



## Looking Beyond Covid-19



# HR HEADS UP

## Beststart HR – Driving Productivity

We are all aware that productivity, or the lack of it, has been a challenge for UK businesses for many years; however, in a post Covid-19 world, maximising performance is going to be critical for survival.

Increasing productivity is a multi-faceted problem which requires a range of business solutions including business strategy planning, embracing technological advances, sound financial management and a focussed and co-ordinated approach to managing people. These are also all the disciplines that will be needed to ensure that companies embrace the opportunities created by the changes the pandemic has imposed on us.

More than ever, your employees and a joined-up approach to HR are going to be critical to maximise company performance. In other words, to ensure individual effort daily aligns and converts into revenue and profit for the business.

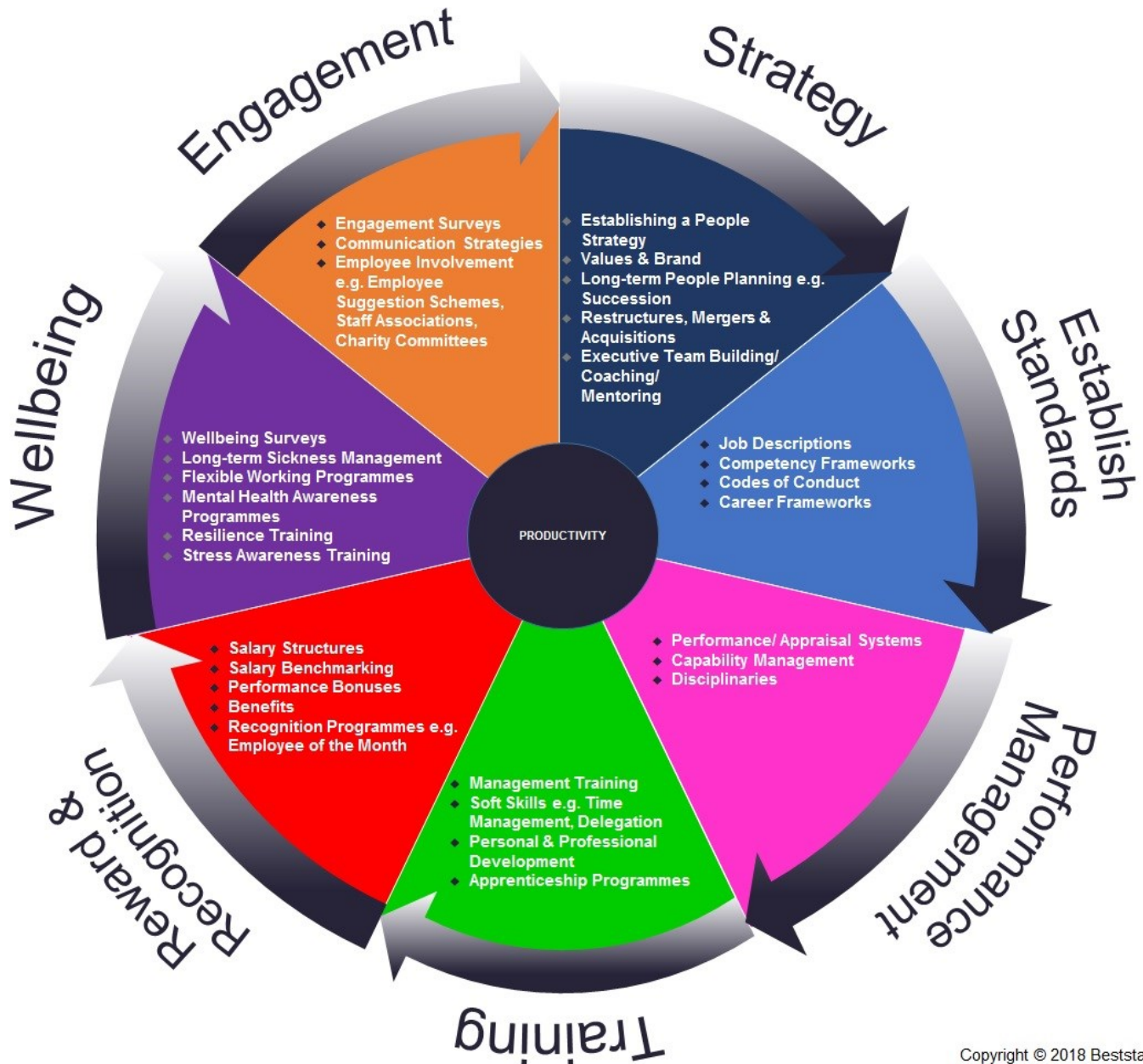
After such an unprecedented experience, which

