

THE BETTER MANAGERS MANUAL

Managing the New Normal

A Practical Guide to Navigating the Impacts of COVID-19



CONTENTS

01

Executive Summary

03

Top Tips From CMI's CEO Ann Francke OBE

04

Flexibility

05

Crisis Management

06

Mental Health & Wellbeing

07

The New Employment Landscape

08

The New Good Governance

09

How We Might Positively Change The Working Environment

11

Conclusion: A Note From Our CEO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 crisis is the ultimate test of management and leadership – a sudden, dramatic, life-threatening upheaval, where the outcomes are uncertain.

In this extraordinarily difficult time, the value of great management and leadership is being demonstrated every day – whether it's senior leaders in government or managers on the frontline of healthcare and retail.

To support these managers and leaders as they navigate the crisis – both for themselves and for those they manage – the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) has assembled a set of tried-and-tested tools and resources.

These tools, brought together in this Better Managers Manual, are designed around five key themes that the pandemic has presented us: flexible working; crisis management; mental health & wellbeing; the new employment landscape; and the new good governance.

To help the business community during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have produced a Leading Through Uncertainty hub, which can be accessed at managers.org.uk/coronavirus. It features a wealth of resources and advice from CMI as well as information from the Government and other organisations which may be of use during the pandemic.

We are also releasing twice-weekly newsletters providing up-to-the-minute resources and knowledge of the best practices that will help managers and leaders address the unique challenges of our current situation. Alongside this is our #BetterManagers Briefing webinar: led by CMI's CEO, Ann Francke OBE, with guests from CMI and the wider world of business,

each episode will address a different topic relating to management and leadership in times of uncertainty, with the opportunity for viewers to ask questions. Sign up at managers.org.uk/register for newsletter and webinar updates.

Who We Are, What We Do

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) is the chartered professional body for management and leadership, counting more than 132,000 people in its membership community. Backed by a unique Royal Charter, CMI is the only organisation able to award Chartered Manager status - the ultimate management accolade, which is proven to boost individuals' career prospects, management capability and impact in the workplace. There are currently over 8,500 Chartered Managers and growing.

As the UK's professional body for managers, CMI doesn't just provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resources for aspiring leaders - we also act as the voice of professional management in the UK. We speak on behalf of our members to the highest levels of Government to ensure the perspective of conscious leaders is present in key legislative decision-making.

Whilst [helping the business community to lead](#) through the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to identify opportunities to learn. The value that better managers add to organisations and society is being clearly demonstrated across the UK and beyond. As businesses continue to face uncertainty and seek new ways to thrive, there has never been a more crucial time to highlight the value of professional management skills.

Since the crisis hit, we have sought to help the Government create and share clear guidance for managers; whether that be on how they should handle the COVID-19 pandemic within their own organisations, the business support packages available to them, or the role they can play in helping their teams observe best practice on social distancing.

We know that “facts are king” at this time, and the sharing of clear, targeted information is key to reducing uncertainty and anxiety within teams. We will continue to share the Government’s guidance and to work with key Departments to ensure CMI resources are available to as broad an audience as possible.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Organisations have accepted the principle of flexible working for some time; but the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated its adoption and necessity for many. This rapid take-up has been an intensive stress-test for management practices that will be needed if flexible working becomes more normalised post COVID-19. Among these, retaining the human dimension in terms of management and employee communication is crucial.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

The nature of the COVID-19 crisis has intensified its mental health consequences. Managers must quickly learn – and be trained in – a new set of management skills around empathy and emotional intelligence; and must themselves in turn ensure *they’re* getting the support they need to build their own resilience.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

While the COVID-19 pandemic is an unusual crisis with distinct characteristics, it will still be a time in which many managers will fast-track their capabilities. There are proven crisis-management techniques that, if followed, will enable managers to step up, support their organisation and team, and turn the crisis into a development opportunity.

THE NEW EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

The effects of the COVID-19 crisis are uncertain but will be significant. Many people – and managers – will find their working and professional circumstances altered. Many honest, sometimes difficult conversations will need to take place. Managers must make sure they know how to conduct them and feel supported in doing so.

THE NEW GOOD GOVERNANCE

The first priority for leaders and managers during a crisis is for their organisations to survive. However in the slightly longer term, this crisis may change forever what is expected of them and the expectations staff have of their bosses. Poor decision making during this period will not be quickly forgotten. All of us need to consider whether our skills and behaviours will equip us for ‘the new normal’.



