



JETRO hosted a webinar on business restarting guidance and legal considerations following the lifting of the stay-at-home orders

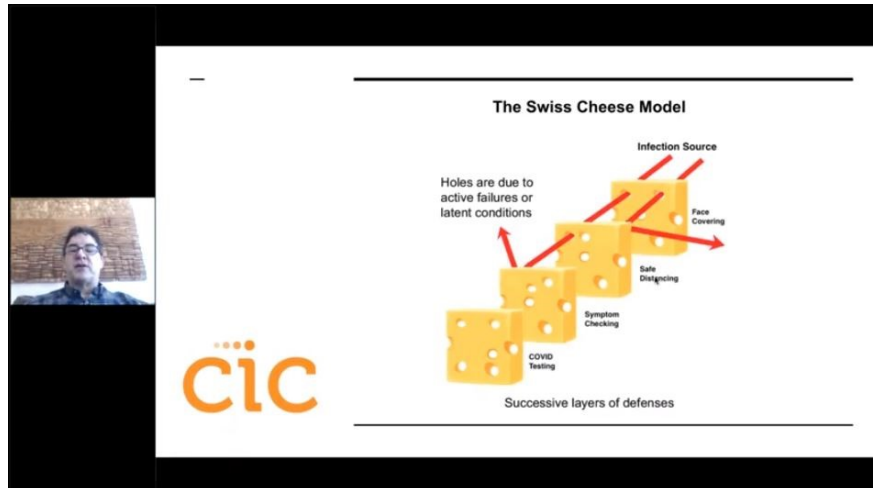
Ever since the novel coronavirus outbreak, companies that were forced to shut down their operations are growing anxious about an uncertain future. JETRO surveys of Japanese companies operating in the U.S. on their coronavirus measures shows that, as states reopen their economies three months after the pandemic's emergence, securing workplace safety and dispelling employee anxiety have become challenges for companies looking to restart operations. Moreover, while signs of resuming economic activities are emerging, states that have reopened are reporting new infection cases, making it essential for companies to take full precautions in restarting operations.

To help these companies address such challenges and to answer their questions, JETRO hosted a webinar on business restarting guidance and legal consid-

erations following the lifting of the stay-at-home orders, inviting experts and business representatives as speakers, and presented examples of measures being taken. (This webinar was based on information available on the webinar date of May 27. For the latest information, check the websites of the federal and local governments.)

The reopening guidelines from the federal, state, and local governments, and from the CDC provide specific rules for different industries. Additionally, legal considerations must be considered. Attorney Noriko Motegi of Ballon Stoll Bader & Nadler, P.C. said that for businesses that are restarting their operations, rehiring all terminated or temporarily terminated employees would be difficult, both physically (in terms of securing social distance) and financially. Moreover, she strongly urged paying close attention to regulations under anti-discrimination laws when rehiring only some of these employees, in particular cautioning that refusal to rehire employees due to their being high-risk persons because of their age or serious underlying conditions may be considered a violation of anti-discrimination laws. In the event of infection cases at the workplace, it is important to prevent disclosure of the infected employee's identity, health information, and other private information, she said.

CIC (Cambridge Innovation Center), the Boston provider of rental office space for startups, has around 2,500 companies using its shared office space, and has been preparing anti-coronavirus measures since around February, CEO Tim Rowe said. Specific office reopening safety measures include, as basic steps, wearing masks, installation of touchless facilities, and self-checking of symptoms, and these constitute the three core measures, he said. On top of these, he also cited separating desks by six feet for social distancing, limiting the number of elevator riders at a time, and other specific measures that meet the CDC guidelines. He also mentioned that novel coronavirus test kits are becoming available to businesses and predicted that their prices will decline several months down the road from around \$150 at present. The test kits available now are usually sent to a lab and results do not come back for about several days, but going forward, quick, low-cost self-administered test kits that deliver results in just few minutes will likely become available, he said.



Tim Rowe, CEO of CIC , explaining the layer of safety measures , comparing them to Swiss Cheese Model.

Lastly, staffing and human resources outsourcing service provider Pasona NA's Vice President Kayo Tokumaru presented examples of office reopening preparations and guideline creation. Drawing up office reopening guidelines requires not only having the perspective of being able to work safely after the office reopening, but also envisioning post-pandemic survival and providing relevant guidance, Ms. Tokumaru said. Further, she also said that managers tend to think being physically present in an office is the norm and feel anxious about not seeing how their employees work, and thus they are often keen on bringing them back to the office. But she emphasized that it is important to ascertain employees who will be prioritized to go back to the office according to necessity, and take into consideration what the employees themselves want, including the health conditions of these employees and their families and whether the remote work environment is optimal, because these factors may develop into issues of retention and recruiting/employment competitiveness going forward. Moreover, she explained that her company shared the guidelines with all employees and had employees and managers discuss their views, and this enabled them to deepen their understanding of the different situations each person is in (diversity). The thinking on the office environment has drastically changed with the pandemic, resulting in a shift in opinion among managers, that remote work may not be a problem as long as employees can perform and produce results, she said. Due to concerns about safety, her company will maintain remote work for employees for the time being, she said, noting that with respect to using the

office, capacity will be limited according to the purpose and necessity of use, the plan being to conduct business and run the organization in a manner that does not result in any infection cases.

実例: オフィスでのSocial Distancing対策 #2



Social Distance measures in Pasona's office after the reopening.

With companies engaged in efforts to reopen their operations as described above, a change in the thinking of managers away from conventions is critical for survival and growth in the post-pandemic era. Additionally, it is becoming more important to carry out corporate activities tailored to the new post-pandemic era. JETRO is committed to continuing to share information with and support Japanese companies going forward.

JETRO New York