may have included being furloughed for weeks on end, employees are unlikely to increase their effort, flexibility, engagement and commitment without any intervention or recognition from their employer. Whilst resigning and moving on for disgruntled employees may not be an option, not performing to their best, being negative and draining morale, definitely are. Many organisations will benefit from re-establishing or revisiting HR practices and going back and asking, “What are we trying to achieve?” Taking back control of their company by setting clear goals and frameworks, and being able to keep this on track with simple and consistent performance measurement, possibly within new work practices, will set the foundations for increasing productivity.

# The Productivity Wheel

Our Productivity Wheel gives a framework for reviewing all your HR practices in a coordinated and connected manner, recognising that getting the most from people is a balance of clear direction, for example, setting expectations, performance monitoring and support such as training and wellbeing.

Contact Beststart HR to arrange a complimentary audit of your existing HR practices using our productivity wheel and to discuss your opportunities for change.



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**BESTSTART HR** *Driving Productivity*



# Act now to take back control of your company's future

Significant moments of change are the perfect opportunity for review

The strong economic activity around the world, including in the UK, has been destroyed by Governments' measures taken to contain the spread of Coronavirus. The speed, size of the adjustment and uncertainty about how, and when, normal trading will resume has left many business owners and management teams, used to steering and controlling the destinies of their organisations, feeling rudderless and shellshocked. They have dealt with the current situation as best they can by furloughing staff, implementing remote working and/or social distancing in the workplace but what now?

Managements can seize back control by taking stock of the changes, looking beyond the current melee to think about what the business landscape might look like.

But where to start and how to put some structure to this process?

You should systematically review what in your business has changed during and what will change post the Covid-19 period. In addition, you should review how it has changed? This should cover your suppliers, customers and services/products and also shine a light on what has not changed.

*Have you been asked for products or services that you have not been able to provide? Would you want to have been able to provide these if you could?*

*What have your customers valued about you?*

*Have you discovered that you have other things that make you special compared to other providers?*

*What new has been done and equally what did you used to do that you have not been asked to do?*

*Etc.*

A structured approach, involving the key people of your business will help you see what the future of your business might look like. It will crystallise what needs to be done to position your business to start to capitalise on new opportunities and markets or what needs to be changed to ensure you survive and are stronger to take on the challenges as we emerge into this new business world.

The upshot of this review might lead you to make changes that are painful such as redundancies or reductions in other costs, both variable and fixed. These may be quite drastic and radical. However, *change is opportunity*, and making changes in the

context of this review will allow you to position your company to move forward again. Without the framework of this review, any changes might be non-existent or just reactive and haphazard and ultimately you will continue to feel at the mercy of

events and potentially see your years of hard work and achievement eroded by a thousand cuts.

Another way of looking at this, is imagining you were starting your business tomorrow, what would you keep and what would you change given your 'new' business would operate in this unfamiliar landscape? After detailed consideration, you may conclude little needs to alter, this should not be an exercise to force through change for change sake.

The lockdown has forced many to use different tools and ways of working, the most commonplace



probably being video conferencing software and apps. The 'how' review will provide you with input for your future workplace and working practices.

