

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES IN LINE WITH EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

HARNESS YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES



Assessing COVID-19 impact on Human Resources

“The New Normal of work”

How does this pandemic impact the workplace, you, your team, and your organization?

It is important to understand the significant impact of COVID-19 on the way of conducting business especially when managing teams and dealing with people. Employers need to understand people’s fear of losing jobs, fear of being contaminated to rethink and create a safer workplace whereby employees feel cared for and safe to come back to work once lockdown is over while at the same time ensuring the continuity of the business.

To do so, it is important to:

Identify Employees with Critical Skills for your Business

Establish who are the critical staff that you will require while working from home. When your employees can work from home, make sure they have the equipment (such as a laptop) they need to work from home.

Consider developing a special roster so that critical staff are always available to keep essential business systems and processes running.

Have a Strong Remote Work Policy and make sure Employees know what it is

A great remote work policy clearly defines when and under what conditions remote work is permitted (or encouraged), who is eligible, and any steps employees need to take in order to take advantage of the policy. If you do not have a policy in place, one can be adopted and communicated with relative ease.

Keep an Extra Clean Office

Once lockdown is over, you will need to review the workplace and put in place health and safety measures in the way we deal with our customers, our employees, suppliers etc.

It is important to build a safe working environment for your employees that will ease concerns about catching COVID-19 and boost morale of employees. Make common items like hand sanitizer, tissues, spray disinfectant, and soap/paper towels available to all of your employees. You can also encourage all employees to use common hygiene best practices like sneezing into their arm, covering their mouth when they cough or sneeze, and promptly disposing of used tissues. You may also want to consider scheduling an added shift for whoever is responsible for cleaning your office and office space.

To build a safer environment for your workers, you may wish to consider [Module 1](#) that will allow you to carry out a proper risk management of your factory/office to ensure that you cover all risk areas within your premises.



Develop New Policies - Encourage Sick Employees to stay Home

This is as much a communication piece as it is a policy item. Make sure your employees know that the company does not expect them to report to the office if they are feeling unwell. In addition, you may want to encourage employees to utilize remote work resources if they believe that they have been exposed to COVID-19 so as to prevent contamination of the workplace and employees, even if they are not showing symptoms. Thus, the importance of having a well-defined work from home policy.

Plan Workforce Utilization

With cash being limited, you need to plan your workforce to perform as effectively as possible given the constraints such as limited travelling, inability to produce, among others. You need to think of alternative ways of using the workforce to operate at least at a reduced capacity. Should you put in place a system of reduced work hours? Should you consider putting up a shift system? These are some questions that you can ask yourself while planning your manpower.

Re-Frame Employee Experience: Focus on Real-Time

One of the most important HR capabilities being tested is agility. HR departments must build a crisis response muscle, learn quickly how to distribute authority and coordinate activity, and implement real-time data collection, listening, and communication programs. It is important to build mitigating measures that:

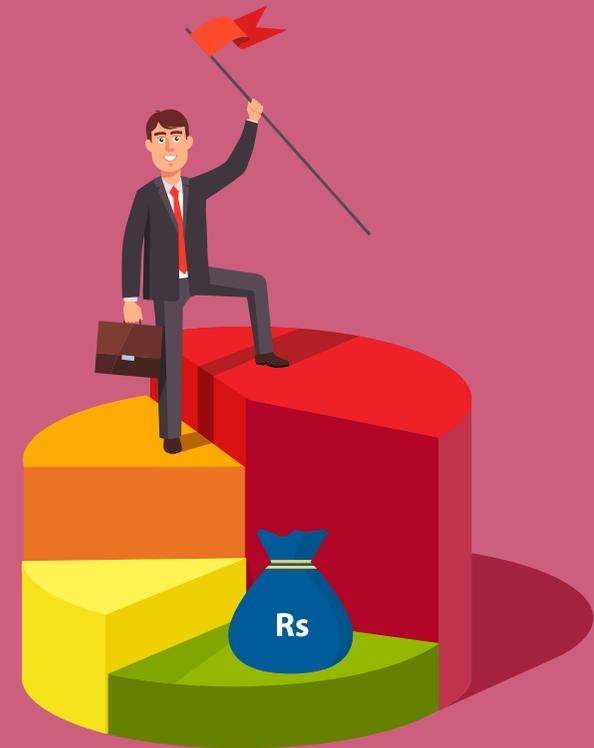
- Focus on people first, economics second.
- Develop rapid response teams that cross organizational boundaries
- Quickly assess what jobs are going away and start to align people towards new roles quickly. Rapidly develop programs to educate, train, and empower people to work at home especially if you are changing your business model.

