

COVID-19 has affected way we live, conduct business

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused millions of people to lose their jobs or forced many people to work from home as states shut down businesses in an abundance of caution.

All over the country, there has been an almost 500 percent increase in requests for unemployment insurance since the beginning of the pandemic. In the state of Arizona specifically, there has been in excess of a 600 percent increase in requests.

Due to the massive loss of jobs, people are no longer able to travel, leading to a decrease in hotel occupancy. The tourism industry in Phoenix has suffered as well, with fewer people coming to the state to visit because of the shutdown.

The industries where people had to be close together in large numbers have suffered the most: leisure, hospitality, travel, sporting events, etc. The state of Arizona, along with a lot of other places, did not reopen well because people have equated being able to go out again with the problem being over.

This issue will not be over until there is a vaccine, or some type of medication that limits the impact of COVID. Gov. Doug Ducey is trying to get bars and restaurants to take restrictions more seriously in order to stop the spread. Even if people had money to spend, they couldn't because of all of the retail stores being closed.

Before a vaccine is released, people are going to learn how to be very careful. They will not be able to go out as much as they have been over the past months. People will not be spending as much time in malls and stores, which will flatten out the recovery curve.

After there is a vaccine, the economy can truly be on the road to being back to the normal that we are used to. This process will take at least two years though. Some businesses will not have the option to reopen because it is too late for them.

Scottsdale economist Elliott Pollack does not believe that a lot of smaller businesses will be able to come back from the losses that they have suffered since the beginning of the pandemic. The majority of these businesses have five employees or less, and simply did not have the capital to survive something this catastrophic.

The government did not act quickly enough to get them the help they needed, and in some cases, they fell through the cracks completely. For some of these businesses, paying their employees was not their largest expense. Rent, supplies, and other things took up most of the money that they were able to bring into their business. There are even some larger businesses that are filing for bankruptcy. There are forecasts that predict a quick recovery in the third and fourth quarters, but it all depends on how quickly COVID-19 spreads.

According to Pollack, the financial, physical and mental damage of the economy closing was far greater than it would have been if everything had stayed open. At the time everything began to take place, we did not know what we were fighting against, so everything was shut down as a precaution.

Pollack thinks everything opened up three to four weeks after they should have, given that we had more information on COVID in mid-April than we did in mid-March. With everything that has gone on, basically every one out of four people were told that they would lose their jobs.

The effects of coronavirus have also been felt in every aspect of our lives and across society as a whole. Previously unthinkable distancing and societal rules have become the norm, ingrained into our collective psyche.

However, it is doing more than this. COVID-19 is also changing the way we interact and the way we work. While some of these new styles of work will undoubtedly disappear once the virus is gone, some are likely to stick with us much longer. The 'new normal' will leave its mark on business forever. Here are just five ways the way we work will never be the same again.

Recruitment

The pandemic isn't just affecting the way we work – it's also changing the way we get work. Many employers were already moving towards pre-appointment online application and assessment processes, but the shift has moved monumentally as a result of COVID-19.

Skype, ZOOM and telephone interviews are increasingly becoming the norm in the employment process – and for good reason. Interviews done online are at least as effective as those done face to face but can also be recorded, giving employers the chance to reflect on potential employees long after the interview is over.

The end of the commute?

Where a typical working day might run 9-5, by the time you add the morning and evening commute, it becomes significantly longer. This is commonly exacerbated if you live in the country but work in the city (as is very common). Commutes of three hours or more (each way) are not uncommon once you factor in buses, trains, and subway networks.

COVID-19 has thrust remote working front and center and made organizations and employees question the validity of working in an office. Remote access and systems have improved so much over recent years that there's very little to justify staff having to travel to a single place of work each day.

Improving the work/life balance

For many, the biggest concern (and biggest challenge) in life is to achieve a healthy balance between working and living, summed up by the old question, "Do you work to live, or live to work?"

Remote working has allowed employees to do both – to spend more time with family while still getting the job done. It's a model we'll not quickly forget, and employers are having to change their expectations of how and when their employees work.

Improving worker productivity

Working from home has brought other changes. Employers are slowly moving to a more deadline-based approach to work rather than thinking purely in terms of time at work. This makes good sense.

After all, there's no feasible reason to expect all employees will perform at their best, through the hours of 9-5, sat at a desk. Many people work better late at night – others, early in the morning. Whatever the preference, moving to a task-oriented way of working is better for most people. Get the job done – however and whenever – just meet the deadline.

Improving empathy and harmony

Through COVID-19, "checking in" has become a part of everyday life. Somehow, just knowing we can't see people as often, has made us think of them more. This has applied to partners, friends, family – all those people we've missed so much through social isolation.

Somewhat surprisingly, it's also applied to work. Management styles have had to adapt to the pressures we've all been under. Collectively we – managers and employees alike – have moved to more empathetic relationships. Once where the question, "How are

you?” was an empty formality, it has now become more about actually being interested in a person’s well-being.

Source: AZ Big Media website