Chartered Manager gives you the tools to take on a challenge.

Matthew Carr, Chartered Manager of the Year 2019



TOP TIPS FROM CMI'S CEO ANN FRANCKE OBE

By way of helpful introduction, here are five top tips from our CEO Ann Francke OBE on how to help managers lead and act effectively in times of uncertainty:

1. BE 'VIRTUALLY VISIBLE'. Take advantage of video-conferencing tools, or pick up the phone; don't just use emails to keep in touch with your teams. Make sure you can virtually see and hear each other to maintain a human connection while socially distancing.

2. OVER-COMMUNICATE. Some teams are not used to working virtually, and may need extra direction and contact to help them adjust. CMI suggests virtually meeting at least once a day with your team to agree on workflow and check in on staff wellbeing.

3. MANAGE MENTAL HEALTH. Major changes in work and home life (such as balancing work and parenting/carer responsibilities) can have a big impact on health & wellbeing - managers are often best placed to spot this and provide help. More information can be found in the **Mental Health & Wellbeing** section of this manual.

4. PRACTICE AGILE MANAGEMENT. Maybe your staff are unable to work remotely, you have increased demand, or you need to diversify to keep the business afloat. Being agile with your priorities will be helpful in these times, as will sharing experiences and examples of best practice within your networks. Making difficult decisions can increase the feelings of loneliness, but many managers are facing the same situation in different circumstances. Now is the time to nurture your professional networks.

5. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY: MANAGE WITH A HUMAN FACE. As Ann said in our first [#BetterManagers Briefing](#):



Through all of this, it is so important that we maintain a human face - that we be kind, that we encourage others to be kind. We need to be there for each other.

“ Ann Francke OBE

FLEXIBILITY

2020 has seen a necessary yet unprecedented shift away from the traditional physical workplace. During the COVID-19 crisis **90%** of CMI members report that staff in their organisation are working from home: managers and employees have had to adapt at pace, but positively, **66%** of managers have reported increased innovation among their staff during this time¹. Additionally in our January poll of managers, **95%** felt that their organisation supported a flexible-working culture to at least a small extent², but large-scale enforced remote working will be a significant adjustment for many - and many managers are having to adapt both to this and to managing remote teams.

The following resources can help you and your teams adjust to remote working:

- [How To Make Homeworking Work For You and Your Team](#)
- [How To Manage an Entirely Virtual Team](#)
- [Working From Home - With Children](#)
- [What To Do If You Can't Work From Home](#)

While your current remote-working situation may not be perfect, it could provide the foundation for a sustainable future of flexible working for yourself or your staff. In a recent survey of CMI members³, the top three benefits that managers felt that introducing flexible working by default would bring to their organisation were: better employee wellbeing (**80%**); attracting and retaining talent (**68%**); and a more engaged workforce (**65%**).

Here are more resources on how to effectively implement flexible working in the long-term:

- [CMI & the Government Equalities Office \(GEO\) Flexible Working Guidance for Employers](#)
- [Is Your Organisation Happy to Talk Flexible Working?](#)
- [Improve Remote Working Practices to Minimise Staff Sickness](#)
- [Working From Home - Health & Safety Need-to-Knows](#)

BENEFITS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING



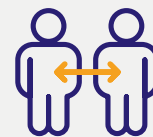
95%

of managers felt their organisation supported a flexible working culture



80%

felt that introducing flexible working to their organisation improved employee wellbeing



68%

felt that introducing flexible working to their organisation would attract and retain talent



Well designed flexible working can boost the attraction, retention and wellbeing of employees, and many businesses can and will continue to benefit from this new way of working post COVID-19. Therefore, it is essential that managers are supported to help their teams to embrace effective flexible working practises, both through this crisis and beyond.

Elysia McCaffrey, Director, Government Equalities Office



¹ The Manager's Voice (April 2020)

² The Managers Voice (Jan 2020)

³ *Ibid*

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A crisis situation like the COVID-19 pandemic is a time for your management and leadership skills to shine. Previous CMI research⁴ found that **94%** of managers surveyed have experienced a 'work crisis' (including significant conflict with a colleague, perceived unfair treatment or project failures) but only **55%** look back at their biggest crisis and feel they dealt with it well. However, [crises can be overcome](#).

