

# Sonup Proposal

**The Innovation Project - Helping Businesses in the Hunter Build Resilience**



## **HUNTERNET FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAM 2021**

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# 1 Executive Summary

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we go about our everyday lives has changed fundamentally. Businesses across all industries and of all sizes have been forced to face challenges on a monumental scale – and quickly.

Sonup is a Hunter-based business consultancy firm who has experienced a significant reduction in revenue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, putting its business start-up sector (BSS) at risk of remaining viable. In response, Sonup's CEO initiated the Sonup Innovation Project (SIP) with the aim of deriving a solution to help other Hunter businesses (including Sonup's clients) build resilience and in turn generate sufficient revenue to fund the ongoing operations of the BSS.

Sonup undertook extensive research (which included a survey of 30 businesses plus local MP's and business leaders) to ascertain how businesses in the Hunter have been impacted by COVID-19. The study identified that of those businesses which were adversely impacted, it was generally due to a unique combination of one or more of eight (8) key issues (**the 8 Key Issues**). In response, Sonup has developed the 8 Pillars of Business Resilience (**the 8 Pillars**) which represent a foundational framework of processes and tools to help businesses overcome the 8 Key Issues and inherently build resilience. However, further research suggested that the path for businesses' to overcome the 8 Key Issues is generally not a 'one size fits all', even for comparable businesses within the same industry, therefore how would any one business determine which path is right for them and additionally, how would they obtain the correct information and assistance to proceed?

To solve this issue, Sonup has created a virtual Business Diagnostic and Information Delivery Tool (**the Sonup BDT** or **the BDT**), a state-of-the-art online tool which is hosted on Sonup's website ([www.sonupsale.wordpress.com](http://www.sonupsale.wordpress.com)) and is used to assess a businesses' current position against each of the 8 Pillars and automatically deliver highly personalised information/guidance based on their results in the following forms:

1. Sonup's '**Comprehensive Pillar Guides**' which tell users everything they need to know about establishing and implementing each of the 8 Pillars; and
  2. Sonup's '**Business Connections**' which are other Hunter businesses who provide paid services associated with each of the 8 Pillars.
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## 2 Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is continuing to greatly impact the entire world following its emergence in late 2019. The number of total COVID-19 cases worldwide currently stands at approximately 229 million and counting, including over 4 million deaths (World Health Organisation, 2021). The way we go about our everyday lives has changed fundamentally and businesses across all industries and of all sizes have been forced to face challenges of a monumental scale - and quickly.

Sonup is a Hunter-based business consultancy firm who was first established in 2005 (Refer to Annexure A for the Sonup organisation Chart). It includes a business start-up sector (BSS) focused on providing low-cost assistance to local start-ups to help establish them within their respective markets. Following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, Sonup experienced a significant reduction in revenue across its core business in Q1-Q3 2020, primarily due to its clients being forced to downsize and cut costs and this subsequently put the continuing viability of the BSS at risk.

Sonup experienced early signs of recovery in late 2020 as market confidence began to return and most believed the worst of the pandemic had passed; however, the latest COVID-19 outbreak in 2021 slowed progress significantly. Subsequently, in June 2021 Sonup's CEO announced the Sonup Innovation Project (SIP) which was to be undertaken by the BSS. The aim of the SIP was to establish an innovative solution to help Sonup's clients and other Hunter-based businesses (who have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic) build economic resilience and thrive during this 'new normal'. A key condition was that the solution would also need to fund the ongoing business activity of the BSS.

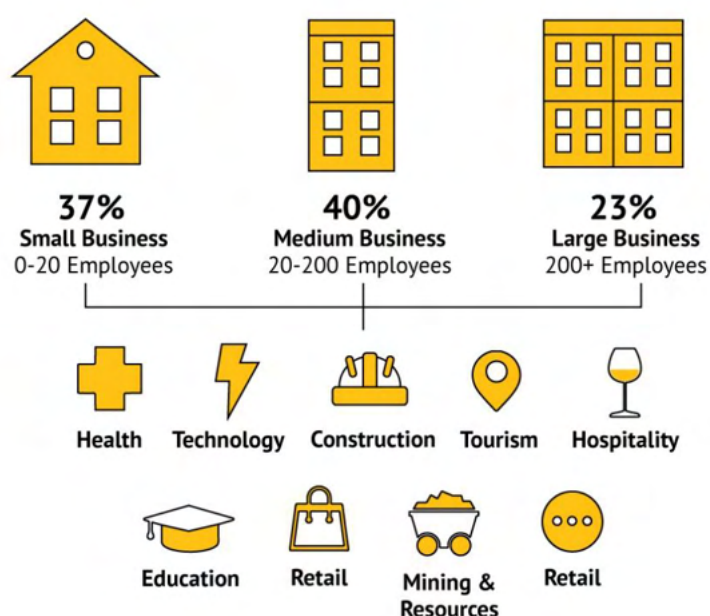
## 3 Understanding the Problem

In order for Sonup to create an innovative solution to help other businesses in the Hunter establish economic resilience and rebound from the adverse impacts of COVID-19, Sonup first sought to understand exactly how businesses were impacted. The following section outlines key findings from Sonup's research.

### 3.1 The impacts of COVID-19 on businesses

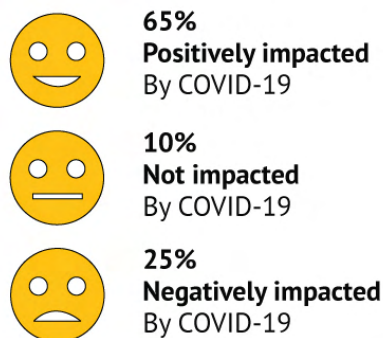
It goes without saying that adapting to the new normal has been a steep learning curve for everyone. Inevitably, businesses were impacted in different ways and some businesses were able to adapt more quickly and effectively than others.

In August 2021 Sonup undertook a survey of 30 Hunter businesses (across a range of industries and of varying sizes), local MPs (Tim Crakanthorp) and business leaders (Bob Hawes, CEO Hunter Business Chamber). Figure 1 below shows an overview of the survey demographics.



*Figure 1 - Demographics from Sonup's Survey*

The survey revealed that approximately 25% of businesses were positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 65% were adversely impacted and 10% were not impacted at all. Other key themes which emerged from the survey are shown in Figure 2 below. Refer to Annexure B for the full survey results.



*Figure 2 - Key Survey Insights*

### **3.2 The 8 key issues businesses faced**

Why is it that some businesses were able to thrive during the pandemic while others struggled and, in some cases, were forced to close their doors forever? As a result of in-depth research, Sonup established that in general, the businesses which were adversely impacted by COVID-19 experienced one or more of the following eight (8) key issues (the 8 Key Issues):

- 1. Government lockdowns and restrictions forced some businesses to stop trading.**
- 2. Government lockdowns and restrictions reduced the ability for clients/customers/users to travel to businesses to use their product or service.**
- 3. The financial situation of clients/customers/users was impacted such that they were no longer able to pay for business's products or services.**
- 4. Demand for pre-existing products or services decreased because they became obsolete or were considered non-essential by clients/customers/users.**
- 5. Employee mental health suffered which resulted in lost productivity, increased staff turnover and decreased morale.**
- 6. Businesses struggled to establish new innovative ideas.**
- 7. Where innovative ideas were identified, businesses did not have the time, resources or skillset to implement the ideas.**
- 8. Businesses did not know how and/or where to obtain the correct information, and assistance to enable them to rebuild and implement new innovative ideas.**

## 4 Understanding the Exception

The next phase of Sonup's research was to ascertain what differentiated those businesses which were able to rebound (or even thrive) during the pandemic from those which were adversely impacted.

### 4.1 Why did some businesses benefit from the pandemic?

Sonup found that of the 25% of Hunter-based businesses who have been positively impacted by the pandemic, this was often because they were able to overcome most (or all) of the 8 Key Issues.

Consider the following case study of the Hunter-based Harcourts Real Estate who reported to Sonup that their business thrived during the pandemic and reached heights previously unseen. Demand for their pre-existing product (i.e. real estate) skyrocketed for several external reasons, and while government lockdowns meant that they were not able to have prospective buyers attend open homes, they were able to adopt and implement new virtual reality software, allowing buyers to view properties from the comfort of their own home. They also reported that employee mental health improved with being able to work from home with regular virtual team catch-ups. In this case Harcourts was not impacted by Key Issues 1, 3 and 4 and they were able to overcome Key Issues 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**Sonup realised that in order for a business to build resilience and not only survive, but thrive during this 'new normal', it must focus on overcoming the applicable 8 Key Issues.**

Additionally, Sonup's research showed that whilst the path to overcoming several of the 8 Key Issues may be relatively similar for a wide range of businesses, overcoming others (in particular being able to establish and implement new innovative ideas and/or continuing to sell a product/service when customers can no longer travel) may be completely different from one industry to the next. For example, there were numerous cases of businesses in different consumer markets changing their product in response to the COVID-19 pandemic - Fashion brand Burberry repurposed one of its trench coat factories to make non-surgical gowns and masks while tech company Dyson began mass-producing ventilators (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Service-based organisations such as Accountants, Lawyers, Engineers, and Schools moved to online delivery and communication platforms. Healthcare organisations such as pharmacies and the NSW Department of Health implemented

contactless home deliveries and visits (Australian Government - Department of Health, 2021). There were even cases of businesses within the same industry implementing completely different ideas - for example, Earp Distillery turned to producing hand sanitizer while Winding Road Distilling Co. established online memberships to attract more revenue (Earp Distillery and Winding Road Distilling Co. 2021).

These examples demonstrate that the path to overcoming the 8 Key Issues is certainly not a 'one size fits all' for all businesses and therefore, Sonup believed that its solution to help businesses build economic resilience could not be either.

## **5 The 8 Pillars of Business Resilience**

**In response to the 8 Key Issues, Sonup developed the 8 Pillars of Business Resilience (the 8 Pillars) which represent the foundational framework of practices and tools that businesses must establish in order to overcome their applicable key issues and inherently build resilience (refer to Figure 3 below for a visual representation of the pillars to overcome the 8 Key Issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.).**

**The 8 Pillars are designed to cover the needs of every Hunter-based business, no matter the size or industry and are applicable to establishing resilience in general - not only against future COVID-19 disruptions. Sections 5.1 - 5.8 below provide an overview of each of the 8 Pillars.**

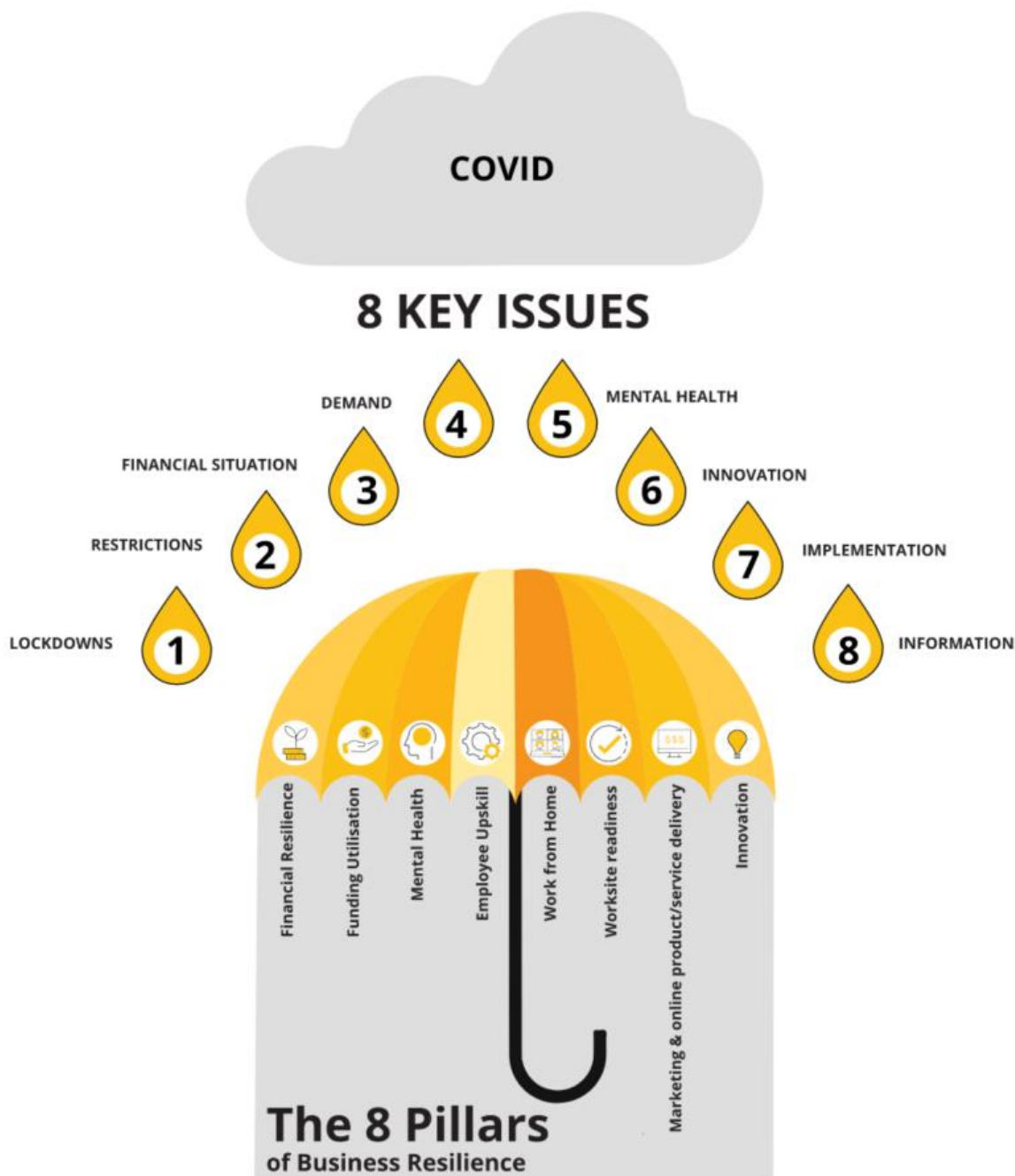


Figure 3 - The 8 Pillars of Business Resilience as a Foundation to Overcome the 8 Key Issues

### 5.1 Pillar No. 1 – Financial Resilience

Financial resilience is the ability for a business to withstand or rebound from financial shock. One key element of building financial resilience is ensuring that an organisation has enough cash contingency to cover future disruptions. A survey of 5,800 businesses (*National Academy of Science, 2020*) highlighted the financial fragility of many small-medium sized businesses where the average business had enough cash on hand to cover

only two weeks' worth of expenses and only 20% of businesses had enough to survive six weeks without an income.

## **5.2 Pillar No. 2 – Funding Utilisation**

Sonup's survey showed that only 50% of businesses who were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic applied for any type of grant or funding, primarily because they were not aware of all applicable funding and/or did not think they would qualify. Of the businesses who did receive government funding, 100% said they would have found it difficult to survive without it and this highlights the importance for businesses to utilize all available funding sources.

## **5.3 Pillar No. 3 – Mental Health**

The unexpected arrival and ongoing nature of COVID-19 has amplified the need for businesses to address mental health concerns and wellbeing. In a recent report undertaken by the NSW Mental Health Commission highlighted that 55% of those surveyed indicated that the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health.

## **5.4 Pillar No. 4 – Employee Upskill**

The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified a skills shortage already evident in Australia pre-pandemic, primarily due to limited access to skilled migrants due to government lockdowns and travel bans.

## **5.5 Pillar No. 5 – Work from Home**

An estimated 27% of Australians shifted to working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic (EY Australia, 2021) however many businesses have struggled to adapt and implement a successful and efficient working from home business model that supports their employees. Sonup's Research has found that many business leaders thought that going remote with their workforce was as simple as sending a worker home with a list of tasks and laptop, but since discovered without the correct policies, procedures, tools and connections it has become a much more challenging and time-consuming business model to which to adapt.

## **5.6 Pillar No. 6 – Worksite readiness**

Significant disruptions to businesses are expected in the coming months, particularly when restrictions relax which will likely result in more widespread COVID-19 cases. Sonup's survey found that 70% of businesses do not yet have an established plan to ensure



employees are protected from customers/clients who could be carrying the virus and/or to ensure there is contingency if a large portion of employees contract the virus.

### **5.7 Pillar No. 7 – Marketing and online product/service delivery**

Having a robust online selling/service platform and social media marketing strategy is critical for all businesses, particularly when customers/clients may not be able to attend businesses in person. Additionally, the fluid nature of social media makes it the perfect launchpad for storytelling, product launches and new initiatives.

### **5.8 Pillar No. 8 Innovation**

In a recent survey by McKinsey and Company of over 200 organisations across various industries over 90% stated that they expect COVID-19 will fundamentally change the way they do business. However only 21% of organisations surveyed believe that they have the expertise, resources and tools to pursue growth through innovation.

## **6 The Sonup Business Diagnostic Tool (BDT)**

As noted above, Sonup's research strongly suggests that the path to overcoming the 8 Key Issues via the 8 Pillars and subsequently being able to build economic resilience could be completely different for each individual business. Additionally, businesses advised Sonup that they struggled to find the correct information and guidance to determine and implement their individual path (with reference to Key Issue No. 8). Therefore, how would any one business determine which path is right for them? How would they determine which Pillars are applicable and how would they obtain the correct information and guidance to build on those Pillars?

As a solution to this problem, Sonup has created an automated online Business Diagnostic Tool (BDT) which is able to assess how businesses have been impacted by the 8 Key Issues and deliver personalised information and strategies associated with each of the 8 Pillars in order to help businesses (across all industries and of all sizes) build resilience – and it does so all within 10 minutes. Essentially, it will achieve this by implementing the following three (3) steps:

- 1. Step 1: The Diagnostic Process** - Ask a business a series of questions regarding their current position for each of the 8 Pillars.

2. **Step 2: Building a profile** - Build a profile of that business based on its responses and assign scores for each of the 8 Pillars.
3. **Step 3: Information delivery** - Automatically deliver personalised guidance/information (in several forms) associated with areas where the business shows weaknesses or room for improvement.

**The power of the BDT is that it allows users to identify their individual path to building resilience all within a few clicks of their mouse (saving businesses significant time and resources) and then delivers personalised tools and assistance to allow them to implement that path. Neither Sonup or its business advisors were unable to find a similar tool with the same capability available anywhere else in the world.**

**Additionally, Bob Hawes (CEO Hunter Business Chamber) told Soup during an interview on 18th August 2021 that another big problems to be solved is that businesses and their staff are just so busy that they often don't have the time to spend on training/upskilling or being innovative – The BDT solves this issue.**

**Sections 6.1 to 6.3 below expand on the above-mentioned steps. Refer to Annexure C for an overview of the BDT.**

## **6.1 Step 1 – The diagnostic process**

Sonup has created the BDT by utilising the third-party software 'Leads Hook' and has established its own conditional control algorithm and virtual decision tree model consisting of different question/answer combinations which are used to gather information specific to any individual business. The model is smart and adaptive, which means that the content and questions will change in response to the information provided the person utilising the BDT on behalf of their business (the user). For example, if a user were to confirm that it is in a physical services industry which would not enable employees to work from home (Pillar No. 5), that business would not be asked further questions associated with this topic and would not be provided with tools and guidance associated with working from home. Alternatively, if a user was to confirm that their business did not have any established tools and protocols for monitoring and improving employee mental health (Pillar No. 3), that business would automatically be provided with information and guidance specifically targeted to that area upon completion of the BDT process.

The overall BDT contains individual sections and associated questions for each of the 8 Pillars. For example, for Pillars 6 (worksite readiness) users may be asked some of the following questions which are automatically adapted depending on their answers to previous questions:

- Significant disruptions to most businesses are expected in the coming months due to staff and/or customers catching COVID-19. Does your business have an established plan to if a portion of staff are diagnosed with COVID-19 and cannot attend work?
- Would your organisation be able to continue to operate adequately if up to 30% of your staff contracted COVID-19 and were unable to attend work?
- Does your organisation have any form of on-site testing? (e.g. temperature scanners etc)
- Does the ventilation in your workplace comply with the newly established NSW Government COVID-19 ventilation guidelines?

Figure 4 below shows a visualisation of the question layout and adaptive capability of the diagnostic tool section for Pillar 6. Each node represents a specific question and the connection represent the decision paths. For example, if the user answers 'Yes' to the first question of 'Do you have employees working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?' they are directed to the question path on the left-hand-side whereas if they answer 'No' they are directed to an alternate question set.



Figure 4 - Visualisation of questions for Pillar 6 - Worksite Readiness

## **6.2 Step 2 – Building a profile of the business**

The overall BDT contains individual sections and associated questions for each of the 8 Pillars. Each section has an associated points system such that businesses are assigned a score to represent how well they are performing against each of the 8 Pillars. This is a clear and concise method by which to identify areas where businesses are currently performing well and where improvement is needed to ensure they can build resilience.

## **6.3 Step 3 – Delivery of personalised guidance and information (the Results Page)**

When a user completes the BDT for their respective business they are automatically directed to their personalised 'Results Page' which includes dynamically delivered content based on the specific responses provided to the BDT questions i.e. the results automatically change and adapt such that the user is only provided with information specific to them.

The results page consists of several sections as follows. These are expanded upon in Sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.4. Refer to Annexure D for an example of a complete Results Page.

1. **Part 1** – Introduction
2. **Part 2** – 8 Pillars Chart
3. **Part 3** – Explanation of each Pillar with personalised guidance
4. **Part 4** – Pillar guides and Business Connections

### **6.3.1 Part 1 – Introduction**

The introduction section provides an overview of the impacts COVID-19 has had on businesses in the Hunter and how the way we do business, in all sizes, shapes and forms, has fundamentally changed, and will continue to change over the next several years. However, the pandemic has produced incredible opportunities for innovation and growth.

