



human resources talent trends update.

randstad malaysia
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COVID-19 has caused major disruption to the world of work. Staggered working arrangements have impacted the outcomes of manufacturing outputs, research and development processes as well as supply chain management. Border control measures have halted the facilitation of not just leisure and business travels, but also the relocation of global talent.

As the global pandemic drags on, companies around the world are faced with unsustainable overheads as well as rapid dips in consumer and business confidence. To understand the real impacts of COVID-19, Randstad has conducted an in-depth survey to yield insights on how the human resources industry is coping and recovering as we enter the last quarter of 2020.

full business operations expected to resume by Q1 2021.

Even as the world waits for a safe and viable vaccine against COVID-19, businesses are fairly optimistic about economic recovery. 56% of respondents said that they are confident that they will be able to resume full business activities in Q1 2021.

The Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) has been extended to 31 December 2020. If the local COVID-19 situation remains under control, it is likely that Malaysia will start opening its borders to business travellers and tourists.

This is not a unique phenomenon that we expect to see in Malaysia. Countries around the world are also eager to open up their borders to resume economic activities, hence there is a general observation that there will be a rush to return to normal once that is allowed.

Furthermore, some employees in select sectors have raised concerns that they are overworked and highly stressed due to the circumstances brought about by COVID-19. Not only do they have back-to-back meetings to attend to, staff also need to meet tight deadlines with limited resources and support.

An increase in headcount number could provide the much-needed relief that employees want, as they can share the workload and finally feel some sense of normalcy. Companies have started working on their HR strategy and plans for 2021, which will include budget allocations, workforce planning as well as skills development. Once the time is right and when the necessary approvals have been acquired, companies will start ramping up their hiring activities.



growing restlessness at home and eagerness to return to work.

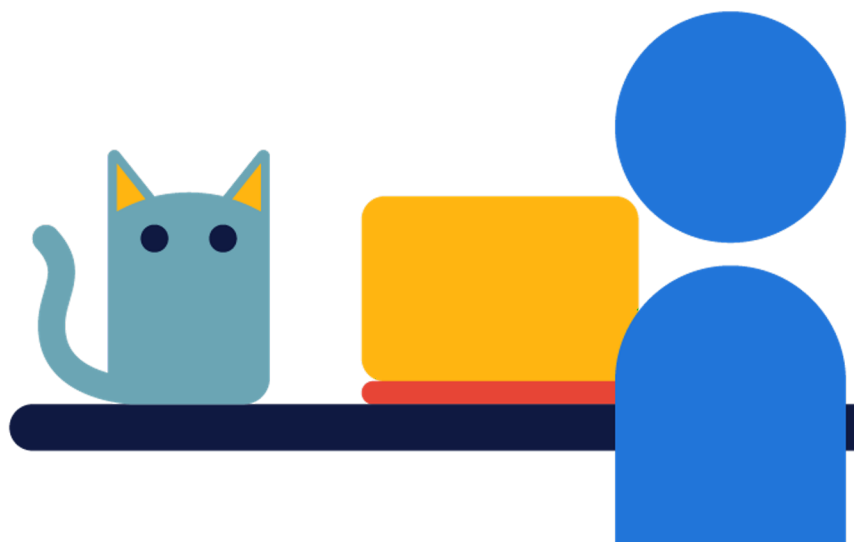
The experience of working from home is not the same for everyone. Depending on their unique living conditions, lifestyle needs and routines, some may feel more productive, while others may feel elevated levels of stress.

For instance, working parents have to juggle between work and helping their children with homework. Others may not have stable WiFi at home or can potentially develop mental health issues as a result of prolonged self-isolation.

One of the most common reasons why employees have a desire to return to the workplace is the sheer volume of virtual meetings. When an employee's calendar is filled with meetings between 9am and 6pm, they can realistically only start working after dinner. Some employees have reportedly clocked longer hours when working from home to meet deadlines that have been brought forward as well.

The concept of meetings have changed drastically as well. We used to walk up to our colleagues in the office to quickly share an update or bounce an idea off them. However, these normal, impromptu conversations that we would typically have with our colleagues in the office have become virtual meetings or long chats over Google Chats or Whatsapp, which can be very time-consuming and disruptive.

If such communication issues continue, it can cause frustration among the workforce and lower employee productivity and morale. It can also negatively impact the organisation's culture and value of its employer brand in the long run. Human resources teams are responsible for making sure that employees not only have the resources they need to work from home, but that their well-being is also well taken care of by their employers.





in-demand skills and jobs in HR.

For some years now, many global and regional companies have invested in setting up HR shared services centres in a central regional location. Malaysia is one of the top choices to set up a shared services centre in Southeast Asia due to its low operating costs, ease of doing business and access to a diverse talent pool.

