

Employee Engagement and Support – March 24th, 7AM

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Description of issue: The disruption to employees' personal and professional lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies the importance of maintaining employee engagement and mental health.

General best practices:

- Create a separate internal communications crisis team
- Tailor communications channels and frequency to support remote work
- Create a sense of purpose and community for your entire workforce, being especially sensitive to critical employees who are required to continue to work on-site.
 - Critical personnel on-site: highlight the greater cause that their work is driving towards
 - Working from home: highlight that these individuals are supporting the greater cause, and by working remotely are helping stop the spread of COVID-19
- Balance important business and COVID-19 updates with engaging and supportive communications to maintain company culture and employee engagement. Communicate openly and regularly to employees what they need to do and how the business is managing through the crisis, including:
 - Ensure that the health and wellbeing of our employees is paramount
 - Keep employees updated and informed on decisions to ensure the least disruption to the business
- Help employees make decisions that are best for them by helping them navigate all the decisions the company is making (travel, time off, sick leave etc.)
- Outline behaviors to help prevent absenteeism and how to report issues/concerns
- Ensure leaders feel supported and recognized for their efforts – so that in turn they can actively support the workforce
- Solicit employee feedback on how to best support them and implement immediate solutions

CDC resources:

(General information about employee mental health can be found at the following site)

<https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/tools-resources/workplace-health/mental-health/index.html>

Detailed sample communication below:

Sample A: Email supporting primarily remote workers

To support our employees, we are focusing on communication and engagement throughout this difficult transition to remote work. We have created a virtual engagement calendar that has communication or activities scheduled for every day, including:

- Regular all-company phone calls with our CEO
- Regular video updates, live streams, and emails from senior leadership
- Regular email communication with updates on COVID-19 news and recommended safety precautions
- Recommended physical activity – instructions for physical activities such chair yoga that can be done from home
- Today is show off your space – encourage employees to share photographs of their home workspace with their team or to company message boards
- Show us your paws – post photos of your pets
- Work from home tunes—work from home themed online playlists for employees to download
- Work from home bingo – humorous bingo for common work from home challenges
- Newsletter – a daily, humorous, companywide newsletter with quick bits of information and funny cartoons, videos, stories
- Leader updates – monthly leader updates will now be weekly to ensure ongoing communications
- Virtual mental health – share resources to support mental health, including company-sponsored services and suggested activities
- A daily survey to employees to gauge their issues, concerns, and priorities

Sample B: regional healthcare system, daily email update

Operational Updates

- We are monitoring our supply inventories closely including masks, gowns, face-shields, wipes and all the products we need to keep you and our patients safe. Currently, we have enough supplies but, like all health systems, our concerns will rise as the number of positive cases rises. We are in constant communication with our suppliers and are continuing to take measures to extend the life of our supplies.
- For team members working remotely IT has prepared several tip sheets as we know there have been challenges with access to Skype and other applications.
- Share your ideas. Email [Covid19Team@HealthCare.com] to share your ideas to address COVID-19.

Clinical Updates

- Read today's COVID-19 Update with the latest clinical and non-clinical COVID-19 guidelines, updated infection control practices, new internal systems functionality and other need-to-know information. This information can always be found here on [internal website].
- Operating Rooms at [facility] are in the process of being closed. Patients with scheduled time-sensitive procedures and surgeries are being cared for at the nearest alternate facility.

Human Resource Updates

- We have several resources to provide to staff who are feeling additional stress during these unprecedented times and need support. Please take advantage of them as the health and well-being of our team members is very important.
- [Our philanthropic partner] is offering financial assistance of up to \$1,500 to eligible employees who can't afford necessities including food, clothing, childcare, and medical care during this critical period. You can apply at [internal website].

Please visit [internal website] for all the latest information and updates including COVID-19 past daily updates, policies, procedures and frequently asked questions. You can also continue to send your questions directly to us at [Covid19Team@HealthCare.com].

Sample c: Addressing employee burnout

The root causes of burnout most often lie with the workplace, not the individual. These issues can be averted if leadership focuses on prevention strategies, within the organization. We have to ask our people what would make work better for them. More generally, we need to better understand what causes people to feel motivated in our organizations, and what causes them frustration. Ask a series of questions of your organization:

- What is making my staff so unhealthy/unhappy?
- Why does our work environment lack the conditions for them to flourish?
- How can I make it safe for them to work here every day?

