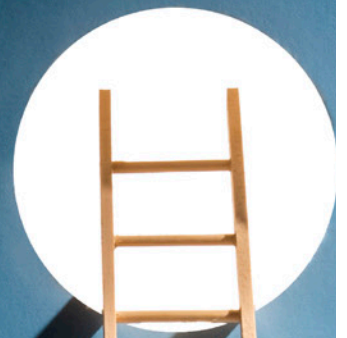


# THE LOCKDOWN :

## A KEY ENABLER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION



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## **/ The Lockdown: A Key Enabler for Business Transformation**

The widespread lockdown caused by the Covid-19 crisis has forced companies to urgently implement, mass teleworking strategies. As could be predicted in the given circumstances, the collective capacity to adapt varied from one company to another.

A common base of best practices can be highlighted from global firms. These trends could be continued and even reinforced to facilitate the transition back to normal at the end of the lockdown.

As more and more publications focus on the difficulties encountered in this period, few question the “post-critical” period.

In order to gain in robustness, competitiveness and agility, it is in companies’ interest to learn from this exceptional situation.



## **An Uneven Management of Massive Teleworking**

The Covid-19 crisis has accelerated the dynamics of teleworking

Since 2009, the number of French teleworkers is growing steadily: from only 10% of the workforce in 2009, it has increased to approximately 30% in 2019. The change is the result of three main factors.

Firstly, a strong demand for access to telework by employees' and social partners. Second, the success of its implementation in several major French groups. And finally, an easing of the relevant legal system, particularly the reform of the Labor Code initiated by Emmanuel Macron in 2017.

The latest strikes in the transport sector and, above all, the recent measures of general quarantine have considerably accelerated this dynamic. Today, it is not yet possible to precisely quantify this effect.

However, firms that could continue their activity during the Covid-19 crisis have made extensive use of teleworking. In some cases, entire organizations, business units and teams have been led to work in a different environment for the first time.

### **The Lockdown: An Exceptional Situation for Teleworking**

During the lockdown period, telework takes place under very specific circumstances. It is imposed as a matter of urgency instead of being voluntarily chosen, sometimes without any specific preparation, and it covers all working hours. Other important factors complicate its set up among them, the implementation of part-time measures, or the anxiety-provoking climate in which employees are teleworking.

In addition, there is a strong sense of isolation and confinement that can be associated with teleworking. Finally, the blurring of the boundary between private and professional life can lead to a lack of routine (example: having children in the house during confinement).

### **Companies Show Heterogeneous Abilities to Adapt**

The massive deployment of working from home had to be done in a very short time. As such, the lockdown has been a revelation of the heterogeneity of companies and the gaps that exist within each one (between business lines or between teams for example).

The responsiveness of companies, and therefore their ability to adapt, appears to be clearly correlated with their pre-crisis mastery of "New Ways of Working".

As expected, the most experienced in the field reacted very quickly. While some companies that rely on "traditional" organizational models have been forced to temporarily suspend their activity.

Among these two opposing models, many companies and/or businesses have been caught in an intermediate situation, leading to a more or less sharp decline in productivity.

In this context, it seems appropriate to carry out an analysis of the good practices associated with the deployment of telework, specifically those implemented by the most reactive and efficient companies in periods of generalized lockdown.

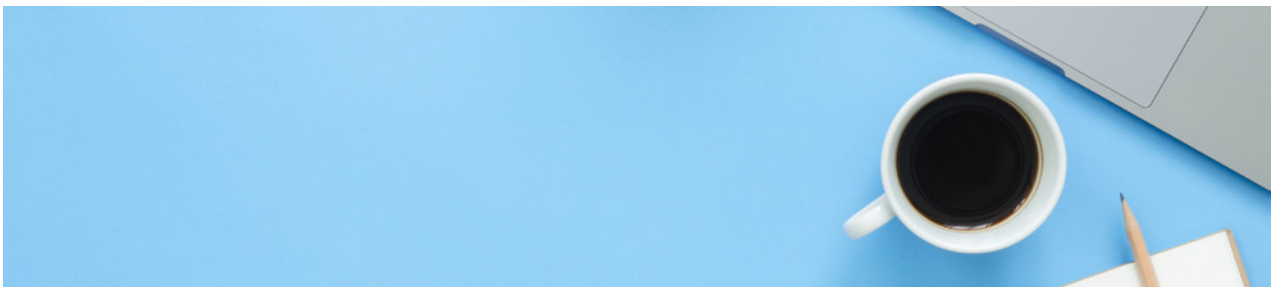
## **The Best Practices that Make Telework a Success**

The successful rollout of teleworking relies on a foundation of best practices. The companies that implemented such practices before the lockdown period were much better prepared to face this challenge than their peers.

### **Adapting IT Devices to Teleworking**

Providing teams with an IT environment adapted to working from home is a real prerequisite. It is a matter of going far beyond simply equipping them with laptops and communication solutions. In this regard, companies that have successfully switched to generalized teleworking configurations are those that have two key elements: on the one hand, a secured access to the corporate network.

