

Corporate India Adopts Vaccination as KRA

Hoping for normalcy by Oct, cos across industries ensure at least one dose for 50-95% of workforce

Team ET

Bengaluru|Mumbai|New Delhi:

With a majority of employees having got their first Covid-19 jabs, India Inc is looking at vaccination as key to gradually returning to a regular routine as the second wave of the pandemic tapers off. To be sure, not too many companies are in a hurry to restart daily work from office for all.

ET spoke to more than 30 companies across industries, including Tata Steel, Hindustan Unilever (HUL), ITC, Amazon, Godrej, Dalmia Bharat Group, Larsen & Toubro, Samsung, KPMG, Zomato, Byju's and Future Group. Though companies say there is no urgency to open offices for white-collar staff, they have clear guidelines and timelines to get their entire workforce vaccinated. At least 50%, and up to 95%, employees of these firms have got at least one dose.

"As of now, we intend to keep office presence at a minimum. We are reviewing the situation every two weeks," said Amitav Mukherji, head, corporate human resources, ITC. Almost all eligible employees, their family members and service provider personnel of the Kolkata-based FMCG-to-hospitality conglomerate have been vaccinated with the first dose.

At factory locations, almost all employees have received the jab or will get it over the next few days, and most factories are running at full capacity. Similarly, ecommerce companies have prioritised frontline workers and delivery staff.

Step by Step
Cos say they have clear guidelines and timelines to vaccinate workforce

WHO?
Tata Steel, Vedanta, HUL, ITC, Amazon, L&T, RPG Group, Godrej, Marico, Dalmia Bharat Group, Panasonic, Samsung, Dabur, KPMG, PWC, Zomato, Byju's, Urban Company, Healthians, Dunzo, Future Group and Deloitte

WHY?
Key to gradually opening up offices, getting back to normalcy

CHALLENGES?
Vaccine hesitancy, supply constraints (for some)

Inoculation in Full Spate

Tata Steel has issued guidelines for all its employees to get at least the first dose by July 15 and managed this for around 82% so far.

Mining major Vedanta aims to complete 100% vaccination among all its employees, business partners and their families across all locations by August, while engineering and construction major L&T has vaccinated about 80% of its nearly 50,000 employees with at least one dose.

Consumer, retail and FMCG companies, too, are vaccinating their staff at full tilt.

At HUL, over 100,000 persons have been inoculated with their first dose, including 18,000 employees, that is, 86% of the workforce. Marico has vaccinated over 90% of eligible staff members. Panasonic and Dabur have vaccinated nearly all their employees, while Samsung has inoculated about 70% so far.

Godrej Industries has vaccinated about 70% of its employees across businesses with at least one dose. Future Group has 30-40% back in office on a rotational basis as vaccination continues.

OFFICE IN 3 MONTHS?

Industry insiders say August-October seems the likely horizon for the white-collar workforce — that has largely been working from home — to return to office, provided there is no big third wave or vaccine shortage.

“Every CEO wants teams to start coming back to offices, but given the devastating second wave, most are being cautious,” Navnit Singh, chairman and managing director of India for executive search firm Korn Ferry, told **ET**. “It is likely that companies will resume offices post-August, once employees get their second shots.”

K Sudarshan, managing director of executive search firm EMA Partners India, who is in constant conversations with business leaders, said that while one set of people are strong votaries of going back to the office, as of now, the larger section is playing it safe. “Once the second vaccine kicks in, more people will be pushing for normalcy around September-October,” he said.

Professional services firm KPMG, for example, plans to reopen its offices in India in September as it expects a majority of its employees to be fully vaccinated by August-end. About 50% of its employees have been vaccinated, a KPMG official said.

Its rival, PwC, is requesting employees to get both shots by August 31.

Another rival, Deloitte India, seems more cautious, though. “Vaccination is not the only factor to alleviate infection risk,” said SV Nathan, partner and chief talent officer, Deloitte India. “There are other touchpoints too that will be crucial before employers feel confident to open up offices at full capacity.” Deloitte has covered 25% of employees in its vaccination drives.

SUPPLY CONSTRAINTS

Company officials and labour lawyers said supply constraint as well as vaccine hesitancy among a small section of the workforce are some of the challenges they face.

“It is difficult to predict when we will complete full vaccination since this will also depend on employees’ time gap eligibility for their second doses and availability of vaccines,” said Supratik Bhattacharya, chief talent officer, RPG Group. About 75% employees of the various companies of the Mumbai-based industrial and services conglomerate have taken at least one shot.

Amazon India, which began its on-site vaccination events for frontline teams in May, said vaccine hesitancy among frontline employees was a challenge initially, but it has been able to overcome it. The ecommerce major has vaccinated more than 130,000 of its associates, employees and their dependents so far.

At hyperlocal delivery startup Dunzo, approximately 40% delivery partners have received the jab so far. The company expects to vaccinate more than 90% by year-end, vaccine supplies permitting, said Geetanjali Swamy, head, people team, Dunzo.

At home services marketplace Urban Company, more than 70% of its 35,000-strong partner fleet and 75% of its employees have received the first dose. It is aiming to reach 100% vaccination (including the second dose) by August.

With vaccines, most see safety in numbers. At food delivery app Zomato, 95,000 of the 160,000-strong delivery executive fleet have been vaccinated. At health test service startup Healthians, over 80% of employees have received at least one dose. Edutech major Byju’s has vaccinated over 5,000 of total 10,000 employees with at least one dose.

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