

Coronavirus/Covid-19 Checklist for Law Firms

As this virus spreads around the world – there are now cases in over 60 countries – law firms all over the world need to take immediate and urgent action to develop a plan and a strategy to deal with the consequences of the virus as it impacts their law firms and their clients.

The following is a simple checklist to stimulate thought and action. All law firms will be affected differently and need to consider their own plan and strategy.

1. Take immediate action to determine whether any staff have been to an affected area or spent time with people from an affected area. In cases of doubt, any such individuals should be quarantined – probably for at least 14 days. This will probably mean working from home at a minimum. Review the advice from your local health authorities.
2. Consider the health and welfare of your staff both physically and mentally. What additional measures should be taken, e.g., sanitisers within the office and the provision of masks. Lead on this issue to maintain the confidence of staff that the law firm is on top of the issue.
3. Develop a strategy around visitors (external and from other offices). Are you going to close to visitors? Are you going to interrogate visitors to see where they have recently visited and/or people they have been in contact with? Are you going to take the temperature of visitors? It is also important to track visitors more carefully than usual in case they need to be contacted. Will you shake hands?
4. Immediately check your business continuity plan and in particular, make sure you have up to date contact details of all staff. If you urgently have to move to home working you need to know where your staff are. Is your IT system ready for this?
5. Events. Consider whether to postpone events or to hold them in a different manner, e.g., switch to webinar. Show thought leadership on this. Do not wait for your guests simply not to turn up. Is there PR around this that needs managing?
6. Consider, and more importantly, talk to and listen to your clients. Approach to client meetings; do they want to meet? What are the issues they are facing given the virus and how can you help them? Issues might include:
 - Supply chain disruption
 - Force majeure events
 - M&A opportunity
 - Distressed situations being both a threat and an opportunity
 - Stock Exchange notifications
 - Employment issues, e.g., enforced “holidays”

7. Do you need to notify your insurers?
8. Initiate discussions with regulators/judiciary about court hearings and other procedures.
9. Urgently establish a travel policy. Are you going to permit people to continue travelling or impose restrictions on where they can travel?
10. How will you make home working work? Will you keep the office open? Can everyone work from home or do you need some people in the office? How are you going to persuade people to come into the office, e.g., split teams on alternate days? Need to address any employment law issues? Communication and training. How to move to “business as usual” as soon as possible – do you need additional measures, e.g., variable hours.
11. If schools close, will this mean your staff will stay at home to look after children? Are there alternatives?
12. Many people are concerned about public transport. Can you provide alternatives?

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