What happens NEXT?

PREPARING TO GO BACK TO YOUR WORKPLACE

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At the moment it feels like we're all living in limbo, doesn't it?

Confined to our houses - and gardens if we're lucky enough. Our homes have turned into offices, kindergartens, schools... probably very exclusive bars too! All under one roof.

It's an uncertain time to say the least. And we don't even really have an end in sight.

But while we wait on officials to make a call on how long this lockdown will last, we should really be taking some time now to make a plan for our businesses, and the eventual return to the workplace.

We know that the people who planned for the event of a lockdown found the whole process of sending staff to work from home a lot less stressful.

Those who left it till the last minute? Well, they struggled, and have definitely wasted time and suffered a bigger loss in productivity than they needed to.

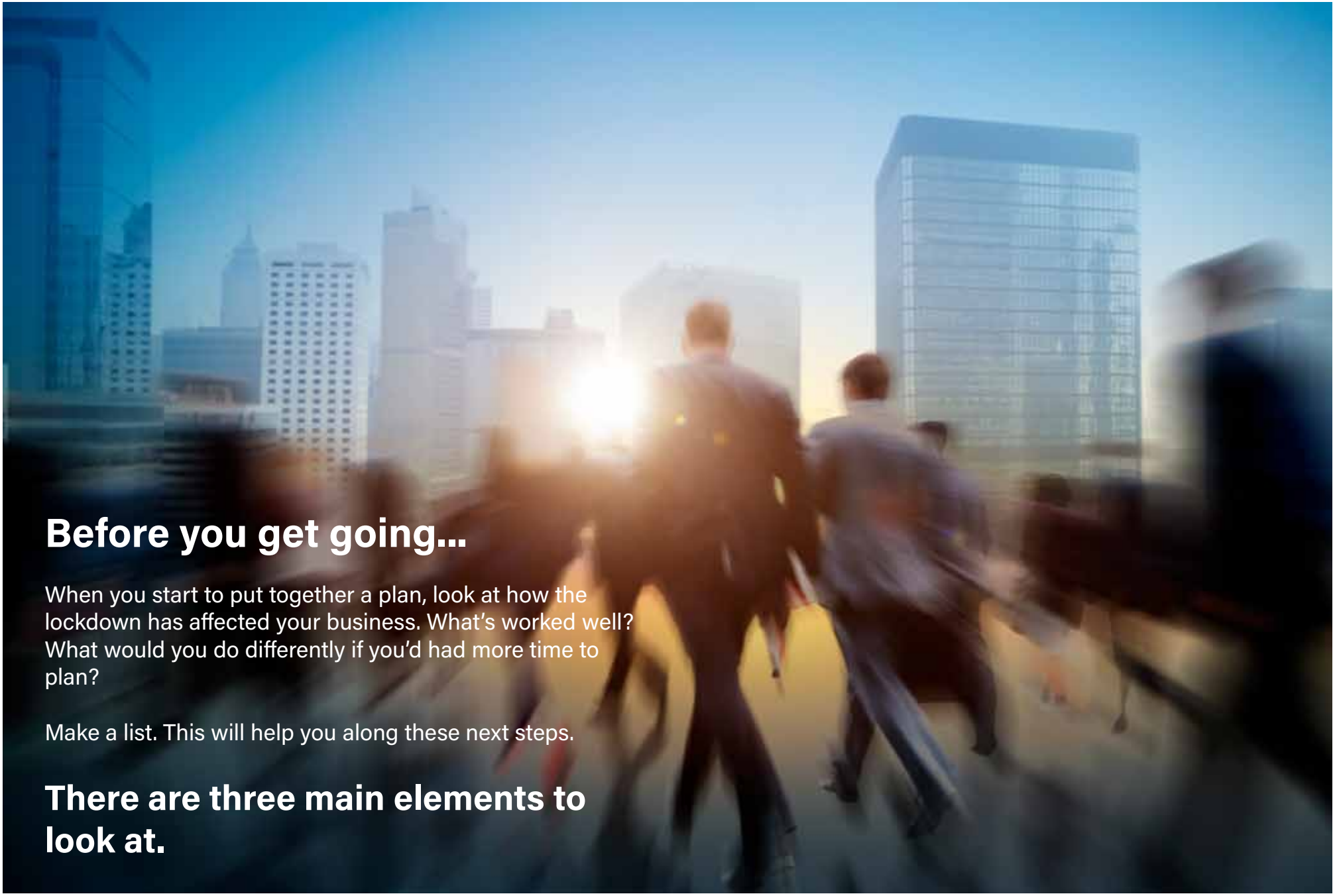
So while we were unsure as to whether a lockdown would happen, we know for sure that we will be returning to our workplaces at some point. The only question is... when?

