

# Stop, Reset, Go!

*Irish employers share their  
advice for 2021*

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# Want A Better Workplace In 2021?



## Stop, Reset, Go! Irish Employers Share Their Advice for 2021

Irish businesses had to contend with some serious challenges last year.

Insight HR recently shared six key areas that will help you re-engage your staff and have a better workplace in 2021.

To see the article and the six key areas, [click here](#).

We also asked Irish employers to share their advice on how to create a better workplace in 2021.

"Insight HR is an HR Consultancy that helps Irish businesses navigate the tricky road to effective human resource management. Since the business was founded back in 2000 we've built up a strong client base which spans many different industries and sectors. We are specialists in employment law compliance and experts in workplace conflict management. However, with Insight HR, it's never just about fixing a problem or developing a strategy. Instead, our partnership approach arms teams with the knowledge they need to make better decisions. We leave HR teams better informed and more confident in their abilities to resolve future HR issues. This quick guide is another way for us to support you and your business."

**Mary Cullen**

**Managing Director - Insight HR**

# Advice From Irish Employers

## Mr Michele Neylon – CEO of Blacknight Solutions (Hosting, Colocation & Domains)

The main thing is making sure that everyone from the top to the bottom of the company is flexible and pragmatic. So while previously most of our staff were working “normal” shifts from our offices now they’re all working from home and having to juggle their domestic lives and those of their partners etc., with their jobs.

One of the bigger challenges has been switching to being a 100% remote company overnight. From a technical perspective that wasn’t too hard for us, but from a practical day to day one it was a seismic change.

For some of our staff the change has been very positive and they’re loving it, but others have had major issues with it and it’s put a strain on them and their teams.

Change can be a challenge, but businesses that do their best to embrace it can survive and possibly even flourish, while those who deny it will cause problems for themselves.

## Diane Baker, Recruitment Manager at Poppulo

Try to work together with employees & support as much as possible as the country opens up & returns to normal. Communication is key, Ensure that everyone is kept up to date with company plans and ambitions. An informed workforce leads to greater engagement allround.

## Brian Crooke, Course Director at Tangent, Trinity’s Ideas Workspace

If there was one area I would encourage employers to focus on in 2021 it is the wellbeing of their colleagues. It’s the legal thing to do, it’s the ethical thing to do AND it’s the smart thing to do. A healthy workforce leads to a healthy bottom line.

## Elizabeth Kelly, Senior Manager Development at ENCLUDE

We organised a buddy system from the start of the first lockdown so all our staff got to connect with one or more members of their team each day via Zoom. It really helped people not to feel isolated and that they were still part of the company. It also got client problems solved faster!

## Fanny Grant - Recruiter at Threatscape

My personal take away from 2020 is that we have learned to enjoy the simple things that we took for granted before Covid hit. Whether that's seeing friends and family, going shopping, visit the cinema or museum, etc, . . . and having a job! Many people started doing outdoor activities and family activities. So to me that's a lot of positive things that came out of the pandemic.

The swift arrival of COVID-19 has undoubtedly immersed the entire world into unknown terrain. While browsing online earlier today, I was drawn to the blogging site of twitter where multiple followers were asked to describe 2020 in one word – the following words were most commonly used; pain, unstable, hurt, agony, sadness and unpredictable. These words collectively summarise the economical and emotional challenges organisations and its people have experienced, and sadly are still experiencing. The effects of COVID-19 have been lasting and devastating.

Despite Covid-19's negative effects, it is likely that we can all agree on one thing – we've learned a lot. As an HR Manager operating within the 'not for profit' sector, I have witnessed the foregone days of having office space lit up and occupied five days a week being replaced by the digital home workplace. Working from home was one of the biggest challenges for some employers within this sector. Have we the appropriate IT infrastructure in place, how can we all operate remotely without daily interaction and physical presence? How can we still service the needs of our clients?

## Laura Barry – HR Leader – Not-For-Profit Sector

Indeed, the learning curve was steep, but we got there. We got there not only continuing to provide excellent services and quality standards but also increasing employee engagement, a fundamental HR facet that increases productivity, employee retention and an optimal workplace experience. The work-life balance, virtual social interactions and constant simple gestures of appreciation shown weekly to staff got us through it. For many of us, the digital home workplace will now be our new norm. Trust is a key learning for many leaders that once doubted this intrinsic benefit. For 2021, employers across the Island will undoubtedly incorporate this work practice, whether partially or fully and will reap the benefits of seeing a real time boost to morale all the while inspiring confidence and autonomy among its workforce. *'To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace'* Doug Conant.

