

# HR, Career Development and Recruitment FAQs

In partnership with Lynne Griffiths  
of Sirius Executive Search



**BTA**

BUSINESS TRAVEL  
ASSOCIATION

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# Contents

01

**Introduction from BTA CEO  
Clive Wratten**

Page 1

02

**Top 10 Tips for Career Development  
During Lockdown**

Page 2

03

**Employer's Questions**

Page 3/4

04

**Employees' Questions**

Page 5/6

05

**Post Covid-19 Questions**

Page 7/8

06

**Summary from Lynne Griffiths  
of Sirius Executive Search**

Page 10

07

**External Resources**

Page 11

## Dear Members & Partners,

In this week's FAQ guide, we are using this extended period of lockdown to reflect on career development, the future of recruitment and some of our HR responsibilities across the sector.

From our ongoing conversations, I know our sector is finding it particularly tough to retain talent in the industry, is heavily reliant on the nascent furlough scheme and constantly looking for ways to look after its workforce.

We wanted to bring together advice for all the amazing people we see across the industry, to repeat our call for collaboration on the issues that matter to us and our pledge to help guide the sector out of this crisis, when the time is right.

This week, Lynne Griffiths, Founder and Managing Director of latest BTA member, Sirius Executive Search has brought her expertise to our most pressing questions. With over 35 years' experience within the corporate travel industry, Lynne has held commercial roles from Sales to Procurement as well as IT and HR and has built up an extensive network in the travel industry.

Sirius is a business travel recruitment specialist that focuses on management and board appointments in the TMC, airline, hotel, ground transport, payment solutions and travel technology sectors.

The team values integrity and professionalism and has invaluable real-life experience of the qualities and attributes required for roles in the travel industry.

Armed with such expertise, Sirius has been able to help us develop the following pages with tips and answers about skills development, career growth, management evolution and how the industry might evolve. With all this information to hand, we want you and your teams to feel encouraged and prepared for the months to come.

These FAQs are from you, and for you, so please do let me know if there is a particular issue or topic you would like us to tackle or if you would like to offer your expertise to the series.

Thank you all and stay safe!

Best wishes,



**Clive Wratten**  
CEO, The BTA

## 10 Tips for Career Development

Don't assume your career is on pause



See this time as an opportunity



Could I be a Mentor?



Update your CV



Connect



Ask for 360° Feedback



“What did you do with your time during the Pandemic?”

# 10 Tips for

# Career Development

Create a Self Development Plan



Decide on your Career Path



Network



## Employers' Questions

### Will employees expect bonuses and pay reviews during lockdown?

As we know, the business travel industry has been severely impacted by Covid-19. Many companies are fighting for survival and are taking it one week or even one day at a time.

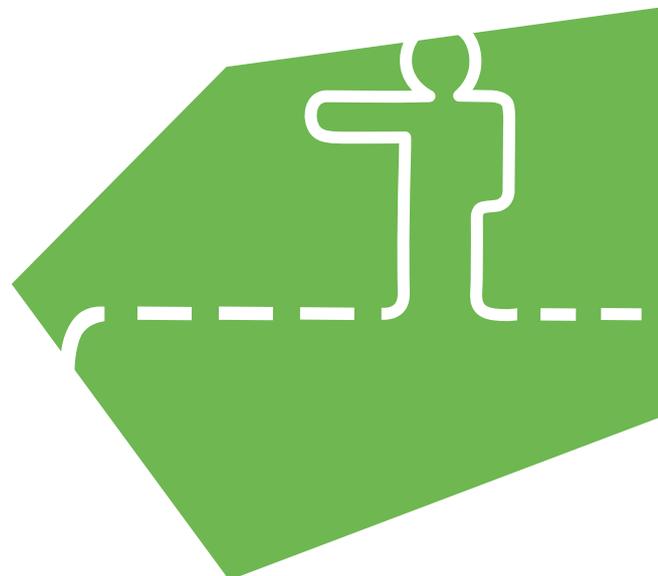
We know many non-furloughed employees who have taken salary cuts, unpaid leave and reduced hours and pay accordingly. Whilst employee contractual rights still apply, we are aware of companies changing their policies to reflect these unprecedented times and hope that expectations are realistic by both parties.