Start planning for that eventuality now and ensure it's as smooth a process as possible.

"Why do we need a plan?" I hear you ask. "Can't everyone just, you know, come back to the office?"

Well, not really. There's a little more to think about that that.

It's not a mammoth task. You just need to know what to consider and you can make your plan.



Before you get going...

When you start to put together a plan, look at how the lockdown has affected your business. What's worked well? What would you do differently if you'd had more time to plan?

Make a list. This will help you along these next steps.

There are three main elements to look at.

First, look at your people

It's likely that there'll a phased end to the lockdown. That might mean that not all of your people will come back to your workplace at the same time.

You may have people working for you that are at higher risk (or live with someone who is high risk), so they may have to stay home for longer.

You may also have had to lose some of your team due to the impact on your business.

Basically, things are not going to click straight back to the "old normal". And honestly, they may never be the same again for many of us.

You've probably found that having your people work remotely hasn't been so bad. Perhaps before this you didn't think it was possible to have remote workers? Will this help you to become more flexible with the way you work, and expect your team to work?

In the case of a phased return to your workplace, look at how well your team have coped over the last few weeks. Those who have thrived should perhaps be among the last to return. Those who've struggled (and are not in a risk category) should be first back.

Would you consider making working from home a regular option for your team?

Then look
at your
equipment

While everyone has been working from home, they've needed devices to work on, and a setup that allows them to access your network, files, applications, etc.

How has the at home setup worked for you?

If you planned ahead of time for a lockdown, you've probably had an almost seamless switch to home working. At least as far as your IT is concerned, anyway.

If you didn't, what are the changes that you would make once the restrictions are loosened? What changes would you need to make to allow home working for any of your team on a regular basis?

How will you manage the safekeeping and return of any company equipment during this process? Did you or your IT service provider keep a list of what was handed out?

Will your IT service provider need to spend a lot of time with you setting everything back up in the workplace?

Again, if you plan to keep some staff working from home permanently or regularly, do they have everything they need to make the switch? Do you need to purchase extra devices or licenses for apps?

This is the part of your plan where you'll need to liaise with your IT service provider. What can they do to help the move back be as easy as possible for you?

What about your data?

Access to your data has been moved across devices from your workplace, to homes, and now needs to come back to the workplace again. Has your data security been compromised in any way during this process?

Strictly speaking, if you've managed the switch well and your people have followed protocol, your data should be watertight. All the additional checks and measures should mean that your anti-virus software is up-to-date and the most recent versions of everything should be installed.

However, if you managed the move in a rush, perhaps you could have been a little more thorough?

Whatever the case, when people and devices start coming back to your workplace, it's a great opportunity to update everything, check the strength of passwords, and ensure all data is constantly backed up.

Making sure data is safe – and keeping it that way – must be a very high priority for all businesses, these days.

Now look at cost savings

There's no doubt that times are going to be hard for a while. The economy has been impacted in a big way, and we're all going to have to tighten our belts in some way.

IT has never been something to underinvest in. Because that will have a direct impact on how productive your team will be, and how safe your data is.

If your business found that the move to working from home was actually quite easy, how can you use this to your advantage and save money in the process?

For example, if you plan to allow some of your people to work from home on a permanent or regular basis, what would that mean for your premises? Could you make savings by downsizing?

Are there any other things that you've found yourself less reliant on than usual? Maybe your future business meetings could be held online rather than face to face, saving travel time and cost?

The changes will differ from business to business. But there are probably some areas that you can now review to make some savings.

The time to take action is NOW

Whether you can't wait to get back to your workplace, or you're secretly enjoying working from home, hopefully now you'll see that a little planning can go a long way.

This isn't something that should be left for a few weeks. Please don't put it off. The more work you do now on planning your technology and implementing it, the easier it will be for you and your team when the lockdown starts to ease.

If you could use some help planning and implementing the technical side of the return to your workplace, please get in touch.

We'd love to help you make it a smooth transition, without wasting any further time.

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