



**THE**

# HR

# TRANSFORMATION PLAYBOOK

How will your business evolve  
following COVID-19?

# Preparing for 'the new normal'

**The COVID-19 pandemic has become the biggest catalyst for business transformation of our time - and HR now finds itself at the forefront of delivering that change.**

Every organisation has been forced to press the reset button on normal operations and resolve unprecedented challenges to survive as a business. As the recovery process continues, HR professionals now play a crucial role in redesigning their organisation for the better whilst maximising the health, wellbeing and performance of their people.

We can't ignore that the way organisations structure themselves and how they manage their workforce is already shifting as a result of the pandemic. All HR departments have been given a mandate to strengthen their services, build greater resilience and develop more efficient ways of working wherever possible.

That has huge implications in terms of culture, technology, communications, remote working, recruitment, L&D and many other core functions.

One thing's certain: things won't be going back to exactly the way they were.

## A playbook to navigate change

At Access, the nature of our work puts us in constant contact with HR professionals across all industries. We've noticed that many departments are calling for a playbook to help navigate the transition back to 'normal' and solidify a stronger approach to people management going forwards.

We've since conducted a research study that draws insight from HR departments across the UK as they continue through the recovery process. Given that preparation is absolutely essential to avoid ongoing disruption and poor performance, it's a surprise to find that just 23% of HR departments have a clear plan to manage the transition to the 'new normal'.<sup>1</sup>

Now is the time for business leaders and HR to work closely together to review tactics and put a decisive strategy in place that not only facilitates their organisation's recovery, but that also lays a foundation for long-term success. We trust this playbook will prove to be a valuable resource to do just that.

<sup>1</sup>Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

# PHASE 1

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# STRENGTHEN YOUR DIGITAL FOUNDATION



- 1 Strengthen your digital foundation**
- 2 Prioritise health and wellbeing
- 3 Rethink your talent strategy
- 4 Embrace the rise of eLearning
- 5 Keep your data protected



# Born of necessity

**HR's reliance on new technologies and secure digital systems has been pushed to the extreme by the global lockdown; though it's also created huge opportunities for companies to transform their day-to-day operations and culture.**

The scale and speed of change is like nothing we've seen before. HR professionals across all industries are facing the ongoing challenge to maintain culture, communications and resources across a predominantly remote workforce. And whereas departments that already had a strong digital infrastructure in place have been able to adapt far more effectively than those without, every business has been forced to accelerate their digital transformation in some way.

Any HR department that relied on outdated legacy systems or on-premise file storage will have struggled enormously to carry out their plans for business continuity. For these organisations, the pandemic will have been an alarming wake-up call to analyse their approach and start integrating the digital tools necessary to become more resilient, productive and agile as an organisation.

As businesses continue to navigate their own recovery, HR will play a pivotal role in validating new systems and ways of working as standard practice. This is a chance for HR to rethink outdated solutions and transform the way that people services are both perceived and delivered.

Is your department taking the opportunity?



**88%**  
**of HR professionals expect their department to review technologies and 'normal' ways of working as a result of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

## The remote revolution

Although the shift towards remote working has been gathering momentum in recent years, there's no doubt we've reached a tipping point as a result of the pandemic. Whilst it's not the case for every industry, the crisis has given many people the chance to prove they can operate just as efficiently, if not more so, when working from home.

Now more than ever, it's clear that people want to continue having the option to work in a way that suits them. Our research shows that 84% of HR professionals expect their organisation to continue to offer remote working as a standard practice following COVID-19.<sup>3</sup>

Forward-thinking businesses are already looking ahead to develop a long-term plan for flexible working that cuts costs and delivers a better employee experience. This is a big opportunity for every HR department to develop new guidelines and make the case to invest in remote working solutions that benefit employees, the wider organisation and HR. The advantages could include:



**Reducing office costs**



**Relieving the daily commute**



**Better work-life balance**



**Attracting top talent**



**Employee engagement**

<sup>3</sup> Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

# Leading the charge

Our perception of work will never be the same following COVID-19. Now, out of so much struggle and uncertainty, comes an opportunity for HR to take the reins on key business decisions, get their workforce back on track and establish a much stronger voice within their organisation.

