Business resumption planning after the pandemic

First of all, I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy. As the COVID-19 outbreak comes under control, companies are resuming operations to make up lost ground from the past few months. A key element in business continuity plans (BCPs) is business resumption, which must be carefully planned to avoid potential recurrence of viral infection. Management should make decisions and take action during the crisis times with recovery in mind.

Management has the responsibility to implement appropriate risk controls by placing health and safety first. The following points should be considered during business resumption after the pandemic crisis:

- Arrange an employee assistance programme to address stress and anxiety. Keep in mind that mental health is as important as physical health.
- Continue to promote hand hygiene and stay vigilant in maintaining a hygienic workplace.
- Assess the risks of different business areas within the company and develop appropriate risk control measures.
- Plan business travel carefully. While Hong Kong may have fewer COVID-19 cases, the pandemic is still affecting many overseas countries.
- Develop communications plans that balance caution and business needs, plus recognise front line staff and office workers who may have different needs.
- Provide refresher training to maintain competence after an extended home stay.
- Provide protection for on-site workers and maintain adequate inventory of essential personal protective equipment. COVID-19 cases may still arise in the future.
- Be ready to reactivate flexible working arrangements if needed.

Companies will want to review and renew their BCPs, assess how well existing BCPs are working and enhance them to meet future challenges. If there are deficiencies, then the root causes should be identified, whether they are timeliness of action, lack of infrastructure or external environment issues. Companies will then want to consider implementing new internal guidelines based on lessons learned and international good practice, as well as solid contingency plans to build resilience and better respond to future crises. All in all, companies should maintain regular transparent communication to continuously reassure their employees.

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