*Will there be more requests for flexible-working and will you be able to now reasonably refuse these?*

*Is this the catalyst for working practices to move away from historic norms to a more even mix of office-based working with remote working and/or employees working set hours with compressed or flexible hours?*

*With the first Millennials now reaching their late thirties and in management and senior management roles, will a considered introduction of remote working and flexibility address the different needs of this generation?*

*The widespread use of video calls in the home environment has, out of necessity, had to be accepting of informality: a pet dog or cat appearing screen left; a child interrupting with a query about how to logon for their remote schooling; doorbells ringing; increasingly unkempt hairstyles as a trip to the hairdressers or barbers becomes overdue; or simply the leisurewear people prefer to wear in their own four walls! Is it time to embrace this informality more generally to create a more relaxed workplace and workforce?*

Beststart HR is helping several clients with these reviews, and they have found our knowledge of their sector and business, coupled with our objectivity and expertise in people, a welcome steer when facilitating.

These are unprecedented and worrying times; however, *the darkest hour is just before dawn*. Taking back control should mean you and your company come out of the other side of the pandemic in the right place for you. For many we hope this will mean stronger and ready to take advantage of the new environment. For those of you that reluctantly decide to call it a day, this can be done in the best way to protect your financial investment in your business whilst treating your workforce fairly and with dignity to allow everyone to move on.

**If you would like us to help you, please contact us for more information about our Covid-19 Business Review.**



## Performance = what we do and how we do it

Living company values is critical through the lockdown and beyond

These bizarre times have seen a wholesale shift to remote working and changes to the workplace for employees and employers. But has this step change affected whether employees and employers still are guided by, and live, their company values?

Feedback from some clients would suggest that each party's opinion or perception of the other may have radically changed during the lockdown from where it was before. Employers are seeing which employees willingly step up, are flexible and do what is asked of them and which flatly refuse to because they would rather be furloughed and receive 80% of their salary for not working. This even happened when the end beneficiary of the work in question was the NHS! On the other side of the fence, there are employees who feel isolated from the company, having been furloughed or asked to remote work. They have lost morale and belief in leadership after a lack of regular, joined-up communication; inflexibility and intolerance by management of the pressures thrust upon staff who are having to juggle working remotely with home life and family pressures; and little understanding and empathy of the worries they have in the face of Covid-19.

In what we can all agree are the most challenging of times, it can be easy for management to focus on the ‘what’ part of performance, both their own and that of their team. However, the consequences of neglecting the ‘how’ part could be far reaching and significantly impact your business, just as you emerge from this episode and hope to accelerate back to some sort of normality. Employers need to refocus their attention on their values and the behaviours that these translate into and ensure they live them, even in these unusual times.

Values and behaviours are the essence of the company's identity – their principles, beliefs and philosophies.

These values not only shape the identity of the company, but they act as a guiding light for your employees. So much so in fact, that a recent study of more than 1,000 firms in the *Great Places to Work* database revealed a strong correlation between financial performance and the degree to which employees believed their company's values were being practiced. Of course, it may not always be that black and white, as employee loyalty can be tied more directly to a particular manager's values and behaviour rather than the company's values as a whole.

On the flip side, vague, meaningless or ill-conceived values can also cause problems for your company culture. This is exactly what happened at *Uber*, where the old set of core values included phrases like “*Always be hustlin*” and “*toe-steppin*”. Decided by former CEO, Travis Kalanick and senior executives, these values highlighted and exaggerated a disconnect between how management saw the company and the day-to-day experiences of employees, resulting in a toxic company culture. Compare this with how Dara Khosrowshahi, the current Uber CEO, who came up with a new set of core values, including things like “*We do the right thing. Period.*” and “*We value ideas over hierarchy.*” Khosrowshahi wanted to reflect the goals and ambitions of Uber's workforce, so he asked for submissions from his employees and convened 20 working groups to refine them.



When company values are well-defined and true to the way an organisation behaves and does business, they can guide decision making across the organisation, set your company apart from the competition and make it easier to recruit and retain people that will be a good organisational fit.

