

Recovery Playbook for Impact Employers

AT A GLANCE

As challenging as times of crisis are, they present an extraordinary opportunity to reimagine employers' relationships with their employees and promote equity and economic advancement for all. This special edition of our Impact Employer Framework offers insights into the unique challenges companies face in this moment, along with emerging practices to help business leaders navigate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and related crises.



Developed by JFF, June 2021



About This Playbook

This playbook is a tool to support action among Impact Employers, companies that prioritize inclusive economic growth and equitable economic advancement for their employees alongside traditional business performance. It is organized based on the six levers of our [Impact Employer Framework](#): Corporate Culture, Workforce Planning, Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Total Rewards, and Offboarding.

In every section, we explain why each lever matters during the recovery phase, why there are challenges associated with navigating it well, and how you can make progress on each lever with emerging practices sourced from leaders across multiple industries and sectors. You can read this as a whole report or just skip to the relevant sections. We invite you to think of the playbook as a reference guide, meant to be accessed frequently as you navigate your company's recovery.

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We Can Return Better and Stronger Than Before

Our world looks dramatically different than it did a year ago.

At the start of 2020, no one could have predicted that our economy and society would be abruptly and fundamentally altered.

COVID-19 catalyzed an extraordinary public health crisis with devastating economic consequences. As of the writing of this playbook, there have been more than [3.1 million](#) deaths worldwide, with over 600,000 deaths in the United States alone.¹ [Twenty-five percent](#) of U.S. adults say that they or someone in their household lost their job because of the coronavirus outbreak.²

In addition, our country has been grappling with a much-needed reckoning on racial injustice. Urgent calls for action have made their way to the highest levels of corporate leadership.

This time of social and economic reckoning has upended many of the talent management systems and norms we know.

Now is the time for visionary corporate leaders to reimagine and rebuild corporate talent practices in a way that emphasizes equity, puts people at the center of business strategy, and creates widespread economic mobility.

The pandemic simultaneously magnified longstanding racial disparities and accelerated our nation's collective awareness of racial injustice and inequity.

Black and Latinx populations, who represent a disproportionate share of frontline workers, have been more negatively affected by the economic and health effects of COVID-19 than white Americans. Currently, 12 percent of Black Americans and 18 percent of Latinx Americans are jobless. Black Americans are [two times](#) more likely to die from COVID-19 than white Americans, while Latinx populations are over 50 percent more likely to die from COVID-19.³

The consequences of this crisis are particularly concerning for women.

One in four women are [said](#) to be downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce altogether, and in September 2020, four times more women than men dropped out of the workforce.⁴ While this trend is not particularly surprising—on average, women take on [significantly more](#) child care responsibilities than men—it is alarming, and experts fear that it will reverse generations of hard-earned progress for women in the workforce.

The economic impact is being felt across the age spectrum.

Mostly shielded from previous economic downturns and recessions, workers age 50 and older have faced a uniquely challenging situation, experiencing higher levels of unemployment while simultaneously grappling with increased susceptibility to the virus. Younger workers, notoriously disadvantaged during previous economic downturns and recessions, have been negatively affected even more, especially since they tend to hold jobs in hard-hit industries such as retail and hospitality.

A more inclusive future is possible on the other side of the crises we face. **We have a unique opportunity to accelerate positive talent management trends, redefine traditional workplace relationships, and devise innovative new solutions.** We can return from this crisis better and stronger than before, and we can create more opportunities for the frontline, entry-level, and mid-level workers who have proved so essential during this crisis.

We Are Still Navigating the Road to Recovery & Return

We see the fallout and recovery from COVID-19 and related crises happening in three stages (see graphic). Now that the Rapid Response phase has ended, we are focused on Phase 2—Recovery— and the road toward Phase 3—Return— during which we must shift toward more sustainable solutions. When we shift more fully into Phase 3 in the coming months, it's critical that the reality we rebuild for ourselves, our communities, and our businesses, looks vastly different than the one we left behind.

We encourage business leaders to embrace this opportunity and use this playbook as an inspiration and guide for their strategies and investments during this critical period.

Talent management systems and practices have been disrupted, and we have been granted a once-in-a-generation chance to reimagine and build new systems and practices that change the relationship between employer and employee.



