



Best Practices for Continuing Business in Times of Crisis (COVID-19)



Foreign Trade Sector
Investment Department





Notice

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Objective

These practices target companies and businesses that are based in the United Arab Emirates and review a set of procedures, ideas and information on how to facilitate the work of these companies in light of the outbreak of the Coronavirus COVID-19, through which it will be presented:

First: The precautionary measures and steps that companies and employers must follow in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to carry out their work:

- Requirements & Precautionary Measures at the Company's Headquarters
- Requirements & procedures for remote working.
- Requirements & procedures for dealing with others (clients, suppliers).

Second: Proposals on how to conduct business and contribute to increasing sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in closings in markets, shops, restaurants and other economic activities.

Third: The most prominent sectors affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the promising sectors.



Requirements & Precautionary Measures to Ensure Business Continuity

The importance of having plans for companies and employers, to ensure the continuity of their work in order to reduce the disruption of their daily operations and tasks and to continue to carry out their activities normally during the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce infection between employees, and maintain a healthy work environment by implementing these plans and adhering to what follow:

Requirements & Precautionary Measures at the Company's Headquarters

Companies and employers can take a number of measures to reduce the risk of employees and workers being exposed to COVID-19 by developing a plan that helps guide preventive measures against COVID-19, so that the plan is in line with the directions issued by the Ministry of Health and Community Protection and with decisions issued by other relevant authorities, through the following procedures:

1. Forming a main work team headed by a manager in the company and naming a liaison officer from the team members to support the implementation of rapid response measures for any requirements, so that this team works to circulate business continuity plans to all employees adhere to them, especially during this period, and that a deputy head of the team be appointed to do handle things during the absence of the president, the team also performs the following tasks:
 - Clearly publishing instructions to staff to activate any precautionary measures, based on the stages of the pandemic's evolution.
 - Create a database for all company employees to include the following:
 - Contact number and home address.
 - Classification of employees according to the job exposed to high and medium risks.
 - Classification of employees such as: elderly, people with chronic diseases, or their association with their families for special reasons.
 - Replacement staff for all situations.
 - Health facilities (hospitals, isolation centers, a quarantine center) in which injured or quarantined employees are located.
 - Issue a circular to all staff on the need to contact the liaison officer when suspected of any case of COVID-19.
 - The team, through the liaison officer, is responsible for reporting to the Ministry of Health and Community Protection when there are confirmed cases in the workplace.
 - Emphasizing on employees to follow all health procedures & measures issued by the Ministry of Health and Community Protection with regard to prevention measures when feeling any symptoms similar to Coronavirus, as well as disclosing travel and contact cases if any.



- Imposing quarantine on the employee upon his return from traveling outside the country & preventing him from practicing his work as the quarantine procedures decided by the competent authorities in the country.
 - Ensure that the workplace contains all sterilization tools necessary so that the sterilization materials are at least 60% alcohol, and ensure that all company facilities and rooms are fully sterilized.
 - Allocating a temporary isolation room within the company until the company communicates with the Ministry of Health and Community Protection and abide by the instructions issued by it.
2. Setting a business continuity plan in the absence of the decision-makers in the company and the managers with powers to sign all the documents of the company.
 3. Review the company's internal systems and policies from the annual and sick leave and the company's external branches and employees, especially in countries where the epidemic is spreading.
 4. Compliance with all decisions and measures issued by the Ministry of Health and Community Protection, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and the relevant federal and local authorities.

CORONAVIRUS, COVID-19 BUSINESS PLANNING



Requirements & Procedures for Remote Work

The Concept of Remote Work:

Remote work is considered one of the alternative work options that ensures the continuation of the performance of services and the provision of services, as it is the work that is performed away from the office permanently or partially or by request where the communication between the employee and the company is electronically. This is done through the use of smart and electronic systems available and recognized in the company in emergency cases that require performing business from outside the company's headquarters instead of being present in the company's offices, remote work does not mean according to this concept that is granted any kind of leaves stipulated in the company's internal regulations or legislation and laws related.

Types of Remote Work:

1. Partially Working Remotely: where the employee can at the request of the company, divide his work time between the company's headquarters and the place of work remotely in equal or different proportions, and this may be hours per day, or days in the week or month.
2. Full Remote Work: It is the jobs that can be performed completely outside the official workplace.

Criteria for Selecting Suitable Jobs for Remote Work:

1. The jobs are of a dividable nature.
2. The jobs able to be automated.
3. The jobs require specific inputs that are handled according to electronic systems.
4. Any other criteria decided by the company's Human Resources department.