### How can I balance a surge of post-pandemic leave requests with looking after our clients?

We are aware that some companies are asking their employees to take a certain amount of annual leave days during lockdown to avoid a surge of annual leave requests when business returns. Some are asking employees to use up any accrued unused leave by a certain date so they can plan as much as possible and have staff ready to service customers when they are able.

Any furloughed employees that take leave days will require their salary to be “topped up” to 100%. We understand that if the employer cannot afford to “top up”, then legal advice should be sought.

The travel business is very much a people business. It is an exceptionally friendly and inclusive industry and we believe employees will be very understanding of the policies that their employers may have to make for business reasons. Those employees that have worked throughout the lockdown may require their leave requests to be prioritised to enable them to rest and recover. Clear communication with employees is vital as is legal advice if in any doubt.



## Employers' Questions

### What are our HR responsibilities regarding mental health during lockdown and on return to work?

Mental Health for many organisations is no longer a taboo subject. This is fantastic progress and employers that already have a focus on this are well placed during these unknown and unsettling times.

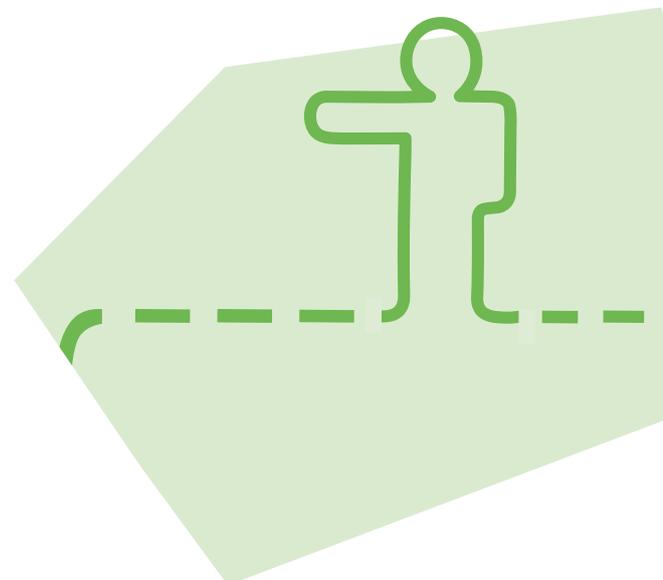
Employers need to step up their mental health support for employees as the Covid-19 crisis enters its second period of lockdown. Concern over job security and income loss coupled with the fear of infection and feelings of isolation can be consequences of the measures taken by the government to prevent the spread of the virus. Each is likely to increase the anxiety, pressure and stress levels that are affecting many people.

Employers need to remember that their duty of care for people's health and safety carries on, no matter where staff are based. Companies should have relevant work from home policies and guidelines to set expectations and best practice for those employees new to home working.

It's really important that managers are regularly checking in with their team and making use of video calls, so interactions can be as

personal as possible. Checking-in, talking and supporting employees is vital during this lockdown. Best practice HR practices during and after the crisis could include:

- (a) Support and guide managers so that they feel equipped to have sensitive and supportive discussions with staff.
- (b) Remind managers about the importance of communicating regularly with their team and asking how they are.
- (c) Encourage staff to practise self-care such as a healthy routine for diet, sleep and relaxation.
- (d) Promote their existing health and well-being benefits and support, for example signposting people to their counselling helpline or other national helplines.



## Employers' Questions

### How can we keep our furloughed staff engaged with our business?

We have heard examples of good (and bad) practice over these past weeks. Communication is vital to keep furloughed staff engaged.

Whether daily or weekly emails to keep them informed on business news, video calls, YouTube videos, social engagements including pub quizzes, talent shows, fun activities, exercise classes – we have been so impressed when hearing how innovative some employers have been to keep their employees positive and engaged. This not only helps with their mental health and anxiety but also builds team spirit across the organisation.

