

Report on Role of HR During Covid - 19



May 2020



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A. INTRODUCTION

The world has drastically changed in the last few months. With the onset of the pandemic Covid-19 that originated in China in December 2019, it has spread from the Asian region to Europe and the US, it has endangered the expectations of a global recovery in 2020. This pandemic has not only become a health crisis across the world but has emerged as a humongous global concern, threatening and crippling major economies and increasing the risk of global recession. Even before the onset of the virus the global economy was experiencing turbulence on account of disruptions in trade flows and attenuated growth, and now with the current scenario it has aggravated by the demand, supply and liquidity shocks. Further, the beginning of the new fiscal year is the time when new projects are initiated, hiring is done and companies gear up for increments and appraisals. But the pandemic has deferred all plans which have also impacted from demand perspective.

While the Indian government has taken all necessary steps including the lockdown to handle the situation proactively, the threat of coronavirus spread further continues. During a time when the Government of India has ramped up safety measures and has advised to enforce Work from Home (WFH) for private sector employees (except those employed in organisations providing essential services) for an extended period, the role of the Human Resources Management has emerged as most crucial. The Covid-19 pandemic has radically transformed ways of working in organisations across industries and geographies by creating precautionary encumbrances to physical collaborations.

The role of HR has significantly increased with additional responsibilities to sync the business continuity with technology by proper optimization of resources/employees during this time of crisis management. With health, job security and remote work being at the forefront of employee concerns, it has helped companies navigate each phase of the crisis. Over the years HR is considered as a business support function but how effectively the HR's have realigned the people, process and technology to achieve the objectives of the company is very well understood in the present situation when the whole world is striving to overcome the deadly disease. Work from home still remains challenging for most of the organisation due to low level of preparedness, however companies are trying to implement seamless work from home experience for their people who are their greatest asset.

In unanticipated situations like the one we are facing today, organisations have reinvented themselves and identified how to adapt to the scenarios. Covid-19 is a serious reminder once again for companies to assess and revamp their HR policies and procedures, business plans and implement appropriate support measures. A strong focus should be given to health, well-being, safety, digital preparedness and active engagement of the workforce. Most organisations have a traditional business plan, but it is prudent to assess whether the same plan can be adapted, or a new design would be required to mitigate Covid-19 and similar situations.

Human Resources are the lifeline of any organization and need to be handled with the utmost care and dignity all the time, and not just during this crisis. This pandemic had raised various operational & business growth challenges in the mind of the business leaders and companies are planning to take various short-term and long terms HR measures best suited to help them sail safely during this economic slowdown. This article provides an insight how HR interventions & initiatives has been at the forefront to care for their workforces and support their organisations during the crisis and beyond as we hopefully begin to emerge on the other side.

It is an understatement to say that our world has changed dramatically over the last few months. The novel coronavirus pandemic has resulted in unimaginable loss to the global economy and the loss of human lives has been unprecedented in an era of global peace.

Not only the numbers are alarming but, the speed at which the challenges have emerged is intimidating. Governments and health professionals are constantly calibrating the response to this pandemic and frequent strategic adjustments are being done.

We are now in lockdown, exploring novel medical treatments and are on the hunt for a vaccine that will stop this virus in its tracks. And since the scenario is grim, doctors, scientists, and governments are working on an accelerated mission mode.

The impact of novel coronavirus on businesses has been devastating along with the human cost which has also been staggering.