Legal considerations for Companies

The following areas will be addressed:

- Employment and Human Resources (HR) Policies
- Data Protection

Focus on people first...



...economics second

Employment and Human Resources Policies

Employer and Employee agreements

If the employee is hesitant to come to work because of a fear of contracting the virus, the employer may investigate the reason for this and whether there are special circumstances that need to be taken into account, eg., if the employee is particularly vulnerable or is living with a vulnerable person. Where the reason is legitimate, and the employee can work from home, the employee is to be paid in the normal course.

Where the reason is legitimate, but the employee is unable to work from home, the employer may consider alternative options with the employee. For instance, the employer might consider whether the employee can be given alternative duties that they can carry out at home or if the employer can adjust certain conditions to address the employee's concerns, such as changing start / end times to minimise travel during peak periods or changing the set up in the office to minimise contact with other staff.

If there are no feasible options, the employer and employee may agree to a period of annual leave or unpaid absence to cover the time off. In the event that the employer and the employee cannot agree as to when the leave is to be taken, half of the leave period is to be decided by the employer and the other half leave period by the employee*¹.

¹ S.45 Workers Rights Act



Working from home...



...can be an option

Health and Safety

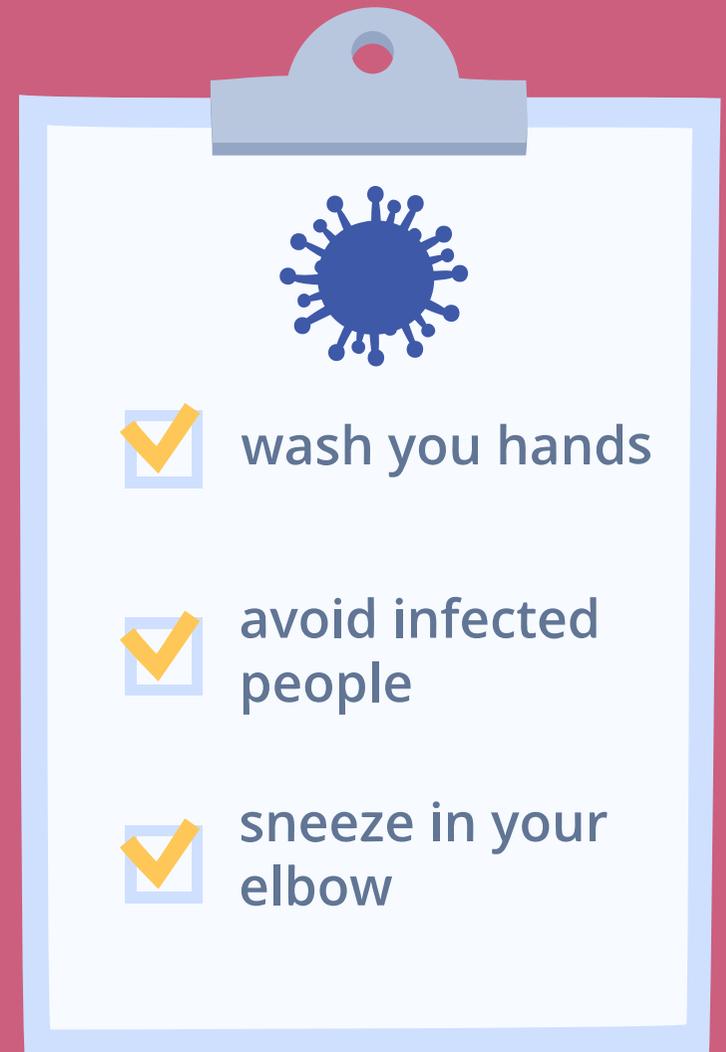
Employers have a general duty to take reasonable measures to protect the health and safety of the workforce and to provide a safe place of work.