Technology plays a big part in this by affording businesses and organisations new, innovative solutions to support their people and strengthen their internal culture. [Cloud-based HR systems](#) that sit at the heart of operations will prove essential for teams to share, collaborate and access vital information from any location. Remote working solutions, including apps and other digital tools, now allow HR and managers to monitor staff performance, track health and wellbeing, send company-wide updates and action requests from any location.

These systems have immense potential to support HR professionals in the long run, enabling them to become far more agile and analytical in their approach to people management. Is your organisation capitalising on this?



88% of HR professionals we surveyed expect their department to review 'normal' ways of working and technologies as a result of the pandemic<sup>4</sup> – and for good reason. Integrating digital tools and HR software is crucial for any business to optimise their organisational design and long-term performance.



**Damian Oldham**  
HCM Divisional Director



## What are your next steps for digital success?

Secure cloud storage

Data security guidelines

Self-service portal for employees

Online training and resources

Clear remote working policy

Track employee engagement

<sup>4</sup> Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

## PHASE 2

# PRIORITISE HEALTH AND WELLBEING



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- 5 Keep your data protected

# Are you thinking long-term?

**The economic and social repercussions of COVID-19 will have a far-reaching impact on the way people approach life in and outside of work. In many ways, this is just the beginning.**

The pandemic has put employee health and wellbeing directly in the spotlight, and more and more organisations are now realising how [HR software](#) and online support portals can transform the way their internal services are delivered.

Having a centralised view of their entire organisation is a crucial first step. From there, managers can maintain open channels of communication, check in on individuals and provide a clear route to report issues or absence. Cloud computing and self-service portals are streamlining key processes and revolutionising the way employees access information and engage with HR. That leaves far more time for the bigger picture of people management.

Culture is everything in times like this and organisations have a real chance to build their brand as an employer, minimise churn and retain their top performers for the long haul. This isn't just about covering short-term challenges; it's also about preparing the groundwork for wellbeing for years to come.

**What steps is HR taking to maintain employee health and wellbeing in light of COVID-19?<sup>5</sup>**

**Regular check-ins with individuals** **86%**

**Company-wide communications** **80%**

**Monitoring absence, activity and disruption** **38%**

<sup>5</sup> Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

# Financial wellbeing

38% of HR professionals we surveyed say COVID-19 has led to less financial security among their staff<sup>6</sup> – a stark indication of the challenge at hand during the recovery process and beyond.

With so much ongoing uncertainty around job security and personal finances, employers can't afford to ignore the impact this is having on their employees' mental health, engagement and day-to-day performance at work.<sup>7</sup>

HR strategies around financial wellbeing are gradually evolving across all industries and often make a huge difference in people's lives. So, what initiatives should HR put in place to support the financial wellbeing of their employees, both now and in the near future? Here are a few popular options:

- **Financial planning workshops**
- **Expert articles and webinars**
- **On-demand pay**
- **Employee assistance programmes**

Remember that every successful strategy is based on a healthy dialogue between staff and HR. This is the only way to promote the right initiatives and tailor financial wellbeing support to meet individual and collective needs.

<sup>6</sup> Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

<sup>7</sup> Source: [Recruitment Pulse Survey 2020, Volcanic & Talent Nexus](#)



## Easing the transition

As organisations continue to recover from COVID-19, ensuring all staff are healthy, engaged and that all necessary precautions are being taken to protect their physical and mental wellbeing is no mean feat.

Many people have been through stressful experiences, or have even lost someone during the pandemic; and that strain will likely have a lasting impact on individual and organisational performance when left unresolved. It's down to HR to monitor wellbeing closely to ensure all staff and their families are always supported by the right resources, systems and support network.