Bold, Collaborative Innovation Will Be Key to an

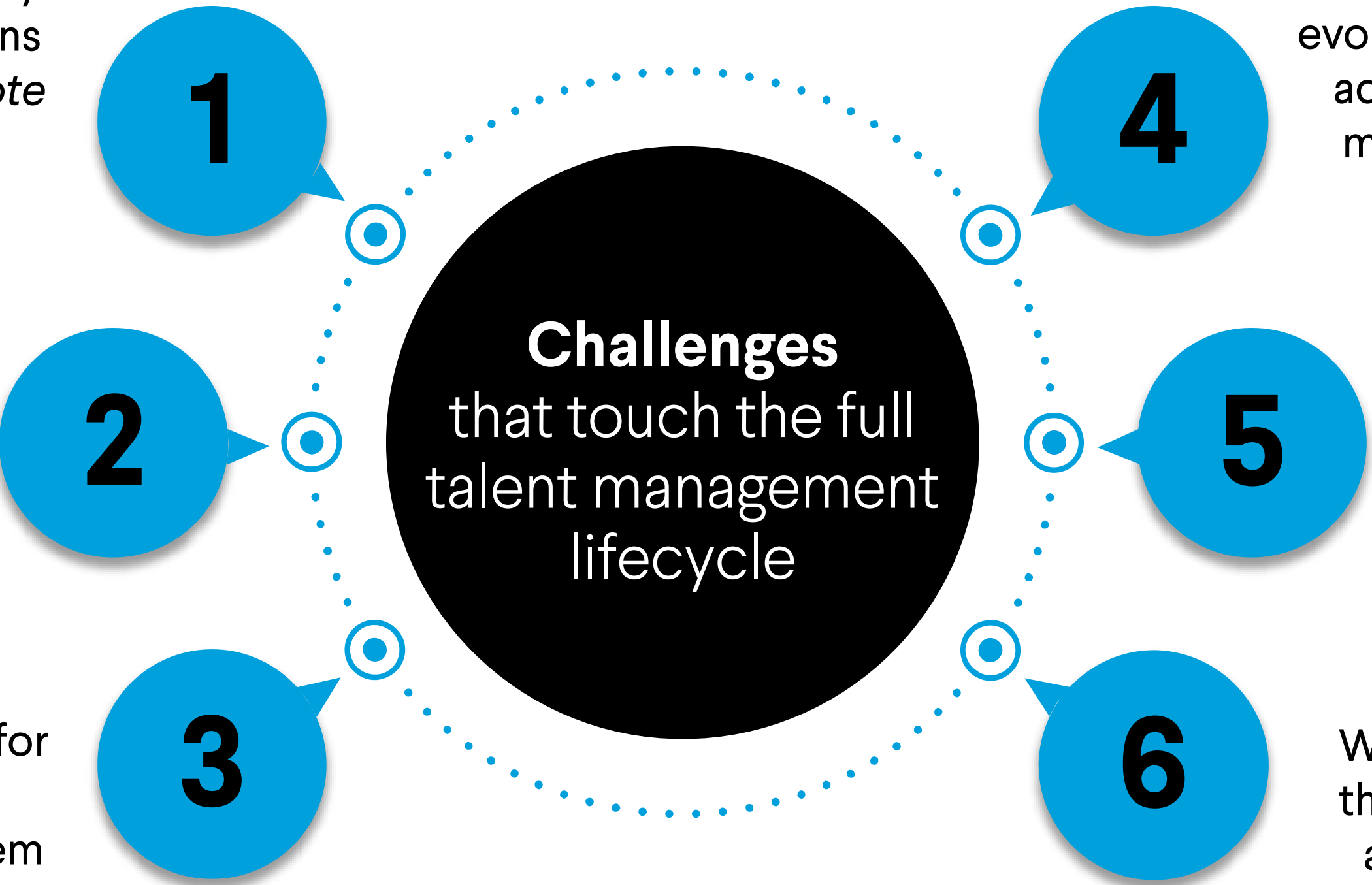
Equitable Recovery

Every company is approaching recovery differently, depending on existing talent management practices, unique employee needs, and business operations during the pandemic. That said, there are a set of common challenges the majority of corporate leaders must address:

Leaders need to determine whether any or all of the immediate response actions should become permanent. (e.g., *remote work, expanded paid time off*)

Trends associated with the future of work are accelerating (e.g., *automation, virtual hiring, remote work, layoffs and reorganizations, and a widening skills gap*).

Organizations must provide support for employees and create a sense of psychological safety that enables them to take advantage of those supports.



The roles and expectations of managers have evolved rapidly. They need agile training to address racial bias, employee wellness, managing in a virtual environment, etc.

Racial equity is rightfully in the spotlight. How do companies incorporate the development of anti-racist cultures and improved talent management practices, for example?

Women are disproportionately exiting the workforce due to competing work and home life demands, which have been amplified by the pandemic.

Roadmap to Recovery

As a way to help leaders like you overcome these challenges, **we co-created this Recovery Playbook for Impact Employers with over 40 leaders** from the human resources, corporate philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility business functions at 18 companies across 11 industries.

These leaders came together in small, topic-focused groups to workshop and brainstorm as peers. Together, they helped surface the promising, emerging talent practices their companies have adopted, as well as bold innovations that have yet to be put into play.

In the pages that follow, we have turned their valuable input into a road map that outlines the best of the emerging practices that are essential to recovering stronger, organized along the talent management spectrum. You can choose to take everything in at once or skip to the sections that feel most relevant to you and your work.