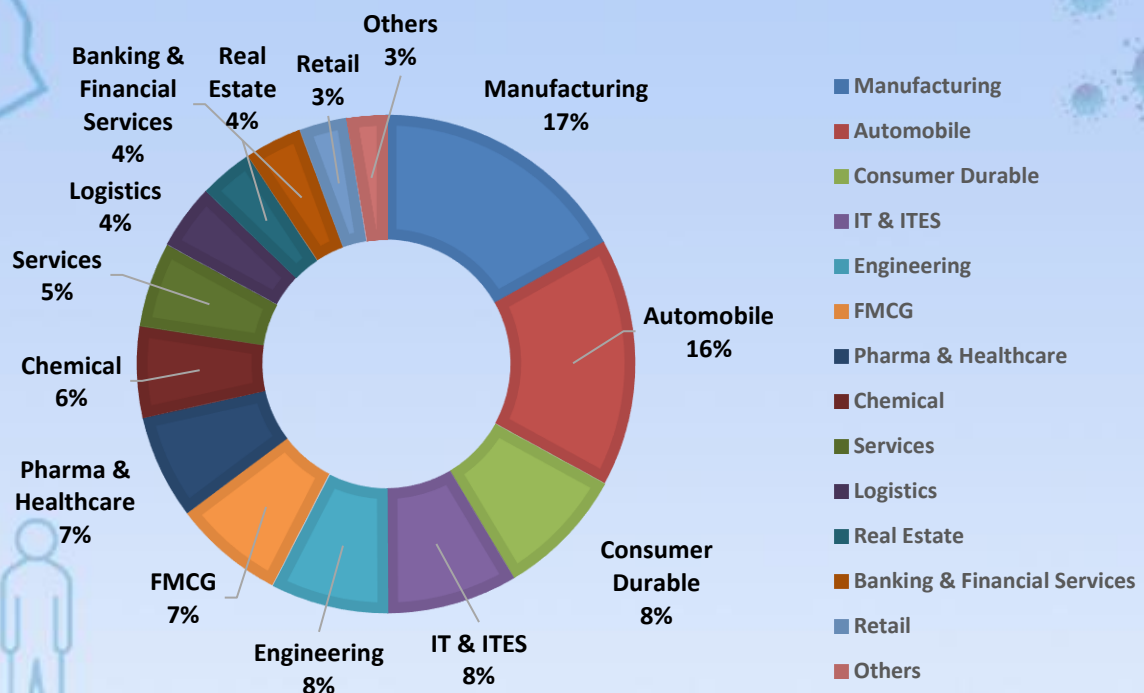
With all the challenges and uncertainties the COVID - 19 pandemic has brought in our lives, we at Omam Consultants tried to capture the measures that are taken by various organisations to combat this situation and maintain the business continuity. The survey basically talks about the two phases of the crisis situation – first is the pre-lockdown wherein the organisations took initiatives to safeguard their employee's health by introducing various respiratory hygiene (infection prevention) measures, creating special task force etc. while the second phase takes care of the various measures initiated by organisation to ensure lockdown days are productive covering – work from home concept, training programs etc.

