

Towards 'the new better': How can organisations recover from the coronavirus pandemic?

How can organisations come out of this crisis better off? That was the central question of a worldwide study carried out by Aon among 130 organisations (including Dutch ones). According to the report 'Helping Organisations Chart a Course to the New Better', the vitality and resilience of employees is a subject high up on many company agendas.

The study covered all relevant organisational themes such as IT, operational affairs, HR, facility management, crisis management and communication. The results of this worldwide investigation can also be applied to any other organisation.

Frequently discussed topics during the investigation were employee well-being and having them feel connected to the organisation. For instance, it turned out to be challenging for new employees to work and train effectively when it had to be done remotely. It was also challenging for them to establish connections with their colleagues. This was enough for some people to quit their new job and return to an old employer because they couldn't settle in with a new one.

Looking differently at work and vitality

COVID-19 has had a major impact on the way employees live and work. People now have to deal with social distancing, (online) working from home, the changing context of work, finding a new balance between private and working time, and multitasking. As a consequence, employee expectations have changed on what (their) work should look like. In addition, people take their health and vitality more seriously than ever and many employers struggle with this sudden trend.

Which strategies work and which don't?

Organisations are taking a closer look at their compensation & benefits programmes to see if they are still effective. They are looking at chain optimisation, but also at whether the current leadership style is still aligned with their strategy. The transition to mass working from home has made the importance of having resilient, healthy employees even clearer.

Employers are looking for new ways to motivate employees into developing resilience and taking care of their own mental and physical health. The main challenges involve creating a fundamental sense of safety at work – of them feeling that the employer cares – but also developing the adaptability and motivation that employees need to realise their full potential. Employers need to ensure that people make any tools offered their own and actually start using them.

The answers are in the data

To find out which strategies to use, it is essential to have information on what does and does not work. That is why the recording and analysis of HR data (especially vitality data) is becoming more important. This is a way in which the added value of health and vitality initiatives, as well as the vitality needs of employees, can be mapped out. By gathering new data and analysing existing data on well-being, organisations can identify the vitality

problems employees have, the behaviour they exhibit, and which methods work best for adjusting behaviour which may be counterproductive.

Resilient people make resilient organisations

Organisations which want to be resilient to new risks in the future need resilient employees. Resilience in the working environment means people who can adapt to adverse situations, manage stress, and still stay motivated. It is therefore strategically important to invest in health and vitality to increase the resilience of employees. These investments must be guided by clear, committed, transparent leadership and a genuine dialogue between employer and employee.

The benefits for employers speak for themselves: only 30% of employees are resilient, but 93% of this group say they want to stay with their employer and 86% are fully motivated at work. Employee resilience must therefore be put high on the agenda, as it is not only important for the employees themselves, but also an organisation's most important asset in staying resilient and unlocking its full potential.

Towards the new better

Many businesses and organisations in the Netherlands have been affected – directly or indirectly – by the corona pandemic. As the outlook continues to improve, we are cautiously looking ahead to the future. What can we learn from these unprecedented times and what steps can we take towards 'the new better'? How do you prepare an organisation for a return to the workplace in a way that it is better than before the crisis? You can read here more about the road to 'the new better'.

Impact of corona crisis on pensions

Due to the uncertainties caused by the coronavirus, stock prices have fallen significantly in recent times. This is reflected in any pension assets still to be achieved, although the chosen scheme and the remaining accrual period may still offer repair options. Although a pension is usually a condition of fixed employment, the call for more flexible employment conditions seems to have grown louder. Since March last year (as of the first lockdown), our workplace has taken on another dimension. Where, how and when we do our work has changed. Now that we are slowly returning to the workplace, employers are talking about 'hybrid working' and (again) demanding flexibility. We can see this flexibility reflected in employment terms & conditions, including pension schemes, as well as adjustments to employer and employee contributions. What makes things difficult is that employees often have different definitions for 'a good set of employment terms & conditions' and 'flexibility'. When determining the course for 'the new better', it is therefore advisable to sit down with them and ask: What value do they attach to their set of employment terms & conditions?