Six Key Levers Contributing to One Common Goal

Economic advancement for all.

That's what Impact Employers strive for, and JFF's Talent Framework is the guide to help get them there. By implementing best practices and making progress on these levers—one, a few, or all six of them—companies can begin or advance on their journey of being an Impact Employer.

Click
on Each
Lever





CORPORATE CULTURE

Why It Matters

The way companies behave during challenging times reveals their values and priorities. The decisions corporate leaders make affect not only the trajectory of their organizations' recoveries but also the public's perception of their brands and values—which in turn affects their long-term resilience.

A company's purpose is its reason for existence and the foundation of its culture. During times of crisis, **Impact Employers navigate challenges by centering their actions around a corporate purpose that is rooted in long-term objectives for growth and impact—and puts employee advancement at the forefront.** Every decision matters and is watched closely. Workers and customers track executives' actions and words to assess whether a company's stated purpose is central to its identity or is just a marketing tagline.

New Challenges During Recovery

Corporate leaders currently face many challenges related to building and maintaining a strong corporate culture. With a large portion of **employees working from home or in isolating conditions on location**, cultural alignment and **feelings of belonging** have been suppressed. Relatedly, the events of 2020, which heightened our collective awareness of racial injustice and inequity in our country, have left corporate leaders scrambling to ensure that their companies support an inclusive corporate culture.

One of the few things we can be certain of during this crisis is that **every employee is experiencing it in a different way**. Prioritizing **worker well-being** and meeting the emotional, financial, and social needs of each employee requires expanded communication and resources.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“To me, an Impact Employer is one who trusts its employees—can believe in the potential of an individual as a person and also as a professional.”

*Wilkin Sanchez, cybersecurity associate,
Envision Technology Advisors,
Opportunity@Work program participant*

How to Do It Well *Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery*

Learn More Starbucks Story

→ Acknowledge people's varying experiences of the crisis.

Recognize that you cannot begin to understand each employee's unique experience, especially in the case of those who have been disproportionately negatively affected, unless you create the space for them to share.

- Establish task forces and employee resource groups, and host listening sessions across all levels of the organization, to inform your decisions and next steps.
- Lift up employee voices and experiences through storytelling.
- Host expert speakers who can educate employees and thoughtfully amplify the perspectives of employees who are traditionally underrepresented in the workplace.

→ Recognize the importance of reflection.

Establish June 19, the date that marked the end of slavery in the United States in 1865, as a holiday to serve as a means for employees of every race to remember, learn about, and celebrate the nation's enduring but unfulfilled aspiration of liberty and justice for all.

→ Support those who support others.

Create and distribute a policy for company-supported peaceful protests, and provide paid time off for its usage.

→ Provide personalized diversity training.

One size does not fit all; work with experts to create more tailored diversity training for all levels of the organization.

→ Prioritize comfort and well-being.

Be lenient on dress code and uniform policies, when possible. Recognize that employees working from home may not be able to be on camera at all times due to issues such as familial obligations or screen burnout.

→ Empower people to discuss mental health.

Provide tools and opportunities to discuss mental health and prevent burnout. Institute a monthly wellness survey, and sponsor virtual health visits and virtual workout classes.

→ Make your brand mean something.

Use your power and influence to help your employees and corporate peers understand the systemic racism that exists in the United States, and to generate deeper global conversations in support of corporate equity commitments.

How to Do It Well

Existing Impact Employer Practices Are More Crucial Than Ever



→ **Ensure mission alignment.**

Generate a corporate mission statement that incorporates a focus on an inclusive economy and equitable opportunity and mobility for employees

→ **Start at the top.**

Ensure commitment from the top, represented by words and deeds from the CEO and other members of the C-suite that further the company's commitment to worker well-being.

→ **Communicate consistently.**

Provide regular updates to employees, customers, and investors on the company's actions in connection with its social purpose and commitment to workers.

“Our deeply rooted, purpose-driven culture became a rallying cry for our organization as we navigated the complexities of the pandemic. We leaned into our inclusive values and created resources to help employees through a journey of self-reflection, empathy, and action to address racial inequity. We emphasized our adaptable values and enhanced our resilience resources to put employee well-being at the center. And finally, we actively fostered an environment where everyone could bring their authentic selves to work. Our culture has given us the foundation of strength to weather unprecedented times.”

Linda Ho, vice president, Culture and Capability, Autodesk

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Why It Matters

Today's crisis has forced many companies to abandon their workforce plans and pivot to forecasting their near-term talent needs.

Impact Employers emphasize rapid agility around talent planning.

As **automation** and other forces accelerate the evolution of work, businesses must be ready to redeploy people within the company on short notice.