Employers should expect that many employees will re-enter the workplace with fears over job security, commuting and ongoing concerns for their health. That's where a solid remote working solution becomes invaluable for staff that work predominantly with a computer. Where possible, people should be given the option to work flexibly from wherever they feel comfortable and engaged to do so, rather than being forced to return the workplace by their employer.

Of course, there are distinct challenges facing industries that must operate on-site. For instance, organisations that aim to thrive in the changing landscape of hospitality HR will need to plan, budget carefully and continue safeguarding employee health as they take each step towards full recovery.



## KEY QUESTIONS

TYPE HERE!

**WHAT ARE YOUR IMMEDIATE WELLBEING CHALLENGES?**

**WHAT CAN YOU BE DOING TO ENSURE POSITIVE WELLBEING IN THE LONG-TERM?**

## PHASE 3

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# RETHINK YOUR TALENT STRATEGY



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# Navigating the slowdown

**For most in-house recruiters and hiring managers, it's been impossible not to recognise the widespread disruption the pandemic has caused within the UK jobs market.**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the number of job vacancies had fallen by 43% in May 2020, making it the largest drop ever, as companies across all industries take stock of their situation and prioritise recovery<sup>8</sup>. Many organisations have also struggled to adapt to new ways of working and simply did not have the right solutions in place to enable their hiring teams to continue working as normal from home.

Those that rely primarily on on-premise solutions and analog onboarding processes have been hit the hardest. Some employers will have had to freeze their recruitment because they can no longer manage employee inductions and initial training on-site. Others have faced serious issues with tracking and assessing candidates remotely and maintaining confidence within their pipeline.

Where challenges have arisen, HR must now rethink the ways in which they support in-house recruiters to thrive in the modern landscape of hiring. Yes, digital tools and agile working are vital for business continuity, but these are ultimately long-term investments that can lead to substantial gains in productivity further down the line. Are these areas that your organisation

<sup>8</sup> Source: [ABS Job Vacancies, Australia, May 2020](#)



SCREENING ATTRACT  
EXPERIENCE BRAND  
**TRACKING**  
PIPELINE 



## Early opportunities

Although the hiring slowdown has affected all industries, some organisations are still making business-critical hires at various levels. A recent survey from Volcanic and Talent Nexus shows that one in ten organisations have actually seen an increase in roles as a result of COVID-19, mainly across IT and digital roles.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, hiring managers have been unable to carry out normal face-to-face interviews and assessments as a result of social distancing regulations – and apprehension to do so may remain for some time.

That's why organisations are turning to intuitive applicant tracking software to monitor, screen and assess candidates remotely, before using an intuitive onboarding portal to orientate new hires.

When a new normality emerges following recovery, talent management software will be an industry standard that no in-house team can do without. Greater emphasis will be placed on building seamless digital experiences for candidates and powerful profiling tools and applications. For any organisation looking to maintain a competitive edge in the labour market, now is the time to evolve.

<sup>9</sup> Source: [Pulse Survey 2020, Volcanic & Talent Nexus](#)

**57%**

**of in-house recruiters  
state that preparing  
for the future is now  
their top priority<sup>10</sup>**

## Preparing for the future

In-house recruitment services will become far more mobile as a result of COVID-19 – though only for those that welcome the shift with open arms. Fortunately, what we're finding with most organisations is that they're not just planning for the here and now; they're already looking six to twelve months ahead.

Beyond enabling teams to work remotely, shrewd organisations understand that digital [talent management systems](#) can speed up key parts of the hiring process and offer huge value for employer brand perception. Modern platforms mirror the digital services that people demand outside of work, which goes a long way in engaging candidates from the very first interaction.

It's also clear that flexible working will now become much less a perk and much more a standard pre-requisite, and employee benefits packages and value propositions will need to be revised with that in mind. Any company that resists the change or fails to adapt will soon find themselves lacking the necessary flexibility and resilience to thrive in the new landscape of work. And who wants to join an employer like that?