The concept of the 8 Pillars for building business resilience is briefly introduced and users are advised that if they are able to master the 8 Pillars their business will thrive amongst this 'new normal'. The introduction section also automatically incorporates data such as the users name and organisation name so that the Results Page is more personalised.

### **6.3.2 Part 2 – 8 Pillars scoring chart**

Users are presented with a visual chart to show their score (on a scale of 0-10) for each of the 8 Pillars. The score is automatically generated based on the answers provided by the

user and this will allow users to clearly see where their business is performing well and which pillars require improvement. Figure 5 below show an example of what a Chart could look like.



*Figure 5 - Chart provided to users to show their business's score for each of the 8 Pillars*

### **6.3.3 Part 3 – Explanation of each Pillar with personalised guidance**

The results page includes a detailed explanation of each pillar and importance of each for building business resilience. Users are then provided an overview of their score for each pillar and if the score is less than a 9/10, Sonup will recommend that the business should focus on that pillar in order to improve their overall resilience.

If a score for a particular pillar is 9/10 or higher, the dynamically generated results will congratulate the user and simply direct them to their score for the subsequent pillar. This way, users are only provided with helpful information and guidance when it is required.

### **6.3.4 Part 4 – Pillar Guides and Business Connections**

If Sonup recommends that a business should seek to improve on any of the 8 Pillars, the users is then automatically directed to guidance and information specific to that Pillar in the following two (2) forms:

1. Pillar guides
2. Business Connections

Each of these are described in detail in Sections 6.3.4.1 and 6.3.4.2 below.

#### **6.3.4.1 Pillar Guides**

Sonup has created comprehensive guides containing useful information for each of the 8 Pillars. If a business scores less than 9/10 for any particular pillar, their personalised and dynamically generated results page will include a direct link to the applicable free guide. The guides are intended to be a starting point to provide basic ideas, concepts and advice relating to each pillar. Refer to Annexure E for the Pillar guides Sonup has created. The guides may be all a particular business requires to get them moving in the right direction; however, should they require or wish to receive additional assistance, Sonup offers its business connections to the user.

#### **6.3.4.2 Business connections**

Sonup has partnered with a number of Hunter-based businesses who can provide paid services applicable to assisting users with each of the 8 Pillars – these are referred to as ‘Business Connections’. This business model not only helps users by providing them specialist advice and service, but it also acts to provide the Business Connections (who are based in the Hunter) with additional clients/customers to help them rebound from the impacts of COVID-19 where required.

For example, for ‘*Pillar 2 – Funding Utilistion*’, Sonup has partnered with ‘*The Tender Team*’ who provide professional funding application writing services in Newcastle. For ‘*Pillar 7 – Marketing and online product/service delivery*’, Sonup has partnered with ‘*Headjam*’, a local company specialising in website and digital content creation and marketing.

The applicable business connections are dynamically generated for each user and presented within their personalised results page and users are always provided with a list of 3-5 potential Business connections for each applicable pillar.

### **6.4 Flowchart**

The overall process from when the user commences the BDT to receiving their peronalised results is shown in Figure 6, below.

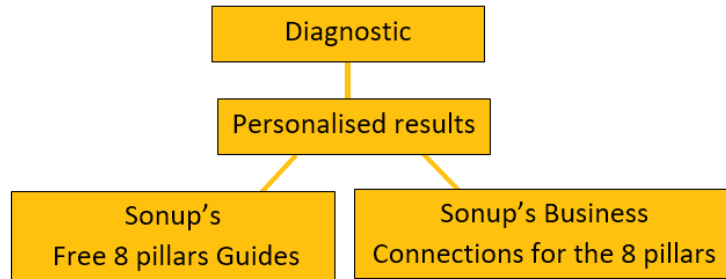


Figure 6 - Flow Chart showing the overall BDT and personalised information delivery process

## 7 Website Overview

The BDT is hosted on Sonup's website ([www.son-up.com](http://www.son-up.com)) which also acts as a platform for Sonup to broadcast its capabilities and generate leads for the BDT through both organic and paid traffic. The website also hosts all of Sonup's free guides and the business connection portal and can be accessed via PC or smartphone. Refer to Annexure F for an overview of Sonup's website.

## 8 Business Plan

This section provides an overview of the 5-year business plan for Sonup's business start-up sector (BSS) which operates under a profit-for-purpose model (i.e. it aims to generate a profit for the sole purpose of funding its ongoing operations). When establishing the Sonup Innovation Project (SIP), Sonup's CEO set the condition that the solution to help Hunter businesses build resilience and rebound from the impacts of COVID-19 was required to generate enough revenue to fund the ongoing business activity of the BSS. Sections 8.1 – 8.3 below show how this will be achieved.

### 8.1 Development plan

The proposed development methodology for years 1-5 is noted in Sections 8.1.1 – 8.1.3 below.

### 8.2 Year 1 2022 (implementation and brand awareness)

- Apply for and receive the Accelerating Commercialisation Grant.
- Build relationships with key business partners in the Hunter.
- Further develop our 8 pillar support system and online diagnostics.



- Grow brand awareness in the Hunter through key business alliances, Marketing, sponsorships & communications.

### **8.3 Year 2 2023 (expansion of services)**

- Expand team of support staff (internal).
- Strategically gain feedback from customers, record and review from previous years.
- Adapt business model and service for what customers need most.

### **8.4 Years 3 – 5 (growth)**

- Review and select regions to implement and grow outside of the Hunter.
- Build key strategic business alliances that will provide support to customers in each new region. Support to be provided both by local businesses and through our Australia wide network of partners.

### **8.5 Start-up Funding**

The initial investment required to develop the BDT is \$150,000. Sonup has worked with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and applied for the ‘*Accelerating Commercialisation Grant*’ which is a matched-funding grant for which 50% (\$75,000) of the initial investment of will be contributed by DPIE and the remaining by Sonup’s core business.

### **8.6 Revenue Model**

Users will be able to freely access the BDT and upon completion will be directed to the applicable Sonup Pillar Guides. The user will be able to view the first 25% of each Pillar guide and then be required to pay a minor fee of \$49.95 for full access to each guide. The purpose of the fee is not to generate significant revenue, but rather to obtain both a conscious and sub-conscious commitment from the user to invest in Sonup’s process.

It is envisaged that free access to the BDT and personalised results will result in the user realising that they may have fundamental problems within their business making them vulnerable which will trigger the motivation to fix these (as has been the reaction when Sonup has trailed the BDT with a range of prospective users). Revenue sources to fund ongoing operation and potential expansion include the following:

1. **Business Connection Fees** - Business Connections pay a fee to be featured on Sonup's website and within the BDT (so that Sonup will recommend their services to BDT users).
2. **Commissions from 'Business Connections'** - When a user engages a Business Connection through Sonup to provide services applicable to the 8 Pillars, Sonup is paid a commission by the Business Connection based on the value of the services provided to the user.
3. **Website Advertising** - Sonup will allow prospective and current Business Connections to advertise their services on Sonup's website.

## 8.7 Financial Forecast

Tables 1 and 2 below show the 5-year financial forecast for the Sonup Innovation Project (SIP) in terms of operating revenue and costs, respectively. Years 1-3 focus solely on generating immediate cash flow to ensure the innovation team can continue to fund the BDT project and if this proves successful, to be able to expand beyond the Hunter region. Year 4 shows a decline in cash flow as Sonup proposes to strategically expand to other regions around Australia. Year 5 will see an increase in operating revenue due to the previous expansion. With reference to Table 3 (Net Profit), it is forecast that the SIP will make a net profit after all expenses are paid and therefore satisfy the key condition set by Sonup's CEO.

*Table 1 - Operating Revenue*

Description	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Internal Funding	\$ 75,000.00				
Government grants	\$ 75,000.00				
End user sales (Pillar guides & Business Connection Fees)	\$ 27,600.00	\$ 42,500.00	\$ 65,500.00	\$ 102,000.00	\$ 123,000.00
Website advertising	\$ 62,000.00	\$ 84,500.00	\$ 103,800.00	\$ 140,000.00	\$ 163,000.00
Sales commissions	\$ 22,000.00	\$ 47,000.00	\$ 63,200.00	\$ 105,000.00	\$ 142,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 186,600.00</b>	<b>\$ 174,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 232,500.00</b>	<b>\$ 347,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 428,000.00</b>

Table 2 - Operating Costs

Description	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Wages	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 132,000.00	\$ 165,000.00	\$ 235,000.00	\$ 262,000.00
Office supplies	\$ 14,200.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
Marketing	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Insurance	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 5,200.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 10,600.00	\$ 12,000.00
Travel	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 6,700.00	\$ 14,200.00	\$ 16,500.00	\$ 19,000.00
Website	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,400.00
<b>Total</b>	\$ 165,500.00	\$ 173,000.00	\$ 253,900.00	\$ 306,500.00	\$ 337,400.00

Table 3 - Net Profit

Description	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Net Profit	\$ 21,100.00	\$ 22,100.00	\$ 700.00	\$ 41,200.00	\$ 131,800.00

## 9 Future Expansion for the BDT and Website

Sections 9.1 to 9.5 below outline potential expansion for the BDT in year 4.

### 9.1 Development of the BDT

There is enormous scope for continued development and the inclusion of additional capability for the BDT, including the following:

- Refinement of the BDT algorithm.
- Improved business profiling such that the Pillar scores are more accurate
- Improved results pages to provide more detailed and personalised information.
- Dynamically generated Pillar Guides so users are only provided with the specific parts of the Pillar Guides which are specific to them.

### 9.2 Additional business connections

Sonup will continue to expand its network of Business Connections such that users have a larger range of options for assistance and guidance. Business Connections will also be able to have their own personalised marketing material included on the Sonup website.

### 9.3 User referral system

Sonup will establish a user referral system such that if a new user is referred, the referring party obtains a discount on future services provided by Sonup. This will help to attract more leads.

### 9.4 Network

Sonup will establish a network of businesses for each industry such that users and business owners can meet, post questions, support and discuss ideas with one another.

### 9.5 Expansion Australia wide and then internationally

Sonup's BDT system has the ability to be expanded beyond Hunter-based businesses to be able to support businesses Australia-wide.

## 10 Expert Consultation & Testimonials

Sonup has tested the beta version of the BDT on several prospective users and Business Connections and the following feedback has been received.

1. **Mark Richardson - Founder & Director – Wolseley Private Equity 1999 - 2019**  
(Wolseley have invested \$400 million of Australian Institutional Superannuation equity) and previously a Partner at Bain and Company:

*“The idea is clearly very innovative, I couldn’t find a similar application or website, and to have it all working was excellent.”*

*“The 8 pillars and BDT are excellent and can be used in any, many different settings”.*

2. **Mitchell Purvis – Director – Projence** (Newcastle based Project Management Company with 25 employees)

*“Overall the business diagnostic was a great exercise and really made me think about the controls we have in place and the relevance thereof”.*

3. **Bronwyn Smart - Chief Operating Officer, The Mindful Risk Group** (Newcastle based risk research and advisory firm with 4 employees)

*“Wow, not only was this tool easy to use and intuitive, it highlighted areas of weakness in our organisation we had previously failed to consider”.*

#### 4. Sandy – Hedweld Group of Companies

*"Sonup has been a comprehensive diagnostic tool for our business. It clearly reflects where we have done well and where there is room for improvement. Very enlightening, an internal conversation starter and a great way for Hedweld to continue to build business resilience as we navigate through the COVID pandemic."*

## 11 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted business across the Hunter in many ways. Of the businesses which were adversely impacted, this was generally due to a combination of one or more of the 8 key Issues identified in Sonup's research. In response, Sonup developed the 8 Pillars of Business Resilience which represent a foundational framework of processes and tools to help businesses overcome the 8 Key Issues and build resilience.

The path for each business to overcome their applicable key issues is not a 'one size fits all' and businesses advised Sonup that they struggled to find the correct information and guidance to determine and implement their individual path.

Therefore, Sonup created a Business Diagnostic Tool and Personalised Information Delivery system (BDT) which is able to assess a business's current situation (by assigning a score against each of the 8 Pillars) and deliver personalised information and strategies associated with each of the 8 Pillars in the form of Pillar Guides and Business Connections in order to help the business build resilience.

The power of the BDT is that it allows users to identify their individual path to building resilience all within a few clicks of their mouse (saving businesses significant time and resources) and then delivers personalised tools and assistance to allow them to implement that path. Additionally, the process can be applied to building business resilience in general, not necessarily only for rebounding from the impacts of COVID-19.

This business model not only benefits BDT users but also the Business Connections (some of whom may have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 themselves) by providing them an additional customer source.

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## 13Annexure A – Sonup Organisational Structure



**Riley Smith**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Sam Barnes**  
Chief Innovation Officer



**Shane Dawson**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Jarrod Williams**  
Chief of Operations



**Brigid Kelly**  
Head of Community Relations



**Anna Beadle**  
Creative Director

## **14 Annexure B – Sonup Survey Results**

## **Summary of Key Points of Interview with Bob Hawes (Hunter Business Chamber CEO) – 18 August 2021**

**Q1:** How do you think businesses in the Hunter have been impacted by COVID-19?

**A1:** We've seen that many businesses, especially small businesses, have balance sheets which don't support them being able to survive for very long if they are forced to shut down – there is just limited diversity small businesses

**Q2:** What do you think will be important for businesses in the Hunter to do in order to be able to rebound from the impacts of COVID-19?

**A2:** I think that in order to build resilience businesses should focus on training and upskilling and build redundancy into their supply chains (we saw a lot of business come undone because of issues and delays with their suppliers).

To help businesses build resilience your solution must allow businesses to be in a better position for next time they are faced with hardship.

The support mechanisms for businesses are different for most businesses.

We have seen some businesses do well during the pandemic by collaborating with other businesses.

Businesses must diversify.

If businesses only focus on cutting expenses rather than implementing new ways to increase revenue then they have not built resilience and are still vulnerable.

One of the other big problems you will need to solve is that businesses and their staff are just so busy that they often don't have the time to spend on training/upskilling or being innovative.

It's not about cutting expenses, its about businesses arming and equipping themselves for the future.

## **Summary of Key Points of Interview with Tim Crakanthorp (State member for Newcastle) – 17 August 2021**

**Q1:** What are some of the issues businesses may face on their road to recovery from COVID-19 and what do you think will be important for businesses in the Hunter to do in order to be able to rebound from the impacts of COVID-19?

**A1:** A big problem I see is not being able to get skilled workers into the Country due to border closures. This was a problem even before COVID-19 – In the Hunter we have a shortfall of about 90k workers.

I think that the government could be doing a lot more to help small businesses – lots of businesses are not eligible for JobSeeker etc.

The government could be offering free training.

# How did COVID-19 impact your Business?

30

Responses

24:24

Average time to complete

Active

Status

## 1. Your name

 Insights

30

Responses

Latest Responses

"Tim Osborn"

"Kaitlan Kelliher"

"Mitchell Purvis"

3 respondents (10%) answered **Luke** for this question.





2. Please tell us the name of your organisation and your position title

Insights

29

Responses

Latest Responses

"Osborn Law, Managing Director"

"Pharmacy 4 Less- Pharmacist "

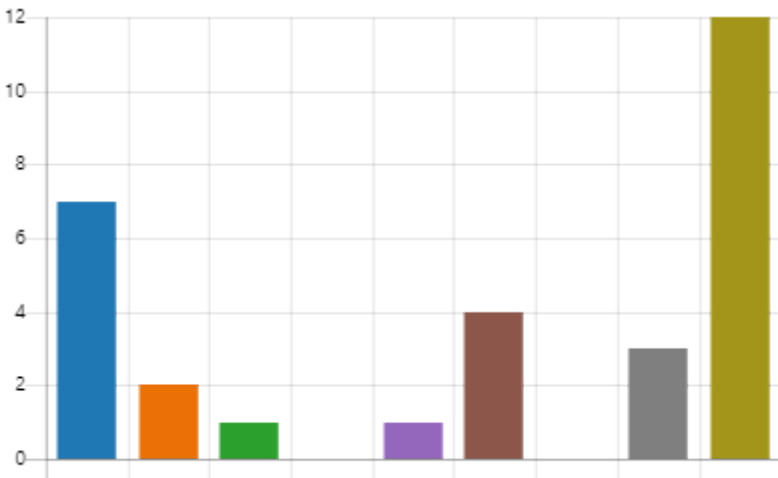
"Projence - Director / Company Owner"

9 respondents (31%) answered **Director** for this question.



3. Which of the following best describes your organisation?

Health	7
Technology	2
Construction	1
Tourism	0
Hospitality	1
Education	4
Retail	0
Mining and Resources	3
Other	12



4. How many staff does your organisation have in total?

0-20	11
21-50	6
51-200	6
201-500	2
500+	5



5. Where is your organisation based? If your organisation has multiple locations are they located locally, nationally or internationally?

💡 Insights

30

Responses

Latest Responses

"Newcastle"

"Newcastle"

"Newcastle"

10 respondents (33%) answered **Newcastle** for this question.



6. Where are your employees predominantly located?

💡 Insights

29

Responses

Latest Responses

"Newcastle/Hunter Valley"

"Newcastle"

"Hunter Valley with some in Brisbane and Victoria"

12 respondents (41%) answered **Newcastle** for this question.



7. How was your organisation performing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Poor	0
Fair	3
Good	17
Excellent	10
Other	0



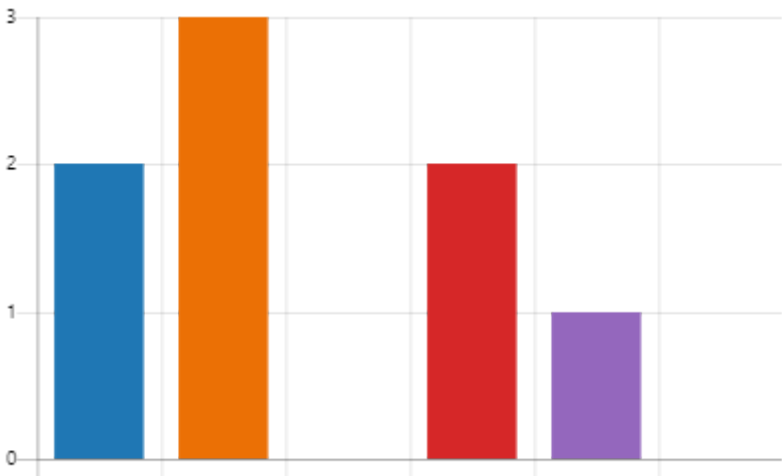
8. In general, has your organisation been impacted by COVID-19?

Yes, positively impacted	8
Yes, negatively impacted	20
No, my organisation has not b...	2



9. What was the main reason your organisation benefited from COVID-19? (tick one box)

Demand for our pre-existing p...	2
We were able to implement n...	3
The health and wellness of sta...	0
We were able to obtain grant ...	2
Productivity has increased wit...	1
Other	0



10. What innovative ideas did you implement?

3  
Responses

Latest Responses

11. How were you able to fund your new ideas(s)?

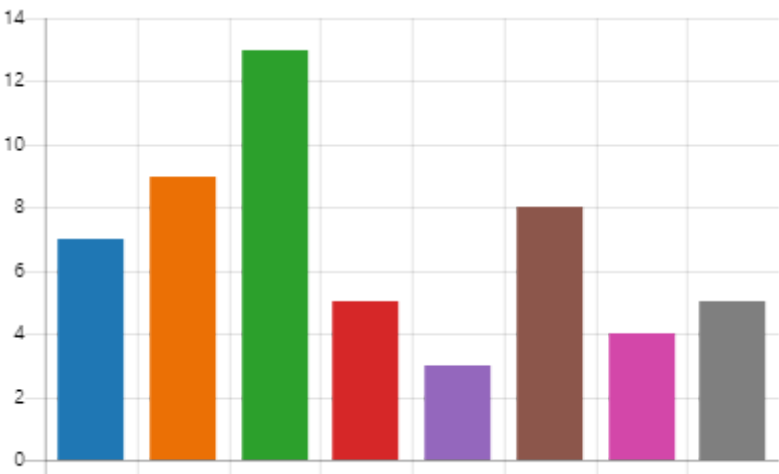


12. What changes/ideas that you made as a result of COVID-19 will you keep and which will you remove?



13. In what ways was your organisation impacted by COVID-19 prior to implementing any innovative ideas/solutions to rebound? (tick all boxes that apply)

- Demand for our pre-existing p... 7
- COVID-19 impacted the financ... 9
- Lockdown rules reduced the a... 13
- We were forced to shut down ... 5
- We were initially not prepared... 3
- The mental health of staff suff... 8
- We were required to down-siz... 4
- Other 5



14. Did you think of any new innovative ideas/solutions to help your organisation rebound from the impacts of COVID-19?

💡 Insights

- Yes 8
- No 12



15. What innovative idea(s) did you think of?

8

Insights

Responses

Latest Responses

"Delivery service- bringing healthcare to patients, phone consultations..."

3 respondents (38%) answered **online** for this question.



16. Were you able to implement these ideas to their full potential?

- Yes

5
- No

3



17. Were your ideas effective?

- Yes

1
- Partially

4
- No

0



18. Why were you not able to implement your idea(s) to their full potential? (tick all boxes that apply)

- We were unable to fund them0
- We didn't have the time to im...3
- We didn't have the personnel ...1
- We did not possess the skill or...1
- Other0



19. Have they allowed you to fully recover to where you were prior to COVID?

- Yes1
- No0



20. Why were your ideas not fully effective?

4

Responses

Latest Responses

"No direct contact with the patient presents to be quite difficult in getti...