In addition, companies must consider the risks of having people physically on the job and be ready to digitize operations at a moment's notice. This has implications not only for the operations of a business but the required skills of the people who power it. As companies begin to navigate recovery, they must begin to study the impact of digital transformation and plan how to prepare their workforces for those changes.

New Challenges During Recovery

Workforce planning within a **dynamic and unpredictable labor market** is bound to be challenging. Many corporate leaders are grappling with **reduced budgets** because the economic fallout of COVID-19 has diminished their bottom lines. But even those whose bottom lines have remained constant or improved have struggled with the unpredictability of **increased variable expenses** related to the acquisition, training, and advancement of employees. At the same time, **anticipated future workforce trends have been accelerated** by the impact of COVID-19. As automation is hastened and more and more work is becoming digitized, leaders are being forced to execute on previously long-term-oriented plans for internal and external talent pipelines, reskilling, and job redesign in the short term. This has precipitated the need for rapid strategic reorganizations and, in some cases, redeployments of employees across functions and/or layoffs.

Additionally, the heightened collective awareness of racial injustice and inequity has ignited deep reflection and a sense of responsibility in corporate America. Leaders feel compelled to **prioritize diversity commitments** to ensure that workforce plans are inclusive and humanistic and account for the varied personal and professional needs of current and prospective employees.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“I would hope that in the future, the whole job process would be more open and communicative. Hearing from managers about what’s needed to do a job well and receiving feedback are imperative for not only getting a job, but for professional advancement in the future.”

Amber Wallace Dekie, associate service desk technician, Iron Bow Technologies, Opportunity@Work program participant

How to Do It Well

Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery

→ **Recognize the value of your existing employees.**

Build an internal marketplace geared toward employee advancement that harnesses the investments you have already made in vetting and developing your employees.

→ **Plan to collaborate, and collaborate to plan.**

Develop alliances and partnerships—with other companies, local community based organizations, education institutions—to share resources and best practices.

→ **Put numbers behind decisions.**

Use integrated data from across business functions (e.g., human resources, strategy, and research and development) to think more strategically about job design for evolving roles and the necessary skills training.

→ **Harness the power of technology.**

Build a collaborative technology interface that aids in skill adjacency analysis and mapping job competency / skill requirements to help advance employees through their career journeys with more ease—across industries, and at various levels.

→ **Get ahead of the job market.**

Work with labor economists, nonprofits, and other groups to determine the skills needed for roles one to two years from now (and beyond), using data to identify market scarcity and inform investment.

How to Do It Well

*Existing Impact Employer
Practices Are More Crucial
Than Ever*

→ **Build a learning organization.**

Cultivate a culture that actively promotes continuous learning and skill development at all levels of the organization.

→ **Generate pathways.**

Create professional development programs and pathways—particularly for frontline, entry-level, and mid-level workers who are most vulnerable to displacement due to advances in technology.

→ **Break down silos.**

Ensure that the human resources, strategy, and research and development functions are closely aligned.



“Prudential has launched workshops to guide employees in creating skills-based resumes. The focus is on repositioning skills and experiences to demonstrate transferability to other roles. Prudential is also training managers on how to review these types of resumes and encouraging them to consider nontraditional candidates.”

Susan McGotty, vice president, Future of Work Career Design, Prudential Financial Inc.



TALENT ACQUISITION

Why It Matters

You will need a high-quality workforce to respond to the incredible demands of our shifting economy.

Impact Employers understand that the talent market is abruptly changing; regularly assess their needs and act accordingly. Some may curtail hiring during the recovery, but others will go on hiring sprees as the labor supply expands and workers migrate from hard-hit industries like retail, entertainment, and tourism to more stable sectors of the economy like food production, logistics, and technology.

New Challenges During Recovery

The talent acquisition processes that companies have relied upon for decades have been completely upended. With in-person interviewing and corporate site visits on hold, hiring managers are forced to find innovative **ways to assess competency and fit in a virtual environment**. And, with the rapid adoption of online tools, jobseekers with **limited digital literacy** require extra support to navigate the online application and hiring process.

Additionally, **traditional pipelines for talent have been disrupted**. This is not only due to limited in-person interactions but also because of increased corporate leadership **commitments to diversity and skills-based hiring and advancement**, which require added support to **ensure fairness and inclusivity for nontraditional jobseekers**.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“I was working in a temporary capacity for a well-known, global company. I was hired as the executive assistant for the chief legal officer. After six months, the company hired an individual who had a degree, over me—someone without a formal credential, but who had been successfully performing in the role for months. This is a great example of when removing extraneous requirements, such as a college degree, would have worked well, for both the company and for me.”

Debra Ethan, employee representative, Jobcase

How to Do It Well *Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery*

→ Connect with other businesses.

Build relationships and pipelines with businesses in different but related industries and sectors to intercept and hire displaced workers who possess relevant skills for your business.

