

Emerging Practices: Recalling Your Employees with Disabilities

Key Tip #1—Don't turn the economic recession into a diversity recession

Your inclusion efforts might be even more important right now. *Great Places to Work* and *Fortune Magazine* research looked at company performance during the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Companies that prioritized Diversity and Inclusion outperformed less inclusive companies by 400% on the stock exchange.¹

In research published in the *Harvard Business Review* by Alexandra Kalev², she cautions that layoff lists made in haste can default to the idea of first hired, first fired. Women and other minorities like people with disabilities often fill the lowest-authority positions and have shorter tenures, and so they lose their jobs at disproportionately high rates.

Key Tip #2—Make your recall plan inclusive and clear

In March 2020, BC Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender advised that “the surest means to guard against inequality and injustice during the pandemic is to ensure that all of our actions are evidence-based.”³

Ryan Wozniak, Senior Vice President, Operations and Legal, at Peninsula Canada recently wrote that recall plans “should consider workplace capacity, recalling employees in stages, and implementing measures for preventing the spread of coronavirus in the workplace.”⁴ He cautions that without a fair and clear plan for recall, businesses may find themselves risking discrimination claims from employees who do not feel they have been considered fairly.

Key Tip #3—Hold on to what's working

For a portion of your staff, changes like working remotely or with more flexible schedules are not just keeping the business going, but may be helping them thrive. Diane Lightfoot of the UK's Business Disability Forum notes the BDF had already seen a trend in their member businesses moving away from talking about *accommodations* for disabled colleagues to *productivity tools*. “And that is exactly what we are seeing now, with face to face meetings now taking place on Microsoft Teams, Zoom or other platforms. Webinars replacing events and home working moving from being a luxury for the few to mandatory for the majority.”⁵

¹ [New Study Reveals That Diversity and Inclusion May Be the Key to Beating the Next Recession](#)

² [Research: US Unemployment Rising Faster for Women and People of Color](#)

³ [Message from BC's Human Rights Commissioner](#)

⁴ [Opinion: Prepare and protect your business while recalling employees | Venture](#)

⁵ [Meeting the needs of disabled colleagues during COVID-19](#)

Key Tip #4—Prepare for the neurological cost of reopening

In late April, half of Canadians reported worsening mental health due to the stress of the pandemic.⁶ While a return to work will reduce some stressors for some workers, a new collection of stressors await them at work on a neurobiological level. Employees will go from feeling “lost in the unfamiliar” to confusion from feeling “lost in the familiar” as they see their expectation of normalcy upended by new practices and procedures. Rearranged workplaces, temperature checks, PPE requirements, and limits to basics like the lunchroom and bathrooms, will all shift our brains from survival mode to threat mode.⁷

Employer Supports—Large Business

The Institute for Corporate Productivity’s checklist is intended to provide you with helpful ideas and reminders of key factors to consider as your organization moves toward re-opening and re-staffing its facilities and workplaces impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The document includes considerations for all areas of a business, including facilities, policies, leadership, operations, communications, and workforce considerations.

[Return to the Workplace Checklist](#)



Employer Supports—Small Business

Small Business BC can help businesses navigate a variety of supports and services, including BC’s Restart Plan, through the B.C. Business COVID-19 Support Service. Speak to someone by phone, or live chat.

[Small Business BC COVID-19 Support Services](#)

Supporting Employees

The UN’s policy brief “A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19” emphasizes that it’s important employers and workplaces continue to provide accessible environments and reasonable workplace adjustments. “Approaches to coming out of lockdown need to be sensitive to the particular situation of persons with disabilities.”⁸ People with disabilities and their family members may have different levels of vulnerability to COVID-19, and may benefit from flexibility via extended remote work options and flexible schedules.

[Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19](#)



BC Human Rights Commissioner: Accommodations beyond employees with disabilities

Employers must also accommodate employees who are considered particularly vulnerable to the virus, such as elderly or immuno-compromised people. This means taking all necessary precautions to stop the spread of the virus in the workplace unless doing so would amount to undue hardship. It also means they must provide flexible work arrangements to allow vulnerable workers to work from home or from safe spaces, unless doing so would amount to undue hardship.

⁶ [Worry, Gratitude & Boredom: As COVID-19 affects mental, financial health, who fares better; who is worse?](#)

⁷ [Leaders, Here’s How To Prepare For The Mental Health Challenges Of Reopening](#)

⁸ [Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19](#)