

## HUL replans operations to protect staff health, shield biz

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**Mumbai:** Office-based employees of Hindustan Unilever (HUL) went into a work-from-home (WFH) mode from March 17 itself, and the Rs 38,000-crore FMCG major has already framed a new set of protocols for employees, area sales managers (ASMs) and the field force. An incident management team (IMT) — a cross-functional steering committee — has been set up to lead multiple pillars for Covid-19 readiness, and over 1,000 circle meetings (virtual meetings each manager has had with his or her team) have taken place to cover the last blue-collared employee on the shop floor:

The company has mapped 40-50 top mission-critical roles, with a plan of two levels down as substitutes to ensure business continues if any individual is unable to attend to a role.

For its 140 ASMs, the directive is — in any given week — very few managers would travel in the market for business-critical work. Similarly, for office support, a small number of managers would come to office, while a higher number of remaining managers would work from home. Managers are rotated between these three work locations on a

### MISSION-CRITICAL STRATEGY

- Safeguard workforce, ensure continuous supply of essential products to consumers
- Office staff told work from home since Tuesday last week
- Incident Management Team set up to act as nodal agency on Covid-19 readiness
- Managers to have virtual meetings with all, including blue-collared workforce (already 1,000 held)
- Up to 50 biz-critical roles identified with backup execs till 2 levels down in hierarchy
- All 140 area sales managers (ASMs) to drastically cut down mkt travel, given standard

➤ HUL CMD Sanjiv Mehta to hold 2nd virtual town hall within a week, instead of usual physical one every 3 months



operating procedures depicting expected life offsite and at home

➤ Helpline created to answer queries regarding settling into work-from-home mode in Week 1. Next week to focus on getting back to biz

➤ All protocols expected to percolate from leadership team to blue-collared employees — over 2L people — in a few days

ekly basis to ensure social distancing, safety and business continuity. The standard operating procedures talk about what an ASM's life would look like when he or she is in the market and what would it look like at home.

“What's happening today is unprecedented. The new set of protocols we have put in place will allow us to play a dual role of an employer as well as a provider of essential products like soaps and packaged foods to consumers,” said HUL executive director (HR) Anuradha Razdan. The company has plotted a

large matrix classifying towns, areas and micro-areas that are operating in line with government advisories. “With this matrix, we ensure we continue to have contact with the trade and at the same time we minimise exposure and risk. For example, for our field force, there are clear guidelines and we make sure everyone has a shared understanding of this,” said Razdan. Considering that the situation is dynamic, leaders are required to demonstrate quick decision-making. The day starts with a virtual stand-up meeting and

‘check-ins’ to ensure all feedback goes upwards and then seeps down to the people. Leaders are told to listen in and share in. Every team has these meetings, preferably first thing in the day. “The objective is to create a virtual intimacy that will allow people to stay positive even through these very unprecedented times by keeping employees positive and bring transparency of communication,” said Razdan.

At top, management committee of HUL meets CMD Sanjiv Mehta where the discussion is around the health & safety of people, business continuity, long-term strategy & opportunities, and how the company can keep the momentum going. Mehta is all set to hold his second virtual town hall, something that he would otherwise address once every quarter.

“Communication is critical to reflect the new ways of working. So from the supply chain leadership team, it goes to the unit leadership team, or the factory heads and then to the factory leadership team, and then to first level of manager who has a meeting on the shop floor with blue-collared employees,” Razdan said. In the next few days, the new protocols would reach over two lakh people in the extended ecosystem.