### **WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS FOR TALENT ACQUISITION?**

Digital candidate experience

Applicant tracking software

Focus on employer branding

Facilitating remote teams

Improving communications

<sup>10</sup> Source: [Recruitment Pulse Survey 2020](#),  
[Volcanic](#)

## PHASE 4

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# EMBRACE THE RISE OF eLEARNING



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# The shift to online



**As businesses and HR professionals continue to rethink their strategy for the remainder of the year and beyond, learning and development is a key area of transformation that's being discussed more and more.**

Inevitably, in-person training sessions were one of the first initiatives to be cancelled following the social distancing regulations brought in by the government. Every company now faces the ongoing challenge to migrate their training to an online platform so that employees can continue working – and learning – from home at any time.

Ongoing risk and compliance training has been crucial to share important updates and keep staff updated on new regulations since the COVID-19 outbreak first emerged. Top employers have also ensured their people have continual access to expert advice around remote working, data security and personal health and safety. Many more have been forced to find new ways to upskill staff quickly in order to support their businesses in a critical area of response.

eLearning has therefore become an essential solution for organisations during their recovery process, though it's also clear the situation is prompting many businesses to broaden their thinking around the way that L&D is delivered going forwards. How is your business approaching the challenge?



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It's interesting to find that 65% of HR professionals believe eLearning solutions will become more important as a result of the pandemic.<sup>11</sup> This is a sign of intent from organisations as they look to develop a more agile approach to L&D.



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**Mark Jones**

Digital Learning & Compliance Divisional Director

<sup>11</sup> Source: HR Transformation Survey 2020, The Access Group

## Efficiency and engagement

Whereas short-term necessity has compelled HR professionals to take a serious look at eLearning solutions, more and more are realising that the benefits go far beyond their immediate needs during recovery.

For busy HR departments and fast-paced industries such as finance or professional services, the flexibility to deliver training from anywhere, at any time is a huge advantage. Certain aspects of induction training, health and safety and compliance can also be automated to free up more time internally – though only when this training is delivered effectively.

The [best learning management systems](#) are easy to navigate and bespoke to employee needs. They engage users with a broad mixture of guides, instructional videos, webinars, virtual classes and provide opportunities for both assigned and self-directed training. All of this contributes to a culture of learning that prioritises efficiency and user engagement at every turn.



# Are you investing in learning from home?

One thing we've learned from the COVID-19 response is that remote working is set to become a much bigger staple of our normal working lives. HR must address the challenges this brings in terms of new processes, new methods of communication and new considerations around physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Every shift in day-to-day operations and culture should be reinforced by [effective training resources](#) that can be easily accessed at all times. Employees should fully understand the best ways to collaborate with colleagues, arrange meetings and get the most out of online programs. Managers themselves will also need to be properly trained to oversee remote teams whilst still being able to guide individual development from a distance.

For most organisations, a [cloud-based learning management system](#) is the perfect solution to house key resources and deliver online walkthroughs, workshops and training courses. This is obviously a necessity in the short-term, though it's down to HR to spot what's working well with eLearning and continue to explore its full potential.



## KEY QUESTIONS

TYPE HERE!

**WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING  
COULD BE DONE DIGITALLY  
WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS?**

**WHAT DOES YOUR IDEAL  
LEARNING MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?**

## PHASE 5

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# PROTECT YOUR COMPANY DATA



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# New opportunities, new risks

**The ongoing shift to remote working and cloud solutions presents a new set of challenges for HR, though none more potentially damaging than data security gaps and poor protection for remote systems.**

As recovery from COVID-19 continues, it's vital that organisations keep their personal and company data protected at all times. The Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC)<sup>12</sup> and the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB)<sup>13</sup> have highlighted the need to be more vigilant regarding the rise of cybercrime, phishing attempts and other data security threats during the pandemic, and these risks remain.

