

The back-to-work roadmap

So far, 2020 has seen seismic changes to the world of work which we could never have imagined even 6 months ago.

As the government endeavours to jump start the economy, guidance on how and where we can work is developing almost week by week. As companies struggle to ensure the mental and physical well being of their workers, whilst moving back to some sort of workplace normality, there are plenty of difficult decisions for employers. We decided to ask our clients what their back-to-work roadmap looks like...

Planning for success

- 33% of respondents said that they have no plans to return to the workplace at all in the medium term
- 25% have begun the return to the workplace (in the case of very small companies or larger ones by business-critical departments)
- 25% have a plan to return but no date yet
- 17% are waiting for further guidance from the government

The general consensus seems to be for a gradual return. Some organisations have brought back specific departments only and other are staggering the return of workers, implementing shifts or rotating staff, whilst the vast majority continue to work from home.

Our clients say....

“We will stagger the return of staff once we re-open. Currently we are implementing social distancing measures to ensure the security of the staff.”

“Current office attendance rate is 3 %. It will increase to 10% from 6th July. All others continue to work from home until end of September.”

“I am currently working in the office 1 day per week with one or two other colleagues but mostly everyone works from home. Management are being very cautious indeed about reopening. If we do soon it will be very much on a phased and rota basis with those who can walk drive or cycle to work coming first and only 1/3rd of the office in at any one time.

Complicated. Also, the intention is only to return for a purpose (that can include collaboration and social-seeing-each-other benefits) but not aimed at 8h/40h sitting in front of a screen. We can get that instantly by colleagues pressing on their laptops, so it needs to be for more.”

“Protocols / actions have been taken into consideration at work for this; with enough spacing between desks, Etc. Plus flexible coming and leaving times to the office to avoid rush hour.”

“We have been working from home for most part of this period but have now slowly started trickling into work in shifts.”

What are the key concerns?

Many expressed reluctance to return until there is further government guidance and had specific concerns around commuting to London.

Here are some client comments which sum up the general air of caution which categorised so many responses.

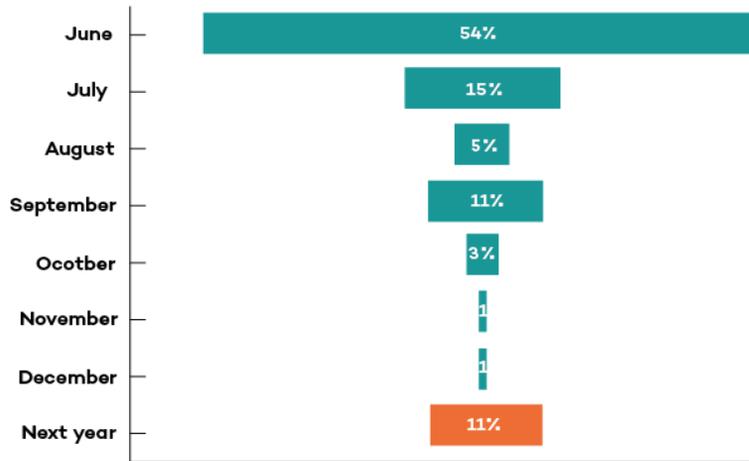
“In terms of how long we will continue working from home, this is still unknown and mostly reliant on government advice and guidance. For me, it’s more the commute that’s a concern.”

“We are all working from home at the moment and I do not see us going back until the government says it is OK to get public transport, as we all commute to London. Maybe we will go back Sep or Oct but will have to see.”

“We’re all still working from home – no talk yet of a return – given the mixed messages coming out, can see this going on for quite some time yet ...”

So how do your workers feel?

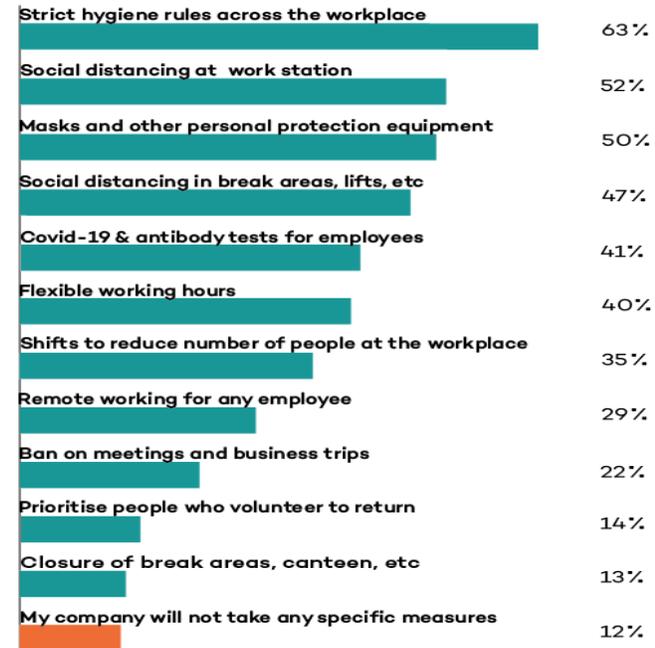
The latest research from Totaljobs shows half (49%) of UK workers now want to return to their workplace, with 54% aspiring to be back in the workplace by the end of June 2020.