→ Accommodate different levels of digital literacy in the hiring process.

Provide additional support to prospective employees to help them successfully navigate the online application and hiring process.

→ Get managers up to speed.

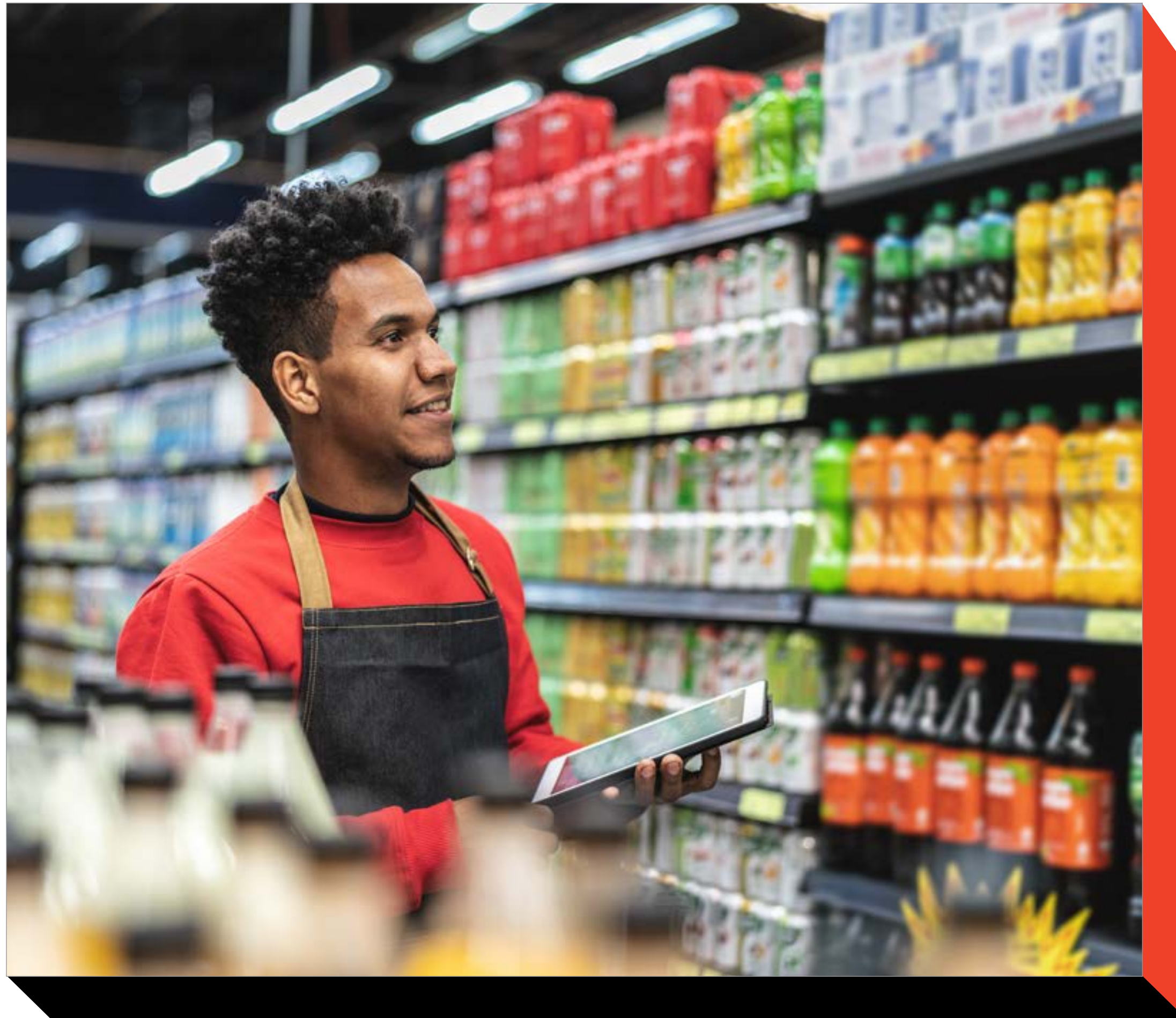
Provide timely training and education for hiring managers/recruiters on new processes, policies, and priorities related to changes in talent pipelines (e.g., diversity, partnerships, and digital literacy).

→ Set ambitious diversity targets, and report outcomes.

Go beyond just connecting talent acquisition practices with diversity commitments, and move toward setting and meeting ambitious targets for creating and sustaining new and equitable talent pipelines. Report targets and outcomes to external constituents.

How to Do It Well

Existing Impact Employer Practices Are More Crucial Than Ever



→ **Increase the focus on skills.**

Use skills-based assessments instead of credential-based resumes to recruit and hire job candidates.

→ **Decrease the focus on degrees.**

Remove extraneous requirements for applicants (e.g., college degrees or years of experience).