B. METHODOLOGY

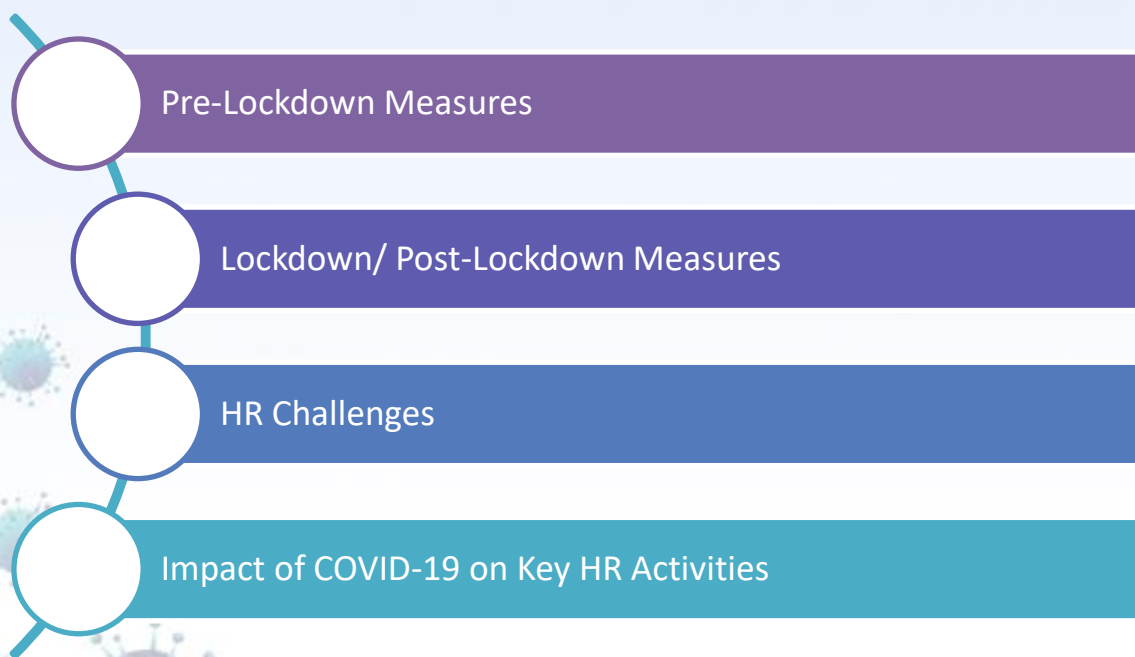
Planning & Understanding	Data Collection & Validation	Data Analysis & Report Generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and define objectives• Identify industry and the companies to be covered• Finalise key parameters of the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questionnaire was designed to have structured inputs from the selected benchmark companies• Capture & understand data from benchmark companies (one-to-one – through telephone/ e-mail/ online survey)• Collate the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study data of each benchmark company & revalidate• Survey analysis• Report generation

The survey was conducted during the month of April 2020 covering 100 plus companies across various sectors. The result of the survey is compiled and presented in the following pages –

C. PARTICIPATION PERCENTAGE (INDUSTRY-WISE)



D. COVERAGE



E. SURVEY FINDINGS

I. PRE-LOCKDOWN MEASURES

1. Respiratory hygiene (infection prevention) measures -

Mailers advising -
"Do's" & "Don'ts"
• 78%

Availability of masks &
gloves
• 94%

Sanitisers @workplace
• 100%

Guidelines on -
domestic & local travel
(only urgent work)
• 75%

Stopped biometric
attendance
• 88%

Sterilise office space to
ensure safety
• 86%

Hospitality staff to
wear mask/ gloves all
the time
• 55%

Thermal screening of
visitors
• 92%

Awareness sessions for
facility staff on Corona
prevention
• 67%

Other Measures –

- Companies provided kit – sanitiser + mask + soap
- Swiping ID card/ manual attendance
- Temperature screening - mandatory for all employees and visitors
- Employees with cough, cold and fever were not allowed to come to office
- Self-declaration of health status
- All domestic and international travel plans were cancelled
- Special awareness sessions were organised across for all employees to maintain hygiene and safety both at workplace as well as at home
- Frequent cleaning and fumigation of workplace
- Celebrations such as Holi and other employee engagement activities were called off
- Alternative seating facility
- Companies started operating at 50% capacity and employees were asked to work from home (WFH) a week prior to Janta Curfew
- Many companies started WFH from 1st March and few a week before lockdown

2. Special Task Force

95% of the companies covered under the study have created a special taskforce to look into Employee Safety and Engagement.

Salient features are as follows -

- CFT (including Business Heads & Leadership) - to monitor employee safety & engagement
- HR Committee – to stay in touch with employees for their well being
- Senior Management/ CEO addressed employees from time to time
- Group mailers - by CEOs
- Medical Expert - included in special taskforce
- Involved Disaster Management Experts along with safety/ environment and operations team
- Employee wellness survey
- Messages from inhouse doctors - on precautionary measures
- Online counselling sessions - for mental health through dedicated psychologist
- Regular mailers, teasers by HR/ HODs – to keep up employee enthusiasm

3. Corona Helpdesk

In most of the companies the special taskforce/ HR Department was in constant touch with their employees for their queries. However, some companies have defined a dedicated Corona Helpdesk to extend emergency support to their employees

