WHITE PAPER:

Thriving in a Pandemic Workplace: Managing the Socially Distant Gaps

The COVID-19 pandemic has simultaneously changed the rules and created a new opportunity to adapt the way we do things. Technology, process, and workplace must adapt to a new set of norms and people must change their behaviors while exploring new opportunities for growth. In one sense, this is an exciting time that will define the future ways of doing what we do. Yet, the uncertainty and risks evident in today's world pose challenges that we have never experienced before. Now is the time to develop SPECIAL solutions that will bridge today's reality with an exciting new future.

Managing The Socially Distant Gaps

Socially distant workplaces require creative thinking to fill the space between people. Each person works individually; however, much of today's work relies upon groups and teams. This puts more emphasis on collaborative technology to help fill the gaps.

- **Standardize on an online collaboration platform**. Whether Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting or Microsoft Teams, it is important to collaborate within a common framework. Not only is this easier to manage from an IT perspective, focusing on one method of video communication will help optimize your teams' usage and improve ability to use the tools across the enterprise.

- **Establish technology policies**. Within the typical workplace—your home base—there are safeguards in place to prevent security issues and breaches. Places outside your working environment may or may not have these safeguards in place. Establish a set of policies (e.g. acceptable use, bring your own device, social media usage, etc.) that guide your employees as they use technology in multiple locations, while protecting important and sensitive data.

- **Encourage casual connections**. When working from a distant location, it is easy to become isolated and independent of your team. To avoid this, set times for "check-in conversations" to frequently communicate about working in this new way. Quick one-on-one meetings at various times throughout the week are also effective in maintaining open communication and dialog.

Align With Your Technology

Successful organizations are often the ones that operate according to the needs of their clients, stakeholders, and employees. The tricky part is finding the common ground between these audiences while optimizing the effectiveness of the organization at the same time. Technology is often the investment that helps processes become more efficient and as a result, improves the productivity of people. Here are four ideas that will optimize your technology investment:

- **Plan for the next disaster**. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that disasters can and will happen. While it is impossible to plan for every contingency, it is important to spend planning time in advance in case future predictions come true. Make sure you know how you plan to address workforce changes, loss of business-critical data, downtime, and sudden unexpected changes to business processes. Your plan should include specific and measurable responses to all these items and should rely on nimble and strong leadership in a time of crisis.

- **Define systems for remote work and work from home**. Specific policies that define acceptable use of technology and social media and bring-your-own device guidelines should already be in place. The pandemic has forced many organizations to create these plans in response to our new normal. Pay close attention to how you guide and develop employees in a home or distant environment. The migration from a focus on process to emphasis on outcomes is a critical element of any distributed work arrangement.

- **Protect and educate end users**. Unfortunately, in times of crisis, there are unscrupulous individuals who look to take advantage of unprepared companies and individuals. The number of cyber-attacks in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic increased and focused almost exclusively on the COVID-19 crisis. These crimes take advantage of the fears and vulnerability of people and unprotected home systems. It is important to educate everyone to a level of understanding and protection from harm. This might include phishing simulations, customized training and education, online learning, or some combination over time. Getting this right, especially in today's world, is extremely important.

- **Evaluate and implement managed IT services**. The concept of managed services—whether financial, technological or operational in nature—is to focus on what you are good at and leverage others to do what they do best for you. Now is the time to evaluate the kind of managed services you need to create the nimble, distributed and creative workforce of the future. By proactively managing your key processes and capital investments monthly, you have increased visibility to required changes and more available time to work on solutions important to your business. Especially in today's world, we all must find ways to become more efficient and sustainable for the future. Managed services are a great way to do just that.

Conclusion

In the future, we will coalesce into a new order of work in life post-COVID. Those who demonstrate strategic and servant leadership—while making the best use of people, process, and technology—will prevail. Do not lose sight of the power that comes with integration of these three cornerstones of business and, above all, remember these three important concepts:

1. Engagement with your clients and team will lead to productivity in the future.
2. Workplace and technology are support tools dependent upon your unique business design.
3. Focus more on outcomes and less on process, especially while physically distant.

While it is true that we are "all in this together," it is not true that we all have the same "this." Pay close attention to the integration of people, process and technology and your business will **THRIVE!**

TeamLogic IT is a national provider of advanced IT management services for businesses. With hundreds of locations across the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico, TeamLogic IT provides managed IT services, computer consulting and support services focused on helping companies minimize downtime and improve productivity. TeamLogic IT helps businesses compete better through the effective use of information technology.

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