Mechanism for Applying Methods of Remote Work:

1. The company manages the requirements suitable for remote work to and the nature of the business the company is conducting.
2. The company should ensure that its services are available to customers and the public, and that it is available through websites or smart applications, etc.
3. Use all technical media and ensure the provision of technical equipment to all of its employees such as: ZOOM, Teams MS, VPN, Business for Skype or any other available means.
4. Providing the technical equipment for holding periodic meetings and tracking the achievements electronically and for accessing the main and subsidiary electronic systems for performing the work and tracking achievements.
5. Use different means of communication provided by the company's work teams and internal committees so that members could get the latest updates through WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.
6. Follow up on the application of remote work & documenting achievements through:
 - Measuring productivity for employees working remotely.
 - Ensuring the quality and accuracy of the outcomes.
 - Determine time frames for providing services, carrying out tasks and delivering projects.
 - Commitment to apply safety measures when using various technical means to implement the remote work system.
 - Any other precautionary measures the company deems necessary.

Obligations of Employees Working Remotely:

The employee who works remotely is subject to all the laws and regulations of human resources approved in the company, and the employee must pledge to abide by the following:

1. Submitting tasks at the required standard times & answering all calls and emails, whether from his superiors or his co-workers.
2. The obligation to come to the original place of work in the event that which calls for attending meetings.
3. Taking pre-approval of the work remotely from the company they're working in.
4. Commitment to work ethics provided by the company while maintaining confidentiality of information, documents and documents & using the work time remotely to accomplish the job tasks required.
5. Commitment to providing daily reports on tasks accomplished & the level of productivity.

General Measures for Remote Work:

1. The company's management determines the working hours remotely according to the interest of working there.
2. The remote work application should not affect the absence of a minimum number of employees in the organizational unit if the business interest so requires.
3. The period of remote work may be different from the official work period of the company if urgent circumstances and the interest of work so require.
4. The period of remote work may be different from the official work period of the company if urgent circumstances and the interest of work so require.
5. All the HR systems in force in the company are applied to the employee working remotely.
6. All employees of the company's applicable HR systems shall apply to the employee working remotely.
7. Employees must ensure a suitable work environment is provided in the workplace remotely so that it insures success and help to enhance productivity and quality of achievement and take into account the requirements of security and occupational safety.





Requirements & Procedures for Dealing with Customers & Suppliers

Companies and employers can take a number of measures to maintain their customers, keep in touch with suppliers, and clarify alternative solutions in the event of COVID-19, through the company reassessing the basic activities it provides to customers and key suppliers of the company's supply chain, by following these procedures:

1. The company must be fully prepared to change a number of practices to maintain important operations in the company such as:
 - Determine alternative suppliers.
 - Priority to existing clients.
 - Pause some operations temporarily if necessary.
2. Identifying alternative supply chains for important goods and services. As some goods & services may be highly required or not available.
3. Identify the main suppliers and service providers & discuss the possibility of preparing business continuity procedures.
4. Develop a plan on how and when to activate the alternative suppliers.
5. Identify key customers and ensure that there are alternative plans to meet their needs.
6. Informing companies that provide contracts or temporary employees about the importance of keeping infected employees in their households.
7. Establish direct communication channels through smart apps with suppliers and service providers for inquiries regarding supply operations.
8. Establish communication channels to keep direct contact with customers and keep them always informed.
9. Contact important suppliers of goods & services while making sure of their ability to deliver the order reliably by sending an official letter or contacting them directly.
10. Contact companies whose activities are similar to the activities of the company and share with them about the plans.
11. Share best practices with companies whose activities are similar to the activities of the company (especially those in the company's supply chain).
12. Develop policies and practices for social distance, and implement the recommended social distance practices by the Ministry of Health and Community Protection.
13. Meetings with suppliers using video or smart applications to communicate remotely.
14. When it is not possible to hold meetings using video or smart applications to communicate remotely, you can hold meetings in open and well-ventilated places, or cancel, amend or postpone meetings.



Recommendations for Business Continuity During COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the closings that have been applied to most of the economic activities to combat the crisis of COVID-19, companies especially Small and Medium Enterprises suffer from stumbling in their business and activities, companies must remain in contact with customers, we present a number of proposals that contribute to ways of doing business & increasing sales to minimize losses due to closures & faltering of activities:

1. Online Shopping:

Since most stores are still closed during the COVID-19 crisis, opportunities to market products online should be sought through specialized platforms like Shopify which are easy to use and offer a free trial to start selling products online.

2. Building a Customer Classification Data:

For companies that are still able to operate, they can take advantage of current conditions to collect customer information and build a database through which they are categorized according to their wishes and interests with the aim of re-orienting them at a later time. By creating a registration form to the company's website using a free tool or requiring them to follow the commercial activity on social media for updates and special offers

3. Engaging on Social Media Platforms:

Social media will be your best friend during (and after) restrictions of COVID-19 when a company does not have permanent customers, it is important to interact on these methods to attract and maintain them through the Internet and social media

4. Special Offers:

Use social media channels to announce special offers or discounts on online sales.