Some of the practical steps that employers may consider include:

- Providing regular up-to-date government and health authority information to staff
- Displaying notices based on the latest health advice on how to prevent the spread of the virus and what to do / who to contact if they have symptoms
- Reminding everyone with symptoms of the virus not to come to the office and of the recommendations on self-isolation
- Discouraging physical greetings such as handshakes and kissing and otherwise encouraging social distancing
- Reviewing cleaning regimes so that high-traffic areas or surfaces such as door handles / faucets / shared equipment, etc., are cleaned regularly
- Providing tissues and ensuring there are sufficient means for disposing of tissues
- Providing hand sanitizers in entrances to the office and ensuring there are appropriate hand washing facilities (with soap) for employees and invited guests using the office
- Assessing if there is any particular risk in relation to certain members of staff who have underlying health conditions or are vulnerable for any other reason
- Providing similar advice to visitors / contractors who are working on the premises and mandate that they also comply with any policies or guidance in place.

Face Mask and Gloves

Employers are highly encouraged to provide face masks and gloves to their employees (For example the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms of Mauritius issued Circular Letter No. 30 of 2020 highlighting the need for a sufficient number of appropriate face masks and disposable gloves to be provided to staff). This will motivate employees to attend work and will help to improve morale at the workplace.



Appropriate Communication

Given there is much anxiety about COVID-19, employers are encouraged to issue appropriate communications to staff to, where possible, ease anxiety and provide clear and comprehensible guidance on the current and future situation.

In addition, below are a few other steps that may be worth considering:

- Provide regular updates from company leadership to reassure staff
- Consider what steps – if any – may be appropriate to protect the mental well-being of staff during periods when they may be self-isolating or required to stay away from the business
- Publicise information concerning who employees can speak with if they have particular concerns or anxieties about the virus and the measures being taken
- Evaluate workplace emergency response protocols and consider what, if any, modifications may be necessary to address a potential pandemic
- Check whether personal contact information is up to date and business emergency procedures are in place
- Consider reissuing your social media policy and what employees should / should not be posting about the virus and your business prevention measures to avoid the spread of rumours / false information or the misimpression that employees are authorized to speak on behalf of the company
- Review your schedule of upcoming meetings and conferences and decide which, if any, to cancel, modify (eg, turn into a conference call or “virtual” meeting) or maintain as-is
- Consider visitor / contractor policies for the workplace and if these need to be updated
- Consider the health and safety implications of provided transportation.

Data Protection

Employers generally may not require employees to undergo medical screening or temperature checks or to collect medical data that goes beyond the minimum necessary to manage the virus. Employers may be able to ask employees to test themselves in certain situations but typically may not carry out the tests, nor collect or process the results of such tests. Employers may request for the consent of the employee under such circumstances. Health data is generally considered as special categories of personal data under the Data Protection Act 2017.

Provide regular updates...



... to reassure staff



Benchmarks

Across the world, people are already creating their new workplace and implementing measures to respond to the crisis.

We have compiled some examples that you can use as reference to build your own HR response:

Emergency Leave

Walmart to allow any worker concerned about Coronavirus to Stay Home 'Without Penalty'

Walmart is enacting an emergency leave policy for its 1.4 million hourly US workers that allows them to take time off without penalty if they fear the spread of a new virus. The nation's largest private employer said Tuesday that a worker at its store in Cynthiana, Ken., tested positive for the COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

(New York Post)

Colorado will require Paid Sick Leave for Certain Workers in response to Coronavirus

The state of Colorado will soon require employers to offer paid sick days to hundreds of thousands of service and hospitality workers in response to the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. Gov. Jared Polis announced the new policy on Tuesday morning as he declared a state of emergency.

(Colorado Public Radio)

Therapy Sessions

Starbucks to offer Free Therapy to all Workers

Starting April 6, Starbucks employees can tap their pool of therapy sessions and meet with a counselor in person or via video chat, the company said. They will also have unlimited access to self-care apps through Lyra Health Inc., a software company that connects people with mental-health services through their employer. The company said it would begin to offer 20 free therapy sessions a year for all of its employees, including part-time workers, as part of a broader mental-health benefit plan.

Starbucks was planning its new mental-health benefit rollout before the coronavirus outbreak, but said it would help quell some of the anxiety workers face regarding the pandemic.

