BOMA Canada:
Coronavirus – Human Resources & Mental Health

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Please contact relevant public health authorities for medical/public health advice. Neither BOMA Canada nor the individuals presenting herein are providing such advice.

Return to Work

Key considerations for re-opening your office-based worksites

- Communication is a top priority
- Workplace readiness and the phased return
- Managing the office environment
- New policies and procedures
- Employee mental health and emotional well-being
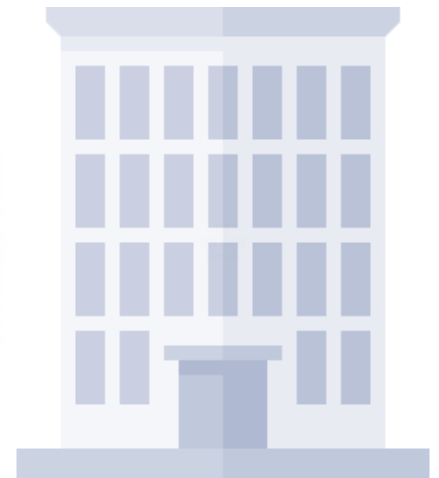
Communication is Key

- Re-engagement of the workforce is key - clear, regular communication is critical
- Establish two-way feedback - survey your employees and let them help guide your return to work planning

> At Triovest we conducted a survey targeting our office workers, ~66% participation rate.
> - ✓ Strong opinions on when to return ranging from June to September, or when there is a therapeutic treatment
> - ✓ Strong opinions on safety in the work place – physical distancing, sanitation
> - ✓ Strong opinions on PPE
> - ✓ Concerns around transit and availability/cost of parking

- Don't forget your current essential on-site workers – Building Operators/Maintenance, Property Management staff
- Leadership - need to demonstrate empathy and understanding - many employees worried about returning and may have concerns about corporate vision and direction
- Employees need to hear from leadership - how they can positively impact the organizations long-term recovery and success

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Workplace Readiness and the Phased Return

- Preparing a safe workplace to welcome employees back to
- Establish internal Return to Work Playbook
- Communicate new Safety Guidelines and ensure that anyone returning to work signs-off
- Establish protocols that will be in place – communicate ahead of time to all employees before commencing your Phased return
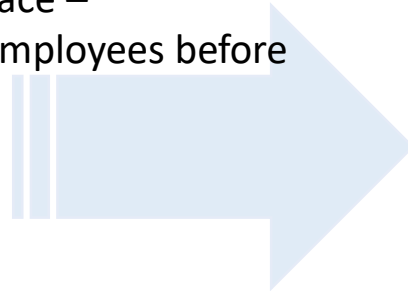
Protocols should include:
- ✓ Physical distancing, 6-foot office mandatory
- ✓ Cap on office capacity – 20-30%
- ✓ Office attendance – e.g. max 3-days/week, rotational schedules
- ✓ Office floor plans with work station set-up, entry/exit points, use of common areas, traffic flow, sanitation stations, adequate signage
- ✓ Electronic sign-in so we know who is in the office and when (and to assist in case notification if an outbreak occurs)
- ✓ Use of PPE
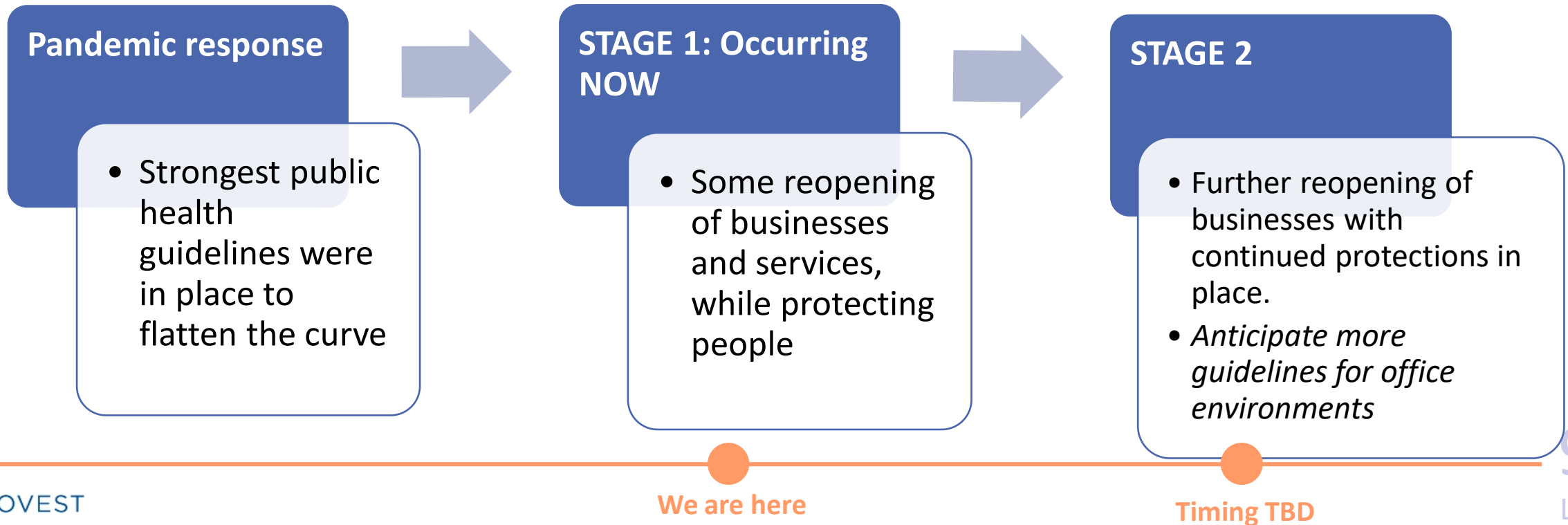- ✓ Flexible hours and staggered start and finish

Questions to consider:
- Will you require your employees to notify their Manager they are coming in AND that they are Covid-symptom free?
- How will you respond to violation to the new protocols?