→ **Create an inclusive environment.**

Create employee resource or affinity groups for people who come from underrepresented populations, to attract, cultivate, and retain diverse talent.

→ **Foster new talent pipelines.**

Partner with local community-based organizations or community colleges to develop new and diverse talent pipelines.

“As an essential business during the COVID-19 pandemic, Walmart saw an increased need for talent, and we are pleased to have hired over 500,000 new associates during the course of 2020. We recognized that businesses in other industries were laying off employees with related and transferable skills, so we set out to create a bridge to mutually benefit both Walmart and those displaced workers. This not only allowed Walmart to meet its rapidly changing talent needs, but also provide valuable employment opportunities for workers affected by COVID-related layoffs.”

Gayatri Agnew, senior director, Corporate Philanthropy, Walmart

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Why It Matters

During this time of rapid change, developing talent has never been more important or more challenging. Companies must work diligently during the recovery period to find the best ways to prepare workers for new roles that emerge within their businesses. Companies must craft talent development strategies that build resilience among their employees—and, in turn, throughout their operations—so they're prepared to bounce back from future crises.

As we move into recovery, Impact Employers understand the heightened importance of nimble training and developing programs for employees in the midst of rapid change. They know that training programs need to be agile, relevant, and virtual.

New Challenges During Recovery

Before COVID-19, many companies had begun to integrate elements of virtual onboarding and training into their talent development practices, but most still relied heavily on in-person methods. Concerns for the health and safety of customers and employees alike forced companies to **fast-track virtual learning and development**, which required **heavy monetary investments** with limited time for **quality assurance**. Mentorship and job shadowing, once key components of in-person talent development, have been forgone or forced to go virtual. This has left companies questioning their efficacy not only in getting employees adequately trained but also in generating a **sense of belonging and alignment with the company**—something especially important for new employees and/or those who are considered to be “nontraditional” hires.

The existing skills gap has widened during this crisis, due to the rapid digitization of jobs. A **lack of digital literacy** has necessitated rapid digital upskilling in order to quickly and efficiently train employees on health and safety protocols and customer relationship management in this new environment. The expanded virtual training for COVID-19-related protocols, in addition to standard requisite training for employees, has led many to experience **virtual training fatigue and burnout**.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“In my experience, trust and autonomy are huge parts of professional development. I’ve had the most growth and success when my employer has said, ‘look, we’ll give you the training, tools, resources, and skills—we trust you to use them; show us what you can do.’ The opportunity to learn new things and do new things, combined with the freedom to make my own decisions on how to advance the work, increased my potential as an employee to the point of getting a promotion.”

*Wilkin Sanchez, cybersecurity associate,
Envision Technology Advisors,
Opportunity@Work program participant*



How to Do It Well *Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery*

→ Find innovative ways to fill talent gaps.

Create a special-assignment project board that allows employees to voice their interests and learn new skills based on emerging company needs.

→ Personalize training.

Provide on-demand virtual training, coaching, and mentoring so employees can engage with bite-size development on their terms and time.

→ Address digital literacy barriers.

Conduct audits of training and development tools to assess and eliminate digital literacy barriers.

→ Shift to a learning organization model from a learning-per-role/function model.

Carve out time and resources for employees to take advantage of learning opportunities.

→ Focus on future-oriented, individualized, modular learning.

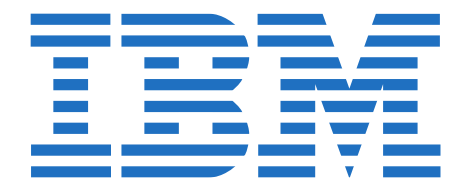
Use “future-fit” plans, which allow employees to create personalized career goals they can then work backward from to inform their learning.

How to Do It Well

*Existing Impact Employer
Practices Are More Crucial
Than Ever*

- **Continue work-based learning online.**
Offer work-based learning programs to train and prepare workers for the next phases of their careers.
- **Continue apprenticeships online.**
Offer apprenticeship programs that give employees opportunities to learn new skills on the job while still receiving a paycheck.
- **Provide support for upskilling.**
Provide continuing education programs that allow workers to earn degrees or credentials for free or at a low cost.





“Employers and employees are struggling with the upheaval brought on by the pandemic, and the existing skills gaps are widening as a result. Now more than ever, there is a need for alternative pathways to skills-based training. IBM’s apprenticeship program provides on-the-job training in areas from blockchain to cybersecurity and mainframes. It utilizes an “earn as you learn” model to meet the demands of the digital economy.”

Tommy Wenzlau, HR talent leader, IBM

CORPORATE
CULTURE

WORKFORCE
PLANNING

TALENT
ACQUISITION

TALENT
DEVELOPMENT

TOTAL
REWARDS

OFFBOARDING

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TOTAL REWARDS

Why It Matters

In the midst of a crisis, the wraparound supports that companies provide to their workers are critical. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a resurgence of worker interest in and reliance on employer-provided benefits. Gig workers may feel vulnerable because they have limited access to employee benefits and societal safety nets. Traditional employees are concerned that their benefits packages may be inadequate. All workers are asking detailed questions about health insurance, leave policies, child and dependent care, and employee assistance programs.

