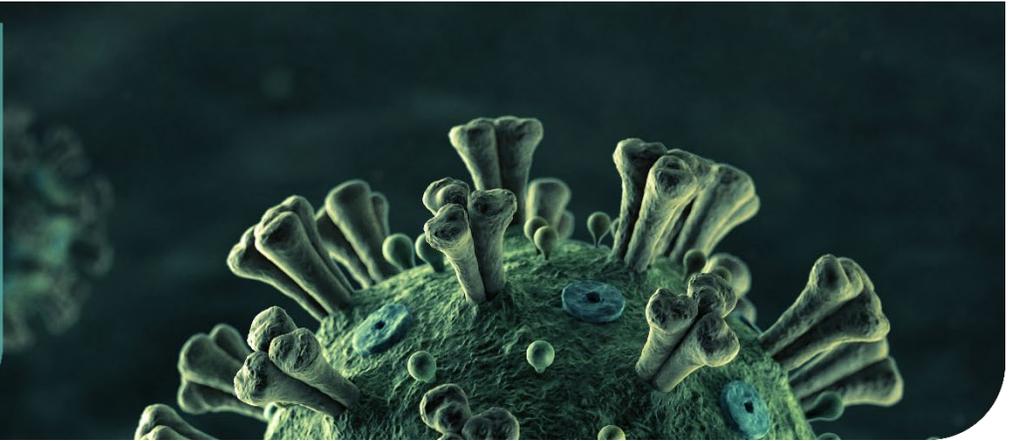


Employee Well-Being in Unprecedented Times



As the world responds to the coronavirus situation, fear and anxiety are escalating in the workplace. Making employee health and well-being a priority is important, but it must go beyond reiterating the importance of good hygiene or encouraging employees to work from home. During this challenging time, companies must take action to instill calm and reassure employees that they are committed to their overall health and well-being. Key steps to consider include:

Recommunicate all critical benefits and resources – At a minimum, make sure employees are aware of the benefits and resources available to them. Ideally, you have a platform or hub, accessible via mobile device that lists all benefits and company news, and has alert functionality so you can provide updates on important developments.

Provide a support HR hotline – Employees may be feeling anxious about coronavirus developments, trying to navigate their workday remotely, or feeling lonely, isolated, disconnected or unappreciated. A hotline provides an outlet for these feelings and an opportunity to reconnect with someone ready to listen. It is also important to consider promoting solutions where employees can ask for help with potential mental health challenges.

Revisit your telecommuting or remote workforce policies – Many companies are encouraging or requiring employees to work from home. Before you implement a new structure, make sure you have a clear telecommuting policy that covers temporary remote work arrangements.

Consider hosting virtual company events – Celebrations and town halls, as well as well-being challenges, can be a great way to keep employees focused on staying engaged, healthy and positive. And technology makes it easy to remain connected, especially when many employees are working remotely.

Take care of your managers and leaders so they can take care of others – Hundreds of books and articles suggest that managers and leaders have the most influence on the success of a business. So it's critical to focus specifically and intentionally on their well-being because they have unique needs and roles during challenging times. If your leaders feel supported and have the tools to help them succeed in a difficult environment, your workforce culture and well-being efforts have a greater likelihood of being successful. Consider the following:

- Clearly outline any new expectations for managers and ensure they have the tools, training and support to be successful.
- Have a feedback mechanism to check-in with managers and determine if additional – or different – tools and resources are needed.
- Encourage empathy that respects the concerns and perspectives of others and creates a path to resolutions that align with your company's values.



Consider increasing management feedback – In a 2019 survey (“Remote work: equipping business students for the working reality,” Roberta Sawatzky and Nathan J. Sawatzky), 72% of respondents stated that individual feedback from a supervisor was either critical, or at least very important, especially when workers are remote. Another 69% agreed that feedback from peers was also critical to their success. The channel for receiving feedback is also important, with 73% stating the most effective delivery channel from a supervisor is face-to-face (in-person or video). Approximately 25% of those also stated that receiving a written summary following the conversation was important. When receiving feedback from peers, 56% reported that face-to-face conversations (in-person and video) were preferred, while 32% were content with email or instant messaging communication.

Communicate respectfully – When people receive a text or email, they feel compelled to open it and reply. Setting guidelines that discourage sending emails outside of business hours (and define what urgent really means) shows a level of respect that employees appreciate. When circumstances require around-the-clock attention, acknowledge that those late night emails are an exception and express gratitude for the extra effort.

Proactively relieve pressure to overwork – In times of crisis, there is often more to do, in addition to the work already on everyone’s plate. The pressure to perform and contribute can be overwhelming and lead some to have feelings of guilt that they’re not doing enough. Encourage managers to proactively relieve this pressure by lessening the workload by involving more members of a team, helping employees prioritize, acknowledging that the intensity is temporary and going out of their way to express appreciation for the hard work.

Don’t forget about new hires, recent hires and first-time job employees – During a challenging time there is a tendency to rely more on people you know well. But don’t risk wasting all the hard work it takes to secure the best talent. Make sure people new to the organization feel supported and have an opportunity to contribute. Clarify existing norms and values, so they aren’t unintentionally defined by the current crisis. And provide extra outreach and communication as they navigate new territory.

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