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Phased Return Approach

Phased approach will have regulatory implications. Provincial legislation and requirements should be considered along with legal counsel

Pandemic response

- Strongest public health guidelines were in place to flatten the curve

STAGE 1: Occurring NOW

- Some reopening of businesses and services, while protecting people

STAGE 2

- Further reopening of businesses with continued protections in place.
- *Anticipate more guidelines for office environments*

We are here

Timing TBD

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Phased Return Approach

Key considerations – Phase 1

- **Determine return date**
  - Give advance notice
  - Ensure ample time to plan – office layout, supplies, etc.
  - Personalize 'welcome back' package – hand sanitizer, reusable masks

- **Determine who is returning - leadership presence, critical roles?**
  - Based on survey results
  - Plan your rotational schedules
  - Maintain WFH for roles that can successfully do so
  - Accommodations still in place for vulnerable groups

- **Sign-off on new Safety Guidelines**

Looking ahead to Phase 2

- Don't wait to start planning
- Decide on a date for next phase
- Remember the 2-way feedback – regularly commit to surveying your employees
- Remind employees: details of Phase 2 are fluid – subject to provincial guidelines
- Can't discount 2nd wave, need to be agile in adapting to what that means

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New Policies & Procedures

- Identify where you may need new policies and which ones will require updating

- Revised Health & Safety guidelines:
  - Health monitoring
  - Adherence to physical distancing
  - Hand washing protocols
  - Minimizing touch points
  - Requirements for PPE
  - **Advisable to get your employees to sign-off**

- Work From Home – update with new considerations. Incorporate established Agile Working Strategy into

  WFH

- Guest and Visitor Policy – will there be restrictions?

- Vacation Use Policy – changes to carry-over of days, mandatory use of vacation?

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Employee Mental Health

- **Support for employees and managers**
  - consider manager training on managing mental health in the workplace

- **Communication about resources** you have available:
  - Employee Family Assistance Providers
  - Maximize benefits - most providers also offer podcasts, blogs, webinars

- **Digital / virtual healthcare** now one of the main benefit resources that organizations are introducing

- **Consider adding a wellness page** to your Intranet that offers:
  - Peer support
  - Resources to cope with anxiety
  - Social and community pieces can be added

- **Promote physical well-being, health and fitness** – corporate memberships to gyms are now offering on-line resources

Final Thoughts

- Pandemic Leadership

- We need to understand that the pandemic will affect organizational culture

- Leaders will need to show increased empathy – if your employers see and feel that their leaders care about them, they will in turn care back (ties into the engagement factor)

- Be sensitive to health concerns, dependant care needs, financial worries, job security

- Recognition

- Actively recognise those employees who have taken on extra work.

- Recognise and reward your site essential employees (e.g. Building Ops) who never had the option to WFH

Mental Health and Wellbeing In the era of COVID-19

Lori Casselman
President and CRO
Wello

Current Landscape

- 67.91% (vs. 47%) of Canadian employees now work remotely

- **Advantages:**

  - time saved, focus, ability to manage work/life balance, cost savings due to decreased overhead

- **Disadvantages:**

  - less connection – tougher to build meaningful relationships with colleagues, clients

  - can also be challenging to properly identify and support employees who are disengaged or performing sub-optimally

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Focus on Mental Health

- Experts anticipate a significant rise in mental health symptoms, diagnosis.

- Mental health:

  - "Worried"; "anxious"; "bored"; "depressed";

  - Depression, Anxiety Disorders

- Need for mental health resources has never been greater

Supporting remote employees' mental health: Productivity & Engagement

Providing targeted, informed support that specifically addresses the anxieties individuals are facing is critical:

- Stay connected with technology

- Check-in regularly

- Be flexible

- Reward good work

- Encourage work/life balance

- Offer mental health employee benefits and share resources

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Supporting remote employees' mental health: tools & resources

Offer mental health employee benefits and share resources:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP/EAFP)
- Mindfulness/meditation and resilience building apps
- 1:1 health and fitness coaching
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and CBT Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) resources
- Virtual healthcare

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Actions

- Increase communication frequency

- Enhance communication strategy (how)

- Empathy for unique personal scenarios

- Reduce stigma and create a positive workplace

- Focus on Early Intervention/Prevention

- Support disrupted work schedules and interruptions

- Appreciation and positivity

Building a culture of unity amongst remote teams

- **Create a virtual environment of positive behavior and continue to grow a positive company culture**

- Understand the value in remote working

- Communicate on company values and culture

- Encourage open communication and feedback

- Set expectations on communication methods

- Encourage fun interactions

- Be consistent

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Why is it important?

- **Reduce stigma**

- Create a positive workplace culture

- Improve morale in the workplace

- Enhance productivity and engagement

- Support work-life balance

- Reduce costs

Resources for employers and employees

Resources for Employers

Resources for Employees

Wello.ca

Download the Guide at bomacanada.ca/coronavirus