

Like a Phoenix Rising from the Ashes

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Businesses across the world are addressing the impact of Covid-19, regardless of whether they were ready or not. Where possible, virtually every affected country is advising working from home, self isolation or other mitigation to stem the spread. Businesses have been responding to this challenge and are making home working possibility as quickly as their IT services can deliver.

Across social media, there have also been a number of articles describing this way of working as "Working From Home" (WFH). There have also been comparisons to Home Based Working (HBW). The issue is that neither WFH or HBW aptly describes your now remote workforce.

- WFH is typically something employees do at agreed times, whether it is to address a family issue, accept an important delivery, focus on a particular project or for some other pre-arranged reason. WFH is on an individual and case by case basis.
- HBW is typically for a person that has taken on a role where having their office at home is the norm, such as a field sales, consulting or some other role where the office is not centre stage to their daily lives.

What we are dealing with now is a third category, that of the ***Displaced Worker***.

The Displaced Worker has been wrenched from their usual surroundings and is now being asked to do the same job, but from home. Gone are their familiar and supporting surroundings, stationary arranged just the way they like it, trinkets on their desk, the office talk around the coffee machine, the on hand mentoring, the tacit feeling of belonging to a team.

What is on their computer monitor is likely all that is left of that familiarity and now when they are at home, their most familiar of surroundings has become a paradox to their work.

Managers, team leaders and supervisors are also in new territory, as they can no longer pop round to a desk and have a chat or have an ad-hoc meeting just by calling across the office. It is essential to make sure each employee is settled at home and able to do their job. Guidance will be offered about how to manage their day, completing familiar tasks within their unfamiliar office. It is important for them to ensure that each employee is able to adapt to this temporary paradigm and help those that are struggling.

Some take this new situation in their stride, mechanisms will already be in place to ensure good ongoing communication across their teams. Others may not be quite so on the ball, but there is no time like the present to start. In the work situation, a common environment has been established, around which the company culture exists. But the

Displaced Worker is now contending with their managers expectations as well as the additional distractions of home life, such as children, partners and pets. Flexibility, adaptability and understanding is required and must be actively demonstrated.

What of other impacts? The first casualty in this new way of working is culture. Culture is the way that things get done within a business. Culture forms the unwritten rules that determine whether or not a company is good to work for. Culture relies upon habit, and the habit has just been ripped away.

It is now down to leadership to ensure that a new culture is established, one that enables the business to function with employees that are engaged. So leadership has also to adapt, from the top down, ensuring that strategies are reviewed and resulting changes to tactical operations are communicated across as well as down the organisation. This will include the handling of bad news and the impact on morale, as has already been seen across the travel and tourism sector.

The mechanism at the heart of this change is Organisational Change Management (OCM). OCM is the method by which a business adapts to a changing situation, builds the plans and communicates necessary steps, bringing about the change and successfully moves forward.

In a few weeks or maybe months, another change will come about as restrictions are lifted and the business will be faced with some choices. OCM is the tool to make a new culture a reality.

Does the business revert to its previous way of working? Or is this an opportunity to reflect on the lessons to be learnt and embracing a new flexible way of working. Recognising the good that came out of the disruption and turning it to an advantage that makes the company a better and more agile place to be. Now is the time to start planning for that new future, so when everyone returns, things do not immediately revert to something similar to the old ways. In its stead, Displaced Workers who have experienced the changes first hand need to be involved in building that new future, in so doing making them the champions for the new culture. Start on this today!

#OrganisationalChange #Culture #RemoteWorking #DisplacedWorking
#ChangeManagement #leadership #WFH #remoteworking #strategy
#businesscontinuity