(Wall Street Journal)



Emergency Leave

Provide Therapy Sessions to Workers



Employee Relief Fund

Amazon Launches \$25 Million Relief Fund for Delivery Drivers, Seasonal Employees Amid Coronavirus Outbreak

Amazon is launching a \$25 million relief fund for delivery drivers and seasonal workers amid the coronavirus outbreak, it announced March 11. The aim is to help employees “that are under financial distress during this challenging time,” the company said. This includes Amazon Flex drivers and its network of delivery service partners, who handle last-mile package deliveries, as well as seasonal employees, who help the company manage variation in customer demand during peak periods and holidays. Amazon will allow these employees to apply for grants that are equal to up to two weeks of pay if they’re diagnosed with the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

(CNBC)

Starbucks will offer ‘Catastrophe Pay’ to Baristas exposed to Coronavirus

Starbucks said this week that it is offering “catastrophe pay” to U.S. baristas who have been exposed to the coronavirus. It will pay employees for up to 14 days if they have been diagnosed with, exposed to or been in close contact with someone with the coronavirus. Workers who may be considered higher risk because of underlying health conditions also are eligible with a doctor’s note. The company has implemented similar measures in China.

(CNBC)

Shorter Store Hours

Walmart shortens its hours, stores across America close their doors

Walmart said March 14 that beginning March 15 it will modify its hours for its more than 4,700 U.S. stores to help employees restock shelves overnight and clean stores. Other stores such as Publix, Giant, Stop & Shop and H-E-B have modified their hours in recent days. Some retailers, such as Urban Outfitters and Patagonia, are temporarily closing around the world.

(CNN)

Shorter Store Hours



Hiring Spree, Bonuses

Amazon to hire 100,000 warehouse and delivery workers amid Coronavirus shutdowns

Amazon.com Inc. plans to hire an additional 100,000 employees in the U.S. as millions of people turn to online deliveries at an unprecedented pace and Americans continue to reorient their lives to limit the spread of the new coronavirus.

(Wall Street Journal)

CVS to hire 50,000 workers to deal with coronavirus rush, give bonuses to employees

CVS Pharmacy, one of the few companies to see business grow during the coronavirus pandemic, announced March 23 that it would be hiring 50,000 new staffers and giving bonuses to the ones already employed. Part-time employees of the retail and healthcare chain will now also have 24 hours of paid sick leave, on top of the 14-day paid leave for anyone who tests positive for coronavirus.

(New York Daily News)

Walmart to Pay \$550 Million in Staff Bonuses, Hire 150,000 Temporary Workers

Walmart Inc. said it would pay special cash bonuses totaling \$550 million to its hourly workers and hire 150,000 temporary staffers as the country's biggest retailer seeks to manage a shopping surge sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

(Wall Street Journal)

Supermarkets Tesco, Asda, Aldi and Lidl Go on Hiring Spree

In Britain, supermarkets have gone on a hiring spree as demand surges as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Tesco, Asda, Aldi, and Lidl said they would hire thousands of staff after hugely increased demand saw shoppers clearing shelves. Supermarkets have been overwhelmed by a wave of panic-buying as shoppers rush to stock up amid the coronavirus pandemic.

(BBC)

Hiring Spree



Bonuses



Coronavirus Testing

NYC's Hotel Workers Union to offer Members Coronavirus Testing

The health insurance plan run by the city's powerful hotel workers union will soon offer more than 90,000 people tests for the coronavirus. About 40,000 workers and 50,000 of their relatives and union retirees are covered by the plan run by the New York Hotel Trades Council.

(New York Daily News) [SHRM members-only form: Notice of Workplace Exposure to a Communicable Disease]

Virtual Hiring Implemented

Coronavirus Forces EY to Go Virtual with Some Student Hiring

EY, one of the UK's Big Four accountancy firms, has gone virtual with parts of its student recruitment process in response to the spread of coronavirus.

(Financial News)

Closures and Quarantines

Starbucks closed a Seattle Store after 1st case of employee diagnosed with Coronavirus

Starbucks temporarily closed a Reserve store location in downtown Seattle after an employee was diagnosed with COVID-19 and was quarantined March 6. This is the first case of coronavirus contracted by a Starbucks in-store employee. The company immediately closed the affected store, initiated a deep-clean procedure and sent home employees that had direct contact with the infected partner.