21. Do you have any other ideas (which you could share with us) for how businesses in your industry (or other industries) could build economic resilience and rebound from the impacts of COVID?

💡 Insights

26

Responses

Latest Responses

"we already had remote work arrangements in the business so we wer...

"

"plan for the worst and consider the personal impacts on staff "

5 respondents (19%) answered **business** for this question.



22. If your ideas apply to your industry, would you feel prepared to implement them?

- Yes

28
- No

2



23. Why would you not feel prepared to implement your ideas? (tick all boxes that apply)

- We would not be able to fund...

0
- We would not possess the skil...

0
- We would not have the time t...

0
- We would not have the perso...

0
- Other

2



24. Has your organisation applied for any grant funding to help you recover from the impacts of COVID-19?

💡 Insights



25. What grant(s) did you apply for?



Latest Responses

"Jobkeeper"

"JobKeeper"

6 respondents (38%) answered **job keeper** for this question.



26. Did you receive the funding?



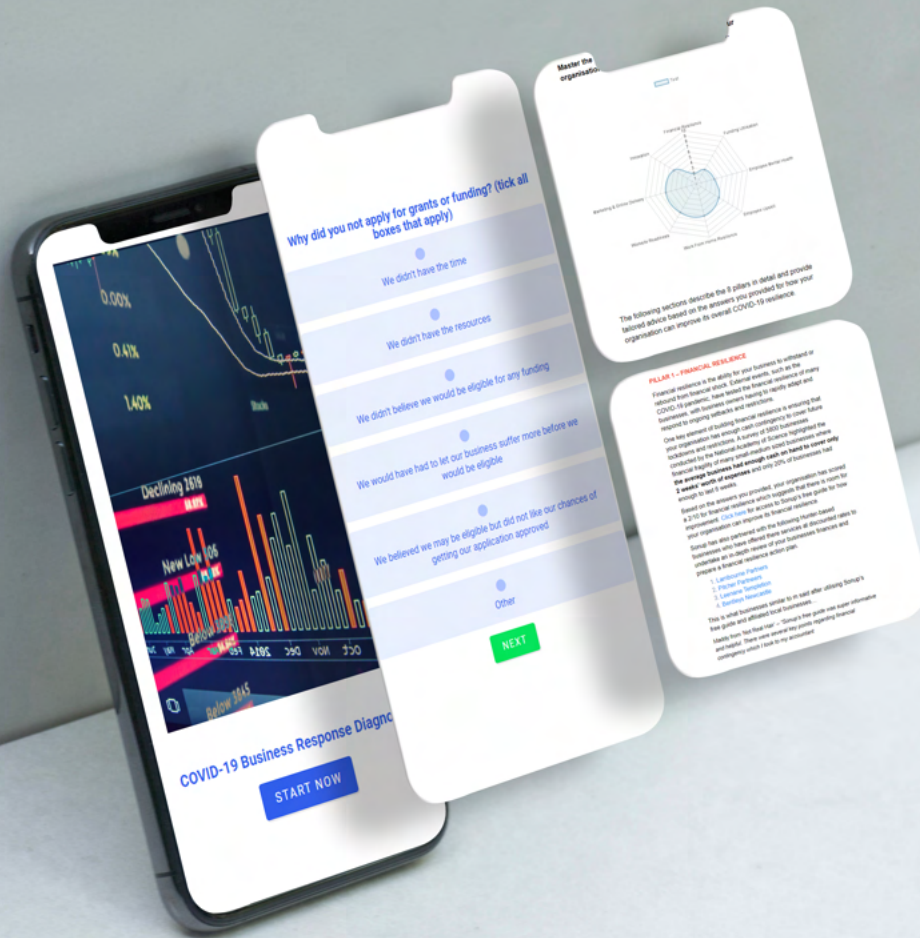
27. Why did you not receive the funding?



Latest Responses



## 15 Annexure C – Overview of the BDT



**Leads Hook**  
Hook your sales funnel quickly and easily!

[Dashboard](#)

[Decision Trees](#)

[Leads](#)

[Admin](#)

[Help](#)

[Stuck?](#)

Decision Tree 1 - HF ...

[Add New Node](#)

[Results](#)

[Direct Link](#)

[Embed Code](#)

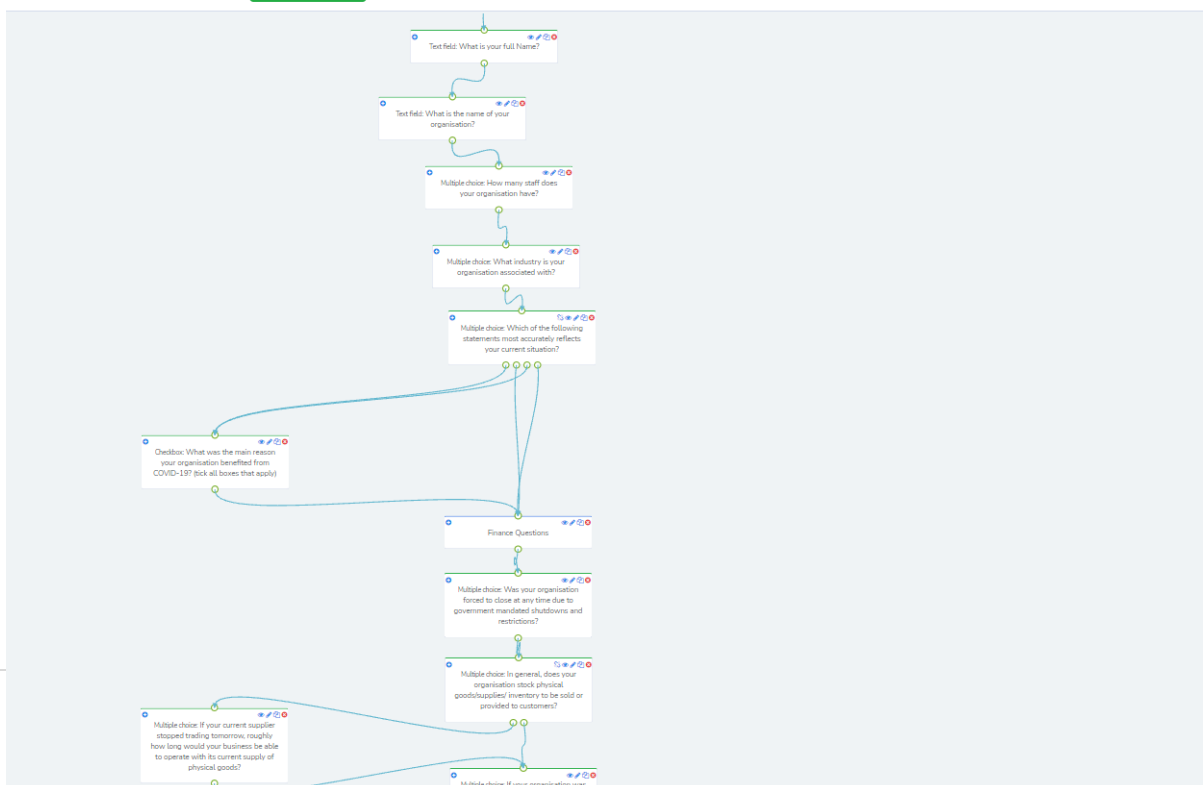
[Custom url](#)

[Appearance](#)

[Publish](#)

[Version 10](#)

[Deactivate](#)



## **16 Annexure D – Example Results Page a user would see upon completion of the BDT**

# Congratulations for Completing the Sonup COVID-19 Business Diagnostic...Your Personalised Results are Shown Below.

Riley, thanks so much for completing the Sonup COVID-19 Business Response Diagnostic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended nearly every aspect of life, from the personal (how people live and work) to the professional (how companies interact with their customers, how customers choose and purchase products and services, how supply chains deliver them).

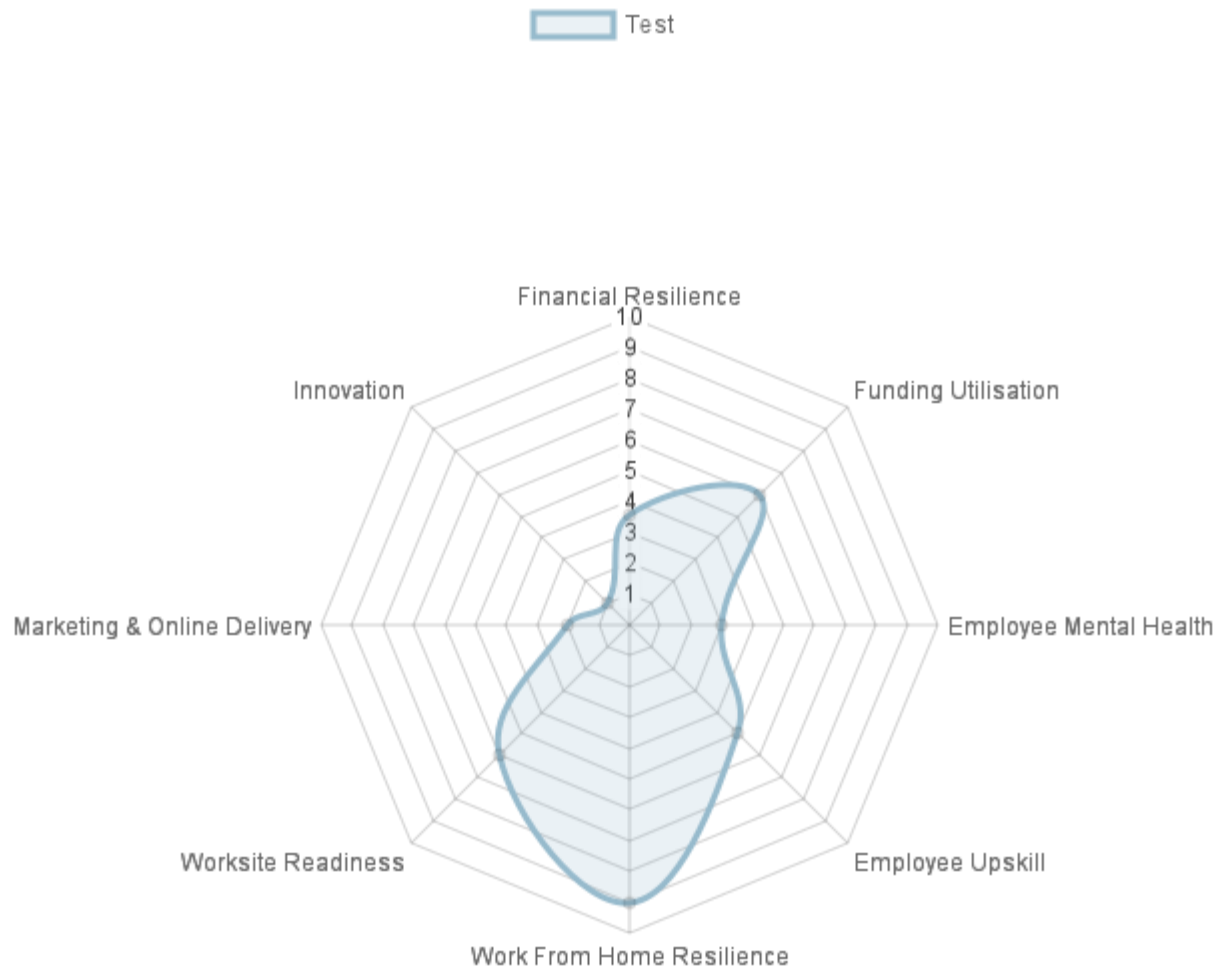
The way we do business, in all sizes, shapes and forms, has fundamentally changed, and will continue to change over the next several years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced incredible opportunities for innovation and growth, but where does your business currently stand in terms of both its overall resilience for future disruptions and its ability to innovate...?

The Chart below shows Company X's personalised score for each of the **8 PILLARS** of COVID-19 resilience based on the answers you provided in the diagnostic.

The 8 PILLARS are formulated based on in-depth research into the primary problems businesses, both small and large, have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and what those businesses who were able to adapt, innovate and rise above the adversity did so effectively.

**Master the 8 PILLARS of COVID-19 resilience and your organisation will thrive amongst this 'new normal'...**



The following sections describe the 8 pillars in detail and provide tailored advice based on the answers you provided for how your organisation can improve its overall COVID-19 resilience.

## PILLAR 1 – FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Financial resilience is the ability for your business to withstand or rebound from financial shock. External events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have tested the financial resilience of many businesses, with business owners having to rapidly adapt and respond to ongoing setbacks and restrictions.

One key element of building financial resilience is ensuring that your organisation has enough cash contingency to cover future lockdowns and restrictions. A survey of 5800 businesses conducted by the National Academy of Science highlighted the financial fragility of many small-medium sized businesses where **the average business had enough cash on hand to cover only 2 weeks' worth of expenses** and only 20% of businesses had enough to last 6 weeks.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 3.6/10 for financial resilience which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide for how your organisation can improve its financial resilience.

Sonup has also partnered with the following Hunter-based businesses who have offered there services at discounted rates to undertake an in-depth review of your businesses finances and prepare a financial resilience action plan.

1. [Lambourne Partners](#)
2. [Pitcher Partneers](#)
3. [Leenane Templetion](#)
4. [Bentleys Newcastle](#)

This is what businesses similar to Company X said after utilising Sonup's free guide and affiliated local businesses...

Maddy from 'Not Real Hair' – *"Sonup's free guide was super informative and helpful. There were several key points regarding financial contingency which I took to my accountant*

## **PILLAR 2 – FUNDING UTILISATION**

Did you know that there are a tonne of incredible grants and funding packages out there which are likely suitable for your business? (and we aren't just talking about JobKeeper and JobSaver)

Sonup conducted a study of 50 local businesses where it was noted that only 50% of businesses who were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic never applied for any type of grant or funding.

The primary reasons for this were that they were only aware of the JobKeeper or JobSeeker grants and did not believe they were eligible or they did not have the time or resources to apply for grants.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 6/10 for funding utilisation which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide for how your business can identify and apply for grants and funding to assist with COVID-19 response.

Sonup has also partnered with the following local businesses who have offered there services at discounted rates to provide advice regarding funding application writing, or they can even write your applications on your behalf.

1. [Lambourne Partners](#)
2. [Pitcher Partneers](#)
3. [Leenane Templetion](#)
4. [Bentleys Newcastle](#)

This is what businesses similar to Company X said after utilising Sonup's free guide and affiliated local businesses...

Brad from 'Made Up Cafe' – *"I now feel much more confident applying for government grants".*

### PILLAR 3 – EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

Understandably, the challenges associated with social distancing and isolation, including separation from loved ones, loss of freedom and reduced income, are leading some people to experience feelings of anxiety, boredom, frustration and fear.

Since the start of the pandemic, 42% of employees globally have reported a decline in mental health and according to the World Health Organisation, mental health conditions cause approximately \$1trillion in lost productivity to businesses worldwide.

A study undertaken by Mckinsey showed that for every dollar companies spent on wellness programs, their healthcare costs fell by approximately \$3.27 and their absenteeism costs by about \$2.73.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 3/10 for employee mental health which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide for how you can improve the mental health of your employees.

Sonup has also partnered with the following Hunter-based businesses who can provide basic employee mental health services and discuss with you how to establish an employee mental health protocol within your business.

1. [HeadSpace Newcastle](#)
2. [Reach Out - Mental Health Tools and App for businesses](#)
3. [Black Dog Institute](#)
4. [Helping Minds](#)

### PILLAR 4 – EMPLOYEE UPSKILL

The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified the skills shortage which was already evident across Australia pre-pandemic, primarily due to limited access to skilled migrants due to government lockdowns and travel bans. Businesses must place a higher priority on upskilling opportunities, to build resilience and keep communities at work under public health restrictions and moving forward into a post pandemic future. Throughout COVID - 19 many Hunter businesses have failed to abandon a zero-sum approach to advancement and leverage resources within their region to provide growth opportunities to their employees in; agile adaptation, cultural diversity and awareness, a global perspective, basic competency in technology and data analytics, and EQ.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 5/10 for employee mental health which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide for how you can improve the mental health of your employees.

### PILLAR 5 - WORK FROM HOME RESILIENCE

You told us that you have had employees working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and/or your business is intending to promote flexible working arrangements moving forward. When COVID-19 first forced companies to send their employees home to work virtually, there was a period of unrest as employers made a huge rush to ensure employees had access to all of the tools they would need to work remotely. But after everyone settled in, what quickly became apparent to many office-based teams is that employees could be productive and focused when not in the office—in many cases, even more so. Employers everywhere began to understand that remote work really works. Studies conducted by Sonup reviled the following benefits of working from home: 1. Better work-life balance - Many remote jobs also come with flexible schedules, which means that workers

can start and end their day as they choose, as long as their work is complete and leads to strong outcomes. This control over your work schedule can be invaluable when it comes to attending to the needs of your personal life. 2. Less commute stress – According to Sonup's study, the average Hunter-based employee spends approximately 100 hours commuting and 41 hours stuck in traffic each year. 3. Improved inclusivity - Remote work enables companies to embrace diversity and inclusion by hiring people from different socioeconomic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds and with different perspectives. 4. Money savings - People who work from home half time can save around \$4,000 per year. Gas, car maintenance, transportation, parking fees, a professional wardrobe, lunches bought out, and more can all be reduced or eliminated from your spending entirely. 5. Increased productivity and performance - Working from home usually leads to fewer interruptions, less office politics, a quieter noise level, and less (or more efficient) meetings.

[Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free Employee Work From Home Guide [here](#) for Sonup's free Employer Work From Home Guide.

## **PILLAR 6 - WORKSITE READINESS**

Significant disruptions to businesses are expected in the coming months, particularly when restrictions relax which will likely result in case numbers skyrocketing.

Has your business got a plan to ensure that your staff are protected from customers/clients carrying the virus..?

Have you got a contingency plan if a portion of your employees contract the virus...?

As we slowly adapt to the new normal, it will be imperative that businesses who see face-to-face customers/clients establish a COVID-safe worksite. Unfortunately, things like physical distancing, record keeping, adequately ventilated workspaces, on-site temperature and/or COVID-19 testing and self isolation are likely here to stay if you want to minimise disruption to your business, at least for the next few years.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 6/10 for worksite readiness which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide for how you can improve your organisation's worksite readiness.

Sonup has also partnered with the following Hunter-based businesses who can provide personalised advice for how you can prepare your workplace to be resilient to future disruptions.

1. [Health Safety Consultants Newcastle](#)
2. [Riskology](#)
3. [Sesa](#)

## **PILLAR 7 - INNOVATION**

What is innovation and why is it so important?

In a business sense and on a fundamental level, innovation is the process undertaken to conceptualise or new products, processes or ideas with the goal of boosting the bottom line.

Innovation is key to allowing businesses to adapt to the changes and disruptions forced upon them by the COVID-19 pandemic and here's a real life example...

Sonup conducted a study of Hunter-based businesses where it was found that of the businesses that have been positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 70% said it was because they were able to implement new innovative ideas.



On the contrary, of the businesses who have been negatively impacted, only 40% of businesses thought of new innovative ideas to help them overcome the changes and disruptions, while only 60% of those business were actually be able to implement their new innovative ideas to their full potential.

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 1/10 for innovation which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free business innovation guide.

Innovation is a skill and requires the applicable skills, knowledge and time, this is why Sonup has partnered with the following Hunter-based businesses.

1. [LaunchPad9 – Business innovation experts](#)
2. [Grant application writing experts](#)

## **PILLAR 8 – MARKETING**

Businesses of all sizes and across all industries are expected to continue to face significant disruptions over the coming months (and even years) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But one thing remains clear...**Having a robust online selling/service platform and social media marketing strategy is critical.**

Social media channels have quickly become the backbone of business strategies and are key to building meaningful connections with consumers to drive long-term brand loyalty. Not to mention, when done well, they can boost online sales. The fluid nature of social media makes it the perfect launchpad for storytelling, product launches and new initiatives

Based on the answers you provided, your organisation has scored a 2/10 for marketing which suggests that there is room for improvement. [Click here](#) for access to Sonup's free guide to taking your business online and establishing a social media marketing strategy.

Sonup has also partnered with the following Hunter-based businesses who can help you to plan and implement both an online sales platform and social media marketing strategy.

1. [Pepperit](#)
2. [Headjam](#)
3. [Social Haus](#)



## **17 Annexure E – Pillar Guides created by Sonup for each of the 8 Pillars**




**Let's get prosperous**

# **Employer Financial Guide**

# Bookkeeping and budgeting basics







Running a business includes keeping up with your bookkeeping and financial reporting.

To do this:

1. Set up a bookkeeping system – this can be as simple as a [record keeping book](#) from the newsagents, or purpose-built [accounting software](#), such as Quicken or MYOB. Keep your entries up-to-date to know the exact state of your finances.
2. Use the checklist on business records (see the financial policies and procedures manuals template) and how long to keep them – including financial and employment records.
3. Find out if you need to register, report and pay GST.
4. [Talk to your accountant regularly](#) – an accountant who regularly checks your finances will help detect potential problems and provide suggestions for ways to improve your business.
5. Use the financial policies and procedures manual template above and modify it to suit your business.
6. Budget and [refinance your business](#) if your reporting shows you're continually reliant on overdraft or other financing facilities. Use the financial statement template above to produce your cash flow statement.
7. Have a projected cash flow for the next 12 months to work out if your business is tracking for growth, or losing money – anticipating when and how much money is coming in and going out is critical to [maintaining a positive cash flow](#).
8. Create a budget to enable the planned financial operation of the business to be measured against the forecast.
9. Increase your income by planning more strategically to grow your business.

