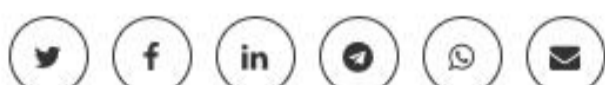


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# How can infrastructure companies cope with reverse migration?

*The lockdown and the subsequent migration of labourers has been unfortunate for the entire infrastructure industry, says ED-REPL of Rudrabhishek Enterprises Limited, Dr. Harish Sharma.*

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Infrastructure industry

By Dr. Harish Sharma

The harsh memories of the previous year's **lockdown** due to **Covid-19** and the subsequent **reverse migration** had not yet faded from our minds and it has started all over again. Due to the surge in the Covid-19 cases across the country, the partial or regional

lockdowns are already being implemented by the state governments and local authorities. Uncertainties related to availability of work and wages are again pushing a considerable portion of workforce to retreat to their native places.

The reverse migration is bound to impact every sector of the **economy**, however due to its labour-intensive nature, the infrastructure sector will be the most effected one. Life and business, however, cannot stop for ever. Businesses either need to adapt to the changing dynamics of the market or be prepared to perish. **Infrastructure companies** need to take early action to combat the situation arising due to the reverse migration of the labourers. They need to think about both short- & long-term measures and prepare themselves for any future Covid-19 like situation. Let us examine what infrastructure companies can do to tackle the ongoing crisis.

## Invest in automation

Automation is the means of reducing dependency on manpower. Automated machines can do the work of several people alone. These machines are also faster and more efficient. They also minimise human error and reduce wastages. However, these machines cost a fortune and need skilled manpower to operate them. They also need timely maintenance. Before investing in automation, companies need to make sure to train personnel to operate and maintain them. It is advisable to conduct a proper cost-benefit analysis prior to investing in these machines.

## Provide for safe accommodation

In the budget 2021, government announced incentives for affordable rental housing for migratory workers. Since migratory workers are an important asset for any infrastructure company, organisations should consider investing in safe and hygienic living conditions for them. This might seem easier, however, this could be the most effective and long-term way of checking reverse migration.

## Providing workers with work assurance

Workforce is the most important resource of any organisation. Therefore, organisations should strive to retrieve their employees. It might be nearly impossible for most infrastructure companies to stop reverse migration in case of a total lockdown in the country as most people give priority to the safety of themselves and their families and absence of work defeats the purpose of their stay at the work places. In the likely event of reverse migration, the best an infrastructure company can do is to give work assurance to their workers on their return. This will not only provide a sense of job security to the workers but also ensure the availability of workers when things get back to normal. Alongside the above mentioned initiatives, it is utmost important to take all possible measures to ensure health-safety of workforce, which should boost confidence in their minds.

The Covid-19, the lockdown and the reverse migration all have been unfortunate events for the entire infrastructure industry. It creates multiple issues in supply chain management, cost overrun pressure and construction activities. However, these are the testing times which will decide who will remain and who will perish. It is a time when companies need to think out of box and try to mitigate the harm done by the reverse migration. Companies need to be far sighted and plan not only for today but also for the future.

*(Dr. Harish Sharma is ED-REPL at Rudrabhishek Enterprises Limited. Views are personal.)*