

PEOPLE AND SKILLS

# Put your people first

Employees are the fuel of any organisation, they need to function at their best to enhance future performance.

Our series of insights can help businesses look at the external drivers and internal enablers that will underpin their strategy and programmes, whilst working in sync to boost performance. We share insights relating to ‘people and skills’ and how putting your people first will support business resilience.

**Retuning Action Areas:**

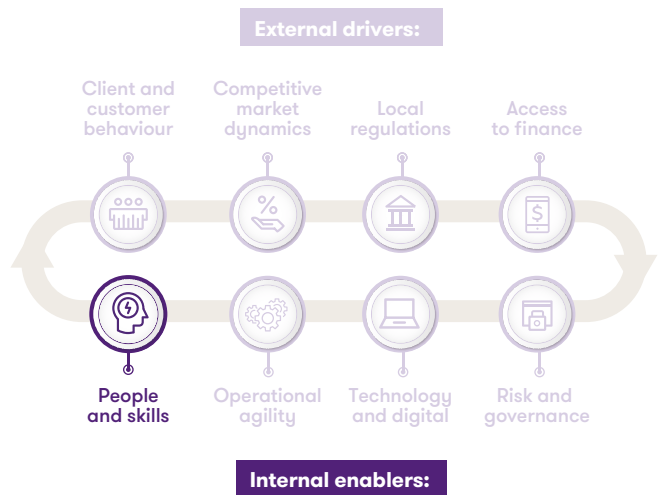
- Manage back to work performance
- Consider outsourcing specific roles
- Revisit your wellbeing policies
- Don't ignore your business culture and values
- Rethink your skills strategy for a post-COVID world

The most radical and immediate impact of COVID-19 has been on people. New ways of working have put increased pressure on managers and their teams. Lockdowns and remote working have blurred the lines between business and professional lives and brought to the fore the physical and mental wellbeing of workforces. Health, morale, the working environment, skills, and productivity are critical issues and meeting those challenges is a priority. According to Grant Thornton's [IBR data](#) 36.7% of mid-market businesses said they were planning for people and leadership challenges in preparation for recovery.

**Manage back to work performance**

For those businesses needing their staff to be location-based, the priority is to provide a safe environment with appropriate self-distancing measures, and Grant Thornton's [IBR data](#) showed that 46.8% of companies were planning workplace safety. However, as people return to their workplaces, they also need managerial guidance and clarity to get them back on track.

Change and lack of clarity can often lead to confusion and insecurity, which inevitably has a negative affect on performance. Communication between management and teams is crucial, with a clear transparent dialogue on the changes being made, the impact of these and the rationale for embedding such change.



However, well-executed change can have a positive impact. If approached with thoughtful planning and meaningful engagement, change can be an opportunity to ‘build back better’.

**Consider outsourcing specific roles**

Businesses have adopted a new way of working during the pandemic, with virtual and hybrid models being embedded. Such changes will have an impact on fixed costs and will drive agility further forward. Businesses maybe reluctant to bring in new permanent staff, therefore we expect the demand for outsourcing to increase further.

Likewise, specific, and specialised projects will require new and emerging talent which is now globally available given the concept of virtual working is now becoming a norm. Such changes will address the talent gap locally, along with offering competitive advantages for organisations and clients alike.

## Revisit your wellbeing policies

But for a large proportion of employees now working more or fully remotely, mental wellbeing – more easily monitored under face-to-face settings – is a growing concern for businesses. Emerging research from the UN found that women have been disproportionately affected by lockdown work patterns, given care responsibilities and impact on job security. The research suggests that given the large proportion of women working in the most impacted sectors, we need to think carefully about how we can redeploy this human capital as a critical component to our economic recovery. Employers' support for women's wellbeing has a vital role to play in that. Meanwhile, many younger employees are living – and now working – in shared accommodation with less space and privacy.

While many people across generations, feel isolated or that their sense of purpose has diminished. People are working harder and are becoming more available in a bid to retain their roles during an economic downturn.

Business leaders must lead with compassion and authenticity, ensuring they communicate with teams regularly, are open, consultative, and express gratitude for exceptional work and effort being placed by its people.

Senior leaders must recognize the impact of wellbeing on the workforce and the value to the bottom line, ensuring adapted policies and structures are aligned to the new way of working.

## Do not ignore your business culture and values

With so many businesses focused on survival, it is not surprising that culture has slipped off the radar.

Living by organizational values is crucial now more so than ever, ensuring people are treated fairly, with respect and integrity. It will both support the business to remain resilient and drive innovation to capitalize on the opportunities in the market.

Organisations who neglect employees now will face the prospect of demotivated staff remaining in their roles given the current employment market is somewhat bleak, this will cause productivity, cultural, well being and in some cases reputational challenges.

Even in these difficult times, businesses need to demonstrate integrity and their core values in their DNA.

## Rethink your skills strategy for a post-COVID world

The new challenges COVID-19 poses for businesses require new skills to deal with them.

The pandemic is forcing organisations to snap out of an antiquated way of teaching people, to embrace technology, and adopt a much more inclusive approach to upskilling and reskilling people of all ages, across all communities.

While upskilling has a positive motivational impact on employees, by thinking now about teams' future skill requirements, businesses can position themselves strongly. With some roles having changed drastically to adjust to circumstances, the crisis has allowed people to develop new skills and identify where they fall short.

Human capital should be placed back on the boardroom agenda, developing better short-term horizon scanning and helping boards be more open to how technology can help.

A disengaged, demotivated and distant team is akin to putting the wrong fuel in the car. A retuning exercise, based on proactive communication, transparency, core values and an evaluation of skills can help ensure your people are optimised for the race ahead.

## Speak to our team across Saudi Arabia to help you prepare your human capital strategy.

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