## Deirdre O'Brien, Training Consultant / Life and Executive Coach / Personal Development Trainer

I would have a few tips I have found to be good. The first is for people who are working from home regardless of their position in the company: Dress with intention, dress as if you were going to the office, right down to the shoes you wear – as in, no slippers. Makes a big difference to how people feel and focus. The second one is: Do something specific for the length of time it would have previously taken you to get to work, something that has nothing to do with home life and nothing to do with work. It could be go for a walk, or learn a new language etc. Something that takes the same duration as your previous commute would have taken. And the third tip is again in relation to working in a disparate environment, some at home some rotating in an office: Keep in touch, specifically, and not related to work. Have a regular coffee and cake meeting – for half an hour to an hour only once a month on an interactive online setting (Teams, Zoom etc.) this way managers can get a better insight into how their team are doing, but the team also feel that it is not all about work. These are some of the things that I teach but are based on what I have seen and experienced as being both motivating and inclusive.

## Mila Neudert, IT Service Delivery Manager at ProStrategy

All people struggle with change, it doesn't matter what is. For some businesses, it was a very successful year, for some it was the worst. Disregard the industry, every person had to adapt and change their habits, behaviours, communication styles, and many more. So, if business could adapt quickly enough they would recover much easier. Apart from changing technologies (moving online mostly) very important for us was the transparency of the management on how the company is doing. For example, we had only two company-wide business update meetings before and from March this year we have them each month – people are aware of how we are doing and what we are doing to improve our “numbers” – brings more trust and understanding from staff. Another thing I did to connect with people more (as no more office coffee breaks chats) was to introduce “social gathering” meetings with no business agenda, which also proved to work well and people felt more at ease and noted it was important to them. Also if there's a possibility to invest in people's skills – it was a good time to learn and catch up on the latest releases of technology. Thinking ahead and planning for the future brought more stability in people's thinking and released uncertainty. All the main bets should be on the people, they are the main driver for any business success, so the main focus was on the guys in the team. Little things make a big difference and, if we genuinely care about each other, it doesn't matter what life throws at us – we can handle it.

## Lorraine Morrin, Human Resources Generalist at Oneview Healthcare

I think this year has been a year like no other and if I was to offer any advice I would encourage as open communication as possible. Employees have had a very uncertain year in all industries and it is important for employers to recognise this and provide comfort and honesty in open communication.

## Tony Duffin, CEO at Ana Liffey Drug Project

It has been said that the COVID19 pandemic has (for better or worse) amplified what is. Couple this amplification with the need for many organisations to diversify what they offer to their customers/clients; and these changes can cause organisational culture and operational differences now compared to when the pandemic began. During the first wave of COVID19, in Ireland, fear and uncertainty permeated the public and professional consciousness. While this has subsided there remains significant concerns and a desire for certainty. As such, whatever change you may be managing at work – process, communication and authenticity are even more important than ever.

## Laura Burke, HR Generalist at Clanwilliam Health

I would say my number one lesson of 2020 is to remember we are, and always will be, stronger together. Truth be told, a business is only as successful as its people, yet somewhere along the years we may have lost sight of this. People want to feel valued, like they are part of something meaningful and have a purpose. Reminding them of their contribution to the success of the business and the vital role they play will drive motivation and optimism. No one gives 100% to an employer where they feel they are just a number. We are all important and have a place.

## Brenda Nagle, Head Of Business Governance at Gallarus Industry Solutions

This year has brought about uncertainty and when a world becomes uncertain it breathes fear but also change. I would promote the benefits of change for 2021, this could be within yourself and your development or for business looking for new strategies. Let's grab 2021 with both hands and say I'm back in control.



## Aidan Hennessy, People Talent Manager at Nearform

With more teams having to work from home I think it is important that employers make a conscious effort to promote a flexible working environment and ensure that their employees feel trusted, valued and still part of the team/company despite being separated from everyone. I feel that to promote wellbeing and a positive culture within their workforce by having strong resource groups to promote wellbeing, diversity and inclusion and also having a group to promote a positive remote working environment will pay dividends as employees will be more productive if they feel trusted, included and valued but also having resources available to them if/when times get difficult

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