Even with the desire to return to typical work life, understandably over half (56%) of workers are concerned about what this will mean in terms of safety, as Covid-19 continues to be a risk.

Concerns of workers

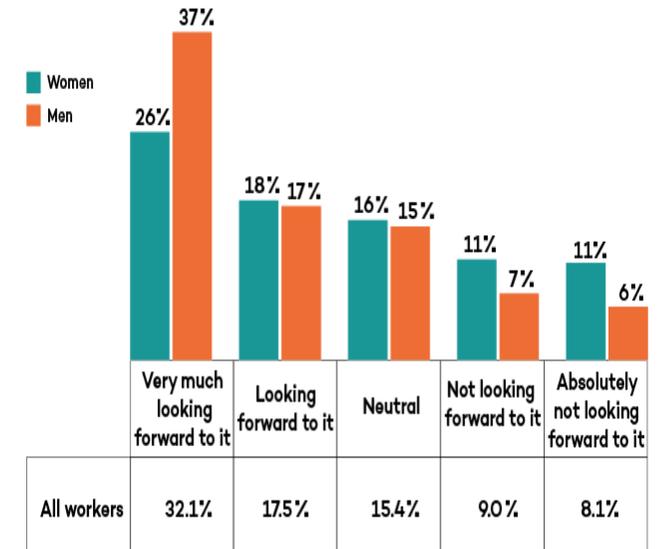
Over half (56%) of workers are concerned about their safety when going back to work. With this, a quarter (24%) are not sure which safety measures they would like to see in their work environment – which is why businesses can look to highlight their adherence to government guidelines and recommendations to help put staff at ease. Workers who do have an idea of what measures they'd like to see cited the following:



There's also the commute to consider, with 32% of employees concerned about their safety in travelling to work. For Londoners who are more likely to rely on public transport, this is higher, at 60%.

Positive Attitudes

In general, workers are keen to return to the workplace:



Source: Total Jobs

Clear communication

Half (48%) of employees don't know what their employer's strategy is when it comes to returning to work. This lack of clarity can add to the anxiety many people are already experiencing as a result of Covid-19, whether from a place of personal concern for their health, or the health of loved ones.

Many workers feel communication could be improved, with 39% feeling that their employer hasn't been consistent with communicating businesses performance throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. A third (36%) believe they have been kept up to date by their employer.

Previous research has found that 35% of workers now feel more positive about their employer as a result of their business response to Covid-19. Similarly, a quarter feel more loyal. This highlights that clear, consistent communication during the crisis is essential not just to support staff through difficult times, but helps to build trust and commitment in the long term.



Actions to take for the return to the workplace

Businesses can follow the latest Government advice, which includes the following:

- Risk Assessment
- Develop cleaning procedures
- Help people work from home
- Maintain social distancing
- Manage transmission risks

Alongside the above safety measures, businesses can further support staff in the following ways:

- Keep staff in the loop at every planning stage, with regular updates in line with government advice
- Be aware of how teams are feeling – send out a business-wide survey to get an indication of how employees are feeling, what their personal situation might be and how this might impact their return to work
- Ensure employee needs are at the centre of your strategy. Consider which elements may need to be tailored depending on the needs of individuals, whether they are parents, or live with key workers, for example
- Be open to flexible or remote working. Staggered shifts can help staff to avoid public transport during rush hour, while checking remote working set ups are comfortable and staff have the tools they need at home means this way of working can continue to play its part in future approaches.



Whatever your roadmap looks like,
we're here to help you reach your destination!

Team Japan: teamjapan@people-first.co.uk

Team China: teamchina@people-first.co.uk

Supply Chain: register@people-first.co.uk

Multilingual: language@people-first.co.uk

Or call on 020 7796 3636

www.people-first.co.uk