## Stock, supplier and customer basics

Maintaining your cash flow and growing your profits requires you to manage customer orders and supplier payments.

To do this:

1. Keep up with your [supplier payments](#). Owing other businesses and the tax office money is one of the first signs your business does not have a strong cash flow.
2. Manage your cash flow by completing a [cash flow forecast](#) statement to make sure you have money to pay your suppliers on time.
3. Manage your customer debt – if your [customers owe you money](#), do you know how much is owed and how overdue the payments are? If your customers owe you money outside of your credit terms, you need to act swiftly to collect this money.
4. Know your [break even point, gross profit and profit margin figures](#) to price your goods and services to cover your total cost of producing a product or service. These figures are essential to charge enough to cover costs and make a reasonable profit. Calculate these figures by using our financial statements template.
5. Review and then [increase or decrease product and service costs](#) – your cost structure should not be set in concrete. Profitable businesses have regular reviews and make allowance for rising costs or sales dips.

## Sales and marketing basics

6. To promote your business to new and existing customers:
7. Don't just compete on price – use [promotions and offers other than sales and discounts](#). If you have many competitors and your point of difference is being one of the cheapest, your margins will always be slim and eventually someone will undercut you. Work on creating value-added points of difference that you can advertise.
8. [Benchmark your business](#) against competitors to help you plan and implement changes to boost your business performance.
9. Find out how to improve your sales by having a good [understanding of your customers](#).
10. Assess your marketing campaign by [conducting market research](#) to find out where your sales techniques and market reach can be improved.



# Staffing and wage basics

## Sole trader wages

To pay yourself wages as a [sole trader](#), it should come from the sales revenue you've made after you've taken out all your expenses.

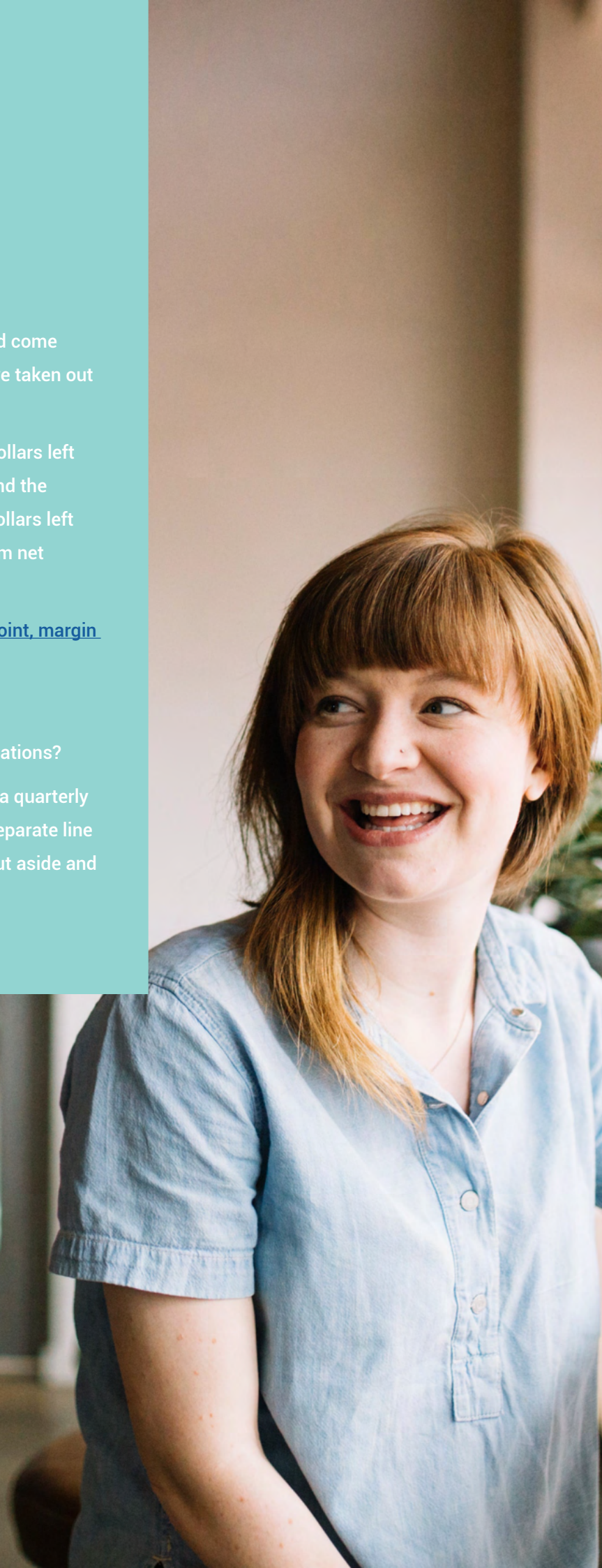
Calculate your net margin (which is the sales dollars left after subtracting both the cost of goods sold and the overhead expenses) and gross margin (sales dollars left after subtracting the cost of the goods sold from net sales).

Visit our page on [calculating your break even point, margin and markup](#) to understand these figures.

## Employer obligations

Are you keeping up with all your employer obligations?

Super and PAYG obligations are usually part of a quarterly tax office return and should be recorded on a separate line in your cash flow statement, so the money is put aside and you're not caught short every quarter.



## COVID-19 Business Grants

A one-off payment to help businesses with cashflow support for the first 3 weeks of lockdown.

### How much

- \$7,500 to \$15,000 depending on the decline in turnover

### Eligibility

- A revenue decline of 30% or more
- Annual turnover above \$75,000
- Payroll up to \$10 million

[Apply for the 2021 COVID-19 business grant](#)

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## JobSaver

Fortnightly payments to help maintain employee headcount and provide cash flow support to businesses.

### How much

- Employing businesses: 40% of their weekly NSW payroll, with payments between \$1,500 and \$100,000 per week
- Non-employing business: \$1,000 per week.

### Eligibility

- A revenue decline of 30% or more
- Turnover between \$75,000 and \$250 million.

[Apply for JobSaver](#)

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## JobSaver for Not-for-Profit (NFP)

Fortnightly payments to help maintain employee headcount and provide cash flow support to NFPs.

### How much

- 40% of their weekly NSW payroll, with payments between \$1,500 and \$100,000 per week
- Non-employing NFP: \$1,000 per week

### Eligibility

- A turnover decline between 15% and 30%.

[Apply for JobSaver](#)





## **JobSaver for large hospitality, tourism or recreation businesses only**

Fortnightly payments to help maintain employee headcount and provide cash flow support to large businesses. commencing from the 26 June 2021 lockdown only.

### **How much**

Payments of 40% of weekly payroll prior to the 26 June 2021 lockdown, up to a maximum weekly payment per group of:

- \$300,000 for businesses with aggregated annual turnover over \$250m and up to \$500m
- \$500,000 for businesses with aggregated annual turnover over \$500m and up to \$1b.

### **Eligibility**

A turnover decline of at least:

- 50% for businesses with aggregated annual turnover over \$250m and up to \$500m
- 70% for businesses with aggregated annual turnover over \$500m and up to \$1b.

[Apply for JobSaver](#)

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## **2021 COVID-19 Micro Business Support Grant**

A fortnightly payment for businesses with a turnover between \$30,000 and \$75,000

### **How much**

- \$1,500 per fortnight

### **Eligibility**

- A turnover between \$30k and \$75k
- A revenue decline of 30% or more
- Businesses that provide the primary income source for a person associated with the business.

[Apply for the 2021 COVID-19 Micro Business Grant](#)



## Payroll tax deferrals

Businesses have the option to defer their payment of the 2020-21 annual reconciliation, and returns due in August through to December 2021 until 14 January 2022. Interest free repayment plans for up to 12 months will be available.

### How much

- Deferral of the 2020-21 annual reconciliation payment as well as the returns due in August to December 2021 until 14 January 2022.

### Eligibility

- Any NSW business liable for payroll tax.

[For more information visit Revenue NSW](#)

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## Payroll tax reduction

A 50% reduction to help reduce overheads for eligible businesses with a 30% decline in turnover.

### How much

- Eligible customers will receive a 50% reduction in their 2021-22 payroll tax liability if they have experienced a 30% decline in turnover.

### Eligibility

- A decline in turnover of 30%
- For NSW businesses with grouped Australian wages of no more than \$10 million

[For more information visit Revenue NSW](#)

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## Gaming Machine Tax deferrals

Gaming machine tax deferral options for clubs and hotels.

### How much

- Clubs: deferral of the August quarter until 21 December 2021.
- Hotels: deferral of the June and September quarters until 21 Jan 2022.

### Eligibility

- All NSW clubs or hotels liable for gaming machine tax

[For more information visit Revenue NSW](#)





**Let's get prosperous**

# **Employer Financial Guide**





**Let's get productive**

# **Employer working from home guide**



# What is working from home?

WFH is a working arrangement in which a worker fulfils the essential responsibilities of his/her job while remaining at home, using information and communications technology (ICT). For the purpose of this guide and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the term “working from home” is used to refer uniquely to home-based teleworking as a temporary, alternative working arrangement. It requires a shared responsibility and commitment by both employers and workers to ensure business continuity and employment.







## Are all jobs suitable for working from home arrangements?

When worksites and premises are closed across the entire company as a precautionary measure or as a result of a government directive, companies may be able to implement WFH arrangements to achieve continuity of service, maintain productivity, and preserve jobs while safeguarding the safety and health of workers. The ILO estimates that close to 18 per cent of workers have occupations that are suitable for WFH and live in countries with the infrastructure to enable WFH.<sup>4</sup> The responsibility for WFH arrangements is shared, and it requires the commitment of both employers and workers to make it successful. Both employers and workers should be practical, flexible and sensible to each other's situation when implementing WFH arrangements. Before rolling out WFH arrangements, employers should first assess if it is possible and practical for the job functions and the jobholder, as follows: Identify the job functions and tasks that can be done off-site. This may involve innovation and creativity to do things differently from the norm. Assess mechanisms for connectivity such as regular videoconferencing calls and other means. Assess the infrastructure, facilities and tools available for WFH, such as Internet connectivity and the availability of reliable power supply. Assess the legal requirements, obligations and potential liability, taking into consideration the worker's situation and the job functions, equipment and tools needed. Assess the worker's situation in terms of safety and health in his/her domestic environment and actual ability to carry out the tasks required at home.

Consider the potential impact of the worker's living arrangements. For example, workers may have child or dependent care responsibilities, relationship strain or domestic violence, long-term health conditions or disabilities. Assess any mental health concerns or possible future concerns that could arise through a work from home arrangement. It is important to note that while advances in ICT have enabled WFH, not all job functions and tasks can be done outside the employers' premises or the specified workplace. There are companies, occupations and tasks where WFH is not practical or feasible, or it cannot be deployed in a short time frame. Employers need to explore and implement an alternative plan for job functions and tasks that cannot be performed remotely, or for workers who have limitations at home or health and safety issues that prevent WFH. Subject to the provisions in national laws and regulations, government directives or company policy, employers may consider advising workers to take accrued or advance paid annual leave, extended leave at half pay or unpaid, or any other applicable leave that could be used in the situation in consultation with the workers' concerned.

## Are workers obliged to observe the company's directive to work from home?

Normally, WFH arrangements are implemented on a voluntary basis between employers and workers, often accompanied by a signed agreement setting out terms and conditions. In the current situation, however, WFH has been mandated in many parts of the world as a temporary public health measure. In accordance with Article 19(a) of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), workers are legally obligated to cooperate with the employer to secure a safe and healthy working environment in support of relevant statutory provisions, collective agreements or company policies. Workers are also responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and the safety of others, using devices and protective equipment and complying with the policies set forth by the employer. Additionally, in accordance with Paragraph 16 of the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164), they should report any hazards or issues as soon as possible following the employer's reporting procedures. It is important to be clear that the workers' obligations and responsibilities apply even in the informal surroundings of WFH arrangements. Therefore, when WFH is required to minimize the spread of a pandemic, workers must cooperate and comply fully with preventive measures or directives, take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others and observe company policies.

## What are employers' responsibilities when implementing working from home arrangements in response to COVID-19?

It is important to note that temporary WFH arrangements do not require any permanent adjustment to the terms and conditions of employment. The arrangements can change in response to updated directives and the evolving needs of the company. Employers should consider modifying or developing a company policy or guidelines to provide clear guidance on implementing WFH arrangements (see annex for a template). They should communicate the policy effectively to all workers, and any changes to the policy should be communicated as early as possible. Many countries around the world have begun legislating aspects of WFH/remote working arrangements, working conditions, the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers. For example, in the Netherlands, the Working Conditions Decree concerns paid work performed in the worker's living quarters or another place chosen by the worker outside of the employer's premises. It includes the employer's duty of care to check on the worker and ensure legal obligations under the Decree are met. In Poland, the provision of the Labour Code that addresses "telework" emphasises that the location of work is away from the premises of the employer and is based on services rendered by electronic means, while in Austria, "telework" is regulated through working-time legislation, rather than as a separate issue.<sup>9</sup> In March 2020, Chile enacted a law regulating teleworking, granting legal certainties to both employers and workers in teleworking arrangements and specifying their rights and responsibilities. For example, employers' obligation includes bearing the costs of operation, functioning, maintenance and repair of equipment.





# Worker's compensation & liability

Generally, in some countries, when WFH is implemented, any injury incurred during work hours and arising from or while performing work functions in the designated work area of the house may be covered by worker's compensation insurance. In other countries however, employment

injury insurance may not foresee the coverage of WFH arrangements. This would depend on national laws and judicial precedents. Overall the number of workers' compensation claims could fall during the pandemic, as fewer people are working. But that effect is unlikely be felt uniformly across all industries, and the workers' claims may not be limited to COVID-19 exposures. Employers may face additional challenges in limiting workrelated injuries during WFH due to a lack of oversight of work environments and the increased potential for improper use of equipment and in-home distractions. These challenges may be compounded by the current pandemic, which has contributed to rising anxiety and mental stress and forced many workers to share makeshift home workspaces with spouses, children, and pets.

Subject to national laws and regulations, the worker's home workspace may be considered an extension of the employer's workspace in a WFH arrangement. Thus in some countries, employers could be liable for accidents that arise out of and occur within the course of employment when the injury takes place in the worker's home workspace during work hours. The timing, location and circumstances of the injury are usually important considerations to evaluate. If the injury occurred during regular working hours, in a location where the employer anticipated the workers to perform work and was in the midst of performing a required duty, employers may be held liable. If employers may be held liable for accidents in the worker's home workspace under national laws and regulations, employers are advised to review the company's existing employers' liability insurance to ensure it covers WFH. The employer should ensure the company policy on WFH assumes no liability for injuries arising in the worker's home workspace outside the agreed work hours or any loss, destruction, or injury that may occur to the home of the worker. This includes family members, visitors, or others that may become injured within or around the worker's home.

## What are workers' responsibilities when working from home?

Workers have the duty to protect themselves and others and to cooperate with their employers in the implementation of preventive and control measures, in accordance with Article 19(a) of Convention No. 155. This includes following any information, instruction, or training provided by employers and adopting safe work behaviours, complying with instructions,

ensuring good hygiene practices, and using safety devices and protective equipment. Workers are obliged to notify the employer if they become aware that they are suffering from any disease or physical or mental impairment which affects their ability to do their job, and report any accident to management immediately. Workers should also keep in regular contact with their employer and inform of any health and safety risks at home or any need to change the home working arrangement. In addition to safety and health, the general obligations and responsibilities of workers, including those stipulated in the respective national labour and employment laws, the terms and conditions of employment, or the collective agreement shall be applicable in a WFH arrangement. These responsibilities may include: complying with the company policy or guidelines on WFH, if any; complying with all existing policies and regulations, including safety and health policy, ICT and data protection policy, intellectual property, use of company tools and equipment policy; taking care of one's own safety, physical and mental health and well-being; restricting working time to those agreed with the employer and in line with national working time legislation; fulfilling all normal duties or alternative duties assigned; practicing work-life balance, and staying active and connected; being available and accessible during work hours, and maintaining regular and timely communication with managers; refraining from holding meeting with customers or other workers at home without the company's approval; making necessary child or dependent care arrangements; taking reasonable care of the company's tools and

## How do you measure workers' productivity when working from home?

Companies with remote workers are generally concerned about productivity from two angles. Some employers wonder "are they working at all?" while others are more concerned with "are they working efficiently?" Yet measuring the productivity of a remote workforce should not be any more difficult or different than measuring a physically present workforce. Well managed remote teams can be far more productive than physically managed workers as companies are required to measure productivity by objective metrics than the physical presence of "time in the building." Before a company establishes how to track and measures a workers' performance, it should identify what needs to be measured. Choosing the most impactful and qualitative metrics is key. Measuring productivity based on results requires quantifiable metrics, which can be challenging to define. Some sectors and jobs are easier to define than others. For example for a sales worker, it is very clear what can be measured and evaluated. In job functions like a call centre representative, a simple metric of calls per hour can be used. However, when workers have varying responsibilities, creating metrics for each worker will be required, with some degree of frequent revision. Additionally, meeting a measurement does not necessarily equate to productivity. If goals are set too low, a worker accomplishing the desired result may not be working at full capacity. Just because a worker is connected to the office by a virtual private

network (VPN) does not mean work is being performed. Performance is best determined by outcomes, and whether a worker is meeting measurable benchmarks or goals. Like any goal, worker performance cannot be achieved if no one knows what it is. The key to working well with remote workers is to be very clear and specific with all expectations. Consideration should be given to how long it will take to know if someone is productive or not. Measurable results make sense, but the more frequent the measurement, the more susceptible is the feeling of micromanagement. However, measuring too infrequently means that the employer may not be aware of problems that need to be resolved. Importantly, there are privacy issues that employers need to be aware of regarding workers and workplace monitoring.

Five elements to consider in measuring remote workers' productivity include:

- Set and communicate clear goals and deadlines in the same way with workers in a physical workspace.
- Form plans to increase accountability.
- Analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis.
- Evaluate quality and quantity instead of time worked – shift the metrics to "tasks accomplished and their quality" versus "hours spent".
- Track achievements.

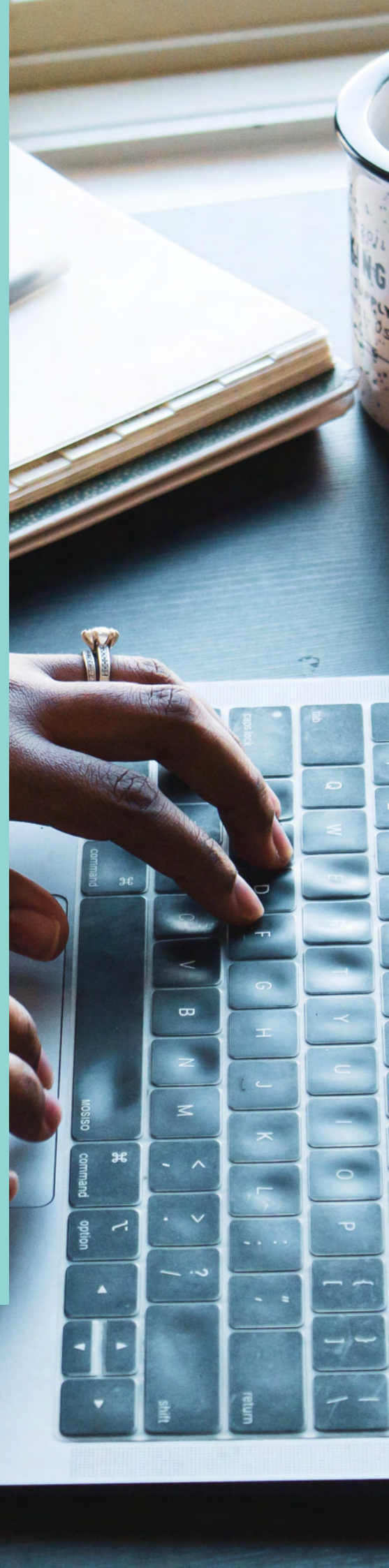




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- u complying with the company policy or guidelines on WFH, if any;
- u complying with all existing policies and regulations, including safety and health policy, ICT and data protection policy, intellectual property, use of company tools and equipment policy;
- u taking care of one's own safety, physical and mental health and well-being;
- u restricting working time to those agreed with the employer and in line with national working time legislation;
- u fulfilling all normal duties or alternative duties assigned;
- u practicing work-life balance, and staying active and connected;
- u being available and accessible during work hours, and maintaining regular and timely communication with managers;
- u refraining from holding meeting with customers or other workers at home without the company's approval;
- u making necessary child or dependent care arrangements;
- u taking reasonable care of the company's tools and equipment, including technology, data protection, confidentiality and security.



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- Track achievements.



## What are the main challenges in implementing working from home arrangements and what considerations should be made to address and manage them?

There are multiple benefits associated with WFH, including: the reduction in commuting times; greater autonomy and flexibility in the organization of work; a better work-life balance; increased motivation and reduced turnover; and enhanced productivity and efficiency. In addition, reduced travel associated with WFH leads to a reduction in carbon emissions. However, in such an unexpected and urgent situation as the COVID-19 pandemic, both employers and workers may be unprepared physically, mentally or infrastructure-wise to meet all challenges posed by WFH. According to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 71 per cent of employers are struggling to adjust to remote work; 65 per cent of employers say maintaining employee morale has been a challenge; and more than one third of employers are facing difficulties with company culture, employee productivity and leave regulation.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore highly recommended that employers develop a workplace policy to provide clear guidelines and address the challenges. In addition, employers should regularly assess the effectiveness of the company policies and guidelines. Workers should regularly communicate challenges experienced with the company policies and guidelines to their employers.