As companies move from crisis mitigation and business stabilization to recovery, **Impact Employers will sustain some of the expanded support they have offered workers and develop special rapid-response benefits packages that they can deploy in the future.**

New Challenges During Recovery

The complexity and urgency around supporting employees' unique wellness, mental health, and belonging needs while **still managing performance expectations** in a fair and equitable way presents quite a challenge. Every corporate leader will tell you that the only certainty during this crisis is that **every employee is experiencing it differently**, which means that employees are requesting access to a wider variety of **benefits that match their unique experiences and needs**. Unfortunately, certain groups of employees are being disproportionately negatively affected and thus require even more support. A sense of unfairness can arise among employees who feel that others' needs are being addressed ahead of their own.

With the **political, economic, and health uncertainties** that still lie ahead, many leaders are struggling to determine which, if any, of the **temporary benefits** used to provide stopgap support for employees throughout the crisis should continue or be made permanent once it has passed. This is especially true if, post-recovery, companies look for ways to quickly reduce costs, as many of these stopgap measures cost more because of their expedited nature.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“Having employees that are whole and fulfilled—they can give more, versus an employee left wanting, saying, ‘I need something from my environment, because I don’t feel whole.’ This can stem from many things, from diversity issues to social problems outside of work, to financial troubles, to caregiving issues. So, I think when you have people who are supported, they are able to pay it forward; they are able to give more and be more and have a positive impact in any environment they come in contact with.”

Jason Roberson, training supervisor, SynClearly

How to Do It Well *Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery*

*Learn More
Salesforce
Story*

→ Take a pulse on employee needs.

Conduct surveys to assess and analyze employee needs to inform short-term total rewards strategy.

→ Repurpose funds.

Move money that would normally be spent on things that have been canceled due to COVID-19 (e.g., travel or event planning) to be used for emergent employee needs.

→ Give employees time to deal and time to heal.

Provide additional paid time off for all employees to handle personal or familial issues that arise during the pandemic (e.g., caregiving responsibilities and mental health needs).

→ Promote wellness.

Integrate things like yoga, mindfulness, and other self-care practices into the workday.

→ Create a safe space.

Focus on embedding psychological safety into your work environment to ensure that employees at all levels feel comfortable taking advantage of enhanced total rewards offerings.

- Highlight stories of employees' pandemic challenges being addressed via enhanced total rewards (with their permission, of course).
- Encourage leaders to promote the use of enhanced total rewards.
- Support employees who ask for help so that others will also feel comfortable doing so.

How to Do It Well *Existing Impact Employer Practices Are More Crucial Than Ever*



- **Provide next-level rewards.**
Offer benefits packages that go beyond basic compensation to include employer-sponsored health care, retirement savings, and disability and life insurance.
- **Make it easy to take advantage of rewards.**
Offer resource navigators who can help employees manage a variety of life challenges, including child care, medical concerns, housing needs, and financial literacy.
- **Personalize total rewards.**
Ensure that benefits that address specific employee challenges, such as transportation vouchers, classes for English language learners, financial planning services, and student loan payment support, are made available.

“At JPMC, we approach employee compensation and benefits holistically striving to offer our employees competitive wages and benefits, safe working environments, and meaningful paths to opportunity and development. JPMC provides competitive wages to all employees, with a U.S. minimum wage of at least \$16-\$20 per hour, and offers robust benefits and employee supports including health care, dental, vision, retirement benefits, vacation, paid sick leave and family leave, and employee wellness programs. During the COVID-19 crisis, we enabled over 180,000 employees to work from home, developed robust safety protocols for onsite employees, and provided frontline workers with over \$100 million in special payments while also expanding access to paid time away and back-up and full-service child care. To help employees strengthen their financial health and reach their financial objectives, we also launched a newly developed financial wellness benefit offering personalized resources and coaching.”

Robin Leopold, head of human resources, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

OFFBOARDING

Why It Matters

Many companies have been forced to furlough or lay off workers during the crisis. Others are now grappling with such decisions as they slowly turn to stabilization and then recovery. Still more are realizing that layoffs are necessary for strategic restructuring following the rapid advancement of future-of-work trends such as automation.

Impact Employers understand that offboarding employees is just as important as onboarding them, and they invest accordingly.

Departing employees can be brand ambassadors, future customers, or even return candidates for jobs at a company. Throughout the recovery period, Impact Employers will take responsible approaches to offboarding workers.

