

PREPARING FOR COVID-19

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES FROM MEMBERS MANAGING THROUGH COVID-19

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As an integrated logistics company based in Mainland China, COVID-19 presented [SF Express](#) with a very different challenge to many other businesses – how to manage a surge in demand for their transportation and delivery services. In addition to providing extra resources to help staff work from home and to ensure the safety of their couriers, SF Express has also moved expeditiously to adapt its business model to meet changing customer demand driven by changes to behaviour brought on by COVID-19.

MANAGING CHALLENGES TO BUSINESS OPERATIONS

COVID-19 presented many challenges for SF Express. In the first two weeks after Chinese New Year (25 January), business operations were severely disrupted because of travel restrictions, cancellation of passenger flights and a shortage of staff. In addition to these capacity constraints, they experienced a surge in demand for their courier services as consumers turned to online shopping.

To address these challenges, Ng stated that SF Express operated more all-cargo flights and encouraged couriers to return to work by offering transportation and accommodation subsidies, as well as providing them with care packages such as face masks and hand sanitisers.

While this increased expenses, Ng noted that these measures enabled SF Express to successfully navigate through the most difficult stage of the crisis, and by early March, it was managing the higher-than-expected business volume well.

SUPPORTING STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

To ensure the safety of their staff and to maximise their efficiency while working at home, SF Express adopted the following measures:

- **Continuing to use internal communication tools** – Staff are continuing to use the company's internal communication system to host meetings and to share information while working remotely.
- **Providing a virtual private network (VPN)** – SF Express has provided staff working from home access to a VPN to help them access information and analyse data from the corporate network.

- **Increasing cybersecurity protection** - With more staff working from computers outside of their network, SF Express has increased investment in cybersecurity protection.
- **Expanding their insurance coverage** – SF Express has expanded their insurance scheme to cover work-from-home arrangements.
- **Collaborating with the IT department** – Ng mentioned that, amidst the crisis, it is imperative to work closely with the IT department to ensure that virtual access channels are open to staff working remotely.

With the above measures employed, Ng said that even their shared services centres based in Wuhan were able to complete their month end management reporting with only a short delay.

SUPPORTING STAFF WORKING IN OFFICE

For staff returning to office, Ng said that multiple control and preventive measures have been introduced to reduce the risks of the spread of COVID-19. They include:

- **Completing a mandatory health form** – Staff are required to complete a health form every day, noting their recent travel history and health status. If staff have travelled to high-risk areas within the past 14 days or have symptoms, they are advised to work from home.
- **Keeping a safe distance** – Staff are required to sit at least one metre apart from each other.
- **Monitoring the number of staff** – The Human Resources department has been monitoring the number of staff working in offices, and raising warnings should staff numbers get too high.

TRAINING AND EVALUATING STAFF

The COVID-19 outbreak has also brought about changes to staff training and evaluation in SF Express. While a mixture of face-to-face and online training were provided before the COVID-19 outbreak, Ng foresees that SF Express will utilise more online resources for training office workers in the future.

In addition, Ng stated that as it has become more difficult monitoring staff performance while working from home, SF Express has begun to set smaller tasks on a milestone basis to ensure that staff performance will not be affected, and that staff performance can be monitored remotely.

OPTIMISING BUSINESS MODELS

The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour has presented opportunities for SF Express to expand their business model. While the short-term focus has been on meeting the surge in demand for the delivery of fresh produce and cleaning and personal hygiene products to customers, Ng stressed that going forward, SF Express will be focusing on innovation: looking to develop new types of products and services to suit work-from-home arrangements. This may include pickup and delivery services for printed or signed documents, supporting remote schooling for students and establishing an integrated administration service.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Some additional tips to businesses preparing for and coping with COVID-19 that Ng would like to offer are:

- Prepare for the new norm of working from home, for example coming up with a staff rotation system and expanding insurance coverage.
- Seek to reduce your rental space by making better use of work-from-home arrangements.