

Rehiring during COVID-19: Best practices and considerations

When the Coronavirus hit, you likely found your company in the same position as many businesses - having to lay off your employees, furlough them, or drastically reduce their hours.

While this is tough for employees and their families, these decisions can also be a human resources nightmare. The process of rehiring can bring to the surface new issues and considerations. Hiring today won't look the same as it did before Coronavirus, as this pandemic has changed the landscape of how we interact within a company.

So, before you start rehiring staff, you want to prepare yourself so you can implement the best practices.

This starts with reviewing your rehiring process. Whether your plan involves bringing back furloughed employees, increasing your staff with new employees, or completing a remote hiring process for the first time, you'll be ready for what's to come.

Rehiring furloughed or laid-off employees

The first group of people you want to consider are those who have been furloughed, followed by those who were laid off. When preparing to rehire these employees, you'll want to keep in mind the following.

Furloughed employees

- Has the furlough lasted so long that it is now considered a legal separation, and the employees are technically laid off? If so, this requires that they are hired as a new employee.

Laid-off employees

- Are you going to require that laid-off employees complete the full rehiring process, including a background check and drug test? Or will you bypass these requirements in light of the current circumstances?
- What are the legal requirements related to hiring new employees? While you might want to make it easier to bring employees back, some of the components are required.

Common considerations

- Have the roles and responsibilities changed for these roles?
- Do you need to update their contract to include new policies and regulations?
- Are their benefits packages the same? Some benefits allow employees to be grandfathered into specific plans based on when they worked. How flexible will you be with this?
- How will you decide who returns and who doesn't? Keep in mind that your decisions might be highly scrutinized, so you want to ensure that you are prepared to explain why you brought certain people back over others.
- Be sure that you're not in violation of any laws or regulations protecting those with COVID-19 or those

caring for others with COVID-19 under the American Disabilities Act or other legal codes.

COVID-19 considerations for rehiring

As you're rehiring, or even hiring new staff, make sure that you're transparent through every step. Be clear about your timeline, what to expect, how you're making your decision, and any COVID-19 related information you would want to know during these times.

Here are some considerations to keep in mind.

- Will you require they test negative for a COVID-19 test before beginning work?
- Will you require them to quarantine and/or work from home until further notice?
- How will you incorporate digital platforms to find potential hires, screen them, interview, and onboard them? Keep in mind that going the digital route can speed up the hiring process if you're in a hurry.

Rehiring mistakes to avoid

While going through the rehiring process, there are best practices, and there are also mistakes that can cost you in productivity and overall progress. Here are some:

- **Hiring average employees:** When rehiring, you want to bring back the best employees to your company. What you consider the best might vary, but look at each person for the value they bring to the company and whether it's better to bring him or her back or find someone new for the position.
- **Waiting too long:** As the economy reopens, businesses will look to fill their positions quickly. The quicker you can meet the needs of your company with highly qualified employees, the better. Delaying too much can cause you to lag or miss out on the top employees who are looking for work.
- **Ignoring remote working skills:** Whether your company is fully remote, considering a partial remote working schedule, or in the office full time, you want to pay attention to remote working skills when hiring. No one knows what the future holds, and if you can bring on employees with the skills needed to be successful when working remotely, it can be helpful.

Should you interview rehires?

Whether you choose to conduct interviews for a rehire depends on your company policies and how much the position has changed. It's never a bad idea to connect with the returning employee to discuss the terms and next steps.

Choosing to interview them in-person or remotely will vary depending on your company preferences. While it's ultimately up to you, many companies are bypassing in-person interviews and learning how to conduct better virtual interviews in light of the times.

Here are some best practices related to finding the best employees through a remote interview.

- **Technology:** Be sure that everyone is prepared with the right technical information. This includes how to access the meeting room and make sure that cameras and audio are working correctly. You also want to have a backup plan in case things don't go as planned and you need to make a change at the last minute.
- **Recording:** If you plan to record the meeting session, get consent from those involved. The laws about recording others vary by state, so be sure that you're knowledgeable of the requirements.
- **Clarity:** Provide clarity on how the call will work, who will be present, and what to expect during the interview.
- **Assign Roles:** If your interview will involve multiple people, give each person a role and layout what questions they will ask in advance or what they will be looking for in the candidate.

Implement rehiring best practices

There's no doubt that rehiring employees amid COVID-19 will require that you take new considerations. Be diligent in protecting the rights of those you rehire, keeping everyone safe with your policies and procedures, and bringing the best talent to your company, whether they're new to the company or being rehired.