Automobile	Employees can connect through emergency hotline numbers
Financial Services	Employees can call doctor through tele-call/ video call incase of any symptom Tied-up with Medi-Assist to provide 24*7 doctor consultations Full time doctors are also available across locations
Healthcare	Dedicated global helpline numbers - where employees as well as their family members can contact and their identity is kept confidential
Manufacturing	Helpline numbers for employee (with cough/ cold symptoms and also for corona +ve cases) SOP for assistance in case of ambulance/ medical help through a Global Employee Assistance Program
Others	HR to touch base with each employee and their family members to understand the pulse 3 rd party agency to provide guidelines to employees & educate in case of any flu symptoms, how to reach doctors, etc

4. Additional benefits – For COVID-19 infected employees

89%

Health insurance coverage for self/ dependents under Group Mediclaim policy

❖ For most of the companies - medical expense costs for COVID infected employees is covered under Health insurance

69%

Reimbursement of the cost of the COVID-19 diagnostic test for employees working during COVID-19

❖ 14 days of Quarantine leave and also special quarantine leaves (for employees @ hotspot areas)

20%

Special quarantine leave to Covid-19 employees

❖ Diagnostic tests – as per government norms, however, employee can get reimbursed if the diagnostic test is chargeable

8%

Cash loans or advances for those in financial distress

❖ Most of the companies paid full salary along with bonus

❖ For some of the FMCG companies - salary was even paid before the designated date of payment and contract workers were paid weekly instead of monthly

❖ Automobile & Manufacturing companies - salary processed 2 days in advance to all contract labours as well/ unionised employees/ mgmt. staff

5. Measures taken for employees at project sites and plants

Mask, sanitiser, temperature monitoring, employee rosters, flexibility in work timing

Specialised agencies are engaged for sanitisation work, entire space is sanitised

Hands-free sanitisation machine and sensor based washroom taps

Transportation - hand sanitiser inside vehicle, sanitisation of vehicle, 50% capacity

Canteen - canteen seating capacity reduced – to follow social distancing norms, marking points in the canteen

6. Measures to ensure - business continuity/ making lockdown days productive

96%

Laptops and Dongle

- ❖ Microsoft Teams, Webex, Google - Meet, Skype and Zoom are some of the tools used to connect teams online

93%

IT & Technical support

- ❖ Wherever required IT teams delivered systems and laptops at employee's home

87%

Online Periodic Team meetings

- ❖ Companies provided high performing data card or internet broadband reimbursement

85%

Access to all information maintaining the confidentiality

- ❖ Few companies provided employees the flexibility to work remotely by accessing VPN

47%

Strategic business calls, concerns and actions discussed by the management.

7. Common Platform wherein – employees can share query/ anecdotes and brainstorm ideas

- Companies across industries have set-up various platforms such as whatsapp groups, company insights associate platform, internal portals, yammer, slido, google spreadsheet and other virtual forms of sharing anecdotes & brainstorm ideas.

Major initiatives taken across various industries are as follows -

Service Industries

Virtual team lunch/ workout sessions/ quizzes, trainings/ webinars/ cooking contest/ intranet wherein employee can post WFH set-up/ selfies/ videos

Manufacturing Industry

Conducted open house (team-wise) wherein leadership team is also present. Employees can post ideas in their company LinkedIn page, through internal – HRMS software group or through HR Helpdesk

Pharma & Healthcare Industry

Have come up with a platform Speak up – internal innovation forum wherein employees can reach to management - in case of suggestions. Some of the programs are rewarded

Automobile Industry

Created whatsapp group department wise to share anecdotes & brainstorm ideas. This platform is used to disseminate information regularly. Associates sim cards have been upgraded so that they can access company portal in case not having laptop

8. Employee engagement, business continuity and training programs - In spite of lockdown, companies across industries arranged open-house sessions, learning sessions and training programs through **e-learning, portals, webinars**.