At Beststart we are guided by our core values (you can check what these are on our website) and we believe that we can, and continue to, deliver on these values even though we are all working from home. Our values underpin all our activities, from recruitment through to performance management and we see our behaviour (the ‘how’ we do things) just as important as delivering a great result (the ‘what’ we do). In fact, sometimes the ‘how’ may outweigh the ‘what’, depending on the situation itself and the sensitivities surrounding it.

As an employer, your employees will be expecting you to demonstrate your company values even more now, not less. There has never been a better time to take a step back, look at your business from the outside, see what it stands for and look at how you and your employees behave.

## The post-pandemic future of the workplace

With the country in lockdown, and millions of employees working from home far more than usual, many employers are now having to consider what future working arrangements will look like when, and if, things return to ‘normal’. For the last decade or more, there has been a concerted shift towards different ways of working for many industries, following the lead of the mighty tech firms and the more casual and flexible approach to work that they champion.

As technology continues to make ever more available the information, access, resources and tools to work remotely more effectively, the ‘workplace’ is no longer limited to the traditional concept of an office on a business park nor is working from the comfort of their home, the sole privilege of



dot-com workers. A large proportion of our service-based economy can be delivered effectively anywhere with a laptop and wi-fi connection.

Now with commonplace use of virtual meeting tools (such as the major lockdown beneficiary, Zoom) working remotely has become less and less 'remote'. Across the country, and the developed world, teams that once sat side by side in a shared office are now meeting daily without leaving their homes. Some of our clients have even reported an increase in positive communication and team bonding under these new conditions. Unlike the traditional team meetings and office-based interactions, which many people took for granted, these new virtual meetings have become more purposeful and engaging.



There are the obvious benefits in terms of work-life balance. Without a commute people have more time at home to spend with their families and keep on top of those household jobs that so often get overlooked or squeezed into weekends. With more time to get outside and exercise, there is the opportunity for improved health and wellbeing. The environmental impact is significant: transport makes up 23% of global carbon emissions, with driving contributing 72% of that total. Whilst, of course, this is not all attributed to people's daily drive to and from work, it is easy to see the environmental benefits of reduced commuting.

But remote working has its challenges and there are several reasons why some employers have traditionally been reluctant to encourage working from home. How do you monitor output and performance of employees? Are you getting a fair day's work for a fair day's wage? What is the impact on team effectiveness and cross learning?

Other pitfalls are the 'curse' of the video call. Like

emails, the tone can be misread as facial expressions are normally a long way from being in 4K ultra HD! It can be easier on video call to portray only what you want the other participants to see. A lack of demarcation means the working day can permeate into time that was typically family or leisure time and lead to higher employee burnout. Equally, going the other way, too much 'social' creeping inappropriately and abundantly into work time.

Whilst an element of trust is essential for remote working to be successful, these issues can be managed with a blend of technology and effective people management. For businesses that do not utilise time recording software, common in consultancy and professional services, a structured approach to establishing standards and performance management means that people can be managed effectively wherever they are working. Clear job descriptions, competency frameworks, SMART objectives and KPIs can all be used to establish what is expected of employees and allows managers to measure performance against these clear and unambiguous standards. The various available technologies allow regular communication and feedback between managers and teams wherever either are. That said, it does require both to adopt or improve their skills to ensure the downside of the remoteness is minimised.

The lockdown has forced a sweeping change on all businesses and is likely to be the catalyst of a greater push towards remote working. Employers should review their experience during the lockdown and decide if, how, and to what extent remote working is suitable and could benefit their business.

Beststart's productivity wheel is a structured approach to the essential management processes and tools to ensure you get the best out of your employees – whether working remotely or not – driving their productivity and their development. Whatever the future of the workplace looks like, effective people management is the key to success.