On the other hand, a collaborative solution allowing users to exchange documents and lead projects and/or teams. This can be done through VOIP, videoconferencing or at least a conference call device. In this field, we have witnessed an increased use of solutions such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Trello, Slack, WeTransfer and Microsoft Teams. They often became, in a few days, the tools of daily life. Giving teams tailor-made support is a keyway to ensure the successful deployment of these solutions.



### **Preparing for the Deployment of Teleworking Through Teamwork**

Traditionally, when a company has a framework that allows teams to switch to teleworking, it is a voluntary process. Therefore, it seems to be a primarily individual approach. However, experience has shown that this type or mechanism is only effective when collective

brainstorming precedes individual application. This idea should be carried out at the level of a department or team.

It aims to identify organizational arrangements adapted to the targeted activity, for example:

- Thinking about activities that can be carried out remotely (including a brainstorming session on computer applications that can be accessed from home)
- identifying methods for adapting processes to teleworking
- Anticipating the seasonality of the activity
- Deciding the allocation of teleworking days
- Establishing procedures for sharing documentation

It is also a question of addressing the conditions of group involvement and maintaining a team dynamic, for instance:

- Organizing team meetings (frequency, tools and guiding principles)
- Organizing projects and brainstorming sessions
- Interacting with the rest of the team (including service providers)
- Informally communicating and completing team building exercises

## Individual Preparation

The lockdown has increased the difficulties that teleworkers usually face: rhythm management, comfort/ usability, difficulties concentrating, etc.. It also emphasized the importance of taking the normal working environment into account when implementing remote working.

The employees, who handled this period the best, were those who managed to organize and plan their days. It is therefore essential, as far as possible, to take measures to maintain a satisfying level of productivity and quality of life at work.

## 7 Actions to Optimize Remote Working

- Create a quiet and comfortable workspace at home to separate professional and private life;
- Define your work and connection schedules and communicate them to the rest of the team;
- Define and communicate your need for autonomy and contact with your manager;
- Optimize and manage your time by prioritizing your actions in order to balance production time and remote meetings;
- Allow time to informal exchanges with colleagues;
- Take regular breaks to stay productive;
- Optimize off-peak periods through trainings (MOOC, distance learning) and by doing research work.

## Helping Managers Master Remote Management

Remote working is overturning traditional management methods based on “command and control” and face-to-face meetings. Thus, it is a very effective way to accelerate managerial transformation within an organization.

Remotely, only management based on goal setting, trust and accountability can be effective.

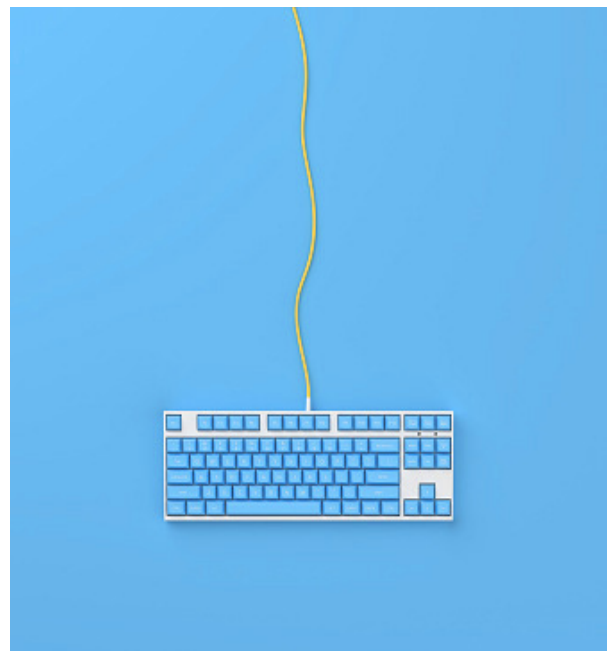
To achieve this, two sets of managerial practices are required: performance management and team support.

## Driving Performance

Telework performance management is based on both collective and individual responsibility. Its terms must be defined during the system framing phase and the monitored indicators must be readily available to employees.

## Supporting Teams

Supporting employees that are teleworking is an essential initiative. It helps maintain team life and overcomes isolation. Procedures for listening, getting regular feedback, information sharing and maintaining social bonds must be defined before the system is launched.



## Continuing the Transformation Dynamic After the Lockdown

Companies will benefit from continuing their transformation dynamic after the lockdown.

Whether they have faced major difficulties during the quarantine period, or whether they have managed to adapt, they have been compelled to drastically transform their organizations.

In just a few days, some have evolved more than in months or even years. They have been able to accelerate the implementation of ongoing

projects or initiatives that were previously deferred. The managers and employees have had to adapt and work differently. They have successfully combined remote working and efficiency.