### Communication

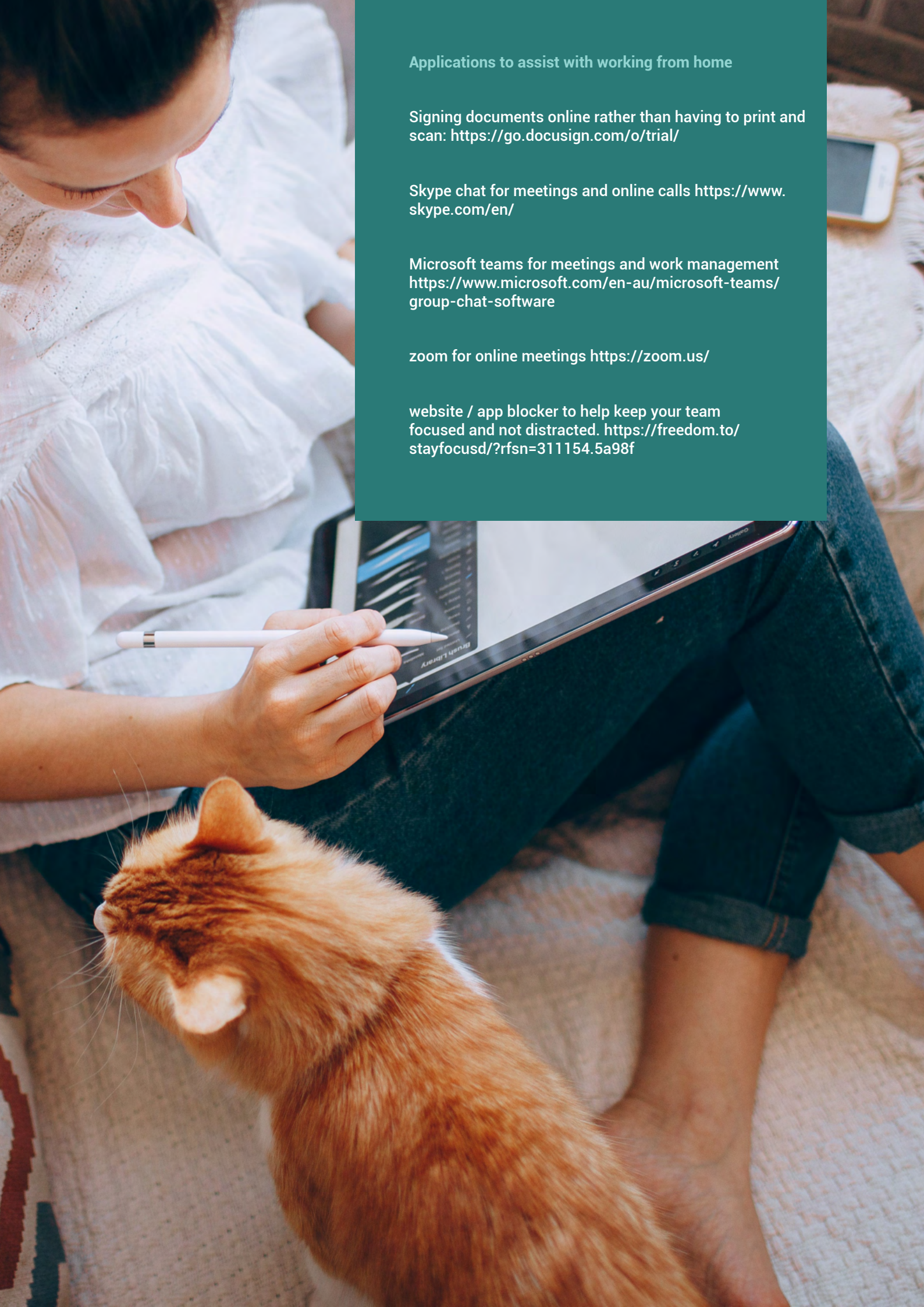
Advances in ICT have enabled and facilitated WFH arrangements, yet ICT cannot overcome every limitation amid the rapid changes in the current situation. While employers and workers are both making efforts to keep up with the latest developments, changes announced by the Government or policy changes by the company could cause confusion among workers, especially if the changes could impact business operations or the expectations on workers, such as new restrictions on the movements of people. There are a range of software tools that make communication, collaboration and transparency easier. Many are free or low cost.<sup>19</sup> Communicate regularly. Communication should be quicker and much more frequent when WFH arrangements are in place. This improves collaboration and builds the necessary trust to successfully roll out new ways of working.

### Employers should do the following:

- Designate communication channels to enable the business to communicate with staff during WFH as necessary and ensure consistency of messages.
- Keep an up-to-date registry of contact details of all workers (phone number, email address, or physical address).
- Communicate with all workers regularly to keep them informed of updated developments related to COVID-19 and its impact on company operations, including any change in company policies.
- Encourage an exchange of views and ideas on business continuity strategies.
- Hold periodic virtual meetings to update workers on the situation, review work and agree on how to deliver the company's services. This will also help workers to feel less isolated during WFH.







## Applications to assist with working from home

Signing documents online rather than having to print and scan: <https://go.docusign.com/o/trial/>

Skype chat for meetings and online calls <https://www.skype.com/en/>

Microsoft teams for meetings and work management  
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-au/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

zoom for online meetings <https://zoom.us/>

website / app blocker to help keep your team focused and not distracted. <https://freedom.to/stayfocusd/?rfsn=311154.5a98f>

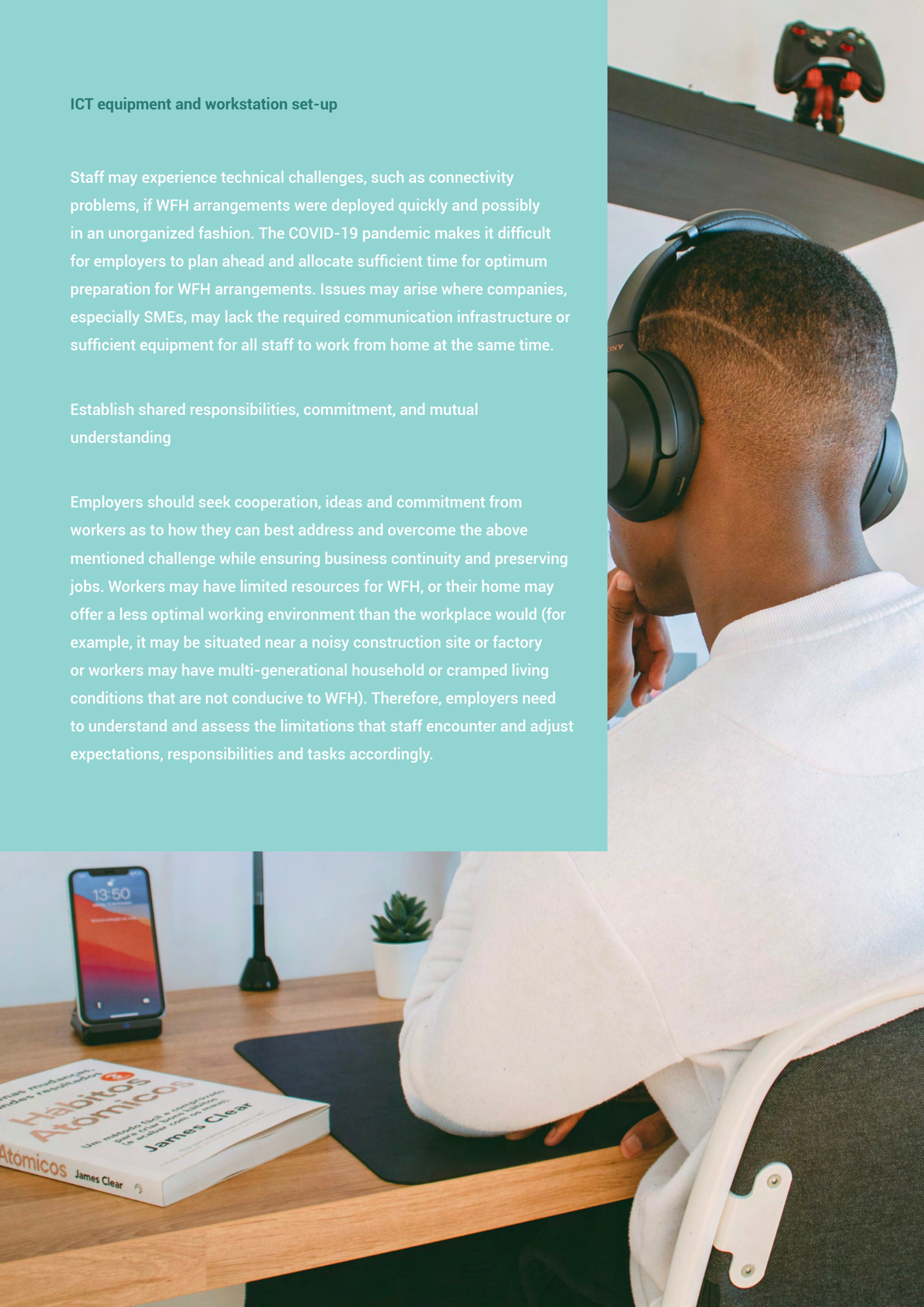


## ICT equipment and workstation set-up

Staff may experience technical challenges, such as connectivity problems, if WFH arrangements were deployed quickly and possibly in an unorganized fashion. The COVID-19 pandemic makes it difficult for employers to plan ahead and allocate sufficient time for optimum preparation for WFH arrangements. Issues may arise where companies, especially SMEs, may lack the required communication infrastructure or sufficient equipment for all staff to work from home at the same time.

Establish shared responsibilities, commitment, and mutual understanding

Employers should seek cooperation, ideas and commitment from workers as to how they can best address and overcome the above mentioned challenge while ensuring business continuity and preserving jobs. Workers may have limited resources for WFH, or their home may offer a less optimal working environment than the workplace would (for example, it may be situated near a noisy construction site or factory or workers may have multi-generational household or cramped living conditions that are not conducive to WFH). Therefore, employers need to understand and assess the limitations that staff encounter and adjust expectations, responsibilities and tasks accordingly.



## Data protection and security

While the use of technology has enabled and facilitated WFH, it also presents higher risks of cyberattacks and confidentiality breaches. Safe WFH processes are essential, especially if workers are using their personal laptops or devices to perform official duties and connect to the company network. Some companies have an existing data protection, confidentiality and security policy for this purpose.

Employers need to ensure that:

- Data security is maintained even during WFH.
- A robust information technology system is in place with the necessary safeguards, including the safe transmission of confidential data outside the workplace
- Computers used for work have proper software installed, including anti-virus protection, secured virtual private networks or firewalls against cyber threats; workers are aware of the company data protection policy, if any
- Workers have the required skill to use the ICT in accordance with company policy. Reminders and online training can be used to refresh skills in this area.

## Staff management and possible abuse of WFH arrangement

As more and more companies choose to (or are required to) offer WFH arrangements during the COVID-19 crisis, issues of trust often advance to the frontline of workplace discussions. This is because WFH can impact the trust equation between workers and managers because the task of management is more challenging. In the absence of face-to-face contact, the traditional "command and control" style of management becomes less relevant and managers may struggle to find other ways to make sure that workers are getting their work done during WFH. If workers do not feel a sense of belonging during WFH, they may also distrust their managers and company leadership. This may lead to the manager's loss of control, and certain workers may abuse the WFH arrangement. Hence, workers' self-discipline and mutual trust and confidence between employers and workers are essential in this working arrangement. Furthermore, the effective management of WFH requires a results-based management approach. This involves identifying objectives, tasks and milestones, and then monitoring and discussing progress without overly burdensome reporting requirements.

## Build mutual trust and shared responsibilities

The "glue" that holds WFH arrangements, together is trust. Managers, workers and their colleagues need to trust each other. WFH cannot be effective without it. Employers should build mutual trust and establish shared responsibilities with workers through open and transparent discussions about expectations and outputs, including:

- when workers will be available and be responsive.
- how they will keep in touch, such as online and telephone contact.
- how work-life balance will be managed, for instance through regular breaks and switching off from work at the end of the day.
- how performance and reporting will be managed, taking into consideration worker's circumstances where necessary.
- who workers should contact if they have any work-related issue.
- who workers should contact if they have an emergency type situation.

Employers must also recognize some workers may find it hard to motivate and organize themselves when working from home. If this happens, the manager and worker should talk about practical steps to overcome those obstacles.

## Organization of working time

The organization of working time is essential but it could be challenging, especially for workers with specified work hours or hourly paid wages. The ILO report, Ensuring decent working time for the future referred to the European Union Framework Agreement on Telework, provides that the working time of teleworkers should be within the framework of the applicable national legislation, collective agreements and company rules. Teleworkers manage the organization of their working time, and can do their work at times that are most convenient for them, while remaining contactable during the normal business hours of the organization. Performance standards of the teleworker are equivalent to those of comparable workers at the employer's premises. The report also indicated that Singapore and Sweden regulate telework, including work hours and rest provisions, through collective bargaining or guidance issued by public authorities.



## Establish self-discipline and close monitoring

While some degree of flexibility should be deployed in a WFH arrangement, employers should:

- establish an expectation of the worker's self-discipline and compliance with the agreed work hours.
- ensure work hours and rest breaks occur in line with national legislation, collective agreements, or the company's terms and conditions of employment.
- ensure that workers record the total hours worked for each day or week.
- consider deploying online attendance or using email to record work hours.

## Occupational safety and health

As indicated in section 6(a), employers generally are responsible for the safety and health of workers at the workplace and during work hours. However, during WFH, supervisors are unable to ensure the health and safety of workers because they are not present at the employer's workspace. Participants in the Global Dialogue Forum on the Challenges and Opportunities of Teleworking for Workers and Employers in the Information and Communications Technology and Financial Services Sectors, held in Geneva in October 2016, included this among their consensus points: "Occupational safety and health conditions are more difficult to monitor and control in teleworking arrangements, especially where the home is also the workplace."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, for a majority of individuals who are working from home for the first time, getting the correct home office set-up presents a challenge. Sometimes, space within the home is limited and office space may double as a dining space, kitchen counter or general use area. Other times, a desk and chair may be present but without the adjustability needed to provide a suitable long-term work environment. Ergonomic risks can be exacerbated as workers may not have access to the same ergonomically-friendly equipment as inside the company's premises. For both employers and workers, the use of proper ergonomics can be overlooked while implementing WFH arrangements during COVID-19, possibly increasing the risk of injury or health problems to workers. Employers should consider how they could mitigate the potential for injuries to address potential ergonomic concerns for workers.





## Promote awareness and ensure compliance

Employers should do the following:

- provide information and training on health and safety issues particularly relevant for workers in WFH arrangements (e.g. ergonomics, working in isolation, general fire and electrical safety issues).
- ensure that workers are aware of or provided with relevant information about their general obligations with regards to safety and health including taking care of their own health and safety and the safety of others.
- ensure that workers are aware of and comply with the company's safety and health policy, if any, including the procedures for reporting work-related accidents and ill health or any health and safety concern.
- review the company's safety and health policy, if any, and ensure it has provisions covering the worker's home when WFH arrangements are in place.
- ensure workers are aware of the company's liability under the applicable national laws and regulations and their liability insurance for injuries that occur in the worker's home during the WFH hours.
- provide on-going evaluation of offsite workers' workstation and offer guidance and monitoring of ergonomic conditions (however, managers will need to respect workers' home privacy).
- offer ergonomics and safety training or resources to change work habits and improve the physical home-based work environment.





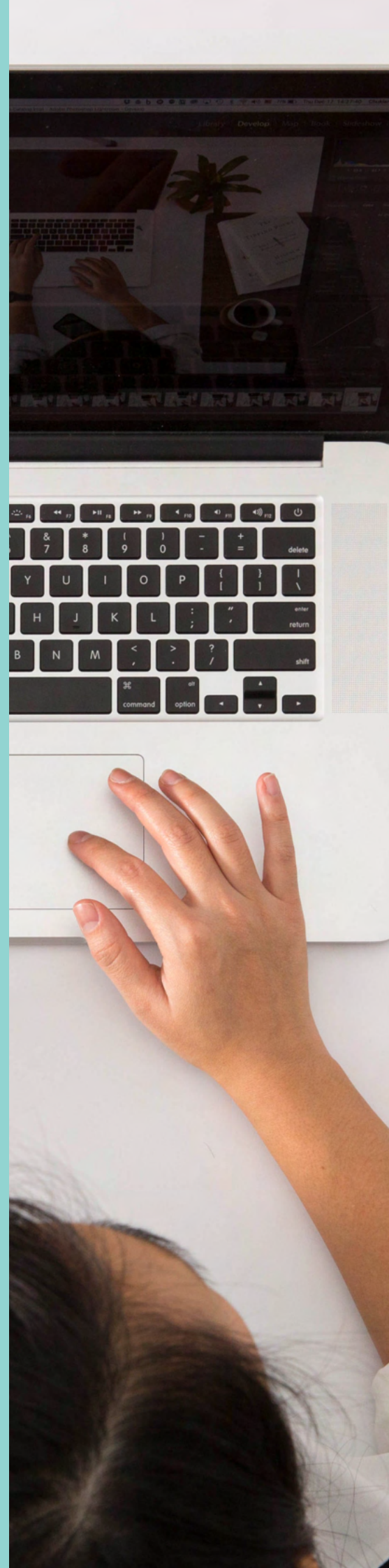
## Health and mental well-being

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers may be experiencing full-time WFH for the first time, while they are also isolated from co-workers, friends and sometimes even from family. Their daily living routines have been disrupted, which may cause added stress, tension, and physical and mental strain. The impact of these stressors is even stronger in the current economic situation. When companies are adversely affected there can be increased redundancy, lay-offs and terminations, causing workers to feel further anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity, which may result in feelings of depression. The situation is aggravated during mandatory and prolonged WFH when lockdowns prevent people from going out and social life is limited. Studies have indicated that being unable to interact with friends and isolation from colleagues are key disadvantages in WFH. 28 Company policies on WFH should incorporate measure that respond to those factors.

### Promote health and well-being and be supportive and understanding

It is important to stress that physical distancing does not require social isolation. While it is important for workers to find new ways to work and interact, employers must recognize the impact of isolation and loneliness, hence they must be supportive and empathetic, and keep workers informed, connected and mentally healthy. Employers may consider taking the following actions:

- regularly contacting workers to make sure they feel supported and being available, accessible and willing to listen when workers need support.
- creating opportunities for team communications by using online tools or apps to establish teamwide chat groups, for example.
- providing workers with appropriate control and flexibility over how they do their work.
- offering information and practical tools to support positive mental health, including access to the employee assistance programme.
- appropriately responding to signs of workers' distress and providing workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns.
- raising awareness of workers' responsibility to take care of their own physical and mental wellbeing during WFH, including encouraging workers to stay physically active, eat well and regularly go outside for fresh air. Companies may consider issuing a policy guideline on WFH, addressing the physical and mental health and well-being of workers, or they may refer to available resources on health and well-being during WFH.



## Work-life balance

WFH can help workers to achieve a better work-life balance as they avoid long and stressful commutes between home and the workplace, and they have more time for family. Other benefits of WFH include increased worker satisfaction, productivity and loyalty, and reduced staff turnover.<sup>31</sup> While WFH arrangements have a great deal of potential, the reality is often more complicated, especially when WFH arrangements are implemented to contain a pandemic and not necessarily because the workers voluntarily chose it. Maintaining work-life balance may be a particular challenge for those with family care responsibilities due to closures of childcare facilities and schools, and in the absence of alternative care arrangements. Often, WFH leads to a blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life, an increase in work hours and an intensification of work. Thus, WFH can interfere with private life and cause work-life conflicts that can be challenging for workers' well-being, and affect overall work performance. A survey of teleworkers in Japan shows that the issue of the ambiguity of working time and time off was the highest-ranked disadvantage of remote working.<sup>32</sup> The worry and stress of "work without end" are being recognized and regulatory measures have been introduced in response to separate paid work and personal life.<sup>33</sup> For example, France introduced the "right to be disconnected" in the 2017 revision of its Labour Code. It is therefore crucial that the employer has clear guidelines on working time arrangements that are in line with national legislation.

### Promote work-life balance and be supportive

- While there may be some measures taken at the national level addressing work-life balance, employers should do the following:
- set clear expectations of work hours and encourage and empower workers to set boundaries on his or her work schedule.
- promote a healthy lifestyle and work-life balance, including regular breaks and rest, exercise and fresh air.
- provide mental well-being support to workers who experience work-life conflict.
- for guidance, refer to the applicable laws and regulations or the relevant guidelines promoting healthy work-life balance, such as those issued by the occupational safety and health or mental health department.

Benefits of WFH for workers typically include less time spent commuting, fewer interruptions, and greater flexibility. Thus, WFH could lead to better performance and increased productivity and engagement, which could improve workers' satisfaction and reduce turnover. However, WFH implemented in response to COVID-19 lockdown measures may be different in practice. Additional care responsibilities of working parents may dramatically increase due to school closures. Working parents may need to be involved in home-schooling, surveillance and care of children of school-age or there may be more than one family member sharing the same space for online schooling or teleworking. The worker's family responsibilities, having to share working spaces, or even strains in relationship or domestic violence may interfere with his or her job responsibilities, alter working schedules, and affect work performance and productivity.