**Let us know if we can help you evolve your working practices to get ahead of your competitors.**

# Two essential factors for sustained success

The CRAFT of change  
by Simon Shepard, CEO



Without doubt the past month has seen the most demanding and widespread levels of change the country has seen for over fifty years. Lives have been lost, businesses have fallen by the wayside and the emotional toll on our communities has been immense, for many it has been devastating.

For the past three decades I have overseen player health, wellbeing and sports science at Lord's cricket ground. There is always high expectation on the players, and we are clear that if we expect a high level of performance that this level of expectation needs to be matched with a high level of support. The research is clear, if high expectation is in place and low support given, then the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) we are looking for are rarely achieved.

You no doubt have a high expectation of your people, but have you considered the two key factors that are essential for sustained success?



## 1. Key Human Performance Indicators

The starting point must be, how are you looking after yourself?

You may have a whole host of KPIs that you want to hit, but are you paying attention to the Key Human Performance Indicators that are so often the catalysts for success? Here the foundation stones are healthy eating, exercise, relationships and sleep. Without these you will neither be able to use your brain effectively, in particular the prefrontal cortex, nor access what are known as 'the ex-

ecutive functions' that allow us to plan, make decisions, be creative, pay attention or regulate emotions – all are essential attributes if you want to lead with energy and empathy.

## 2. CRAFT

You need to address the support you provide to motivate your people. Take a moment to look at the mnemonic CRAFT that summarises some of the key traits of a skilled motivator.

**Clarity** – Ensure that your messages are on point, honest and delivered with clear and concise communication. Remember the mantra, 'Keep it Simple'.

**Relationships** – Build relationships and understand your people. What motivates you will not necessarily motivate them. Taking some time to talk, will help you understand them and equally allow them to understand you.

**Alignment** – It is important to ensure that your chosen corporate direction is in line with your values and culture. If there is misalignment, then you will need to make some amendments to one or the other. In fact, significant moments of change are often the perfect opportunity to refresh the mission statement and encourage a review of corporate culture.

**Fairness** – Neuroscientists have done interesting work that investigates how behaviours change when a state of unfairness is perceived. The long and short of it, is a reduction in rationality and an increase in emotional distress. Consider how fair you are being to your people, family, friends – even yourself!

**Thanks** – The words 'Thank you' are one of the most powerful and cost-effective tools when it comes to motivating people. Really make the effort to say well done and when thanking someone remember to make it personal – by connecting a name to the gratitude, the meaning is doubled.

**Speak to Simon directly on 07985 245 049 or email [info@optima-life.com](mailto:info@optima-life.com)**

*Simon Shepard has worked at Lord's cricket ground for the past 30 years, firstly, as a physiotherapist and, for the past two decades, he has headed player health, wellbeing and sports science for Middlesex CCC and Marylebone CC.*

*He also runs Optima-life, a company that blends technology and training to enable people to be energised, teams resilient and organisations an integral part of the community. Visit [www.optima-life.com](http://www.optima-life.com)*

## From furlough to redundancy

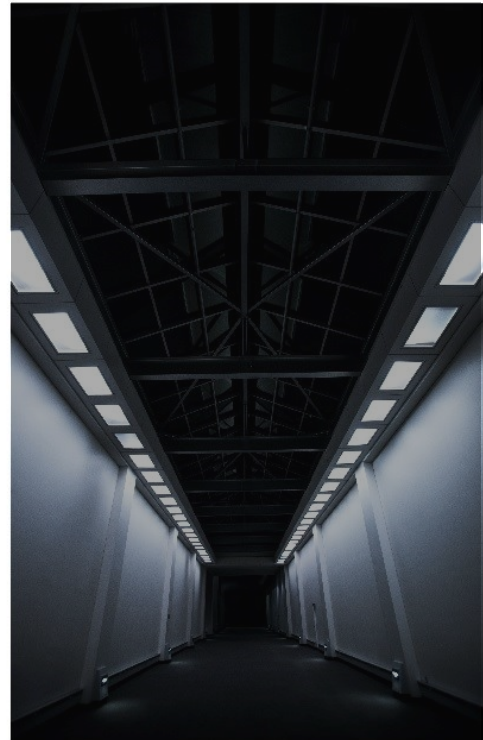
It is an unfortunate reality that there will be significant casualties of the economic impact of Coronavirus in the UK. The contraction in many markets and sectors will not spring back to pre-crisis levels overnight, if ever. Therefore, when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) ends – which is currently on 30 June 2020 – many employers will be faced with difficult decisions about what their business looks like going forward, and what numbers of employees they can realistically sustain.