Some of the key initiatives taken across the industries are as follows -

Service industry

- Internal learning tool – shared database of trainings (free/ chargeable)
- Webinars - for cross functional learning
- Fun sessions on music, fun activities & special chat by experts

Financial Industry

- Tie-up with LinkedIn learning

Manufacturing industry

- Virtual sessions on business excellence
- IT related trainings/ sessions
- Sales & Marketing team interaction - product knowledge, educating suppliers on product range
- Tie-up with Institutes for e-learning

Logistics Industry

- Advance supply chain certification to enhance knowledge

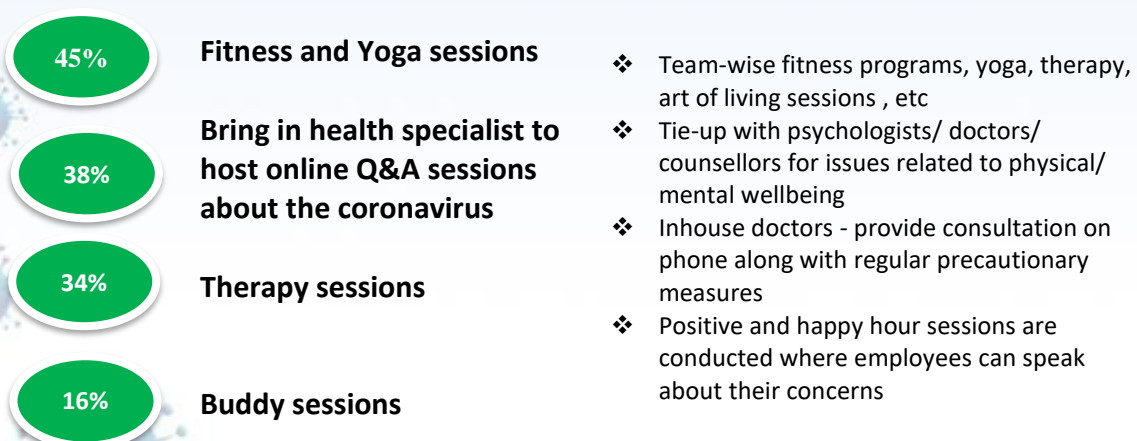
Automobile Industry

- Project related training
- Awareness/ orientation sessions/ ergonomic training with physiotherapy
- Drawing competition and other activities for employee's kids
- Sessions through Harvard mentors
- Training for blue collar - article writing, quiz through internet, live Q&A sessions etc.

These sessions were primarily focussed towards –



9. Employees well-being initiatives to deal with anxiety during this pandemic - To make work from home healthier and to deal with stress & anxiety during this pandemic, companies across industries are taking various initiatives for employees and their family members.



10. Measures taken by companies to support the migrant workers/ daily wage workers/ local communities affected by pandemic -

52%

Provide food packets

- ❖ As a part of CSR activity, companies have been supporting the underprivileged during this hour of crisis

38%

Provide bottled water

- ❖ They have extended support and relief by providing food packets, nutritional products, groceries and essential items

36%

Provide medical and nutritional products

- ❖ Voluntary contributions to PM Care Fund & CM Relief Fund
- ❖ Providing shelters & food packets to migrants
- ❖ Providing help & support to old age & people under quarantine

II. LOCKDOWN/ POST-LOCKDOWN INITIATIVES

- All the companies across industries will follow necessary government guidelines, infection prevention and social distancing measures in a more stringent manner while commuting from home to office, in office as well as on the shop-floor
- Offices and plants will operate as per government norms (33-50% of capacity)
- Aarogya Setu app is being mandatory for all

1. Social Distancing measures while commuting from home to work

95%

Ensure alternative seating

- ❖ Mandatory self-check of health condition by employees

94%

Sanitise hands during entry/ exit gates

- ❖ Thermal screening - of employees and drivers/ conductors before boarding and before entering the company premises