HR will need to transform its approach to meet the challenge head-on. Data security is no longer an option for modern businesses and the importance of carrying out regular risk assessments and only using software that has strong password and encryption measures cannot be avoided. These challenges are particularly relevant to HR when you consider the amount of confidential data that the average department typically handles.

More staff may continue [working on a home device](#) as they use their own laptop or mobile to access programs and confidential data whilst operating remotely. This fuels the need for HR to promote stronger cybersecurity measures, offer online training courses on personal compliance and ensure that the right level of antivirus and firewall protection is available for all employees.



<sup>12</sup> Source: [COVID-19 cyber scams mount against Australians](#)

<sup>13</sup> Source: [NZ's cyber security centre warns more attacks likely](#)

# Building digital resilience

As businesses and organisations recover from the impact of COVID-19, HR plays a key role in embedding the necessary policies and behaviours to keep company data secure at all times. This is another opportunity for HR to take the lead on digital transformation and build greater organisational resilience from top floor to shop floor. What steps is your department taking to ensure this?

Going forwards, all employees should have access to data protection policies, online resources and cybersecurity training, ideally housed within a secure [HR platform](#) that can be regularly updated and accessed at any time. Companies should also continue making time to carry out IT risk assessments to identify and mitigate any vulnerabilities ahead of time.

And even though working from home may not be entirely new for some organisations, it's certain that many more employees will be operating remotely more than usual from now on. HR must be able to guarantee that all devices used to access company data meet minimum security requirements, including regular software updates, strong passwords and network protection.

We've built a handy employee checklist on [Keeping your data safe while working from home](#) that you can send out to remote workers.



## Key things to do for stronger data protection:

- Consolidate data into one platform
- Conduct a data risk assessment
- Ensure protection for remote teams
- Update cybersecurity policy
- Deliver data protection training

# SURVIVAL TO REVIVAL

**NOW**

- ESSENTIAL REMOTE WORKING
- SAFETY OF WORKPLACE
- REGULAR STAFF CHECK-INS
- DATA SECURITY ASSESSMENT

**YOUR PRIORITIES**

↖ TYPE HERE!

**6 MONTHS**

- DIGITAL HR SUITE FULLY INTEGRATED
- TRANSITION BACK TO WORKPLACE COMPLETE
- REMOTE WORKING POLICY IN PLACE
- WELLBEING INITIATIVES ROLLED OUT
- SOLID STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

**YOUR NEXT STEPS**

**1 YEAR**

- HR A KEY DRIVER OF BUSINESS STRATEGY AND CHANGE
- ESTABLISHED DIGITAL CULTURE
- HEALTHY, ENGAGED WORKFORCE

**YOUR VISION**

# Is your department transformation-ready?

**As businesses continue to navigate extraordinary change in the way they operate and manage people, the focus of HR must shift towards building the organisation of the future.**

Never before have HR professionals had such a tangible opportunity to take the lead on core strategies and redefine their own role within the business. Now is the time to plan ahead and stake a claim for the evolution of culture, talent

practices, learning and development and employee experience – and integrate the necessary technology to deliver it.

Decisions made now will have a far-reaching impact on the ability for organisations to thrive in the ‘new normal’ world of work.

And whilst some employers may be thinking only in terms of stopgaps and short-term fixes, those that invest in the bigger picture of HR transformation will reap the benefits of attracting and retaining top talent, maximising wellbeing and developing greater resilience for years ahead, rather than months.

Get in touch with one of our friendly HR experts today to discuss your options, or book a [software demo](#) to see exactly how our [solutions](#) can support your organisation.


For more HR resources on how to improve autonomy, engagement and recognition through technology, visit our Resources Hub.


**GO TO HUB**



# ABOUT THE ACCESS GROUP

The Access Group is a leading provider of business software to mid-sized organisations. It helps more than 35,000 customers globally across commercial and not-for-profit sectors become more productive and efficient. Its innovative Access Workspace cloud platform transforms the way business software is used, giving every employee the freedom to do more.

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