One of the main issues we have heard when speaking to employees during the past weeks has been the loss of identity and lack of routine on a daily basis as we are so used to having appointments and deadlines to hit. Virtual social appointments give furloughed employees back some routine and connection to the company – it cannot be over-estimated how valuable these are.

Sadly, we have also heard of companies that have little interaction with their furloughed employees.

Whilst appreciating it is a stressful time for senior managers who are working long hours - engaging and motivating all employees will put them in a stronger position to re-ignite their business when the time arrives.

### What does good internal communications look like during lockdown and after Covid-19?

Clear and regular communication with all employees is vital during these times. Whether staff are still working or have been furloughed, they all need to know what is happening with their role, team/ department, company and industry sector.

Good communication is using various methods and times and levels. Peer group discussions, top-down, bottom-up, fun, serious, sensitive – a variety of communications, relevant and considerate. Some employees may have caring or home-schooling time commitments so virtual meetings and appointments should accommodate all employee circumstances.

## Employees' Questions

### I am struggling with balancing parental responsibilities and my workload, what should I do?

Our understanding is that employees who have to remain at home to care for anyone connected with Covid-19 including looking after children because schools are closed, can be furloughed, regardless of whether or not you still have work to do.

In practice, this means parents whose children cannot attend school could be put on furlough rather than taking annual leave or unpaid leave to look after them. If you haven't been furloughed in this situation you should be able to request it.

### Can I ask my Company to fund training courses during lockdown?

There are many free online training courses available so we would recommend sourcing these in the first instance. Many courses have been substantially reduced in cost during this crisis which is great to see.

You can always ask your Company to fund any training as per your Company Policy, but we are aware that companies

are keeping their spending to an absolute minimum in order to survive.

### Can I work for another company whilst I am furloughed? E.g. competitors or as a key worker?

During the furlough leave, the employee's employment contract remains in place in other respects, such as important terms covering confidentiality, intellectual property rights, not working for others without permission and restrictive covenants. However, the rules do say that furloughed employees "can take part in volunteer work" - this is not interpreted as permitting employees to voluntarily do work for their employer.

It seems likely that this is a reference to voluntary work outside of the employer's organisation, such as volunteering with the Government's NHS volunteering scheme. We also understand that furloughed employees could take up new employment with a different employer, provided it is 'contractually allowed'. So, this for example, may be with a delivery company or with a supermarket but as always, legal advice should be sought.

## Employees' Questions

### **I have been furloughed, am I allowed to be in contact with my Company?**

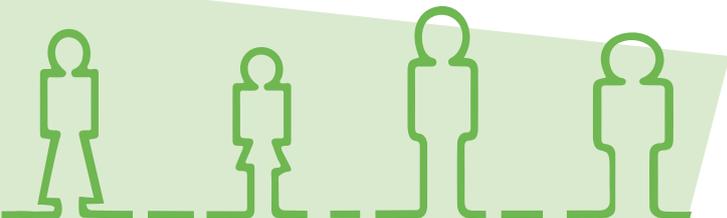
Yes, you can be in touch with your Company and we highly recommend that you do stay in touch for the social side. It can be a very isolating and anxious time. However, you cannot attend virtual work meetings as this would be classed as work and against furlough rules.

Some of our customers have team/department virtual meetings and some senior management/owners hold virtual meetings to communicate with their employees. Some have also set up “buddy schemes” to provide employees with someone to talk to regarding any concerns and share information at a “non-management” level. However, you must do absolutely no work for the company from which you have been furloughed.

### **I am usually office-based, but the government requirement to work from home means I have continued my role remotely. My employer and customers are both happy with my performance; would I be allowed to continue to work from home when things return to normal?**

Covid-19 has forced employers to set their staff up to work from home and business owners who may have held the opinion that staff could not work as effectively from home and needed to be office-based, have had no choice other than to adapt.

