

Optimising processes is critical to driving continuous improvement in a post-pandemic world

The manufacturing, warehousing and logistics sector has faced a number of challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Those in services that were deemed essential had to cope with increased demand alongside reduced headcount, with short turnaround times. Other services experienced complete shutdowns followed by the need to reopen efficiently, when permitted, to maximise profit.

By [Gean Botha](#) 8 Feb 2021



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

While the sectors comprise a broad variety of businesses, one thing they all have in common is the need to do more with less. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the panacea to this problem, offering flexible, on-demand consumption, ease of scalability, Business Continuity (BC) and above all, improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Continuing Covid challenges

While the initial lockdown was a challenge of its own, the ongoing reality of Covid means that social distancing must remain in place, and there is a real chance that entire teams of staff will need to be placed in quarantine. Without a way of bringing in additional staff at short notice, businesses are unable to continue their operations.

Higher production outputs need to be delivered with fewer people. Furthermore, ensuring Covid-19 compliance incurs additional costs due to sanitising procedures, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing and isolation policies and practices, all creating additional requirements for time and planning.

The pandemic has also placed many businesses under severe financial restraint and keeping all staff on the books in-house is not an option for many anymore. These staff then become a liability in the event of further lockdown scenarios.

How BPO can assist

BPO can assist manufacturing, warehousing and logistics organisations during this time by effectively removing the burden of managing workers on site. Entire processes can be outsourced, which includes staffing, monitoring of staff, ensuring Covid-19 compliance, and handling any staff that need to be isolated as well as providing additional headcount to ensure continuous productivity and meeting of demand.

Sustainability of operations is key to success both during this time and in the future. For the supply chain, including manufacturing, warehousing and transport, minimising cost and maximising output is essential to improving the bottom line. Using BPO, businesses in these sectors can ensure that the entire value chain runs smoothly and that processes are optimised to deliver the best efficiency at the lowest cost.

Always driving improvement

BPO providers help businesses to increase productivity, convert fixed overheads into variable costs based on demand, and reduce operating overheads. Increasing output and improving productivity and efficiency are, however, ongoing tasks. They require management on a daily basis to ensure effective process flow.

After systems and production, layouts have been evaluated and data analysed to identify areas of wastage or inefficiency, these areas can then be addressed. However, this is not a once-off destination. Continuous improving methods is the cornerstone of effective BPO, supported by quality control and specific instructions and training to ensure compliance – something which is increasingly critical in this post-pandemic world.

No 'one size fits all approach'

Each business is unique, and their processes will differ, so there is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' approach to BPO. It is therefore imperative that the chosen provider is ISO9001 certified and committed to continuous improvement practices. It is also critical to choose a trusted provider to ensure client confidence. An important aspect here is to confirm that the relevant non-disclosure agreements are in place to guarantee confidentiality.

Ultimately, BPO is a full-service offering, from evaluating the environment to assessing, making recommendations and then implementing changes with staffing if required. It helps to mitigate the risk around Covid-19, ensuring compliance with regulations, while improving cost efficiency, ultimately resulting in increased profit. It also assists businesses to become more flexible and agile in their operations, which is critical given the uncertainty of the current environment.

The ability to respond quickly to market changes will be a key determinant of future success, and BPO delivers this and more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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