
COVID-19 & Your Workplace

What You Need to Know Today

Returning to Work: What All Leaders Need to Consider

April 24, 2020 | Kelly Keefe, President, ERC

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Welcome

- Kelly Keefe, President, ERC
- First female President in 98 years
- Been with ERC for 16 years
- People are an organization's most valuable asset



From ERC's NorthCoast 99 Data

“It would have been simple to take the easy road and play it safe. But the NC99 winners chose a very different path... seeing opportunity where others saw doom, implementing new ideas while others watched from the sidelines, staying positive in spite of an increasingly difficult environment. These organizations are showing us that the ongoing development of a great workplace is the ‘silver bullet’ for organizational success and Northeast Ohio’s regional economic success – both now and in the future.”

- NorthCoast 99 Winners Report, 2009

Today's Agenda

- Provide a safe workplace
- Manage employee fear and stress
- Contend with the sense of loss
- Instill a feeling of confidence
- Keep leaders and employees motivated

Where are we today?

Poll Questions

Provide a Safe Workplace

According to CDC guidance, you should ask three questions when deciding whether to reopen:

1. Are you in a community no longer requiring significant mitigation?
2. Will you be able to limit non-essential employees to those from the local geographic area?
3. Do you have protective measures for employees at higher risk (i.e. teleworking option, tasks that minimize contact)?

Provide a Safe Workplace

- Sanitize/clean/disinfect according to CDC guidelines – another great resource

Provide a Safe Workplace

- Leaders be Leaders
- Create policies
- Stick to your policies and enforce them
- Create a clean culture from day one

Provide a Safe Workplace

Reconfigure spaces as possible, and consider the following:

- Add partition between receptionist and others who directly interact
- Separate employees who work in adjacent cubicle spaces
- Remove every other chair in break areas and lunchrooms
- Add partitions to tables where employees congregate during breaks
- Require employees to walk in designated one-way lanes in hallways and corridors to avoid “head-on” pedestrian traffic
- Consult with landlord about converting communal restrooms to single-seat bathrooms to avoid close contact between users

Provide a Safe Workplace

Reconfigure spaces as possible, and consider the following:

- Try to avoid office-sharing and common spaces
- Utilize HVAC contractors to increase the number of air changes
- Arrange for food trucks or other food delivery services to serve employees outside, and separate them during lunch breaks
- Provide hand sanitizer stations outside each restroom and each door commonly touched or used
- Upgrade your teleconference equipment
- Arrange for pick-up and drop-off delivery of packages outside

Provide a Safe Workplace

Reconfigure schedules as possible, and consider the following:

- Stagger work schedules (M/W, T/TH, etc.)
- Stagger work hours, and create more shifts

Discuss travel guidelines:

- Is air travel expected?
- Are overnight trips expected?

Provide a Safe Workplace

Other items to consider:

- Shared coffee stations (creamers, mugs, etc.)
- Office refrigerators
- Greeting guests and each other with no handshaking or hugging
- Supply room
- Cleaning door handles, toilet handles, elevator buttons, keyboards, and light switches
- In addition to considering masks for employees, do they have access to their own cleaning supplies?

Provide a Safe Workplace

- Have a plan if employee tests positive (or suspected positive) for COVID-19
 - Infected employee needs to stay home
 - Send home employees who worked closely with infected employee for 14 days
 - Extra cleaning and disinfecting
- Notify employees while honoring privacy

Provide a Safe Workplace

Develop a Business Continuity Plan

- Take into account different locations, geographic considerations
- Create a crisis team or continuity team that can act when needed
- Get input from all departments (create a safety committee)
- What will trigger the plan
- Is communication clear (chain of command and key contacts)
- Department of Homeland Security offers template as starting point
- Predict consequences of business disruption (great resources available at (<https://www.ready.gov/business-impact-analysis>))

Manage Employee Fear and Stress

- Regular 1:1 and group communication (have a schedule)
- Express gratitude
- Show encouragement
- Be vulnerable
- Be yourself
- Offer relaxation, meditation, and breathing techniques
- Offer stress management webinars
- Create a buddy check-in system

Manage Employee Fear and Stress

- Make sure to have fun and a sense of humor when possible
- Establish internal wellness committee
- Provide choice: return to work or WFH (WFH option may be required by law)
- EAP, coach or even counselor
- Have psychologist as guest speaker or resource
- Mental health awareness days
- Forced work breaks and time for self-care

Manage Employee Fear and Stress

**Top leaders need someone to talk to also.
Find a coach, group or community!**

Contend with the Sense of Loss

- Meet employees where they are, and be okay with that
- Recognize many are processing COVID loss just like the 5 Stages of Grief
 - Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Despair, and Acceptance
- Help each other move through the process
- Some employees may start back to work and have a difficult time adjusting
- Be flexible

Instill a Feeling of Confidence

- Open, honest but encouraging conversation about the strength and reputation of the business
- If you have “the right people in the right seats,” share your appreciation for them regularly
- Be truthful
- Be decisive

Keep Your Employees Motivated

- This is personal to each individual—make it personal for staff
- Conduct pulse surveys and use the data
- Find out what matters to your direct reports
- Most people just want to feel supported, heard, and valued
- Offer many words that encourage

Other Tidbits

- Early retirement
- Intern programs
- PTO restructuring
- Check your Insurance Policies

“We can’t moan and lead at the same time!”
- John Maxwell

Thanks to Kevin Doherty, Senior Director of HR from Gebauer
Company for the quote on LinkedIn

We also can't beat pictures like this.

Local people.
Doing extraordinary things.

You, too, can do this.