(Nation's Restaurant News)

'No-Contact' Food Delivery Offered

Gig Economy Companies from Uber to Lyft take action as Coronavirus cases grow

Uber and Lyft are planning to compensate drivers affected by the coronavirus for up to 14 days. Postmates and Instacart have unveiled "no-contact" food delivery. DoorDash is letting customers leave in-app instructions if they prefer orders left at the door. Amazon Flex, which taps independent contractors to make deliveries, doesn't have a policy to compensate drivers and is instead supporting on an "individual, case-by-case basis."

(CNBC)



No-Contact Delivery



Teleworking promoted, office visits restricted

Twitter tells employees to work from home as tech firms react to Coronavirus

Twitter on March 2 became the first major U.S. corporation to strongly encourage its employees to work from home to avoid spreading coronavirus.

(Los Angeles Times)

How IBM, Goldman Sachs, PwC and others are responding to the Coronavirus threat

IBM, which nearly three years ago ended remote work for some U.S. employees, said Feb. 27 it had asked workers in coronavirus-affected areas to work from home "wherever possible." The guidance was issued for IBM workers in China, Japan, South Korea and Italy. The company also restricted travel to some locations and canceled its in-person participation in the RSA Conference on cybersecurity in San Francisco.

(Washington Post)

Google tells more than 100,000 North American employees to stay home

Google is telling all of its North American employees to stay home until at least April 10, as the COVID-19 coronavirus spreads, CNBC reported March 10. On March 9, CNBC reported that the company blocked all external visitors from coming into some of its offices, including New York and the San Francisco Bay Area where its Silicon Valley headquarters are located.

(CNBC)

UBS Divvying up Teams in Switzerland, having them switch off teleworking

UBS, the Swiss bank headquartered in Zurich, has begun implementing a split-operations policy in Switzerland this week as part of its coronavirus response. The firm has already implemented a similar policy for its employees across the Asia Pacific region.

(News of the Day)

Cuomo asks NY businesses to split employee shifts to prevent coronavirus spread

The State of New York will ask businesses to consider having employees work two shifts and allowing telework, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a CNN interview.

(New York Post)

Teleworking



Restrict Office Visits



Domestic and Global Travel Restricted

Ford bans employee travel on Coronavirus fears

Ford Motor Company told employees March 3 that it is banning all non-essential air travel until at least March 27 because of concerns about the novel coronavirus. Ford had been restricting travel to and from China but has now extended the ban to all flights, both international and within the United States, out of concern for employees' health and safety. There may be exceptions, a Ford spokesperson said, but they will probably be rare.

(The Motley Fool)

Coronavirus cancellations, Travel bans

Google on March 3 called off its flagship developers conference, called I/O, which was scheduled for May in Mountain View, Calif. Last year, the three-day event drew 7,000 attendees. The company said it would look for ways to "evolve" the event, raising the possibility of livestreamed or remote sessions. Several other companies and organizations, including the World Bank and the IMF, said they would replace in-person gatherings and meetings with virtual ones.

(NPR)

Coronavirus conference gets canceled because of Coronavirus

The Council on Foreign Relations canceled a roundtable called "Doing Business Under Coronavirus" scheduled for Friday in New York due to the spread of the infection itself. CFR has also canceled other in-person conferences that were scheduled from March 11 to April 3.

(Bloomberg)

Airlines cut more flights, execs take pay cuts as Coronavirus takes toll on flying

United CEO Oscar Munoz and president Scott Kirby will forgo their base salaries through at least June 30. United also said it was postponing "non-critical" projects requiring capital expenditures, got a \$2 billion loan from a group of banks and expects to incur a first-quarter loss. Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly said Monday in a message to employees that he would take a 10 percent pay cut and Delta said it is instituting a hiring freeze, taking some planes out of service and retiring older aircraft.

(Herald & Review)

Domestic and Global



Travel Restricted



Work Areas Disinfected

How Dallas-Area restaurants are prepping their kitchens and dining rooms for Coronavirus
Extra hand sanitizer is only part of the effort. Some say food delivery is the next big answer. At one eatery, crews have started sanitizing credit-card pin pads, surface areas and both sides of all door handles more regularly. Like many restaurants, it has put out more hand-sanitizing dispensers and ordered touchless hand sanitizer dispensers to replace manual ones.

