

Mental Health and Well-Being



This is a very stressful and unprecedented time for most of us. While we are consumed by our daily jobs and the added challenges posed by COVID-19, we must also continue to focus on our employees and their well-being. Here are a few things to consider to ensure that your employees remain productive and healthy:

- **Have you communicated to your employees any updated healthcare policies related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)?** For example, to help employees worried about flu-like symptoms or exposure to COVID-19, many health care companies have waived out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing-related visits with in-network providers, whether at a doctor's office, urgent care clinic, or emergency room. Others have been tasked with providing easier access to screening, testing, telehealth services, and behavioral health support. By communicating these policy updates to your employees, you will help minimize their anxiety about added medical costs.
- **Have you encouraged your employees to exercise, eat well, and get enough sleep to help decrease the amount of stress they might be feeling?** Make up creative ways to take a "break" at work by stretching, exercising, or bringing in packaged healthy food options for those employees who still have to come into work. You can also reference the many excellent workout, mind-body practices and healthy food preparation links online for those who are working from home. Even though many consider the best way to get through this situation is to self-medicate with alcohol and caffeine, these things typically add to stress levels.
- **Are you providing as many facts as you can about the work environment, expectations, and your business situation?** Employees are going through a lot of change with school and business closings right now, so make sure that you help them through the change by being honest, transparent, and encouraging dialogue and offering support as they work through how these changes affect them.
- **Have you asked your employees for their input on solving your organization's business challenges?** The more you can get your employees to feel that they are included, listened to, and that they have a say in how to resolve things, the more motivated and committed they will be to you and your company. Employees often have a better grasp of how to work together to resolve issues than we can come up with on our own.
- **Have you identified "rainy day" items that you never seem to get to during the regular business operations that you can assign to your employees?** If your organization does not have enough work for all of your employees but is in a financial position to avoid layoffs, have you identified other ways for them to be productive during this time? These items may include improvement projects, cleaning or organizing a work area, or documenting processes. Of course, development opportunities and online learning for your employees will benefit the organization long-term.
- **Do you have an Employee Assistance Program?** Encourage your employees to talk to someone if they are struggling. Whether it is a licensed professional, an HR representative, or a trusted leader or a co-worker, be sure to offer support.
- **Do you have the materials and equipment available for employees to be able to work from home?** Ensure that employees have access to the information, materials, and equipment they need so that they don't feel isolated or cut off from the workplace. This is a technical issue that you may have to work with your IT team to resolve and provide adequate instructions for connectivity.
- **What is your plan for frequent, ongoing communications with employees working at home?** Making time to check in on employees, ask for their opinions, and encourage online chats between employees to increase connection can help employees still feel connected during this unusual time of social distancing and isolation. Communicate, communicate, and communicate!

As leaders, do whatever you can to support your employees and to let them know that you value them and the contributions that they are making to your team and your organization.



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