For the salons and hairdressers currently closed, it may well be 'all hands-on deck' when restrictions are lifted as millions of Brits rush to get their post-lockdown beauty treatments and haircuts. We do not know whether the CJRS will extend until lockdown restrictions are lifted for all sectors and the reality is that many industries will take months to recover from the crisis and sadly some businesses will never recover. Many difficult decisions will have to be made and the sooner employers consider this, the better prepared they will be when the time comes.

When the CJRS comes to an end and the 80% furlough grants are no longer available, there may be a couple of options for employers to try and delay the difficult decisions and give the economy a little longer to bounce back. If your contracts of employment contain an unpaid lay-off clause then you will be able to lay-off your staff on a temporary basis. A lay-off is where employees are asked to remain at home with no work for as little as 1 day. In this case, they may be entitled to statutory guarantee payments, but these are very low and a far cry from the 80% that has been available under the CJRS. Furthermore, after an employee has been laid off for 4 weeks (or six weeks in any period of 13 weeks) they are entitled to claim for a statutory redundancy payment, so lay-off is only a short-term solution, where it is possible.

Another alternative is reduced hours. If your contracts of employment contain a short-time working clause, you can implement reduced hours for some or all of your employees with them receiving

pay for the hours that they do. Reduced hours could be fewer working hours each day or a shorter working week. For those without short-time working clauses, you can ask for your employees' agreement to reduce their working hours for a temporary period. Under normal circumstances agreement can be difficult to obtain but it is usually more successful if it is positioned as a measure to prevent the role being made redundant.



Unfortunately, despite alternatives being available, redundancies will be necessary for many businesses in the coming weeks. It would be prudent for employers to start thinking carefully about these now, particularly if the number of proposed redundancies reaches the threshold which triggers the statutory requirement for collective redundancy consultation and the associated minimum consultation periods. Any business proposing to make 20 or more redundancies in a 90-day period must consult with elected representatives of the employees for 30 days before it can issue any notice of redundancy. Therefore, the risk of waiting until after the end of the CJRS before commencing consultation, is that an employer could then



face a minimum 30-day consultation period before being able to give notice, which must be paid, along with a statutory redundancy payment. These costs may be beyond the resources of struggling businesses and lead to serious difficulties or even bankruptcy.

For businesses who know with a degree of certainty that they will have to make redundancies, irrespective of the CJRS being extended, it is possible to carry out the consultation process and issue notice of redundancy while the employees are furloughed. Although the Government has been silent on this matter, many law firms have stated that they believe it is also possible for notice periods to run concurrently with a period of furlough, although the employee must receive their normal pay for their notice period. This offers further support for employers who are trying to save their business and may be an option that works for you.

**If you would like a discussion about what options are available for your business during these difficult times, please call the Beststart team on 01438 747 747.**



## PRODUCTIVITY AUDIT

Talk to us about our Productivity Audit. If you have 20+ employees, one of our experienced HR Consultants can carry out your Productivity Audit, giving an expert review using our Productivity Wheel of how your organisation and people management combine. Our HR Audit is comprehensive – much more than a ‘tick box’ exercise that serves little purpose and offers minimal, if any, protection to you as an employer.

And you haven’t heard the best part yet... There’s no charge for the Audit and no obligation on you to take a service from us afterwards.

### It’s on us!

## GET IN TOUCH

For further information regarding our services or for a friendly chat about a current HR problem, please contact us directly.

[CONTACT US](#)

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