(The Dallas Morning News)

Nike closed its worldwide HQ in Oregon for deep cleaning after 1st U.S. Coronavirus death
Nike announced March 1 it temporarily closed its corporate headquarters in Beaverton, Ore., in order to deep clean the campus following the first US death from COVID-19 the day prior. "While we have no information indicating any exposure to Nike employees, out of an abundance of caution, we are conducting a deep cleaning of campus," a Nike spokesperson told KGW, the Portland, Ore., NBC-affiliated station. "All WHQ buildings and facilities, including fitness centers, will be closed over the weekend."

(Business Insider)

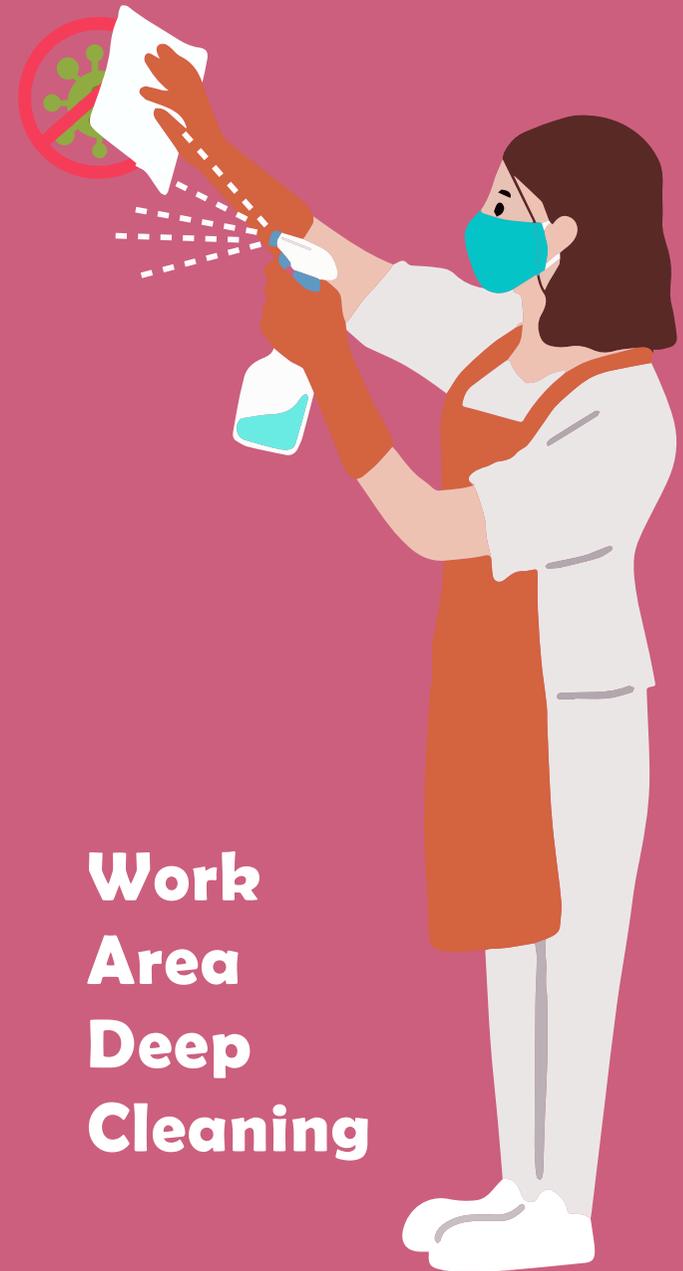
Facebook shuts London, Singapore offices for 'Deep Cleaning' after employee diagnosed with Coronavirus

Facebook said March 6 it was shutting its London office and part of its Singapore base for "deep cleaning" after an employee in the Asian city state was diagnosed with coronavirus.

(The Economic Times)

Sources

- Workers' Rights Act 2019, Mauritius
- Data Protection Act 2017, Mauritius
- Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, Circular Letter No. 30 of 2020, E/152/11/07
- <https://www.dlapiper.com/en/us/insights/publications/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-ten-practical-steps-for-global-employers-right-now/>
- <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/coronavirus-how-employers-around-the-globe-are-responding.aspx>



Work Area Deep Cleaning



The NPCC can facilitate the discussions for the modules where you need us most.
We can arrange for online discussions and group work.

Contact us

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