

COVID-19 Workplace Commons: Keeping Workers Well Case Study – *International SOS*

The [COVID-19 Workplace Commons: Keeping Workers Well](#) initiative leverages the World Economic Forum’s platform, networks and global convening ability to collect, refine and share strategies for returning to – and remaining in – the workplace safely as part of the broader COVID-19 recovery. The initiative is jointly led by Arizona State University and the World Economic Forum with support from The Rockefeller Foundation.

As part of this initiative, we have selected several dozen exemplary organizations to be **case studies**. Through multiple interviews with crisis management teams, Chief Human Resource Officers, and others, we have sought to understand their responses to provide you with a deeper dive into how a diverse set of organizations around the world have handled the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure workplace safety and business continuity.

International SOS

Headquartered in Singapore and counting over 10,000 employees, [International SOS](#) is the world's largest medical and travel security services firm, which counts nearly two-thirds of the Fortune Global 500 companies as clients and takes around 5 million assistance calls every year.

Question	Response
<i>When did your organization become aware that the COVID-19 pandemic would affect your operations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ International SOS sent the first alert on the virus to its customers in December 2019. ✓ A crisis management team was set up in early January 2020
<i>How did your organization set up the initial response to the pandemic?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each regional team is implementing its Pandemic Response Plan that we have had in place and honed from previous endemic and pandemic profile events such as SARS, Mers, Ebola, Zika, and Avian Flu. ✓ A global Pandemic Manager structure was put into place immediately and representatives from each location built local planning and readiness responses based on the lessons of early experiences as the pandemic spread across Asia.
<i>How has your response changed as the pandemic has evolved?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lessons have shown the Pandemic is likely to be longer term and emanate in phases as opposed to linear waves.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We have improved our insight and analysis over the past months, even as far as now having developed a predictive tool following a 5-day moving average, recurrence warning markers structure and developed Covid-19 Impact Scales taking into account risk of travel, relative to the logistics, security and medical risks. ✓ We have developed global mapping and a travel restriction rolling report – globally for our clients, as well as our internal staff travel management.
<i>What has been your organization's approach to bringing your workforce back (or keeping your workforce on site) to the physical workplace during the pandemic?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In most countries we opted for a hybrid and flexible return to operations model appreciated by our employees. ✓ Many of our centres have been able to maintain key staff operations in place throughout the COVID-19 threat by managing effective social spacing, local and office hygiene, specialist options for staff travel to work and excluding non-essential staff from these work areas. ✓ We do not expect 100% of staff to return to the office any time soon and have developed a full workforce work from home structure to accommodate this need.
<i>How has your strategy varied depending on facility location? By type of facility?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each location has its own Business Continuity Plan – Pandemic Manager - who works alongside a global network and are implementing the local response based on local legislation, employee needs and country specificities in cooperation with local General Management, Medical and Human Resource leadership.
<i>Are you requiring your workers to tested for COVID-19 as part of returning to the physical workplace?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In selective situations, we have supported staff in undertaking testing. ✓ However, in most locations we have not seen the need for this and have deployed a layered approach of pre-work health assessment and self-serve questionnaires, temperature checks on entry to the offices and hygiene screening.
<i>What has been your strategy for workers who test positive for COVID-19 or show symptoms of it?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We have widespread education around our offices advising staff how to react to symptoms and the procedures to be undertaken when a staff member in the office faces what might be indicative symptoms. ✓ The individual is isolated in a prepared room and a nurse appointed to monitor then with full PPE. The local authorities are then contacted, and we support the individual to undertake testing to identify the nature of the symptoms and further treatment. ✓ We encourage a measured phased return for employees, who have tested positive and have managed a central oversight of all employees either isolated, on quarantine or hospitalised due to COVID-19 via a team of Medical and HR experts in our group Pandemic Management Team. ✓ We have extensive EAP support and external counselling available to employees.
<i>How do you integrate contact tracing into worker safety efforts?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Contact tracing is an integral part of our managing a safe work environment and we maintain a register of all staff in the office, where they are working and who they

	<p>have had contact with. This is centrally coordinated on a local office basis and office desk allocation allows segregation to certain work areas.</p>
<p><i>What is an example of an innovative practice you have implemented that others might learn from?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ International SOS has established a portal for staff and members to access a specialist forum of Medical and Security information, templates and up to date COVID-19, travel, Government guidelines and general health information. ✓ For our RTO, we have encouraged staggered start and finish times for people to avoid rush hour travel during their commute, to reduce exposure, and have supported additional transport for staff required to travel on local transport in high risk areas. ✓ We encourage A/B team attendance on alternate days to minimise transmission exposure risks in larger administrative offices.
<p><i>What do you think will be most challenging in the next several months when it comes to worker safety?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We are expecting multiple waves in most regions in the next 12 to 18 months and have ensured that we are adequately preparing for this. ✓ Return to international travel is expected to be a considerable challenge and we are working globally to ensure our practices and procedures are applied and the journey of the traveller is made as safe and as supported as practical.
<p><i>Has COVID-19 made you rethink your physical/real estate investments or how your spaces are laid out?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Yes, we are reviewing this on an ongoing basis. We have closed small offices where leases were up and moved people to offices of JV partners or home-based.
<p><i>Have you put restrictions on travel? Does this vary for business or personal travel?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Yes, we have deferred all non-essential business-related travel globally. This is reviewed by our medical, Security and HR specialists on an ongoing basis and adjusted to suit local and global risks and limitations. ✓ For our employees' private travel, we have given staff every opportunity to review information with regards to destination, restrictions and return travel considerations.
<p><i>Employee morale and productivity – how has COVID-19 affected your workforce's output and team cohesion?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The teams were extremely productive and successful, despite the circumstances. ✓ Collaboration and speed to market has improved. ✓ Morale has remained extremely high and for many of our offices we have had a core of staff working within our offices successfully throughout the crisis. ✓ In many countries our Assistance Centres, as they deliver essential services, have special status to operate, even while restrictions are in place.
<p><i>Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your efforts to keep workers safe during COVID-19?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Please look at our Coronavirus microsite and fast facts: https://www.internationalsos.com/client-magazines/novel-coronavirus