

Back to Work Pep Talk for your Optometric Practice

Optical Industry Re-Start

Many business owners have taken great pains to retain employees and keep them on the payroll during this difficult time, but as re-opening becomes more of a reality they are surprised at the lack of enthusiasm among their employees for getting back to work. Sometimes it is hard to accept that people may have a completely different perspective about returning to work. Especially after the great efforts you have made to make it possible for them to have a job to come back to. Business ownership is like parenting in that respect: you do so much that is not seen and appreciated, but you do it out of love and concern. And for now, that may be all you have, the peace of mind that you have done everything within your power to be responsible to your staff, your business, and your patients.

Let us examine why you may encounter some reluctance to get back to work and why its hard right now for people to see beyond their own pain. The highest goal now is to get everyone on board in as positive a frame of mind as possible. Understand that everyone, including yourself has been touched by COVID-19 in some way, possibly including:

- Fear of themselves or vulnerable loved ones becoming ill
- Changed circumstances at home
- Schools are no longer open, creating the instant need to learn to homeschool
- Daycare is no longer available, both public and family resources have become scarce
- Spouses are forced to continue to work in risk-laden environments
- They or their spouses may now work from home, with all the noise, distraction and confusion that involves
- Deaths have happened that cannot be properly grieved, no longer does the family get to visit dying relatives in the hospital or gather and mourn their losses
- Relationships are strained by separation or *lack* of being able to separate
- Budgets and nerves are stretched to the limit waiting for alphabet soup loans and government programs. Hearing sometimes over and over that “You did not fill this out right. You do not qualify for that.”

The same issues we are experiencing are present for our patients and the staff. You need to be prepared for people, patients, and staff, to be ultrasensitive. They may burst into tears or become angry for seemingly nothing. Frustration will run high, no one is immune to that.

We cannot fix any of these things, but we can be tolerant. We can be aware. We can treat everyone with kid gloves and ask the staff to do the same for each patient. Some of the ways to show kindness to patients:

- Introduce yourself, every staff member, every time, even if you are with them only briefly
- Explain your role in their visit
- Detail what you will be doing and why, including, but not limited to safety measures

Kindness measures for staff members:

- Be sure every staff member gets adequate breaks
- Consider having healthy snacks available
- Schedule one on one meetings to check in on how they are doing

These very small gestures and courtesies have always been important but will be appreciated even more now.

Lifestyle questions take on a whole new meaning now as well. How are you? Have you been working or going back to work soon? What is your work environment like? What challenges do you see for your work environment? What needs are you experiencing now or expect to be experiencing in the near future? Reassure them that you have solutions and will be mindful of their unique circumstances.

What is your Why? Why did you take the risks, which are more daunting than ever, to reopen your small business? Why have your employees returned to work? Why are people, who took routine eyecare for granted several weeks ago pushing past fear and anxiety to be there, in your office?

Because the benefits still outweigh the risks involved with owning your own practice. Employees still have rent to pay, groceries to buy and dreams to save for. Our patients still need routine eye care and quality products.

We will all continue to carry on. Bruised? Yes. A little less complacent? Yes. A little more compassionate? Yes, I truly hope so.

“In the end only kindness matters”

Jewel



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