



Workforce shaping for exiting COVID-19 lockdown



Reacting to COVID-19

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant and far-reaching for many of our organizations. While the specific impacts have varied from industry to industry and workplace to workplace, a common thread is that many businesses have been or will soon be forced to consider changes to their operating model and ways of working in order to survive. Across the world, organizations are having to make remarkable changes to how they operate. Many organizations have reacted quickly, doing whatever is required to keep their employees safe and the lights on; some organizations have moved into improving their resilience to this challenge. For example, the setting up of multi-disciplinary teams that focus on planning for and initiating actions to determine what the recovery or post Covid-19 organization should look like, e.g. 'Go Forward' teams.

We have identified four phases that organizations will move through as they respond to COVID-19:



Reaction

Responding to immediate challenges



Resilience

Managing through uncertainty



Recovery

Resetting and identifying opportunities



New reality

Adapting to a new world

Some organizations, industries and geographies will move into the recovery phase, and the new reality, before others. Each of these phases will have different workforce requirements, and organizations must resist the urge to jump to the easiest and most immediate solution.



Workforce shaping

Many organizations will consider their workforce challenges through a traditional workforce planning lens – the number of people or positions they have or they need. Instead, workforce shaping is a discipline for organizations to articulate an intelligent and strategic understanding of the workforce they require in the next five to ten years. The need for this accurate workforce forecasting and planning had never been more critical amid the onset of AI and robotics - COVID-19 has created an even more urgent need. The global pandemic is forcing organizations that want to continue to thrive to bring forward their strategic planning efforts, and apply them to more immediate futures.



Probable, preferable, possible and predictable scenarios

Workforce shaping pixilates the activities required to deliver organizational strategy down into specific tasks and skills to understand the potential influence of disruption, and how roles, teams and organizations should be redesigned accordingly. It is probabilistic, depending on future based-based scenarios (where traditional workforce planning tends to model the current workforce forward in time). In addition to asking what is the **probable** or most likely scenario, organizations shaping their workforce to exit lockdown should consider their future scenarios through the lenses of:

- What is **preferable**? What scenario do we hope to be in?
- What is **possible**? What are the possible scenarios we might find ourselves in?
- What is **predictable**? What scenario can we predict?

Applying these lenses as organizations explore their post lockdown scenarios will encourage a diversity of perspectives and gathering of information to inform iteration and refinement of possible business future. The continual re-application of these lenses will ensure that broader influences are not excluded or overlooked in favour of simply what leaders might want to have happen. Understanding the likely probability for these scenarios focuses effort towards the two or three scenarios that are most probable.

Each of these scenarios will require different changes to the business model, operating model, core services and processes, supply chain, core and critical tasks and key capabilities.



Workforce composition and the five B's

The workforce required in the new reality is inherently linked to the scenario – each future scenario will require a new workforce composition, or an optimal mix of the five B's:

- What permanent employee mix will we **buy**?
- Where and when will we **borrow** contingent contractors and consultants?
- How will we **build** talent through up skilling and reskilling?
- What roles can be augmented with **bots**?
- What mix of **base** options (office space, working from home, offshored etc) will we offer?



Exploring people issues

As probable scenarios are examined through the lenses of the preferable, possible and predictable -and the aligned workforce composition is optimised against buy, borrow, build, bot and building options - resulting potential people issues and risks can be identified, prioritised and mitigated using the 5C model:

- What is our **cost**? Is this affordable?
- What is our **capacity**? Can we create and maintain a workforce of this size and shape?
- What is our **capability**? Will we have the breadth and depth of skill required?
- Are we **compliant**? Will we comply with laws and regulations and limit administrative burden?
- Are we **connected**? What is the risk of disengaging our top talent, or separating leaders from business?



Shaping and iterating

As organizations exit lockdown and move into the phases of recovery and the new reality, this approach to workforce shaping must remain iterative. Leaders within the people function that support their organization through this process will find their transition out of reaction, and beyond resilience building, to be smoother (and perhaps more aligned than before the impact of COVID-19). This iterative approach will better position organizations to thrive in response to external influences, and empower the business to slowly extend their time horizons and scenarios into the new normal.

Contact us

If at any time you need help, please use the information below to get connected to a specialist for more advice and support:

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