We believe post Covid-19, this change of culture will continue, and employers will be increasingly willing to engage with home-workers. However, you should discuss this with your employer when the time is right. Any change should be reflected in your employment contract.



## Post Covid-19 Questions

### I have been made redundant, when do you think there will be any new job vacancies in the business travel industry?

We have spoken to many candidates over the past weeks who have been let go. We have not seen any new roles within the travel sector, and speaking with our industry colleagues, they are echoing this. We are recommending to anyone who is looking for a job at this time to search for employment outside of the business travel industry in the meantime.

We understand that many companies within the sector are taking this time to review their business operations, processes and structures. This time is allowing them to take a hard look at their procedures, staffing levels, productivity and costs. For some organisations, their structure post Covid-19 may look quite different from before. As the saying goes, out of adversity comes innovation.

It's clear that some job roles may change, new skills will be required, and new technologies implemented. These changes will bring new job opportunities.

### If there are less jobs post Covid-19, will this drive down salaries?

In some instances, more competition may reduce salaries, however it is also possible that salaries will increase for some roles where specific expertise is required. It is also important to note that a salary adjustment may be offset if your role becomes a home-based position through commuting costs saved.



## Post Covid-19 Questions

**I have been furloughed but I am concerned that when I return to work, my company will not need as many travel consultants if volumes are lower than pre-Covid-19.**

There has long been a shortage of qualified and experienced travel consultants in the industry which has been challenging for many TMCs. We believe that TMCs will do all they can to retain trained and loyal staff and will communicate their strategy to you when the time comes.

There may well be more competition for jobs, so it is best to keep communication lines open with your employer, upskill if possible and to stay engaged throughout.

**If employers continue with more home-based roles, what impact will this have on recruiting staff?**

Traditionally, companies that have an office-based culture, have had a limited talent pool when recruiting as they have been restricted to candidates living within a commutable distance. Companies that have offered home-based working, have always had a larger talent pool to select from as geography hasn't been a restriction. This enforced company change of policy, should have a positive lasting impact.



## Summary

### From Lynne Griffiths

Having worked in the business travel sector for over 35 years. I have seen the industry recover from all of its previous challenges in that time and I have no doubt that our industry will bounce back – but almost certainly there will be change.

Many are predicting this crisis as the catalyst for the end of the traditional office as the location around which staff must base themselves. Why would companies pay high rents and rates for office space for all of its workforce if savings can be made, employee commuting times and costs reduced, work-life balance improved and talent pools expanded?

At Sirius, we believe the office is more than just a place to work – it is a community. The travel industry is a people business and our need to interact and engage in human contact will always exist. The office is needed to allow for this essential contact, but not necessarily on a daily basis.

Our recruitment business is in hibernation for now with our services not currently required. However, we are supporting our industry colleagues during these anxious times, by offering our advice or just being a sympathetic ear.

Stay safe and look after each other, we look forward to seeing you on the other side of this.

Best wishes,



**Lynne Griffiths**

Managing Director, Sirius Executive Search



# External Resources

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## Online Training Courses

<https://www.udemy.com/>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/writing-applications>

<https://academy.hubspot.com/>

<https://www.oxfordhomestudy.com/free-online-courses-with-certificates>

## How to Work from Home Advice

[https://www.goodworktv.co.uk/how-to-work-from-home-effectively?utm\\_source=display&utm\\_medium=display&utm\\_campaign=display](https://www.goodworktv.co.uk/how-to-work-from-home-effectively?utm_source=display&utm_medium=display&utm_campaign=display)

## CV Writing Tips

<https://jobs.telegraph.co.uk/careers/cv-writing-advice/>

<https://www.cvtemplatemaster.com/cv-template/>

## General Coronavirus links

Public Health England [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

NHS UK: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

## Places that need Volunteers or Online Help

NHS Volunteer Responder: [www.goodsamapp.org/NHS](http://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS)

Samaritans Online Chat portal: [www.samaritans.org/chatdonate/](http://www.samaritans.org/chatdonate/)



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