5. Update Important Business Information Online:

Make sure to update the information on all private social media channels, and on the website, and make sure to update any changes in hours of operation or information.



6. Use Live Broadcasting:

You can use live broadcasts on Facebook and Instagram. Such broadcasts will provide a quick overview of the company's business, products, offers and discounts.

7. Temporarily Modifying the Companies' Activities:

Under the current circumstances of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the company or its products can be modified and transformed into activities that support the market requirements in the current circumstances, such as manufacturing sanitizers, protective tools (masks), providing delivery services, etc.

8. Transparency with Clients & Audience:

It is necessary to have some kind of transparency while doing business, especially at the present time for example if the activity is restaurant, it is preferable to share a video on how to take additional precautions in the workplace, if the activity is to provide and distribute products, it is preferable to share the packaging process and the precaution measures you take.

9. Providing Consultations for Customers & Clients

It is preferable that consultations can be provided to clients & the public through video clips or live broadcasts to preserve existing customers and attract more audiences such as restaurants showcasing recipes, fitness centers by providing exercises to do at home.

10. Create a List of Subscribers to Your Email

Use the company's social media (or phone calls from customers) to encourage them to subscribe to email newsletters to ease the distribution of information about business changes, competitions, and more. Use newsletters to invite subscribers to watch how-to videos created by the company, or what to look forward to when opening again.

Additional Guidelines to Continuing Business During COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Create a taskforce/committee to be more active than ever.
2. Reduce spending as much as possible.
3. Reduce operating expenses.
4. Make a decision to pay the required financial dues at a later time if possible.
5. Increase & accelerate financial flow and collect financial dues.
6. Fully transparent with employees on the current situation and the impact on income.
7. Adopting decentralization in decision making & avoiding the traditional hierarchy in a way that ensures rapid adaptation to change.
8. Investing in technology leads to building flexibility, reliance on modern applications in running businesses, and it is advised to reduce operating costs while raising competitiveness.
9. Monitor competitors' ads. If it is downsized, you should consider increasing your advertising budget and leverage more aggressively as this will provide an opportunity to exclude competitors.
10. Trying to rent instead of buying.





Sectors Affected & Promising Sectors Due to the Outbreak of COVID-19

Sectors Affected

1. Travel & Tourism Sector:

Global tourism rates are witnessing a significant decline due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the decline represents 1% and 3%, it is expected that the Asia-Pacific region will suffer significant damage due to the expected decrease in the number of arrivals ranging between 9% and 12%. SMEs represent about 80% of the tourism sector, and are particularly vulnerable to the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide, including vulnerable communities that depend on tourism.

2. Aviation Sector:

Airlines have been particularly affected by the spread of Coronavirus due to the travel restrictions in most countries.

3. Hotel & Hospitality Sector:

It is evident that prices related to hotel reservations have decreased significantly, especially with the decrease in airline reservations and the closure of air borders in a number of countries.

4. Export Sector:

Manufacturing exports decreased worldwide, and the industries most affected by this decline include the "precision instrument industry, the machinery & automotive equipment industry, and the telecommunications equipment industry.

5. Logistics Sector:

The logistics sector includes several dimensions, including: online delivery, overseas shipping, and air freight. All these sectors are facing significant challenges with the spread of Coronavirus in almost all countries of the world.

6. Trade and Services:

The automotive sector is one of the most affected sectors worldwide, in addition to the passenger and freight transport sectors, the financial services and information technology sectors.



Promising Sectors

1. Pharmacies and Sterilizers Sector:

The spread of the Coronavirus caused a panic for people around the world to go to pharmacies with the intention of purchasing antiseptics, sterilizers, vitamins, masks and other medications in order to maintain an appropriate amount.

2. E-commerce Sector:

Online purchases increased as a result of avoiding public places, as e-commerce transactions related to the retail sector witnessed a remarkable growth in addition to a significant increase in site engagement.

3. Developing Smart Applications:

In light of the current situation and the desire of many customers to avoid leaving the house and mixing with the public as much as possible, the demand for smart applications that help in providing the service remotely increased.

4. Various Forms of Distance Learning:

Most countries around the world have recently implemented the distance learning system in their schools and universities in addition to training and education centers.

5. Developing Artificial Intelligence Platforms:

Artificial intelligence techniques have entered the front line against the Coronavirus significantly, through the use of programs that rely on artificial intelligence to find a direct solution in light of the social distancing measures imposed on all countries of the world.