As more and more administrative roles move from offices to shared services centres, the role and responsibilities of a human resource professional have evolved to be more sophisticated and strategic, with a stronger focus on initiatives that have a financial impact on the business.

1. HR business partners

When relieved of time-consuming administrative tasks, human resources generalists will have the opportunity to further develop their skills to become human resources business partners (HRBP). As HRBPs, they are required to work closely with key business stakeholders to develop and execute organisational-level policies and plans, such as employee engagement, performance measurements and employer branding strategies.

These professionals should stay up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in the HR industry. Not only must they have a pulse on the labour market, they should also stay abreast of HR technology trends that are shaping the world of work. For example, understanding how chatbots can reduce administrative hours by setting up an automated process to answer frequently asked questions from employees, such as how to book meeting rooms or apply for annual leave.

The world's largest vaccine manufacturer had warned that there would not be enough vaccines for everyone in the world until the end of 2024 at the earliest. There were also a number of local studies which revealed that local employees do not feel safe returning to work until a vaccine against COVID-19 is available.

Our most recent research found that 48% of respondents have either fully or partially returned to work at their offices, and 11% will continue to work from home for the rest of the year.

As the world continues to balance productivity and safety, all eyes are on the HR professionals and senior business leaders to design a robust remote working strategy.

There are many factors that come into consideration when examining how remote working would look like. It would also require inter-team collaborations between HR, IT and the various business units. Besides resolving the immediate challenges of remote working, HR professionals would also be expected to plan for the future and identify potential gaps that need addressing. Some questions HR leaders would need to consider are:

- Are employees supported with the hardware and software they need to work effectively from home?
- Are the company's files and data secured enough?
- What are the company's risk assessment levels to external threats?
- Are employees able to work together as a team and meet deadlines in a remote working set up?
- Should the employer set rules and guidelines around meetings and email communications to ensure good use of everyone's time?
- How can companies make sure that employees don't lose sight of the organisation's core values, vision and goals in the long run with remote working?

The global pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented shift in workforce management and employees' expectations, particularly around remote working and flexible working arrangements. HRBPs will have to look into the possibility of remote working more closely to meet the new employee expectations.

2. HR professionals with business-proficient foreign language skills.

As more and more shared services centres are being set up in Malaysia, companies need to build the team's language capabilities to enable efficient communication with colleagues from other markets.

Companies used to hire foreign talent who are business-proficient in multiple languages and relocate them to Malaysia to fill this skill demand. However, this has proved difficult as border control measures have halted the facilitation of global talent acquisition. Companies are hence looking internally at local talent to fill these positions urgently.

An employee working in a locally-based shared service centre will be required to communicate with their colleagues from other Asian countries, such as South Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam. HR professionals who are business-proficient in these foreign languages are particularly sought-after by employers.

candidates urged to revise salary expectations.

The unemployment rate has increased from [3.32% in 2019](#) to [4.9% in June of 2020](#). As the unemployment rate is still under 5%, it is still considered to be in the healthy range given the extraordinary circumstances and the fact that Malaysia is a mature economy.

With more and more people joining the job seeking market, the number of applications for each role has tripled compared to the number recorded in 2019. Companies are practicing more caution when hiring a candidate as well, leading to a more protracted recruitment process. Not only are employers meeting more candidates to expand their shortlist selection, they also have higher expectations of job seekers.

Candidates who can demonstrate their value to the company and have the skills and experiences that employers are looking for will have a higher chance of securing a job during such trying times. Job seekers should always tailor their CVs to the job and industry that they are applying to and do adequate homework on the company and its operations before the interview. It is also critical to be professionally dressed and punctual for the job interview, regardless of the company culture. First impressions count more than you realise.

Job seekers are also advised to revise their salary expectations, as many companies are still coming to terms with how much COVID-19 has impacted their business revenue. As compared to previous years, companies are more likely to offer a less generous salary increment to candidates. They have however stepped up on non-monetary benefits to attract and retain their employees, such as offering physical and wellness programmes as well as a no-questions-asked policy on flexible work arrangements. Remuneration packages aside, the most important candidate expectation that an employer can meet this year is job security, an employer value proposition that will undoubtedly be valued more than others in these uncertain times.

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Sharmini brings with her 15 years of specialised talent recruitment experience in Malaysia. Sharmini leads the Human Resources team in Randstad Malaysia and matches leading companies with highly-qualified HR specialists in Benefits & Rewards, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition and Shared Services. With an extensive network of diverse HR professionals, Sharmini has her finger on the pulse of the HR industry and latest trends, positioning herself as the go-to knowledge partner to her clients and candidates.