80%

Temperature check while boarding any company owned vehicle

- ❖ Seating capacity of company transport vehicles to be reduced to half

80%

Ensure company owned vehicles are disinfected before and after each shift

- ❖ Employees to sanitise their hands at entry/ exit of bus

74%

Self-examination of health status

48%

Maintain social distance while using locker room

2. Social Distancing measures – In Office Premises

Ensure alternative seating

97%

97%

Ensure hand hygiene in restrooms

Wear mask

94%

94%

Self-declaration of visitors at the point of entry

Ensure all visitors/ contractors/ vendors wear mask compulsorily

91%

89%

Stop physical meetings or gathering people

Ensure microfilters in AC if required to switch on

88%

81%

Suggest employees to bring their own cups and water bottles

Avoid handshakes

77%

64%

Avoid overcrowding/ chatting in groups in pantry/ canteen

Conduct virtual meetings

63%

56%

Mandatory check of body temperature

Switch off AC with doors open for ventilation

49%

48%

Disinfect desktop/ laptop before commencement of work

- ❖ Additional laptops are bought for essential services employees
- ❖ AC to be switched off, pedestal fans to be procured, windows to be kept open
- ❖ Virtual meetings to be continued in office premises
- ❖ Staggered timing in canteen
- ❖ Restriction of people in meeting room
- ❖ Eating food at workstation
- ❖ Employees with small children will continue to work from home
- ❖ Disposable crockery & recyclable cutlery to be used

- ❖ Doors to be kept open, AC temperature to be maintained at 24-25 degree with ventilation & opening of doors
- ❖ Employees should bring own hot/ cold water
- ❖ Availability of tissue boxes near water dispensers
- ❖ Use staircase & avoid lifts
- ❖ Staggered timings
- ❖ Sales team to report from home after field work
- ❖ Roles that can be performed from home should be evaluated for WFH with consent of HOD even after lockdown

3. Social Distancing measures – Shop-floor/ Plant

Sanitise common touch points in group rooms

85%

64%

Ensure utensils and dining halls are sanitised after each service

Maintain social distance in group rooms or break tables

83%

62%

Ensure stewards wear personal protective equipment in canteen

Wear cap/ helmet and mask while working on the line

80%

61%

Enquire whether employee and his/ her family members are healthy at the beginning of the shift