New Challenges During Recovery

Offboarding employees under normal circumstances is tough. Add to it an economic recession, a national health crisis, and a labor market with an oversupply of unemployed individuals, and you're **faced with a dire situation**. Corporate leaders are **feeling an increased sense of responsibility** to help displaced workers land on their feet. Furloughs and layoffs of this magnitude have seldom been experienced, and therefore companies may **lack the necessary ethical and equitable internal policies for implementation**. And, given the uncertainty around when the COVID-19 pandemic might end and when the economy will rebound, it is very difficult for leaders to make decisions around **whether to furlough employees or conduct layoffs**. Relatedly, it can be challenging to make the case internally that **spending additional funds** on individuals who are leaving the company is a worthwhile investment, especially when the bottom line is already strained. In addition, **offboarding in a virtual environment can feel cumbersome and isolating**, given that employees may not be able to collect personal effects and/or properly say goodbye to coworkers in person.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

“Receiving notice about the elimination of my position was definitely devastating, especially during the pandemic. Fortunately, I was able to leverage the Skills Accelerator Program that my company offers and partnered with Career Services’ representatives to successfully land on a new position. I attended a series of very helpful workshops that provided a lot of great tips on networking, interviewing, and creating a skills-based resume. In addition, I also worked very closely with an extremely insightful, kind, patient and encouraging Career Partner who helped me improve my resume, interviewing skills, and even my confidence level. Without her help, I don’t think I would’ve landed on a new position that quickly, so I’m really grateful for her time and assistance, as well as all of the other services that were provided as part of the program.”

*Quan Au, senior technical systems analyst,
Prudential Financial Inc.*

How to Do It Well *Emerging Practices for Equitable Recovery*

→ Remove technological barriers.

Ensure that a lack of access to technology does not impede displaced workers' efforts to find new opportunities. Provide access to computers so workers can look for new jobs.

→ Connect current and past employees.

Build active employee alumni groups to connect displaced employees to one another for strategic networking.

→ Pay for useful career tools.

Cover the cost of job search tools and platform subscriptions.

→ Analyze your offboarding processes.

Solicit feedback on your offboarding strategy. Survey offboarded employees at various points following offboarding, and monitor comments on workplace review websites.

→ Connect with other businesses.

Collaborate across businesses, industries, and sectors to relocate displaced workers.

→ Make offboarding a strategic business function.

Build and continually fund and maintain a dedicated offboarding function to ensure the availability of individualized services.

→ Use your voice.

Advocate for better public-sector support (e.g., portable benefits and tools, additional financial support, more innovative marketplace solutions, data-tailored support, or universal basic income).

How to Do It Well

Existing Impact Employer Practices Are More Crucial Than Ever

- **Extend total rewards.**
Establish offboarding packages that provide former employees with income and benefits while they look for new jobs.
- **Offer tools and resources.**
Provide support from dedicated and knowledgeable HR professionals who can help explain exit options and their financial implications.
- **Build strategic exit pathways.**
Create partnerships with local community colleges or nonprofits to set up programs offering workers access to training that leads to employment opportunities in high-growth industries.

For additional guidance on offboarding, check out the JFF report [A Better Approach to Layoffs](#).



“We know our fleet won’t stay with Postmates forever—that’s the very nature of the work. We both recognize and embrace the eventual transition of our gig workforce by promoting open lines of communications and ensuring they have access to tools and resources to help them gain skills for their next adventure. Specifically, we’ve created what we call ‘The Flexible Toolkit,’ which is a one-stop shop for everything gig workers need to be successful both on and off of our platform—including access to career coaching, mock interviews, and advanced certifications from accredited universities and institutions—all at no cost to the participant.”

Claire Sands, former director, Fleet Community Communications and Engagement, Postmates Inc.

How We Recover From This Crisis Matters

The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed our world—our norms, our values, and the roles of our leaders. But for all the damage it has done and the pain it has caused, it has presented us with an unparalleled opportunity to reimagine the role of Fortune 500 companies in a way that builds upon their status as leaders that have a responsibility to their workers and their communities.

To make the most of this opportunity, we must recognize that the success or failure of any business is tightly tethered to the success or failure of workers and communities—an interdependency that has been increasingly clear in recent months. Practically speaking, the practices presented in this playbook will require varying levels of commitment and investment to implement. As with any effort to introduce organizational change, there will be no one-size-fits-all answer to what recovery should look like among employers. So, as you move forward as a leader in these uncertain times, we encourage you to use the entirety of this recovery playbook as a guide to making investments that are right for your business, your workers, and your community.

Contributors

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About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For nearly 40 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About JFF's Corporate Action Platform

JFF's Corporate Action Platform helps companies double down on business performance while preparing workers to advance their careers. Corporate leaders tap into JFF's influence, resources, peer groups, and guidance to learn how to take meaningful action. We help companies make strategic investments in inclusive talent management practices—approaches that drive a real return for businesses and their workers.

Endnotes

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