Two top tips from CMI's third [#BetterManagers Briefing](#) are:

- **Maintain clear communication:** ensuring that staff are well-informed with regular updates can combat misinformation and help ease any crisis-related concerns.
- **Connect with your teams:** taking time to check in on their wellbeing and to have a chat before or after meetings can build connections even when you are all working remotely.

For more information on how to make the best of testing situations, CMI has the following advice:

- [CMI Checklist: Communicating in a Crisis](#)
- [5 Ways to Achieve Top Results From Your Short-Staffed Team](#)
- [How to Motivate Colleagues When The Chips Are Down](#)
- [Re-prioritising in Times of Crisis](#)

Another tip from our BetterManagers webinar series is 'Learn, Earn, and Return': the COVID-19 pandemic is a peculiar crisis, but eventually there will be time for organisations to reflect and find the good among the chaos. Indeed, **90%** of CMI managers have already told us that their senior leaders' business continuity planning as a result of the COVID-19 crisis has been a success to mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on their organisation.

The majority of managers who had experienced a workplace crisis say they are more prepared to handle a future crisis professionally, thanks to their experiences. **85%** report that they are now actively working to create and maintain a good workplace culture, **83%** have improved the way they communicate, and **81%** discuss what they learned openly.⁵

Consider the following for inspiration on how to build on your experiences:

- [CMI Checklist: Risk Management](#)
- [Everyday Leadership: Managers Stepping Up to the Crisis](#)
- CMI guides on [developing](#) and [implementing](#) strategy
- [Crises: Turning the Worst of Times Into the Best of Times](#)



94%

of managers have experienced a work crisis



85%

of managers are now actively working to create and maintain a good workplace



83%

of managers have improved the way they communicate

⁴ 'Bouncing Back', CMI (2016); <https://www.managers.org.uk/insights/bouncing-back>

⁵ *Ibid.*

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

The worldwide shift to remote working, or at least strongly revised workplace practices, has taken place against a backdrop of considerable uncertainty. As a result, people are worried not only about how to keep doing their jobs, but also about their health and that of their loved ones. Understandably, this can have a significant impact on general wellbeing, and a third of managers are already reporting mental health and wellbeing issues among their staff.⁶ Consider these [five steps to mental wellbeing](#) from the NHS, and other ways that you can help your teams and - equally importantly - help yourself to manage your mental health and wellbeing:

- [Stress Management: a 5-point Guide for Managers in Lockdown](#)
- [7 Ways to Improve Your Resilience Immediately](#)
- [Managing Your Mental Health During a Crisis](#)
- [CMI Checklist: Staff Welfare & Wellbeing](#)

CMI knows that many managers and leaders may need an ‘on the fly’ approach to adapt to the current crisis; previous research has found that, at point of questioning, only half of managers (**49%**) had ever received any training on managing mental health problems in the workplace, and less than a third (**30%**) had been trained in the preceding year.⁷

In the long term it may be worth investing in dedicated training to manage mental health in the workplace - not just for crisis situations, but also to help employees in everyday life. Here are some resources to get you thinking about the topic:

- [How to Manage with Emotional Intelligence](#)
- [How Prioritising Self-Care Improves Work Performance](#)
- [How to Use Empathy in the Workplace](#)



49%

of managers have never received any training on managing mental health in the workplace



30%

of managers have been trained in the preceding year on how to manage mental health in the workplace



If we can get one in 10 of the population trained in Mental Health First Aid we will create that cultural shift needed which will start permeating into all workplaces and communities.

Simon Blake, CEO, MHFA England



⁶ The Manager's Voice (CMI), April 2020

⁷ The Manager's Voice (CMI), 2018

THE NEW EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

Ongoing lockdown measures - whilst incredibly important and necessary - will have significant financial implications for many organisations: **86%** of managers tell us their organisation is already making changes to offset the impact of COVID-19.⁸ You may be diversifying to keep your business going, signing staff on to the Government's coronavirus job retention scheme or even facing redundancy. CMI Companion Kate Grussing, founder and MD of Sapphire Partners Executive Search, has [10 top tips for job-hunting in a crisis](#). Here are more ways to protect your business and support your people:

- [Furloughing: The Manager's Guide](#)
- [CMI Guide: Handling & Managing Difficult Conversations](#)
- [CMI Guide: Dealing With Redundancy](#)
- [How to Deal With Redeploying Staff](#)

Seismic changes in the work landscape have forced many to press pause on future plans. However, you may find there is a little more time now for some self-reflection - and by design or necessity - the COVID crisis could be the springboard for you and your people to begin new career journeys. CMI has plenty of guidance to [help you get ahead of the game](#), be it through updating your CV or moving forwards after redundancy:

- [How to Maintain Your Personal Development in a Crisis](#)
- [How to Stop Underselling Yourself](#)
- [What Does Your Map to the Future Look Like](#)
- [5 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Asking for Career Advice](#)



73%

Agree that COVID-19 situation would give their staff time to develop either management skills or more general workplace skills



86%

Of managers tell us their organisation is already making changes to offset the impact of COVID-19

“ Learn, Earn, and Return. In this particular instance, that ‘learning’ could be about understanding what’s changing the situation. The ‘earning’ doesn’t need to be money - it could be the respect of teams. The ‘returning’ is: what is it that you’ve learned that you can give back in the way that you coach, you mentor, or that you encourage an organisation to improve through this crisis.

Air Vice Marshal ‘Bunny’ James, Royal Air Force, CMGR



⁸ The Manager's Voice (CMI), April 2020

THE NEW GOOD GOVERNANCE

At a time of crisis, leaders and their organisations will be judged on their ability to navigate challenging circumstances in a responsible way - that means, not just triaging their organisations but looking at *how* they do so; how they decide to 'share the pain' between staff, shareholders, suppliers and others, and how they make people *feel* as they do so. The challenge of this existential threat is bringing out the best in many leaders, with the 'survival instinct' galvanising Boards and Executive teams. CMI CEO Ann Francke has shared 5 things that better Boards are doing during the COVID-19 crisis:

- 1. Think carefully about all your stakeholders and give employees greater priority.**
- 2. Tip the oversight/support balance towards support to do the right thing - imperfectly.**
- 3. Have a three step plan: 1. survive; 2. connect and communicate with stakeholders; 3. plan the exit strategy**
- 4. Work at speed holistically with government; regulators, competitors and others to operationalise support.**
- 5. Risk will become about the consequences not the cause.**

More information on these steps can be found [HERE](#). The following are further resources for Boards and senior leaders:

- [CMI Guide: Implementing Effective Change Management](#)
- [CMI Guide: Problem Solving](#)
- [CMI Checklist: Strategic Risk Management](#)
- [Meet the UK's Most Socially Responsible Businesses](#)

Leaders also have another focus: "beyond survival – what next?" The choices leaders and Boards make now will influence how

well they are equipped to emerge from an unprecedentedly challenging situation with reputation intact or enhanced. Effective leaders need to think systematically, not just at an individual level, in order to ensure the sustainability of the business as well as the employees working for them.

- [CMI Guide: Stakeholder Analysis and Management](#)
- [Harvard Business Review: Ensure That Your Customer Relationships Outlast Coronavirus](#)
- [How to Define Your Business Purpose](#)
- [CMI Checklist: Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Why Purpose is Not The Same as CSR or Company Mission](#)

Most commonly, businesses strive to put customers first. And if you do the right thing by customers, you end up doing the right thing by shareholders... What I think has happened in this crisis is that employees have risen right to the top of the list.

Bruce Carnegie-Brown, President, Chartered Management Institute

A Board must be responsible for determining: 'have we got the right strategy, have we got the right resources, and have we got the right governance', whether it's a crisis or not [...] but that mustn't be overwhelming the management. Sometimes you can smother the management with help - you actually need to let them get on and do the things they need to do to get through the crisis.

Patrick Dunne, Chartered Companion, author of 'Boards: A Practical Perspective'

HOW WE MIGHT POSITIVELY CHANGE THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Right now, we are all in the eye of the storm, attempting to navigate through uncharted territory and keep our businesses afloat. But there will come a time when, as we adapt to 'the new normal', there will be an opportunity to reflect on our national experiences and use them to make positive, long lasting changes to UK workplace culture. We have the potential to take a generational leap forwards, and we want to see the Government lead that charge.

Many of the recommendations below build on the ideas set out in [CMI's Manifesto 2019](#), which calls on the Government to eliminate the 'accidental manager' and to make the UK No.1 in the world for inclusive workplaces.