Researchers have found that what motivates us (motivation factors) versus what basic needs must be met in order to maintain job satisfaction (hygiene factors) are different and do not necessarily increase or decrease in the same ways. Motivation factors include: challenging work; recognition for one's achievements; responsibility; the opportunity to do something meaningful; involvement in decision making; and a sense of importance to the organization. On the other hand, hygiene factors include: salary; work conditions; company policy and administration; supervision; working relationships; status and security. Burnout is preventable. It requires good organizational hygiene, better data, asking more timely and relevant questions, and smarter (more micro) budgeting.

Leaders could save themselves a huge amount of employee stress and subsequent burnout, if they were to get better at asking people what they need. When investing in burnout prevention strategies, it's best to narrow the efforts down to small, micro-pilots, which mean a lower budget and less risk. Start with one or two departments or teams and asking one simple question: If we had this much budget, what would be the first priority? Have the team vote anonymously then share the data with

everyone. Discuss what was prioritized and why and start working down the list. Employees may not have the perfect solution, but they can most certainly tell us what isn't working — and that is often the most invaluable data. If surveying employees doesn't feel right, start by walking around. Some of the best data-gathering comes from management by wandering around. It's often easier to identify possible solutions to issues by witnessing them first-hand.

Adapted from: Harvard Business Review, "Burnout Is About Your Workplace, Not Your People"

Sample D: Potential additional benefits for hourly workers

As the novel coronavirus pandemic continues to sweep the country, major businesses are re-evaluating company policies to support hourly workers. Below is a snapshot of large national chain businesses that have announced changes to their policies in the wake of novel coronavirus.

Darden Restaurants

The company is providing paid sick leave for every one of its hourly team members who were not already covered by a policy. Sick leave will accrue at a rate of one hour for every 30 hours worked. Current team members have been granted a starting balance based on their most recent 26 weeks of work and can use this benefit immediately. New team members can accrue sick leave upon hire and can use it after 90 days of employment. Team members can carry over up to 40 hours each year with a maximum balance of 60 hours

Starbucks

The coffee chain announced a catastrophe pay solution for U.S. baristas who have been exposed to coronavirus. The financial support, which is different than existing sick pay, will be available to employees, regardless if they show symptoms, for up to 14 days. If an employee is unable to return to work after that time, Starbucks said it will offer additional pay replacement for as long as 26 weeks.

Walmart

The retailer is implementing an emergency leave policy for the company's hourly workers effective immediately. The Walmart Associates in Critical Need Trust, an independent charitable trust, temporarily waived the eligibility requirement that U.S. associates be employed with Walmart for 365 days before they can apply for a grant. If a facility is part of a mandated quarantine or if employees are required to quarantine by a government agency or by Walmart, employees will receive up to two weeks of pay, and absences will not count against attendance. If an employee who has been diagnosed or quarantined is unable to return to work after the determined amount of time, Walmart said additional pay replacement may be provided for up to 26 weeks for both full-time and part-time hourly associates.

Postmates

The gig-worker delivery service announced an "emergency fleet relief" fund to help cover medical expenses for its couriers, which will cover the costs of workers' doctor appointments and medical expenses.

Uber

The ride-sharing service urged its workers who are infected to self-isolate and the company will provide two weeks of compensation. Any driver or delivery person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is individually asked to self-isolate by a public health authority will receive financial assistance for up to 14 days.

Adapted from: ABC News, "[What companies are doing to protect vulnerable hourly workers amid coronavirus outbreak](#)"

Sample E: Supporting employees and business need

How can your company balance your business needs while supporting employees and contributing to the wider effort to reduce the outbreak's impact? Here are actions to consider:

- Keep all of your employees safe: Think critically about how your company can support contractors and gig workers who may currently be without sick leave and paid time-off.
- Listen to and learn from your peers: Look at what other companies are doing and consider taking actions such as thoughtful customer cancellation policies or providing free trials of products that could be beneficial during this time.
- Explore creative professional development solutions: Tap into online resources to help employees stay engaged and up-to-speed with the most relevant skills.
- Help your stakeholders help others: Give your employees and partners the opportunity to serve through coordinated online giving. Ask local community leaders how you can best help.
- Make a corporate grant: A corporate grant to a select nonprofit partner focused on an activity that your company values or in a community your company operates in has the potential to make a big impact.

Adapted from [7 ways to anchor your corporate coronavirus response in compassion](#)