### Change productivity mindset and be flexible and reactive

Employers could consider providing expanded support to parents and caregivers at this time. Employers may be able to provide flexibility, including changing the measures on productivity by focusing on outcomes delivered rather than on working time. Employers may also use collaborative online tools, such as shared calendars and public status to facilitate teamwork and boost productivity.<sup>34</sup> Workers must adapt to their new WFH arrangement and environment and ensure the essential job responsibilities are fulfilled. Any issue on performance should be openly discussed between managers and workers. Caring for children and dependents Working parents may have competing responsibilities between WFH their employer and caring for children whose school or day care is closed. It is unlikely that workers would be able to adequately perform their jobs while simultaneously performing dependent care duties. Employers and workers should agree on arrangements that would enable the worker to effectively perform the required work meeting the employers' expectations while still being able to undertake care activities at home. Employers should be sensitive to the worker's situation, especially when WFH is implemented on short notice and workers had little time to prepare or make the required child or dependent care arrangement.

## Performance and productivity



## Be responsible and adaptive

Workers must communicate with their supervisors about their situation and determine whether modifications to WFH arrangements are necessary to balance the responsibilities of work and family care. It is important for employers and workers to address the situation and agree on a more flexible WFH arrangement. For example, work hours can be scheduled around the needs of the family, temporary changes can be made to the work terms for a reduced workday or work hours and reduced targets, or the employer can be flexible about deadlines where possible. Some governments are adopting legislation allowing workers to take special paid leave<sup>35</sup> or unpaid leave without risking their jobs if they have to care for children or if they are unable to work due to COVID-19.

## Skills, staff training and development

Staff training and development play an important role to ensure workers are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to keep up with the latest information and technologies. Workers may need to develop technical skills to use communications tools for WFH when it is implemented in response to COVID-19.

## Promote a learning culture

Depending on the specific sector and context, different ICT skills will be required during WFH. Online training, remote coaching, peer-to-peer learning and ongoing support for software and other tools<sup>36</sup> may be required to ensure workers develop the necessary skills and abilities to perform effectively from home. Employers should make use of ICT and online training tools and apps for regular contact with workers, and provide necessary training, coaching, or mentoring and ensure workers are motivated, developed and recognized.

## Keep up with the Government's policy and directives

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the operation of companies. Many are struggling to sustain themselves, leading to temporary shutdowns or closures. Companies may have to implement WFH as a preventive measure or in response to the Government's orders and directives. Governments should allow a certain degree of flexibility and provide an assistance scheme to facilitate the implementation of the WFH policy.













A photograph of a person's hands and arms working at a desk. The person is wearing a patterned sleeve and is holding a pen, writing on a piece of paper. In the background, there is a computer monitor, a clock, and a printer. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source coming from the left, creating a soft glow on the desk and the person's hands.

## Engage in policy discussion

Companies all over the world are at the front line of a new way of working. It is happening in real time and in a less than optimal fashion. Companies have little time to respond to an enforced and necessary situation. Overall, the usual ways that workers and management would agree on WFH arrangements have been discarded. For some companies, WFH can be a benefit for their bottom line. A company that can run its entire operation staffed by workers who (mostly) work from home will no longer need to lease large office spaces and long commutes will also be gone. Some companies will be able to hire a geographically diverse workforce without providing additional office space and without incurring any expense to relocate them. During this challenging time, it is crucial that companies play an active role in providing constructive inputs in policy recommendations. It is critical that company experiences with WFH are shared with national employers and business membership organizations.



**Let's get productive**

# **Employer working from home guide**





**Let's get social**

# **A Guide Social Media Marketing**

# The value of social media for your businesses

**As working from home becomes the new normal for many businesses—at least temporarily, posting content to social media is an important way for brands to stay connected with thier audience.**

If you're on a small marketing team, the sole marketing person at your company, or you're running all facets of your business, you know what it's like to wear multiple hats. With countless deliverables to push out to keep your small business running, social media marketing can seem like a non-essential tactic that is easy to push to the wayside when things get hectic.

But I wouldn't write social media off that quickly.

We know that people are spending more and more time on their phones, and a lot of that time is spent on social media apps. We also know that social media users regularly interact with companies they are interested in or already do business with. So not only is social media free, but your customers and prospects are already there waiting to hear from you.



Let's get social

# Start with a plan

## Writing an effective executive summary

The executive summary is a synopsis of your social media marketing plan. It should not exceed one page.

The summary should contain the following information:

- Identify the problem or need for a social media strategy or proposed campaign
- Explain the anticipated result(s)
- Lay out the budget, time, and resources required to execute
- Include any additional information worth noting

## Set smart goals

- Set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely
- Make sure they are aligned to business objectives to accurately measure return on investment
- Track the right metrics to stay focused on what matters
- The objective, goals, and metrics you'll see further down in this template are examples. Update with what works for your business.

## Competitive Analysis

Analyze the competition's social media presence. This will help inform your own social strategy. If you know what your competitors are doing well—and not so well—you'll discover where you might have a competitive edge.

Or, if you're asking your boss to invest more in social media, showing your leaders where your peers and competitors are succeeding can help with that too.

Use the next slide to create a high-level overview of your competitors' plan. Then conduct a SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats) for your own brand

## Auditing your social media presence

If you're already using social media, take a step back and look at:

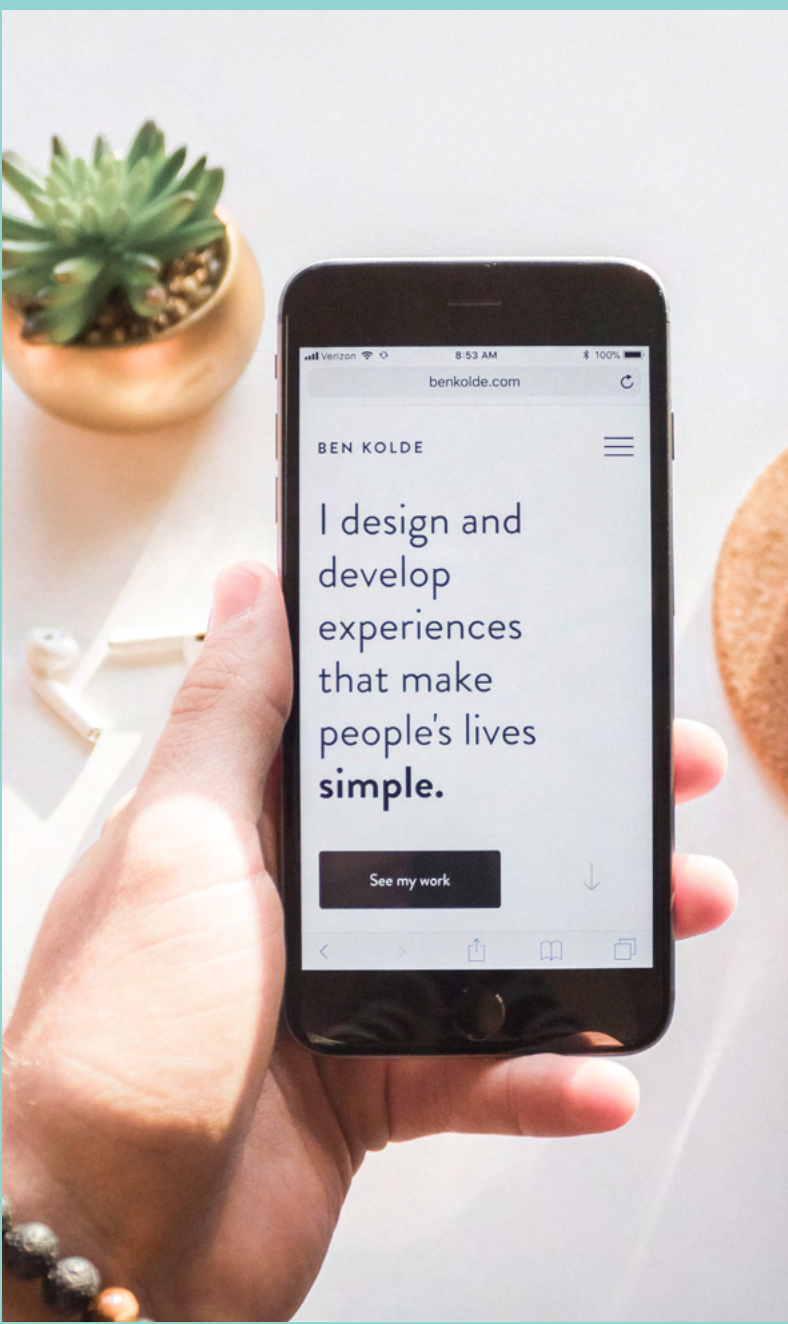
- What's working and what's not
- Who is engaging with you
- Which networks your target audience is most active on
- How your strategy compares to the competition and/or your peers

Business objective	Social media goal	Metric(s)
Grow the brand	Awareness (these metrics illuminate your current and potential audience)	Followers, shares, etc.
Turn customers into advocates	Engagement (these metrics show how audiences are interacting with your content)	Comments, likes, @mentions, etc.
Drive leads and sales	Conversions (these metrics demonstrate the effectiveness of your social engagement)	Website clicks, email signups, etc.
Improve customer retention	Consumer (these metrics reflect how active customers think and feel about your brand)	Testimonials, social media sentiment, average response time (for social customer service/support) etc.



# Find your Brand Identity

Building and maintaining an authentic brand voice is key for businesses on social media. We break down some ways you can achieve this. Every time you talk, write, design, post, respond, launch, thank, and connect with others... you're exercising your brand voice.



## Tips to help you find your brand's social media identity

### Thinking of your brand's personality

if it was a celebrity or public figure, who would that be?

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What adjectives will describe your vibe and tone? Circle 10 of the below.

Adventurous, Artistic, Athletic, Bold, Bright, Busy, Calm, Caring, Casual, Charming, Cheerful, Chic, Classic, Clever, Collaborative, Colorful, Comfortable, Conservative, Creative, Daring, Dashing, Dazzling, Delicate, Delightful, Detailed, Dramatic, Dry, Earthy, Easy, Eccentric, Efficient, Elegant, Elevated, Enchanting, Endearing, Energetic, Ethereal, Exciting, Exuberant, Fabulous, Familiar, Fancy, Fantastic, Fashionable, Festive, Fierce, Flirty, Formal, Fresh, Friendly, Fun, Functional, Futuristic, Glamorous, Graceful, Hip, Historic, Impressive, Industrial, Informal, Innovative, Inspiring, Old, Organic, Playful, Pleasant, Professional, Quaint, Quirky, Rebellious, Relaxing, Reliable, Retro, Romantic, Royal, Rustic, Scholarly, Savvy, Secure, Serious, Silly, Sleek, Smart, Soothing, Sophisticated, Stylish, Thoughtful, Tranquil, Trustworthy, Unique, Upbeat, Urban, Vintage, Whimsical, Wild, Witty, Wistful, Youthful

Now, pick 4 of those 10

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# Creating a social media brand aesthetic

With more than 90 percent of businesses using social media as a marketing tool, the competitiveness of these platforms is intensifying. To keep your identity on social media consistent and effective, you must develop a brand aesthetic. This aesthetic will make it easier to align your social channels, accurately reflect the tone and style of your business, and establish a memorable presence.

Your aesthetic stems from your brand identity. Therefore, the clearer you get on your identity, the easier it will be to establish an appropriate and effective aesthetic.

From the previous activity what does your brand identity *look* like.

Take a look through your website and marketing materials to identify existing brand styles. Perhaps there are some elements you want to move away from and update in your new aesthetic.

It's also helpful to consider your audience persona. Who is your target customer and what type of design styles would likely catch their eye? You might consider creating a persona profile to get as specific as possible about the attitudes, values, interests, and behaviors of your target audience.

## Seek design and style inspiration from other brands

The social feeds of your followers and competitors is a good place to find inspiration. While you don't want to steal or copy another brand's style, it's okay to get a feel for what you do and don't like.

You can find design and style inspiration both on and off social media. For example, take a look through a magazine to see if there are any font styles or color palettes that jump out to you.

Be mindful of any colors, designs, or images that grab your attention. Consider what emotion you want to evoke from your audience and look for designs that elicit the desired response when you come across them.

## Choose a color palette that makes a statement

The use of color in branding is incredibly powerful. In fact, research has found that color can boost brand recognition by as much as 80 percent. Also, 60 percent of the time, people decide whether they're attracted to a message based on color alone.

People tend to associate certain colors with different feelings and moods. For example:

Red is bold and elicits feelings of excitement, which is why it's often used in sales.

Blue establishes a sense of trust.

Yellow is cheerful and happy.

Green conveys health, growth, and relaxation.

You want to pick a color palette for your aesthetic that represents the tone of your brand. To make creating a color palette easier, you can use a tool such as Colors:

## Update your brand style guide to include aesthetic details

Hopefully, your business already has a brand style guide. If not, it's important to create one. Doing so helps keep all team members organized and establishes clear guidance on brand style preferences.

**Maintaining a consistent brand identity on social media can be challenging. However, establishing a brand aesthetic helps keep your social media channels aligned and, in turn, creates a stronger presence.**



# Who is your Audience?

## Defining your audience

Knowing who your audience is and what they want to see is key to creating content that they will like, comment on, and share. It's also critical for planning how to turn followers into custom

Use the table below to clearly and succinctly define who your target audience/customer/buyer persona(s) is. ers.

	Persona Name	Persona Name	Persona Name
Example job title(s)			
Needs(s)			
Pain Point(s)			
Preferred social network(s)			
Unique Characteristic			
Budget (for your product/ service)			
[Other characteristic, e.g. age, sex, location, etc.]			
[Other characteristic]			
B2B companies should also consider	Company name	Company name	Company name
Size of business			
Who tends to make the buying decisions:			

## Research which social channels your audience uses

Now you have a sense of who your audience might be and what they're talking about online. So it's time to find out where they already spend their time on social media. There are a couple of tools you can use to find this information.

## Check out the competition

Odds are, your social media audience overlaps with that of your competitors. So it's worth checking out what they're doing so you can benefit from the lessons they've already learned.

Are they reaching segments you hadn't thought to consider? How are they positioning themselves?

## Understand what your target audience wants from your social channels

First, you need to make sure you have a rock-solid understanding of how your product or service makes your audience's life.

If you don't already have a clear list of the benefits of your product, it's time to start brainstorming now. Creating benefit statements automatically involves stating

some basic information about your target demographic.

Next, start to think about how you can create value for your audience through your social channels.

What kind of content does your audience tend to engage with? If you're having trouble figuring out exactly what your social audience wants to see on your social channels, you could always ask them.

SurveyMonkey has a free template for a social media audience research survey.

# Writing for your audience

It's no secret that social media can be a powerful platform for growing your community, as well as generating leads and sales. According to one survey of small businesses, 85% of brands report generating a new client or customer from social media.

But just being on social media isn't enough to get followers, much less turn those followers into customers. The key lies in how well you engage your audience, which is where great, punchy social media copy comes in.

## Write like you talk

Which means, avoid jargon. Jargon alienates audience members who don't immediately understand what you're saying. They feel silly and unintelligent.

Or, they just dislike you when you say transform, disrupt, and innovate. Same with bandwidth, optimize, holistic, synergy, and viral.

Avoiding jargon forces you to be and sound real.

Got something new to write or post? Maybe explain it first to your mom, kid, or cousin? When an outsider 'gets it', then you're on the right path.

## Encourage Your Audience to Join the Conversation

In the early days of social media, many businesses seeking to engage their audiences on Facebook and Twitter were slow to catch up on the fact that these platforms weren't just about self-promotion or advertising. Social media is about being social, which requires moving from one-way to two-way communication.

One way to encourage conversations with your followers on your social media channels is to write copy asking them questions or gamifying their responses. Examples include:

"Tell us your ideas..."

"Sound off in the comments and tell us what you think."

"What are you looking forward to/excited about?"

## Elevate Images with Emotional Copy

Sometimes, less is more when writing copy for social media. Take Instagram for example, where the average user spends 21 minutes each day scrolling through photos and videos.

On such a visual-driven platform, brevity is the name of the game. Use your captions to elevate your images and videos by conveying a message that evokes emotions.

## Great Copy Cuts Through the Background Noise

No matter which social media platform your brand is active on, great copywriting can be the key to engaging your followers more effectively. These four social media copywriting strategies will help you to stand out from the competition, giving your audience a reason to stop and consume your content.





# Creating great visuals

To create engaging social media content during social distancing, your smartphone will continue to be one of your greatest tools. Smartphones are able to take pictures from anywhere and, when used correctly, can produce photos with quality sufficient for social media posts and online content.

Posts on should be photos, images or short videos of content that largely embodies your brand. This includes your brand values and personality, your company story, the expertise you can offer them, and some promotional items.

## Did you know?

Brands are riding the wave of social media marketing. 73% of marketers believe that their efforts through social media marketing have been "somewhat effective" or "very effective" for their business (Buffer, 2019).

## Consider a tripod or mount for your smartphone

We all know how much a shaky hand can turn a potentially good photo for social media into a blurry disaster. While it is possible to steady the camera using a makeshift mount, your best bet for a steady photo is by purchasing a tripod or professional mount for your phone.

## Pay attention to lighting

You've heard it before: lighting is everything. It can be difficult to get the right lighting outside of a studio and in your home, but with a few adjustments, it's entirely possible to achieve a well-lit photo. Find natural lighting from the sun if possible, and take advantage of "golden hour"—the first hour after sunrise and the last hour of light before sunset.

## Don't be afraid of candid

Not all of your photos need to be of your product or service. Candid photos add a sense of variety to your social media page and show audiences the genuine side of your business. Use these to your business's advantage: demonstrate how your product or service can be used, rather than advertising the good itself.

## Edit, but don't overdo it.

Once you've used these tips to take the perfect picture, you may want to edit it before posting it to social media. There are a variety of apps that can make editing easy, even if you're not experienced with photo editing: Adobe Photoshop Express, VSCO, and Snapseed are just a few that offer free, easy editing from your phone.



# Where should you post?

If you haven't already, you'll need to take the first step in creating your social strategy for businesses: setting up business accounts or pages on each platform. Try to make your username or URL your business name (or as close to your business name as possible) so consumers can easily find you online. On platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, make sure to set yourself and any of your colleagues or business partners that would need access as admins. You can set different permissions for each person based on the work they will be doing in the account.

Once you have set up each account, entered the necessary information about your business, and added in your logo as your account photo, you're ready to start sharing.

## Facebook marketing for small business

Facebook is one of the OG social media platforms. It has a massive user base with 1 billion daily and over 2 billion monthly active users. If your target customer is on any social media platform, it's likely Facebook. Bonus: Facebook also makes it easy to build target audiences for paid ad placements based on people who engage with your organic posts.

### What to post

Facebook is a fairly conversational platform. However, if a consumer decides to like your Facebook page, they are likely looking to receive updates: they want to know about future sales and promotions, hear about new products, or get information about upcoming launches or events. It's important that you're connecting with those who follow you and providing the right type of content for them. Try sharing a few different types of content and seeing what resonates well with your audience by driving the most impressions, engagements, and shares. Once you've determined the types of content and updates your audience responds to, keep sharing in that way.

### How often to share

Posting on Facebook doesn't have a limit for businesses, but dominating your followers' feeds is a social media marketing mistake you'll want to avoid. In a study by Socialbakers, engagement rates per post dropped significantly for businesses posting more than twice per day and for businesses posting only once per week.

So if you post too much, you run the risk of people un-liking your account. If you post too little, you risk your engagement metrics. Take into account how much content you have to promote, and then post accordingly. About one update each day is an optimal rate for most businesses.

### Tips to boost engagement

People scrolling through Facebook will see your business posts alongside photos of their new-born niece and cake decorating videos, so don't take your social posts too seriously. Stay casual, but be sure to continue to provide value.

**These people followed your business for a reason—make sure you're posting relevant content for them to consume and ultimately get a little closer to your brand.**





## Did you know?

Brands are riding the wave of social media marketing. 73% of marketers believe that their efforts through social media marketing have been “somewhat effective” or “very effective” for their business (Buffer, 2019).

## LinkedIn marketing for small business

LinkedIn is the oldest of the social media platforms we’re covering, with a founding date in 2002. What else was happening in 2002? Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets was released. Michelle Branch was absolutely killing it. Kelly Clarkson won American Idol.

I know—LinkedIn’s been around for a minute.

LinkedIn has over 250 million monthly active users, and it’s the most used social media channel for business-to-business (B2B) marketers to share content at 94%.

### What to post

LinkedIn is a place for people to connect with other business professionals and network online. If a LinkedIn user is following your company on LinkedIn, they likely care about the information and insights you can bring them and business-related updates.

LinkedIn is also a great platform for video. If you have the ability to create a product or insight focused video, you can see your engagement rates climb!

### How often to share

Try to post on LinkedIn each week. Companies that post weekly on LinkedIn see a 2x lift in engagement on their posts.

LinkedIn is also a great platform for your employees to become your brand advocates. Make sure to utilize them and their network in the proliferation of your content—this is a great way to get your content on the platform more often without oversharing.

### Tips to boost engagement

LinkedIn is a professional environment for people to connect with each other, and your content should reflect that. Stay helpful in the content you share. Posts should be a resource for consumers to find ways to better themselves in your area of expertise or hear about product updates. You want to share the best aspects of your business, wins people can learn from, and insights they can’t get anywhere else. Posts with an image see a 2x higher conversion rate than posts without, so make sure to accompany your post or link with an image.

## Twitter Marketing for Small Business

Certainly the most conversational out of all of the social media platforms, Twitter is a massive network of individuals and brands interacting with each other in a very fast-paced environment. There are over 500 million tweets sent daily, and over 320 million monthly active users on the platform. It is one of the most relied upon social channels for news and has a wide international user base.

### What to post

In November of 2017, Twitter officially expanded the number of characters allowed in a tweet from 140 to 280, giving people more freedom in what they post per tweet but still limiting the length per post. Most business profiles tweet a wide array of content, including product promotions, online contests, sales, funny thoughts related to their industry, data insights, and new releases.

