



## **The Weekly Business Briefing**

### **Functional Note**

**01 May 2026**

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## Human Resources

*The elements below reflect feedback from some of our HR community collected during a digital meeting on Thursday 30 April 2026*

### **Overall Sentiment & Business Impact**

- General sentiment is positive and stable, with most organizations reporting a return to near-normal operations (75–100%).
- Business impact remains limited for now, though some sectors anticipate delayed effects in the coming months.
- No immediate large-scale layoffs reported; however, some companies are in “wait-and-see” mode while others are revisiting recruitment cautiously, with approvals now more controlled and selective.

### **Return to Office & Workforce Presence**

- Majority of organizations have:
  - reopened offices
  - implemented voluntary or phased return, now moving toward full occupancy
- Typical approaches observed:
  - 75–100% operational presence
  - hybrid models maintained (e.g., 2 days WFH)
  - Alignment with school reopening as a key trigger
- Employee sentiment:
  - high willingness to return
  - positive energy and strong engagement
  - return seen as a symbol of normalcy and reconnection

### **Remote Work from Abroad**

- Clear tightening of policies:
  - most organizations have set limits (e.g., 30 days)
  - employees abroad are now asked to return or transition to leave if exceeding limits
- Some flexibility remains and short extensions granted case-by-case
- Companies supporting return through advance air tickets and/or flexible timelines where needed

### **Employee Mobility & Expat Population**

- Diverging approaches depending on workforce composition:
  - some companies have fully repatriated employees

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- others maintain expat populations abroad (until summer or academic cycle)
- Return decisions often linked to safety perception, family considerations or company-level or HQ directives
- In some cases, employees returning must sign waivers acknowledging personal decisions.

### **Business Travel**

- Business travel remains restricted or tightly controlled and subject to case-by-case approvals (often HQ validation)
- Key constraint is around life insurance limitations (Passive War clauses) impacting coverage during travel
- Some organizations are still maintaining full travel bans while others allow limited travel with strict governance

### **Insurance (Life & Medical)**

- Continued focus on Passive War clauses, particularly 28-day coverage limitation once a country is classified high-risk (orange/red)
- Life and medical insurance must be treated separately:
  - life insurance: more restrictive and complex
  - medical insurance: generally, covers emergencies but may have time limits abroad (e.g., 60–90 days)
- Companies have negotiated upgrades or extensions while balancing coverage vs premium cost

### **Workforce Management & Cost Measures**

- Most organizations have not implemented salary reductions or layoffs, because business was permitting to only push on the leave balances clearing
- Measures still in place or considered:
  - clearing annual leave / comp-off
  - limiting or postponing recruitment
  - scenario planning for cost control (if needed)

### **Employee Engagement & Culture**

- Strong focus on reconnection and team cohesion
- Many companies are organizing:
  - office gatherings
  - welcome-back events
  - informal engagement moments (e.g., lunches, “reconnect” sessions)
- Objective to rebuild team spirit and normalcy after disruption

## **Policies & Operational Adjustments**

- Some companies maintaining:
  - work-from-home country flexibility (limited duration) for future use
- Adjustments being made to better the coordination of office presence (avoid empty days) and/or rebalancing hybrid work models
- Operational alignment continues between local entities and regional / global HQ decisions

## **Key Takeaways**

- Organizations are now clearly in a normalization phase, with:
  - high return-to-office rates and stable operations
- Employees show strong willingness to re-engage, with minimal resistance
- Remaining areas of complexity:
  - business travel
  - insurance constraints
  - remote work abroad exceptions
- Focus is shifting toward:
  - sustainable operations
  - engagement and culture rebuilding
  - controlled policy enforcement

## Marketing and Communication:

*The elements below reflect feedback from some of our MarComEvents community collected during the MarCom committee meeting on Thursday, April 30.*

The MarCom managers present at the meeting reported that commercial and communication activities have returned to normal.

The return to in-person schooling during the week of April 17 enables employees to return to their company offices, which further supports the recovery of business activities.

### **External communication:**

- Activities have resumed normally
- Promotional communication being carried out through various channels such as newsletters.
- Shared content is both promotional and inspirational aimed at maintaining customers' engagement
- Events resumed at the end of April along with those scheduled for May.
- Face to face B2C and B2B meetings have also restarted.

During the crisis:

Some companies organized virtual events through webinars to ensure the continuity of B2B relationships and maintain their market visibility.

Logistical constraints caused by the disruption of maritime transport have led to supply delays. However, air freight has helped ensure the delivery of the most urgent shipments. For some companies, product supply delays also created an opportunity to showcase and present new products as exclusive previews to their key clients.

Overall, MarCom managers concluded that commercial activities were not suspended during the crisis. Instead, there was a shift in customer targeting, with some companies reaching new client segments. This allowed them not only to maintain business activity but also, in some cases, to explore and develop new market opportunities.

## Key UAE News of the Week

### UAE Launches Dh1 Billion National Fund to Support Vital Industries

On April 26, 2026, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum approved the establishment of a Dh1 billion national fund to strengthen the country's industrial resilience. The fund aims to accelerate the localisation of strategic industries, consolidate supply chains, and integrate artificial intelligence into production and planning processes. Alongside this, a policy was adopted to promote Emirati-made products across retail outlets and e-commerce platforms, with a target of fully localising more than 5,000 essential products. The National In-Country Value Programme was also expanded to cover all federal entities. These measures reflect the UAE's broader strategy of economic diversification and industrial self-sufficiency, ahead of the "Make it in the Emirates 2026" forum scheduled in Abu Dhabi.

Ata, H. (2026, April 26). *UAE launches Dh1 billion national fund to support vital industries*. Gulf News. Retrieved April 30, 2026, from <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/uae-launches-dh1-billion-national-fund-to-support-vital-industries-1.500519661>

### UAE Quits OPEC in a Pivotal Moment for the Oil Producing Group

On April 28, 2026, the United Arab Emirates announced its withdrawal from OPEC and OPEC+, effective May 1, marking one of the most significant shifts in the oil cartel's history. The UAE's energy ministry cited its "long-term strategic and economic vision" and a "comprehensive review" of its production policy as the rationale behind the decision. The move came as a surprise to markets, though analysts noted the UAE had been pushing back against OPEC production quotas for years, feeling constrained in its ability to monetise its full production capacity.

Experts at Capital Economics estimate the UAE could pump up to one million additional barrels per day, reaching approximately 4.5 million bpd, once disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz subside, as the ongoing Iran war has severely restricted energy flows through the waterway. Rystad analyst Jorge Leon warned that the departure would structurally weaken OPEC, as the UAE is one of the few members with significant spare capacity, a key lever through which the group exerts influence over global oil prices.

Beyond economics, regional politics played a role: relations between the UAE and Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, have grown increasingly strained in recent years. The exit was also described as a win for US President Trump, who has long pushed for higher oil production. The news coincided with BP reporting doubled profits in Q1 2026, driven by soaring energy prices linked to the Iran war.

Wearden, G. (2026, April 28). *UAE quits OPEC in 'pivotal moment' for oil producing group – as it happened*. The Guardian. Retrieved April 30, 2026, from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2026/apr/28/bp-profits-double-iran-war-oil-price-stock-markets-live-updates>