

The coronavirus outbreak will affect the way people work and search for jobs. Here is why

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Turmoil has engulfed the world, with stock markets sinking, supply chains breaking and quarantine laws being introduced throughout the major economies. How will the coronavirus pandemic affect the future of work? We've asked the IMSA Search members to share

their thoughts.

IMSA Search: The current situation is hitting the many different layers of global economy. Are the companies and job candidates adjusting to the new circumstances?

Monika Ciesielska, IMSA Poland: In my opinion, we should act with determination, but deliberately. Even if everybody knew that the virus would come to Poland, it's always kind of shock that it's spreading so fast and that our country is not excluded from the disease. Now we know that it's here, and we need approximately one-two weeks to calm down and change the working routine.

Jerry Chang, IMSA China: We need to adjust to a new situation. There are many changes in client and candidate behaviour, which – in this situation – is natural. In China (but not only here), clients refuse to meet with candidates face-to-face. Mobility has been limited to absolute minimum, which does not only apply to travel. Candidates are less likely to transfer to other cities for a new position. They prefer to stay where they are because of their family, and we need to respect that.

Alena Sanders, IMSA Czech Republic: Overall, the percentage of available candidates will increase. The hospitality field is already affected, and a significant number of smaller businesses will be facing difficulties and might go out of business. Some people might need to change their career path and start working in a different field in which vacant positions are still available.

Monika Ciesielska, IMSA Poland: On the other hand, the IT sector seems to be quite safe. After all, coders and developers just get what they are always asked for – the possibility to work remotely. I agree that the situation is dire, but we also should be very cautious about painting the darkest scenarios. Let's stick to the facts and give people some time.

Alena Sanders, IMSA Czech Republic: Of course. That also means that in the short-term, at least for a while, there might be a higher number of available candidates actively searching for a new position at the market with lower salary expectations. In the long-term, the market should return to normal as soon as the economy stabilises.

Jerry Chang, IMSA China: I agree. In a long perspective, business will go back to normal. In China, where the situation was difficult a few weeks ago, now the virus spreads under control and significantly fewer people are dying. It probably takes four to six months for business to go back to normal. When it comes to predicting business recovery for the lost revenue, I would say that it will take year or more.

IMSA Search: You pointed out that we all need to adjust to the new situation. As a consequence of the outbreak, will remote work become more common?

Marianna Carbonnari, IMSA Italy: Yes. In Italy, we are currently under a total lockdown and coronavirus is forcing companies to adopt smart or remote working. I think this is a very difficult period but also a good opportunity to introduce a more flexible organisational model that hopefully will also be maintained in the future.

Alena Sanders, IMSA Czech Republic: Actually, companies that weren't open to offer remote work to their employees now have an opportunity to test whether going remote is for them. Under the pressure of state restrictions such as school closures, people are forced to either take vacation time, sick leaves or home office. Employers who will be flexible and support their employees to ease the situation by offering the ability to work at home will get loyalty in return. Mutual trust gained in a critical situation may support loyalty between the employer and the employee. Remote work is necessary in this situation.

IMSA Search: And how about headhunters themselves? How can executive search specialists modify their daily routine in order to perform their duties effectively?

Alena Sanders, IMSA Czech Republic: As in other fields, remote work and the use of new technologies is a must in this situation. Personal interviews will be replaced with more Skype calls. But, there is a positive side for headhunters. In general, candidates have more time for interviews and are willing to discuss opportunities.

Marianna Carbonnari, IMSA Italy: Also, headhunters should maintain strong business partnership with their clients and be particularly supportive in this challenging moment. Patience, strategic vision and optimism are three critical competencies for a good leader and for a wise advisor in this critical situation.