

Transitioning To a New Normal

A Checklist for Managers

This checklist will help you think through your personal transition and the transition of your team back into the workplace. Leverage the resources in the [accompanying kit](#) to dive beyond the bullets listed here and refine your plan.

STEP 1. Prepare for upcoming changes. Create alignment to prepare for the return to work:

Before your company has even decided to return employees to the workplace, you'll need to start building the groundwork for the transition back. Each team member will have unique challenges and concerns. Your responsibility is to communicate and triage topics that you might never have worried about before.

- Send a message to your employees confirming the specific changes or dates that will impact your team. Communicate any safety precautions that the company has committed to, as well as important internal contacts.
- Schedule a virtual team meeting to discuss changes and provide an opportunity for questions to be asked and answered.
- Acknowledge the stress and fear that may come with preparing for and returning to work. Ex: "The first week and month will be hard, things will continue to change, but we will work together."
- Create norms around communicating emerging needs. Perhaps it's sending a group email thread or reaching out via team chat.
- Check for understanding. Consider reaching out to each of your employees separately to see if they have any questions or concerns and how you might be able to help. Or maybe include it in your 1:1 sessions!
- Define your expectations for the return to work, work-life balance, and communicate them clearly. It's likely that you might expect different behaviors and/or outcomes from your team.
- Share strategies or tips from your own experience on how to adapt.

STEP 2. Coach your team as changes continue to unfold:

Returning to your new normal means that you'll continue to discover new and unexpected challenges. It may take extra energy for you and your employees to stay energized, resilient, and motivated. You will need to continue to focus on recognizing, rewarding, and guiding individuals where needed.

- Re-onboard your employees! Returning to a very different workplace calls for supporting your employees by helping them learn the new modes of operation. Some of these you will have to discover together.
- Send at least a weekly email to reiterate important changes, even if there are none!

- ❑ Acknowledge the difficulties of adapting to the new normal and the ways your team is successfully making changes.
- ❑ Reach out to each of your employees separately to unearth and address questions and concerns.
- ❑ Share strategies or tips from your own experience on how to adapt. Encourage others to do the same.
- ❑ Share clear expectations and be supportive, yet create room for your employees to make decisions autonomously.

STEP 3. Create a new, energizing, and realistic vision of the future. Leverage creativity and innovation to identify opportunities:

A clear strategic plan allows everyone to align around common goals and expectations. Unwelcome change can be a catalyst for progress. As a leader, you'll need to anticipate what's ahead and develop creative solutions to navigate uncharted territory. In the process, you may discover opportunities to rethink what you do and how you do it.

- ❑ Acknowledge the difficulties posed by COVID-19, yet identify the opportunities this provides on an organizational, team, and individual level.
- ❑ Set a vision for a realistic yet attractive version of the future that capitalizes on these opportunities.
- ❑ To create a new and improved “normal”, explicitly give employees the expectation, permission, and time to be creative.
- ❑ Use a coaching mindset. Don't solve your employee's problems, guide them in discovering the solution that works best for them.