Maintain social distance during morning briefing/ work allocation

79%

47%

Ensure employees punch at attendance terminal with ID card from 2 cm distance

Maintain social distance while standing in queue for collecting food

79%

40%

Menu at canteen – stop items kept at common points and items which affect health

Maintain staggered timings in the canteen

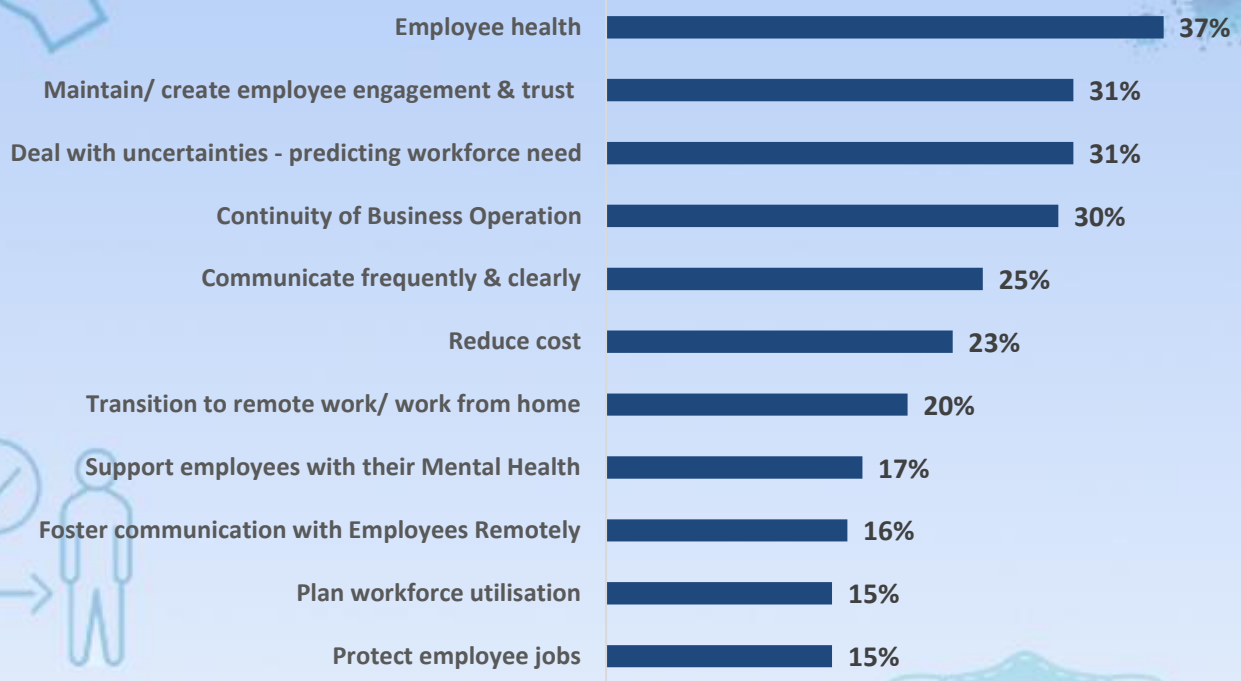
78%

Salient Features

- ❖ Pictorial publication to be done of all social distancing measures
- ❖ Security personal will track attendance wherever Swipe card facility not there
- ❖ Practice of bringing own water bottles, coffee mugs etc
- ❖ Lime Juice/ Neem Herbal drink to be provided post lockdown
- ❖ Lunch hours to be increased with staggered timings
- ❖ Reduction in menu items wherein non-veg might be discontinued
- ❖ Packed lunch in factories & offices
- ❖ Air washers in machine shop floors to be installed
- ❖ Partitions done in L-shaped so that no employee will face each-other
- ❖ Attendance to be monitored through inhouse barcoding attendance system (barcode stickers stuck on id card)
- ❖ No overlapping of shifts, markings made while standing in queue for lunch
- ❖ Placing sanitisers alongside each water dispenser

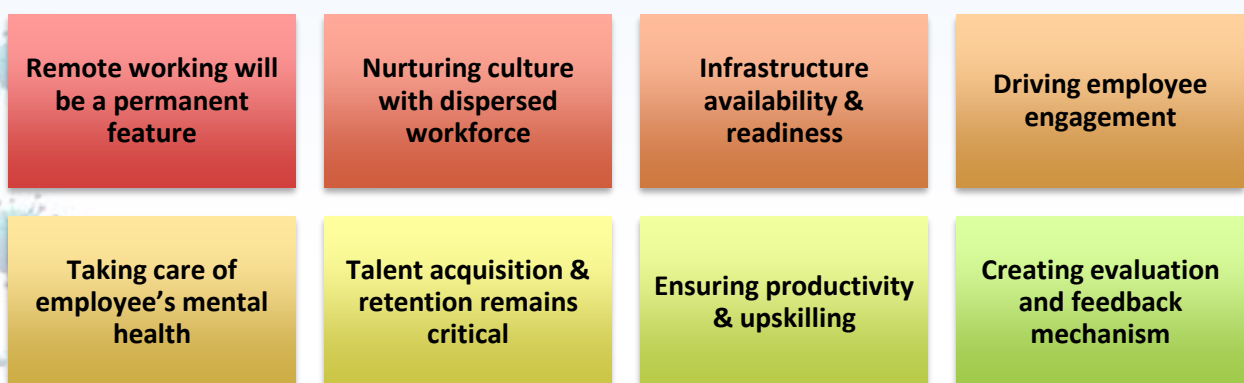
III. TOP CHALLENGES FACED BY HR DEPARTMENT

The study has identified following major challenges faced by the HR Department during this pandemic -



These issues can broadly be categorised under four major areas - employee physical health and wellbeing, followed by remote working or work from home initiatives, closely followed by the issues related to job and work continuity and finally the need for mental health, employee engagement, motivation and dealing with uncertainty.