Once this lockdown period has gone by, companies will have to act quickly based on the lessons learned from this period. They will also face several fundamental challenges in order to keep up the engaged dynamic.

### Think About the Future of Teleworking

It is obvious that compulsory teleworking will not become commonplace. However, lessons need to be drawn about its perspectives.

The lockdown has helped democratize this way of working and has extended it to jobs and activities previously exclusively carried out exclusively on-site.

In this perspective, companies cannot go back. However, implementation procedures for teleworking will probably have to be redesigned. They could replace traditional company agreements as they are more flexible and progressive.

The debate must extend to the list of activities (including IT applications) and the number of days available for remote working, the arrangements determining its implementation, the categories of workers concerned, the application process and the resources available.

The same applies to assisting employees and managers; preparing all staff for the deployment of teleworking in the best possible conditions.

In a nutshell, an assessment of how the teams experience this period should be carried out at the end of the lockdown. It will help identify the balance between the overall improvements and the limits of working from home policies.

### Developing Managerial Innovation

The confinement period has put the manager back at the core of daily activities and team life. It has also widened the gap between management methods based on control and management by objectives based on trust and goodwill. Thus, once this period is over, the simultaneous existence these two modes will become more difficult; all the more so as many employees will have gained confidence and autonomy.

In traditional structures or those in transition, managerial support systems should thus emerge. They will strengthen the efficiency and impact of all managers. For more mature structures and managers, specific managerial innovation systems should also be developed.

For example, managers could help promote management techniques, positions, methods and tools that encourage collective thinking, creativity and empowerment. These practices will enable managers to play a key role in individual and collective performance.

## Cultivating Agile and Digital Practices

Traditional ways of sharing information, as well as many processes and activities that previously required a physical presence, were shattered during the lockdown.

New solutions have emerged to ensure the remote circulation of information or dematerialized entire areas of activity.

The physical distance from decision-makers has also encouraged processes of reflection and decision-making based on collective thinking and short circuits of validation. Working in “project mode” has thus developed strongly, facilitated by the use of previously unknown IT solutions.

Businesses will have to keep up this dynamic. New programs should emerge, enabling agility to be deployed on a large scale (“at scale”).

## Developing the Employee Experience

The notion of the employee experience took shape with the desire to upgrade the quality of service and support for employees throughout their careers within the company.

Initiatives in this direction aim to build employee loyalty, attract new talents and improve efficiency and service quality.

The highlights of the professional life have been more or less adjusted during this period of lockdown.

This is particularly the case for recruitment, internal communication, payroll, training and evaluation.

Some administrative processes have been dematerialized from end-to-end (payroll, expense reports, leave management, etc.), simplifying the daily tasks of many users.

Some organizations have deployed a “pulse-taking” approach for their teams. The objective being to identify actions likely to improve the daily lives of employees during and after lockdown.

These programs and initiatives should thus develop, to improve the experience of employees, customers and potential recruits.

Thanks to these programs, it will also be possible to further optimize processes and organizations. Given the competition and the increasing willingness of customers to use digital tools, companies that do not have this digital environment will have no choice but to evolve.

Companies that already have a “digital workplace” will have to ensure that they master the tools, collaborative solutions and dematerialized processes available to their employees.

The access to secure networks from outside the company’s sites should also be carried out in a more general basis. Indeed, companies have faced some difficulties in this area.



## Adapting the Workplace to Teams' Uses

The organizations that have adapted to the Covid-19 crisis are those that have maintained or developed a collaborative dynamic despite the physical distance between individuals.

The development of collaborative work, combined with new management methods based on trust, listening and goal setting, has thus promoted horizontal styles of management, with fluid exchanges between employees and managers.



Workplaces will have to be transformed to take into account these new uses and the increased mobility of teams (including the possibility for many service providers to carry out their activities off-site).

Today, office spaces are still too often separated, promoting individual approaches instead of collective methods.

Tomorrow's workplace will reflect the image of transformations already carried out in many large groups (dynamic workplaces, Flex Office, transit offices, coworking set-ups or relaxation areas). It will be a connected place, where teams will enjoy working and meeting each other.

The lockdown reinforced the choice of companies that had already undergone a profound transformation in their working methods. For the others, this period considerably accelerated their evolution or the awareness of an evolution to be initiated.

Many companies will emerge economically weakened by the crisis but will have sturdier and more efficient organizations. Ultimately, this crisis will have touched on the cultural model and corporate DNA of every company.

The concepts of accountability, trust, autonomy or agility that were sometimes, seen as simple elements of communication, have been established in the daily lives of many employees.

The end of the lockdown will bring a new period of uncertainty. In this context, companies could simply be satisfied with the progress they made, or maybe even take a step backwards.

However, it is likely, that only those who continue to transform their organizations will be able to achieve operational efficiency and improve employee experience.

Continuing this positive transformation leads to long-lasting resilience and agility.





Leading positive transformation

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