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Rethinking Human Capital Strategy Post Pandemic

While business continuity is important, a company's most vital resource is its people – and the right employees can carry an organization through difficult times. Even through the challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. But a business model only works if the *right* employees are executing the plan. Companies that have succeeded for decades, continually prevailing through recessions and economic hardships, have done so through workforce planning processes.

In this first half of 2020, the world has drastically changed for both companies and their employees. The U.S. economy went from record employment levels, record profits and the stock market reaching an all-time high to record unemployment levels and losses of sales and profits for nearly all companies. Organizations are looking forward to getting back to a level of normalcy as soon as possible. Any rebound to normalcy will be determined by how each company's resources, specifically human resources, are deployed.

Workforce Planning Key to Recovery

As discussed in our previous article about [Recalibrating Human Capital Strategy](#), workforce planning will be a critical area of concentration for businesses as employees return to work. However, workforce planning at this time likely will be different than in past periods of economic downturn as the current focus of the activity will be short-term. A return to normalcy is the name of the game and an effective short-term plan is critical to meet business needs. To use a sports analogy, businesses need to be prepared to immediately field the right players and put them in the right positions when the game action starts back up.

While there will be significant variation by industry segment and business type, most companies will grapple with radically changed market conditions. The biggest reality is that organizations will be adjusting their budgets to lower revenue expectations. That financial reality impacts previous assumptions related to, but not limited to, hiring, merit increases and retention. These factors will require a review of the

organizational structure, roles, responsibilities, talent depth and projected talent gaps.

In addition, some market segments will recover at different intervals than others and companies need to react accordingly to this reality. Employees also need to adjust and take on different responsibilities during this period. The work world will certainly be different than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Six Steps to Workforce Planning During Crisis

In order to weather the storm, organizations need to focus, more than ever, on retaining key talent and effectively filling open positions with the appropriate skill sets. Managing these areas significantly affects the company's ability to return to the right levels of productivity and profitability. To ensure that an organization is prepared in the near term, leadership must implement a rigorous short-term workforce planning process.

Every organization should address these six steps to workforce planning in a crisis:

1. Define the Strategy
 - Identify and prioritize the most critical needs
 - Prepare for potential future crisis, defining core team and role needs
2. Determine Interim Staffing Levels
 - Determine which roles and positions will not be refilled
3. Adapt Your Organization Structure
 - Redefine roles and reassign individuals to provide coverage until full staffing is achieved
4. Develop an Interim Talent Management and Acquisition Approach
 - Identify key talent depth, gaps and needs
 - Develop an aggressive recruiting strategy to address talent gaps

- Dedicate resources to cross train employees to provide coverage where resources are short

5. Prioritize Employee Development

- Manage frequent talent reviews to assess staffing levels and skills capability
- Train supervisory and management team on the new realities of deploying their work teams

6. Communicate

- Communicate workforce plan to all key stakeholders, including any changes made post-pandemic

Establish a Formal Process

While many companies utilize some aspects of this approach, it is essential that this effort becomes a formal process that is rigorously managed for the foreseeable future. Decisions and assumptions need to be documented and, most importantly, effectively

communicated to all stakeholders. New thoughts and ideas on how to best deploy employees will need to be considered and implemented.

Workforce planning is key to businesses returning to normalcy. Organizations of all sizes need to devote an appropriate amount of time to this subject. As a new normal begins, a workforce planning initiative should be coupled with the other three critical areas we have identified. They include [compensation/rewards strategy](#), employee communications/branding, and effectively managing/leading in a time of crisis. Focusing on these areas will determine how quickly and successfully businesses can rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic

For more information about Workforce Planning strategies, contact Dan Simovic at dan.simovic@findley.com or 216.875.1917, or Sandy Turba at Sandy.Turba@findley.com or 216.875.1937