### How often to share

With 5,787 tweets sent every second, it’s easy to get lost in the clutter. Posting multiple times per day will allow you the most opportunity for your tweets to be seen by your followers and give them more chances to engage with you.

### Tips to boost engagement

Again, make sure to continue to provide value to your followers and their audience, but you can also be a little more playful on Twitter than you would be on more business-focused platforms like LinkedIn. Keep it light, keep it bright.







**Let's get social**

# **A Guide Social Media Marketing**





**Let's get healthy**

# **A Guide to Employee Mental Health**



# Managing lockdown fatigue

**No one thought when the pandemic hit Australia in January, that months later, many of us would still be dealing with its fallout. The restrictions for those living and working in areas where the number of COVID cases are higher have caused psychological, physical, and emotional effects, including physical and mental exhaustion.**

However, this fatigue can also be experienced by people in states or regions where there are no or very few positive cases of COVID, and where the long-term restrictions, such as border closures, have had a significant impact on their personal and work-related freedoms. This information sheet outlines what lockdown fatigue is, some of its causes, signs and symptoms, ideas to help you to manage it, and where to seek help if needed.







## What is lockdown fatigue?

Lockdown fatigue has been described worldwide as a state of exhaustion caused by the long-term effects of COVID-19 and the changes it has caused to every aspect of your life. It is a state experienced when people have had to come to terms with a virus that has affected every aspect of their life, including their freedom, and which has continued for months, sometimes with no end in sight until a vaccine or treatment is discovered.

## Allow yourself to grieve the 'old normal'

Many people are beginning to miss the pleasures of their old way of life and are grieving the loss of safety and predictability that has resulted from COVID-19. Grief is a natural reaction to loss or change of any kind and it is important to give yourself time to adjust to new routines and activities. Dealing with feelings of sadness and loss can make us feel like we are 'on an emotional roller coaster' which can cause our behaviour to be unpredictable. This can lead to tensions and conflicts with the people we live with and they may not know how to best support us. Being able to communicate honestly about how you are feeling and how you can support each other may reduce or avoid potential conflict. Remember, many people will be sharing a similar experience to you so don't be afraid to share your feelings and be open to accepting help and support from others if needed.

## What are the causes?

Most people have never experienced the unknowns related to, and the restrictions imposed by, COVID-19. The unfamiliarity of this situation can be seen through the use of so many terms that we have heard on a daily basis since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Australia:

- social and physical distancing
- unprecedented
- Feeling unwell – get tested
- practise good hygiene
- restrictions
- quarantining
- self-isolation
- curfew
- daily reported cases
- border closures
- mandatory mask wearing

All these terms are now a part of everyday language. And recently, 'lockdown fatigue' has been added to this growing list.



## Understanding lockdown fatigue

Some of the reasons for the fatigue you may be feeling include:


- not being able to do what you want to
- being cooped up
- having to home school your children while trying to work from home
- sick of being cautious
- being cut-off from normal social interaction
- feeling uncertain and anxious about your employment or financial situation
- not seeing an end to the changes in your world as a result of COVID-19
- worrying about what the world will look like after COVID-19
- hearing about some people 'not doing the right thing'
- the inconsistent messages given by leaders and politicians
- being bombarded by COVID-19 information.

## What does lockdown fatigue feel like?

Some of the symptoms of lockdown fatigue that you may be experiencing include:

- Short temper with outbursts of frustration, anger and irritability
- sadness
- depression
- anxiety and fear
- physical exhaustion and burnout
- difficulty focusing, prioritising, problem-solving and making decisions
- lack of motivation and reduced interest in previously enjoyed activities
- difficulty in maintaining a routine
- behavioural changes such as non-compliance with public health strategies, over- or under-eating and increased reliance on alcohol, cigarettes or drugs
- sleep disturbance
- negative thoughts like 'I'm over this', 'I can't see an end to it all', 'I'm so tired, I've just got no energy or motivation', 'It's getting harder and harder to get out of bed each morning', and 'I can't stand this anymore'
- exhaustion throughout the day





# How to deal with lockdown fatigue

Some ideas for managing during this difficult time:

- Recognise and try to accept that although you want to return to some sort of normality, this is only possible when it is safe.
- Acknowledge your feelings and reactions and try not to be critical or judge yourself. Some ideas that might help to recognise and understand your reactions include keeping a journal, doing meditation or other relaxation, or talking through your feelings with someone you trust.
- Be kind to yourself (and others). Accept that you may be more tired, not as productive or motivated as usual, and that you may have a shorter fuse and be more irritable.
- Try to create and stick to a routine. It's common to feel tired and unmotivated when you're not in your usual schedule, so it's important to create a routine for your sleep, meals, work, rest and exercise. If you are working from home, take timeout and schedule regular breaks to get fresh air and relax.
- Connect with family, friends, and colleagues. Humans are social beings, so one of the hardest impacts of the COVID-19 for you may have been the restrictions on your social contact with people. If this is the case, make the most of technology, whether it be the phone or computer, to speak and/or see the important people in your life on a regular basis.

## Make the most of any opportunities to communicate

Make the most of any opportunities to communicate, such as chatting over the back fence or balcony with a neighbour, passing them biscuits you baked or lemons from your tree; speaking to a passer-by as you weed your front garden, or while out walking in your local area; or asking the delivery person how they are as they deliver a parcel.

Connect with family, friends, and colleagues. Humans are social beings, so one of the hardest impacts of the COVID-19 for you may have been the restrictions on your social contact with people. If this is the case, make the most of technology, whether it be the phone or computer, to speak and/or see the important people in your life on a regular basis.

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Email: [membership@psychology.org.au](mailto:membership@psychology.org.au)  
Web: [psychology.org.au](http://psychology.org.au)  
Find us on social media





- Spend time relaxing. Do the things you enjoy, whether it be listening to music, reading, watching movies, gardening, working on your family history, playing games, or doing puzzles, craftwork or painting.
- Try to balance your negative thoughts with positive ones, to focus on the present and try not to worry about what you cannot control. Remember that Australia is doing really well in managing the risks of COVID-19 and flattening the curve, and that continuing with restrictions will place us in an even better position.
- Seek additional help when needed.
- Make sure you look after yourself and get some of the following basics right:
  - eat sensibly
  - get regular exercise and keep active
  - sleep well – try and keep to a routine and prioritise sleep, as the body needs good sleep to restore itself
  - drink plenty of water
  - get fresh air and sun if possible

# Maintaining your mental health during social isolation

To help control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) across the country, all Australians have been asked to practise social (physical) distancing. In some cases people are required to, or may choose to, self-isolate. Understandably, the challenges associated with social distancing and isolation, including separation from loved ones, loss of freedom and reduced income, are leading some people to experience feelings of anxiety, boredom, frustration, and fear. This information sheet outlines some useful strategies you can use to maintain good mental health during this unprecedented time of social (physical) distancing and isolation.

## Stay connected

Positive social connections are essential for our mental health and can help us cope in times of stress. In the current crisis, we are being asked to physically distance ourselves from others, so it is important that we maintain our social networks using available methods of communication. This can be as simple as phoning a friend to share your experience, using videoconferencing technology to check in with a family member or friend, or spending quality time with the people you live with.

## Avoid difficult situations

At times, people will be required to self-isolate with others in their household. While this will provide opportunities for social connections, living with someone 24/7 with little or no time away from each other may give rise to arguments and/or tension. There are a few things you can do to limit conflict with those you are isolated with, including:

Creating a roster to help you distribute chores equally and fairly.

- Engaging in activities you like doing together such as movies, board games, jigsaws, gardening. Sharing these enjoyable and fun experiences will result in positive emotions and distract you all from the worries associated with the virus.
- Communicating your needs honestly and clearly, including being open about your worries and concerns, when you need support from one another and when you need some time alone.
- Maintaining your sense of fun and positive humour.
- Remaining respectful of each other in times of conflict – walk away and take time to calm yourselves, returning to the discussion later and repairing any hurt caused.

## Structure your day

While in isolation it is beneficial to plan out your days to restore a sense of purpose and normality to your daily life. Scheduling enjoyable activities and tasks in between the tedious ones will help you stick to your routine. Structuring activities around mealtimes and bedtime can also help you keep to your schedule while ensuring you eat regularly and get enough sleep. Given the current need to practise social (physical) distancing and isolation, many people are also being encouraged to work from home where possible. Working from home can bring a whole new set of challenges and the need to provide structure to your day is even more important.

- Change out of your pyjamas each morning – While you don't have to dress as formally as you might when going into the office, getting out of your pyjamas can help you get in the right headspace to start your day.
- Set up a dedicated workspace – Choose a space away from noise and with adequate lighting to set up your work desk. If possible, use an adjustable desk chair so you can work comfortably. Visit Worksafe Victoria for tips on setting up a safe workspace ([bit.ly/2Wr2vjL](https://bit.ly/2Wr2vjL))
- Set a strict schedule – It can be hard to switch-off from work, so it is important to clearly define your working hours, ensuring you have regular breaks. Disconnect from all workrelated accounts (e.g., remote desktops, email) at the end of your working day to help maintain a clear boundary between your work and home life.
- Limit distractions – Being at home can mean you can be easily distracted by other people or tasks (e.g., household chores). Schedule set times where you can take a break from work to complete these tasks, rather than completing them randomly throughout the day where you can lose track of time.



# Tips to cope with self-isolation

**Maintain a positive outlook during periods of self-isolation by:**

- reminding yourself that this period of self-isolation is temporary
- thinking of the benefits of self-isolation to the wider society, including slowing the spread of the virus and protecting those most vulnerable in your community
- remaining mindful that medical and scientific experts are following strict protocols to contain the virus and treat those affected
- ensuring you have access to accurate, reliable and up-to-date information that communicates what is expected from you if you are in isolation
- maintaining relationships with family, friends and colleagues (e.g., via telephone or video technologies)
- limiting social media as you are likely to be exposed to negative news and get drawn into doomsday discussions – try to keep your mind busy with activities you enjoy such as reading, watching movies, exercising and even spring cleaning the house
- structuring your day when working from home – allocate specific work hours, schedule breaks and set-up a dedicated workspace where distractions are limited.

breath





## Working from home while caring for children

Parents working from home while children are also at home has created the potential for a huge increase in stress, as parents juggle work and family responsibilities. Some ideas for managing during these times include:

- • Develop a routine for the family that incorporates work, study, exercise, as well as fun activities such as games, puzzles, story-telling or reading together
- • List the times for your work, the children's subjects/learning (if learning from home), exercise and regular breaks.
- • Decide where everyone can do their work most effectively and without distractions.
- • Partners can take turns to work and share childcare supervision and responsibilities. However, for single parents, a routine will be especially important.
- • Recognise that sometimes it is impossible to achieve your work goals and adequately supervise your children. Be realistic about your goals and accept that it is essential to reduce your expectations during this time.
- • Try to be as flexible as you can with your work hours and adjust them to fit in with your children's schedules. For example, plan to work on important tasks when your children are busy or sleeping.
- • Communicate with your children when you have a critical work event scheduled and that you need some uninterrupted time.
- • Be kind to yourself and reduce the pressure where you can (e.g., cooking and freezing meals).
- • Have dinner together as a family and discuss the day.
- • Enjoy more family time in the evenings, playing, reading, watching a movie or exercising together. • Stick with normal bedtime routines as much as possible during the week to make sure everyone gets enough sleep.
- • Try to appreciate having this unusual time with your children as it is going to provide unique opportunities to spend time together during a workday that wasn't possible before.
- • If the circumstances are feeling overwhelming, identify what is the cause of the stress and try to come up with some solutions. For example, if you are missing some 'me' time, try to find ways of reclaiming it (perhaps by exercising alone, or escaping for an hour to a room to read).
- • Finding some positives in the current situation may reduce your feeling of being overwhelmed (e.g., you may now have time to do some things you previously haven't had time for).

# Helping your child through self-isolation

Some ideas for managing during this difficult time:

- Recognise and try to accept that although you want to return to some sort of normality, this is only possible when it is safe.
- Acknowledge your feelings and reactions and try not to be critical or judge yourself. Some ideas that might help to recognise and understand your reactions include keeping a journal, doing meditation or other relaxation, or talking through your feelings with someone you trust.
- Be kind to yourself (and others). Accept that you may be more tired, not as productive or motivated as usual, and that you may have a shorter fuse and be more irritable.
- Try to create and stick to a routine. It's common to feel tired and unmotivated when you're not in your usual schedule, so it's important to create a routine for your sleep, meals, work, rest and exercise. If you are working from home, take timeout and schedule regular breaks to get fresh air and relax.
- Connect with family, friends, and colleagues. Humans are social beings, so one of the hardest impacts of the COVID-19 for you may have been the restrictions on your social contact with people. If this is the case, make the most of technology, whether it be the phone or computer, to speak and/or see the important people in your life on a regular basis.







**Let's get healthy**

# **A Guide to Employee Mental Health**





**Let's get productive**

# **Employee Working From Home Guide**



Getting distracted at home? There's no doubt that many of us have been thrust into the working from home life with less than ideal home office setups and plenty of interruptions just waiting to catch you off guard.

Productivity, efficiency and wellbeing are central to a healthy and effective workplace. If you're one of the thousands out there now dealing with cluttered spaces, achy joints, and increased procrastination when working from home, know that you are not alone. More than 65% of Australians work from home. Due to COVID-19, that statistic is probably much higher right now.

Self-isolation and social distancing mean more of us than ever are

getting our work done behind closed doors. There's never been a better time to improve productivity or improve your home office and habits.

It sounds great in theory. Comfy clothes. No commute time. And, your favourite snacks on hand. The issue is, sometimes it's hard to actually get any work done. We've all been there. You spend more time prepping the ultimate breakfast than answering emails. You're undecided on a Spotify playlist. You realise working from your sofa is less comfortable than you thought it would be. Suddenly... you're missing your desk. Don't stress. This guide will cover everything you need to know about working from home.



## What is working from home?

Before we go any further let's get one thing straight. 'Remote working' and 'working from home' are actually two different things. You might've heard the two terms bandied about interchangeably over the past few months but there's a few important differences. You won't meet remote workers in the office. Most people doing remote work are going to be found working externally. It's a different lifestyle altogether and to work remotely requires a degree of discipline and different resources and skills to manage.

Working from home is when you might spend three days in the office and two days at home or it might be a one-off day when your sick child stays home from school, so you decide to work at home. Lots of employees might prefer to work from home permanently even if they're in the same city as their work — they want to enjoy the flexibility. This is still different to remote workers which is a broader term that encapsulates workers who are in another city, out in the country or overseas.

## What are the benefits of working from home?

Working from home has numerous benefits. Some might be direct benefits for yourself or your family while others benefit your community and even the planet.

### 1. Better work-life balance

Take advantage of the flexibility afforded to you. Need to attend a morning meeting but also want fit in a 30-minute walk? WFH lets you do both. Instead of building everything else in life around your work schedule you can fit work around parts of your life. Everything from running simple errands or being at home for a package to be delivered can be done easier.

### 2. Less commute stress

One study found that the average Australian in the city spends 66 minutes commuting. That's an extra hour of sleep or an extra hour to do exercise, spend time with family members or friends. That's just the average, some people might spend far longer commuting which means they might reclaim even more personal time.

In a survey of over 1,200 people by Employment Hero the majority of respondents (59%) rank the commute in their 'top 3 things not missed about working in the office'. According to research from HILDA, the average Australian commute time rose 20% between 2002 to 2017. Sydney had the longest average daily commutes (71 minutes), followed by Brisbane (67 minutes), Melbourne (65 minutes), Perth (59 minutes) and Adelaide (56 minutes).

### 3. Money savings

That's a great segue to our next point. WFH not only helps you save personal time it can help you save money. Between the costs of running a car, parking fees, public transport, eating out on your lunch break going to work can take a huge bite out of your wallet. WFH a few days a week might save you just enough to put towards something you really want.

### 4. Positive environmental impact

Not driving your car into work means one less car on the road contributing to carbon emissions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic global emissions have decreased an estimated 17% since the beginning of April to a level not seen since 2006. That's a couple of months work undoing decades of damage.

As well as this people who WFH are generally more aware of their electricity use while at the office light and temperature settings are often automated. In your own home it might be simpler, cheaper and better for the environment to open in the window instead of turning on the air conditioner.

## Are workers obliged to observe the company's directive to work from home?

Normally, WFH arrangements are implemented on a voluntary basis between employers and workers, often accompanied by a signed agreement setting out terms and conditions. In the current situation, however, WFH has been mandated in many parts of the world as a temporary public health measure. In accordance with Article 19(a) of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), workers are legally obligated to cooperate with the employer to secure a safe and healthy working environment in support of relevant statutory provisions, collective agreements or company policies. Workers are also responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and the safety of others, using devices and protective equipment and complying with the policies set forth by the employer. Additionally, in accordance with Paragraph 16 of the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164), they should report any hazards or issues as soon as possible following the employer's reporting procedures. It is important to be clear that the workers' obligations and responsibilities apply even in the informal surroundings of WFH arrangements. Therefore, when WFH is required to minimize the spread of a pandemic, workers must cooperate and comply fully with preventive measures or directives, take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others and observe company policies.

## What are employers' responsibilities when implementing working from home arrangements in response to COVID-19?

It is important to note that temporary WFH arrangements do not require any permanent adjustment to the terms and conditions of employment. The arrangements can change in response to updated directives and the evolving needs of the company. Employers should consider modifying or developing a company policy or guidelines to provide clear guidance on implementing WFH arrangements (see annex for a template). They should communicate the policy effectively to all workers, and any changes to the policy should be communicated as early as possible. Many countries around the world have begun legislating aspects of WFH/remote working arrangements, working conditions, the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers. For example, in the Netherlands, the Working Conditions Decree concerns paid work performed in the worker's living quarters or another place chosen by the worker outside of the employer's premises. It includes the employer's duty of care to check on the worker and ensure legal obligations under the Decree are met. In Poland, the provision of the Labour Code that addresses "telework" emphasises that the location of work is away from the premises of the employer and is based on services rendered by electronic means, while in Austria, "telework" is regulated through working-time legislation, rather than as a separate issue.<sup>9</sup> In March 2020, Chile enacted a law regulating teleworking, granting legal certainties to both employers and workers in teleworking arrangements and specifying their rights and responsibilities. For example, employers' obligation includes bearing the costs of operation, functioning, maintenance and repair of equipment.





# Worker's compensation & liability

Generally, in some countries, when WFH is implemented, any injury incurred during work hours and arising from or while performing work functions in the designated work area of the house may be covered by worker's compensation insurance. In other countries however, employment

injury insurance may not foresee the coverage of WFH arrangements. This would depend on national laws and judicial precedents. Overall the number of workers' compensation claims could fall during the pandemic, as fewer people are working. But that effect is unlikely be felt uniformly across all industries, and the workers' claims may not be limited to COVID-19 exposures. Employers may face additional challenges in limiting workrelated injuries during WFH due to a lack of oversight of work environments and the increased potential for improper use of equipment and in-home distractions. These challenges may be compounded by the current pandemic, which has contributed to rising anxiety and mental stress and forced many workers to share makeshift home workspaces with spouses, children, and pets.

Subject to national laws and regulations, the worker's home workspace may be considered an extension of the employer's workspace in a WFH arrangement. Thus in some countries, employers could be liable for accidents that arise out of and occur within the course of employment when the injury takes place in the worker's home workspace during work hours. The timing, location and circumstances of the injury are usually important considerations to evaluate. If the injury occurred during regular working hours, in a location where the employer anticipated the workers to perform work and was in the midst of performing a required duty, employers may be held liable. If employers may be held liable for accidents in the worker's home workspace under national laws and regulations, employers are advised to review the company's existing employers' liability insurance to ensure it covers WFH. The employer should ensure the company policy on WFH assumes no liability for injuries arising in the worker's home workspace outside the agreed work hours or any loss, destruction, or injury that may occur to the home of the worker. This includes family members, visitors, or others that may become injured within or around the worker's home.

## What are workers' responsibilities when working from home?

Workers have the duty to protect themselves and others and to cooperate with their employers in the implementation of preventive and control measures, in accordance with Article 19(a) of Convention No. 155. This includes following any information, instruction, or training provided by employers and adopting safe work behaviours, complying with instructions,

ensuring good hygiene practices, and using safety devices and protective equipment. Workers are obliged to notify the employer if they become aware that they are suffering from any disease or physical or mental impairment which affects their ability to do their job, and report any accident to management immediately. Workers should also keep in regular contact with their employer and inform of any health and safety risks at home or any need to change the home working arrangement. In addition to safety and health, the general obligations and responsibilities of workers, including those stipulated in the respective national labour and employment laws, the terms and conditions of employment, or the collective agreement shall be applicable in a WFH arrangement. These responsibilities may include: complying with the company policy or guidelines on WFH, if any; complying with all existing policies and regulations, including safety and health policy, ICT and data protection policy, intellectual property, use of company tools and equipment policy; taking care of one's own safety, physical and mental health and well-being; restricting working time to those agreed with the employer and in line with national working time legislation; fulfilling all normal duties or alternative duties assigned; practicing work-life balance, and staying active and connected; being available and accessible during work hours, and maintaining regular and timely communication with managers; refraining from holding meeting with customers or other workers at home without the company's approval; making necessary child or dependent care arrangements; taking reasonable care of the company's tools and

## How do you measure workers' productivity when working from home?

Companies with remote workers are generally concerned about productivity from two angles. Some employers wonder "are they working at all?" while others are more concerned with "are they working efficiently?" Yet measuring the productivity of a remote workforce should not be any more difficult or different than measuring a physically present workforce. Well managed remote teams can be far more productive than physically managed workers as companies are required to measure productivity by objective metrics than the physical presence of "time in the building." Before a company establishes how to track and measures a workers' performance, it should identify what needs to be measured. Choosing the most impactful and qualitative metrics is key. Measuring productivity based on results requires quantifiable metrics, which can be challenging to define. Some sectors and jobs are easier to define than others. For example for a sales worker, it is very clear what can be measured and evaluated. In job functions like a call centre representative, a simple metric of calls per hour can be used. However, when workers have varying responsibilities, creating metrics for each worker will be required, with some degree of frequent revision. Additionally, meeting a measurement does not necessarily equate to productivity. If goals are set too low, a worker accomplishing the desired result may not be working at full capacity. Just because a worker is connected to the office by a virtual private

network (VPN) does not mean work is being performed. Performance is best determined by outcomes, and whether a worker is meeting measurable benchmarks or goals. Like any goal, worker performance cannot be achieved if no one knows what it is. The key to working well with remote workers is to be very clear and specific with all expectations. Consideration should be given to how long it will take to know if someone is productive or not. Measurable results make sense, but the more frequent the measurement, the more susceptible is the feeling of micromanagement. However, measuring too infrequently means that the employer may not be aware of problems that need to be resolved. Importantly, there are privacy issues that employers need to be aware of regarding workers and workplace monitoring.