FLEXIBILITY

- The increase in scale of those now working remotely has demonstrated that, for many job roles, it is possible to create flexibility in the workplace in order to accommodate diverse needs. Businesses should take this opportunity to evaluate how they can harness this catalyst to make their workplaces more inclusive.
- To accelerate the move towards greater levels of flexible working the government should ensure businesses maintain an element of flexible working implemented during the crisis, except where it can be clearly demonstrated that this would have a detrimental affect on them and their employees.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Team members' mental health and wellbeing have been at the forefront of many organisations' response to COVID-19, and rightly so. The crisis combines a stressful external environment, fundamental changes to our personal lifestyles, and having to adapt to new ways of working.
- The Government should lead a review of the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing in the workplace, with a view to creating a comprehensive guide for all businesses about how to manage their workforce's mental health. This review should also include an assessment of how Health and Safety legislation in the UK can do more to encourage employers to treat risks to their employee's mental health the same as they do their physical safety.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- COVID-19 represents an unprecedented challenge to leaders around the world, the nature of which has allowed misinformation to spread whilst the facts are still emerging. Managers and leaders have found themselves being treated as trusted sources of information despite facing the same challenges and fears as the population at large.

- The Government should recognise the contribution of good management in helping to mitigate the worst effects of the crisis within their teams. To do this, we must create incentives to increase management and leadership skills in the workforce and acknowledge the importance of professionalising management through recognised qualifications. There has never been a more pressing reason to invest in the management and leadership skills of the workforce.

THE NEW EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

- Management and leadership skills should not be seen as only the preserve of senior managers and leaders. The crisis has highlighted the fact that these skills are also key life skills: communicating clearly, being agile in response to challenges, and above all being empathetic.
- Professional management qualifications can unlock benefits for individuals such as boosting the employability of a job-hunter, the promotion prospects of a team leader, or the strategic experience of a senior leader.
- Government should embed these skills throughout school and within all routes of post-16 education, including T-levels, apprenticeships, and degrees.

THE NEW GOOD GOVERNANCE

- Through COVID-19, leaders and Boards are facing unprecedented challenges and the crisis has revealed that some businesses and organisations are not well equipped to deal with these challenges.
- One way to ensure organisations can be prepared for future uncertainty is to look at the selection criteria we use for leadership: how do we ensure skills like resilience, creativity, problem-solving, pace, and being digitally savvy are present at the highest levels of organisations? We would like to see the Government champion the need to build these skills across all organisations to support the best leadership and oversight beyond COVID-19.
- We also want to see Government recognise and champion the supportive role of Boards and leadership. They are not just there for oversight. There should be greater emphasis through governance codes on Boards' supportive responsibilities and how they think about risk. Instead of planning for specific events or causes, leaders and Boards need to be thinking about how organisations weather broad consequences (such as what happens if schools or factories are closed) and consider the impact of their decisions responsibly on employees at all levels of the organisation.

CONCLUSION: A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

As the COVID crisis continues to challenge us all, I know that CMI members and our wider CMI community will be stepping up; wanting to be the best managers and leaders they can be, for their organisations, and for every member of their team. In producing this guide, the CMI's aim is to support you in that endeavour.

I hope you find the resources and advice in this document highly practical and useful, and the links to further materials helpful as you delve further into certain topics. And as the situation develops we'll have updated information added to our website and highlighted on our social channels.

While you will no doubt currently be working at incredible pace, trying to absorb a vast amount of information from various sources, I believe keeping the following points at the forefront of your mind as you create a workable plan for your team, will stand you in good stead for the weeks and months ahead and allow you to effect real changes - big and small - quickly.

- We need to adapt fast to new facts and evidence: agile management is key. Draw from your professional networks to test your knowledge and intended actions. Our CMI Companions and members are sharing their experiences throughout this crisis to support all managers facing difficult and urgent decisions.

- We must be clear and transparent. People's lives and livelihoods are at risk here. They need to be able to trust what they're hearing. When in doubt, over-communicate.
- But let's be aware that bad news and dire forecasts can be overwhelming. Try to find new things to celebrate with your people. Actively encourage them to be kind, and then recognise these acts of kindness together. Show your human face.
- Be mindful of mental health. There will be concerns about the organisation's financial health and viability, about new risks and, most pervasive of all, the anxiety of uncertainty. Consider how this is affecting your people - and yourself.
- Look to the future. You may be working from home or with fewer distractions, so this could be a great period to learn. We are also living through a workplace revolution as many wake up to the viability of remote working: consider how it could benefit your organisation in a post-pandemic future.

Thank you for all you do. With my warmest good wishes,



Ann Francke OBE CMGR CCMi



This is a time to support each other. Share your thoughts and concerns on any of our social media channels using the hashtag **#BetterManagers**.





managers.org.uk/coronavirus



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