During these unprecedented times, the role of HR becomes all the more important and they are expected to respond quickly and comprehensively, considering immediate, short-term and long-term consequences of this global crisis. Ways in which COVID crises has transformed the role of HR is as follows –



IMPACT OF COVID -19 ON KEY HR ACTIVITIES

1. Impact on Compensation & Benefits

Companies are trying to ensure their survival by cutting costs, and many have resorted to slashing compensation and also laying-off employees.

The key points due to the impact of COVID-19 crises on Compensation & Benefits is as follows –

- 36% of the companies are facing salary cuts – for some companies the salary cuts are done across the levels, however some companies have defined the cut-off for salary reduction (generally ranging upto INR 7,50,000/- to INR 15,00,000/- per annum)
- 47% of the companies have indicated no change in their salary budget
- Short-term incentives like sales incentives are kept unchanged by most of the companies
- Annual bonuses are kept unchanged by 62% of the companies, however the long- term incentive have a negative impact of COVID-19 crisis and approximately 34% of the companies have indicated reduction in LTI
- Benefits like Mediclaim Insurance has gained importance - most of the companies considering the employee's health as a major focus area
- WFH policy covering the guidelines and additional benefits/ facilities is on the priority list

Note – Omam's Report on COVID-19 impact on Compensation & Benefits is under study and will be published soon

2. Impact on Hiring & Recruitment

With the advent of COVID-19, it has become a reality with leading rating agencies pegging India's growth rate to near ZERO for the year 2020. This coupled with slowing down of investments would invariably have a long-term effect on the industry-leading to the consolidation of businesses, lower earnings which may well drive layoffs and recruitment freeze.

The key points on the impact of COVID crises on Recruitment & Hiring is as follows –

- 65% of the companies have indicated delay in hiring process for the identified positions as the interviews cannot be handled face-to-face. And if the candidate is selected – there is a delay in on-boarding process
- 52% of the companies have indicated freeze on hiring across different levels
- 24% of the companies have reduced their hiring budget. Mass layoffs and significant reduction in working manhours have put recruitment on hold till the crisis ends
- Contract/ part-time employees have had a major impact due to this crisis
- Industries like Travel, Hospitality and Services have indicated negative impact of the crisis. However, industries like Healthcare, Food Processing, FMCG, Pharma and Medical industry expect growth in hiring

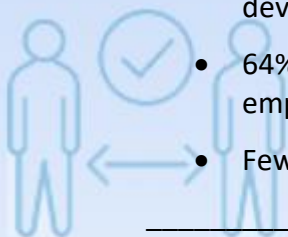


3. Impact on Learning & Development

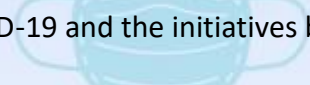
COVID crisis has transformed our lives in ways many never had thought possible. As the outbreak becomes more widespread globally, and volatility and uncertainty increases, businesses are entering a “new normal.” With imposed limitations on both in-person business activities and travel, employees are practicing WFH forcing millions of business meetings, transactions and negotiations to take place virtually.

During this COVID crisis, learning and development continue to be a key strategy to unlock employee’s growth potential.

The impact of COVID crises on Learning & Development is as follows –

- 
- Most of the companies have moved to virtual classroom to take care of the training & development needs of their employees
 - 64% of the companies are using webinars and e-learning as platforms for enhancing employee’s knowledge
 - Few companies have tie-ups with universities for online learning/ certification courses

Hope this report will help you in understanding the impact of COVID-19 and the initiatives being taken by companies.



Thank You for your participation!!!

In case of any query/ suggestion, please write to us at – hrcc@omamcrd.com

OUR BELIEF...

INDIAN Problems Need INDIAN Solutions !

Think GLOBAL, Act LOCAL !



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