Five elements to consider in measuring remote workers' productivity include:

- Set and communicate clear goals and deadlines in the same way with workers in a physical workspace.
- Form plans to increase accountability.
- Analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis.
- Evaluate quality and quantity instead of time worked – shift the metrics to "tasks accomplished and their quality" versus "hours spent".
- Track achievements.





**What are the main challenges in implementing working from home arrangements and what considerations should be made to address and manage them?**

There are multiple benefits associated with WFH, including: the reduction in commuting times; greater autonomy and flexibility in the organization of work; a better work-life balance; increased motivation and reduced turnover; and enhanced productivity and efficiency. In addition, reduced travel associated with WFH leads to a reduction in carbon emissions. However, in such an unexpected and urgent situation as the COVID-19 pandemic, both employers and workers may be unprepared physically, mentally or infrastructure-wise to meet all challenges posed by WFH. According to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 71 per cent of employers are struggling to adjust to remote work; 65 per cent of employers say maintaining employee morale has been a challenge; and more than one third of employers are facing difficulties with company culture, employee productivity and leave regulation.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore highly recommended that employers develop a workplace policy to provide clear guidelines and address the challenges. In addition, employers should regularly assess the effectiveness of the company policies and guidelines. Workers should regularly communicate challenges experienced with the company policies and guidelines to their employers.



## Communication

Advances in ICT have enabled and facilitated WFH arrangements, yet ICT cannot overcome every limitation amid the rapid changes in the current situation. While employers and workers are both making efforts to keep up with the latest developments, changes announced by the Government or policy changes by the company could cause confusion among workers, especially if the changes could impact business operations or the expectations on workers, such as new restrictions on the movements of people. There are a range of software tools that make communication, collaboration and transparency easier. Many are free or low cost.<sup>19</sup> Communicate regularly Communication should be quicker and much more frequent when WFH arrangements are in place. This improves collaboration and builds the necessary trust to successfully roll out new ways of working.

Employers should do the following:

- Designate communication channels to enable the business to communicate with staff during WFH as necessary and ensure consistency of messages.
- Keep an up-to-date registry of contact details of all workers (phone number, email address, or physical address).
- Communicate with all workers regularly to keep them informed of updated developments related to COVID-19 and its impact on company operations, including any change in company policies.
- Encourage an exchange of views and ideas on business continuity strategies.
- 

Hold periodic virtual meetings to update workers on the situation, review work and agree on how to deliver the company's services. This will also help workers to feel less isolated during WFH

Applications to assist with working from home

Signing documents online rather than having to print and scan: <https://go.docuSign.com/o/trial/>

Skype chat for meetings and online calls <https://www.skype.com/en/>

Microsoft teams for meetings and work management <https://www.microsoft.com/en-au/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

zoom for online meetings <https://zoom.us/>

website / app blocker to help keep your team focused and not distracted. <https://freedom.to/stayfocusd/?rfsn=311154.5a98f>



## ICT equipment and workstation set-up

Staff may experience technical challenges, such as connectivity problems, if WFH arrangements were deployed quickly and possibly in an unorganized fashion. The COVID-19 pandemic makes it difficult for employers to plan ahead and allocate sufficient time for optimum preparation for WFH arrangements. Issues may arise where companies, especially SMEs, may lack the required communication infrastructure or sufficient equipment for all staff to work from home at the same time.

Establish shared responsibilities, commitment, and mutual understanding

Employers should seek cooperation, ideas and commitment from workers as to how they can best address and overcome the above mentioned challenge while ensuring business continuity and preserving jobs. Workers may have limited resources for WFH, or their home may offer a less optimal working environment than the workplace would (for example, it may be situated near a noisy construction site or factory or workers may have multi-generational household or cramped living conditions that are not conducive to WFH). Therefore, employers need to understand and assess the limitations that staff encounter and adjust expectations, responsibilities and tasks accordingly.

## Data protection and security

While the use of technology has enabled and facilitated WFH, it also presents higher risks of cyberattacks and confidentiality breaches. Safe WFH processes are essential, especially if workers are using their personal laptops or devices to perform official duties and connect to the company network. Some companies have an existing data protection, confidentiality and security policy for this purpose.

Employers need to ensure that:

- Data security is maintained even during WFH.
- A robust information technology system is in place with the necessary safeguards, including the safe transmission of confidential data outside the workplace
- Computers used for work have proper software installed, including anti-virus protection, secured virtual private networks or firewalls against cyber threats; workers are aware of the company data protection policy, if any
- Workers have the required skill to use the ICT in accordance with company policy. Reminders and online training can be used to refresh skills in this area.









## Staff management and possible abuse of WFH arrangement

As more and more companies choose to (or are required to) offer WFH arrangements during the COVID-19 crisis, issues of trust often advance to the frontline of workplace discussions. This is because WFH can impact the trust equation between workers and managers because the task of management is more challenging. In the absence of face-to-face contact, the traditional “command and control” style of management becomes less relevant and managers may struggle to find other ways to make sure that workers are getting their work done during WFH. If workers do not feel a sense of belonging during WFH, they may also distrust their managers and company leadership. This may lead to the manager’s loss of control, and certain workers may abuse the WFH arrangement. Hence, workers’ self-discipline and mutual trust and confidence between employers and workers are essential in this working arrangement. Furthermore, the effective management of WFH requires a results-based management approach. This involves identifying objectives, tasks and milestones, and then monitoring and discussing progress without overly burdensome reporting requirements.



## Build mutual trust and shared responsibilities

The “glue” that holds WFH arrangements, together is trust. Managers, workers and their colleagues need to trust each other. WFH cannot be effective without it. Employers should build mutual trust and establish shared responsibilities with workers through open and transparent discussions about expectations and outputs, including:

- when workers will be available and be responsive.
- how they will keep in touch, such as online and telephone contact.
- how work-life balance will be managed, for instance through regular breaks and switching off from work at the end of the day.
- how performance and reporting will be managed, taking into consideration worker's circumstances where necessary.
- who workers should contact if they have any work-related issue.
- who workers should contact if they have an emergency type situation.

Employers must also recognize some workers may find it hard to motivate and organize themselves when working from home. If this happens, the manager and worker should talk about practical steps to overcome those obstacles.

## Organization of working time

The organization of working time is essential but it could be challenging, especially for workers with specified work hours or hourly paid wages. The ILO report, Ensuring decent working time for the future referred to the European Union Framework Agreement on Telework, provides that the working time of teleworkers should be within the framework of the applicable national legislation, collective agreements and company rules. Teleworkers manage the organization of their working time, and can do their work at times that are most convenient for them, while remaining contactable during the normal business hours of the organization. Performance standards of the teleworker are equivalent to those of comparable workers at the employer's premises. The report also indicated that Singapore and Sweden regulate telework, including work hours and rest provisions, through collective bargaining or guidance issued by public authorities.

## Establish self-discipline and close monitoring

While some degree of flexibility should be deployed in a WFH arrangement, employers should:

- establish an expectation of the worker's self-discipline and compliance with the agreed work hours.
- ensure work hours and rest breaks occur in line with national legislation, collective agreements, or the company's terms and conditions of employment.
- ensure that workers record the total hours worked for each day or week.
- consider deploying online attendance or using email to record work hours.

## Occupational safety and health

As indicated in section 6(a), employers generally are responsible for the safety and health of workers at the workplace and during work hours. However, during WFH, supervisors are unable to ensure the health and safety of workers because they are not present at the employer's workspace. Participants in the Global Dialogue Forum on the Challenges and Opportunities of Teleworking for Workers and Employers in the Information and Communications Technology and Financial Services Sectors, held in Geneva in October 2016, included this among their consensus points: “Occupational safety and health conditions are more difficult to monitor and control in teleworking arrangements, especially where the home is also the workplace.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, for a majority of individuals who are working from home for the first time, getting the correct home office set-up presents a challenge. Sometimes, space within the home is limited and office space may double as a dining space, kitchen counter or general use area. Other times, a desk and chair may be present but without the adjustability needed to provide a suitable long-term work environment. Ergonomic risks can be exacerbated as workers may not have access to the same ergonomically-friendly equipment as inside the company's premises. For both employers and workers, the use of proper ergonomics can be overlooked while implementing WFH arrangements during COVID-19, possibly increasing the risk of injury or health problems to workers. Employers should consider how they could mitigate the potential for injuries to address potential ergonomic concerns for workers.



## Promote awareness and ensure compliance

Employers should do the following:

provide information and training on health and safety issues particularly relevant for workers in WFH arrangements (e.g. ergonomics, working in isolation, general fire and electrical safety issues).

- ensure that workers are aware of or provided with relevant information about their general obligations with regards to safety and health including taking care of their own health and safety and the safety of others.
- ensure that workers are aware of and comply with the company's safety and health policy, if any, including the procedures for reporting work-related accidents and ill health or any health and safety concern.
- review the company's safety and health policy, if any, and ensure it has provisions covering the worker's home when WFH arrangements are in place.
- ensure workers are aware of the company's liability under the applicable national laws and regulations and their liability insurance for injuries that occur in the worker's home during the WFH hours.
- provide on-going evaluation of offsite workers' workstation and offer guidance and monitoring of ergonomic conditions (however, managers will need to respect workers' home privacy).
- offer ergonomics and safety training or resources to change work habits and improve the physical home-based work environment.
- 

## Health and mental well-being

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers may be experiencing full-time WFH for the first time, while they are also isolated from co-workers, friends and sometimes even from family. Their daily living routines have been disrupted, which may cause added stress, tension, and physical and mental strain. The impact of these stressors is even stronger in the current economic situation. When companies are adversely affected there can be increased redundancy, lay-offs and terminations, causing workers to feel further anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity, which may result in feelings of depression. The situation is aggravated during mandatory and prolonged WFH when lockdowns prevent people from going out and social life is limited. Studies have indicated that being unable to interact with friends and isolation from colleagues are key disadvantages in WFH. 28 Company policies on WFH should incorporate measure that respond to those factors.







## **Promote health and well-being and be supportive and understanding**

It is important to stress that physical distancing does not require social isolation. While it is important for workers to find new ways to work and interact, employers must recognize the impact of isolation and loneliness, hence they must be supportive and empathetic, and keep workers informed, connected and mentally healthy. Employers may consider taking the following actions:

- regularly contacting workers to make sure they feel supported and being available, accessible and willing to listen when workers need support.
- creating opportunities for team communications by using online tools or apps to establish teamwide chat groups, for example.
- providing workers with appropriate control and flexibility over how they do their work.
- offering information and practical tools to support positive mental health, including access to the employee assistance programme.
- appropriately responding to signs of workers' distress and providing workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns.
- raising awareness of workers' responsibility to take care of their own physical and mental wellbeing during WFH, including encouraging workers to stay physically active, eat well and regularly go outside for fresh air.

Companies may consider issuing a policy guideline on WFH, addressing the physical and mental health and well-being of workers, or they may refer to available resources on health and well-being during WFH.



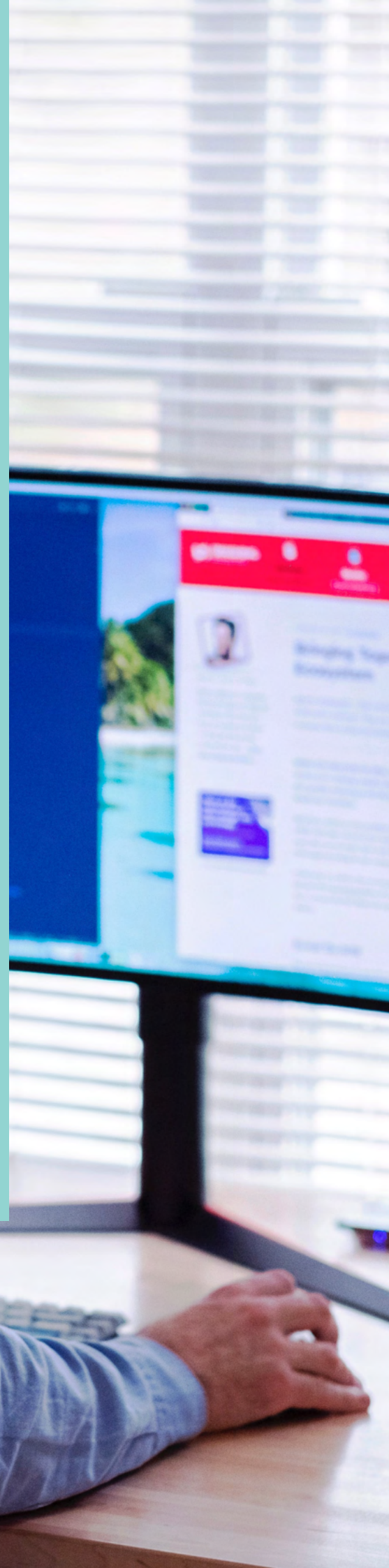
## Work-life balance

WFH can help workers to achieve a better work-life balance as they avoid long and stressful commutes between home and the workplace, and they have more time for family. Other benefits of WFH include increased worker satisfaction, productivity and loyalty, and reduced staff turnover.<sup>31</sup> While WFH arrangements have a great deal of potential, the reality is often more complicated, especially when WFH arrangements are implemented to contain a pandemic and not necessarily because the workers voluntarily chose it. Maintaining work-life balance may be a particular challenge for those with family care responsibilities due to closures of childcare facilities and schools, and in the absence of alternative care arrangements. Often, WFH leads to a blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life, an increase in work hours and an intensification of work. Thus, WFH can interfere with private life and cause work-life conflicts that can be challenging for workers' well-being, and affect overall work performance. A survey of teleworkers in Japan shows that the issue of the ambiguity of working time and time off was the highest-ranked disadvantage of remote working.<sup>32</sup> The worry and stress of "work without end" are being recognized and regulatory measures have been introduced in response to separate paid work and personal life.<sup>33</sup> For example, France introduced the "right to be disconnected" in the 2017 revision of its Labour Code. It is therefore crucial that the employer has clear guidelines on working time arrangements that are in line with national legislation.

### Promote work-life balance and be supportive

While there may be some measures taken at the national level addressing work-life balance, employers should do the following:

- set clear expectations of work hours and encourage and empower workers to set boundaries on his or her work schedule.
- promote a healthy lifestyle and work-life balance, including regular breaks and rest, exercise and fresh air.
- provide mental well-being support to workers who experience work-life conflict.
- for guidance, refer to the applicable laws and regulations or the relevant guidelines promoting healthy work-life balance, such as those issued by the occupational safety and health or mental health department.





## Performance and productivity

Benefits of WFH for workers typically include less time spent commuting, fewer interruptions, and greater flexibility. Thus, WFH could lead to better performance and increased productivity and engagement, which could improve workers' satisfaction and reduce turnover. However, WFH implemented in response to COVID-19 lockdown measures may be different in practice. Additional care responsibilities of working parents may dramatically increase due to school closures. Working parents may need to be involved in home-schooling, surveillance and care of children of school-age or there may be more than one family member sharing the same space for online schooling or teleworking. The worker's family responsibilities, having to share working spaces, or even strains in relationship or domestic violence may interfere with his or her job responsibilities, alter working schedules, and affect work performance and productivity.

## Change productivity mindset and be flexible and reactive

Employers could consider providing expanded support to parents and caregivers at this time. Employers may be able to provide flexibility, including changing the measures on productivity by focusing on outcomes delivered rather than on working time. Employers may also use collaborative online tools, such as shared calendars and public status to facilitate teamwork and boost productivity. 34 Workers must adapt to their new WFH arrangement and environment and ensure the essential job responsibilities are fulfilled. Any issue on performance should be openly discussed between managers and workers. Caring for children and dependents Working parents may have competing responsibilities between WFH their employer and caring for children whose school or day care is closed. It is

unlikely that workers would be able to adequately perform their jobs while simultaneously performing dependent care duties. Employers and workers should agree on arrangements that would enable the worker to effectively perform the required work meeting the employers' expectations while still being able to undertake care activities at home. Employers should be sensitive to the worker's situation, especially when WFH is implemented on short notice and workers had little time to prepare or make the required child or dependent care arrangement.

## Be responsible and adaptive

Workers must communicate with their supervisors about their situation and determine whether modifications to WFH arrangements are necessary to balance the responsibilities of work and family care. It is important for employers and workers to address the situation and agree on a more flexible WFH arrangement. For example, work hours can be scheduled around the needs of the family, temporary changes can be made to the work terms for a reduced workday or work hours and reduced targets, or the employer can be flexible about deadlines where possible. Some governments are adopting legislation allowing workers to take special paid leave<sup>35</sup> or unpaid leave without risking their jobs if they have to care for children or if they are unable to work due to COVID-19.

## Skills, staff training and development

Staff training and development play an important role to ensure workers are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to keep up with the latest information and technologies. Workers may need to develop technical skills to use communications tools for WFH when it is implemented in response to COVID-19.

## Promote a learning culture

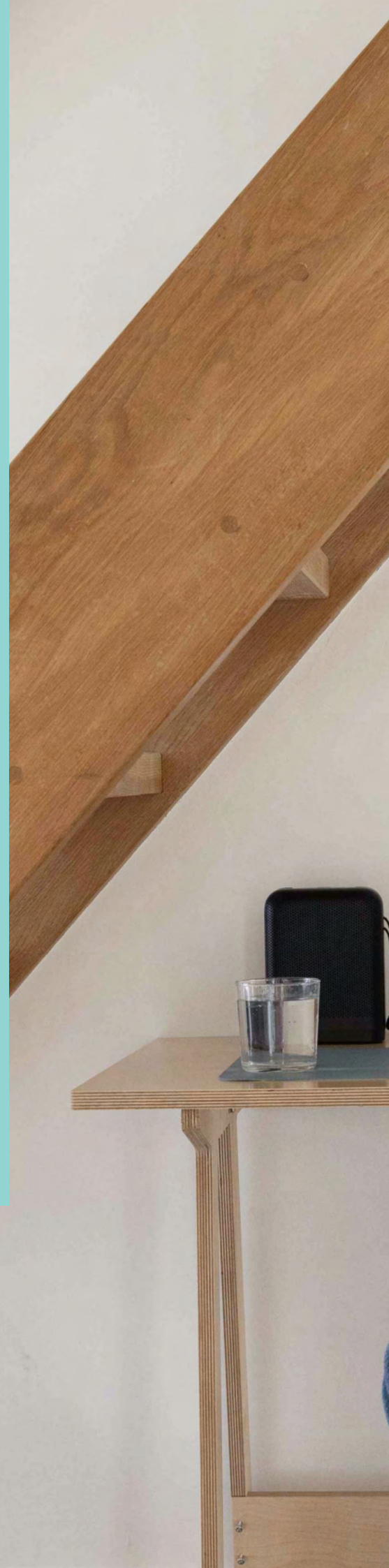
Depending on the specific sector and context, different ICT skills will be required during WFH. Online training, remote coaching, peer-to-peer learning and ongoing support for software and other tools<sup>36</sup> may be required to ensure workers develop the necessary skills and abilities to perform effectively from home. Employers should make use of ICT and online training tools and apps for regular contact with workers, and provide necessary training, coaching, or mentoring and ensure workers are motivated, developed and recognized.

## **What are the main challenges in implementing working from home arrangements and what considerations should be made to address and manage them?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the operation of companies. Many are struggling to sustain themselves, leading to temporary shutdowns or closures. Companies may have to implement WFH as a preventive measure or in response to the Government's orders and directives. Governments should allow a certain degree of flexibility and provide an assistance scheme to facilitate the implementation of the WFH policy.

### **Engage in policy discussion**

Companies all over the world are at the front line of a new way of working. It is happening in real time and in a less than optimal fashion. Companies have little time to respond to an enforced and necessary situation. Overall, the usual ways that workers and management would agree on WFH arrangements have been discarded. For some companies, WFH can be a benefit for their bottom line. A company that can run its entire operation staffed by workers who (mostly) work from home will no longer need to lease large office spaces and long commutes will also be gone. Some companies will be able to hire a geographically diverse workforce without providing additional office space and without incurring any expense to relocate them. During this challenging time, it is crucial that companies play an active role in providing constructive inputs in policy recommendations. It is critical that company experiences with WFH are shared with national employers and business membership organizations.









**Let's get productive**

# **Employer working from home guide**



## 18 Annexure F – Sonup Website Overview

**[Click here to view website](http://www.sonupsale.wordpress.com)**  
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