



# Workplace Safety, Health and Labor Shortage Issues in the Age of Covid-19

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# Workplace Safety, Health and Labor Shortage Issues in the Age of Covid-19

7 Front Line Challenges from the outbreak and how companies are addressing them

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended global supply chains and disrupted operations in almost every major country on the planet. Companies with limited cash runway need processes in place that ensure worker safety and availability. The pandemic has exposed the fatal flaw in these labor-intensive companies - their workers are not truly connected.

Archaic, paper-based systems on factory and shop floors cannot be replicated remotely. While white collar workers have transitioned relatively seamlessly into a work-from-model during the quarantine, companies with frontline workers are struggling. They lack the tools to communicate, coordinate and monitor with the speed and ability needed to provide remote guidance and support to their workers.

## The result?

A massive operational challenge that is impacting millions of companies. There are 2.9 billion frontline workers globally, many of them using paper-based systems that cannot adapt to our new reality. Our critical infrastructure - food, energy, transportation, retail, and distribution - cannot stay home. They must produce the food and power that keeps the rest of us safe.

These businesses are struggling to answer questions they never thought they'd face:



How do we open with 10% or higher absenteeism?



How will we source new workers? Train them? Coordinate them remotely?



What do we do when employees cannot travel, cutting off plants from one another?



There are no easy answers.

Companies are implementing checkpoints at the employee and visitor gates. Some are measuring temperature and then providing the employee or guest with a daily pass as a way to control and monitor their health. They hope this will curve the infection rate by tracing and containing people with symptoms, but the process is extremely ineffective, time-consuming and it lacks data acquisition and automation.

Andonix, through its Smart Work Station software solution, is enabling industrial organizations to navigate these uncertain times. Through Smart Work Station companies are able to cross train workers at record speed, implement health monitoring and monitor workplace deep cleanings to keep workers safe, and fast track communication.

In this guide, we've gathered 7 of the most pressing front line challenges we're hearing from our partners and customers, and how they're being addressed through policy and technology.



## Challenge:

# Extreme Absenteeism and Rotation

Organizations can expect to see absenteeism rates increase dramatically in the weeks and months to come due to illness, potential exposure to those who are ill, or self-quarantine.

While we don't know the exact rates of absenteeism due to the virus yet, we can look to Europe for an example of what could come, with sick or exposed workers leading to substantial issues, including closures of plants.

## Solution:

# Digitize and Fast Track Training and Cross-Training

The best way to be prepared for a spike in illness and absenteeism is to ensure more of your workers are fully trained to rotate between stations as needed. The best way to do so is with a combination of e-learning on mobile devices and microlearning that delivers only the most vital and necessary information as needed.

Microlearning in particular has been scientifically proven to drastically improve knowledge retention and enable workers to more quickly rotate between stations as needed. It's equally important that companies ensure worker safety in these challenging times. At the risk of losing employees in one of the toughest situations many companies will ever see, it's vital to have systems in place to ensure safety on the front line. Cross-training plays an important role in finding alternative labor sources as massive amounts of workers are being mobilized to retail and distribution. By monitoring checkin and training digitally in real-time, companies can implement predictive staffing plans in partnership with staffing companies, keeping them ahead of their needs.

## Challenge:

# Effectively Monitoring and Containing Suspected Cases of Infection

It's every plant manager's greatest fear right now - the disruption and potentially harmful impact on employees that a positive test can have. Do you know who was exposed to the virus? If you have to quarantine a group of people you may benefit from quarantining only the people in close proximity to the subject otherwise you may have to send the entire shift home. Plants across industries in Europe, Asia, and North America have shut down at an increasing speed as workers start to test positive for the virus.

For many organizations, the lack of monitoring makes a shutdown necessary. Having to shutdown the entire plant, clean it, and leave it idle for extended periods of time whenever a positive test occurs can be devastating, especially for small businesses.

## Solution:

# Worker Traceability with Geolocation and Time Stamp

Technology can help identify accurate traceability to exposed individuals, notify related people and minimize impact due to an imposed quarantine.

This starts right at the gate and includes visitors. Once connected, workers are monitored relative to their workflows and proximity to other workers. A safe physical separation is observed. If an employee is found to be ill, they can safely and carefully be removed from the work environment, and the software will report all employees the infected individual came into contact with, based on Andonix's geolocating algorithms. Those employees can be notified, tested, and quarantined without putting other employees at risk.

Companies need the resources and tools in place to follow CDC guidelines and implement employee health and safety compliance policies. This includes site access policies and procedures and redesign of workstations to meet social distancing guidelines.

## Challenge:

# Safety and Quality Fallout Due to High Rotation and Absenteeism

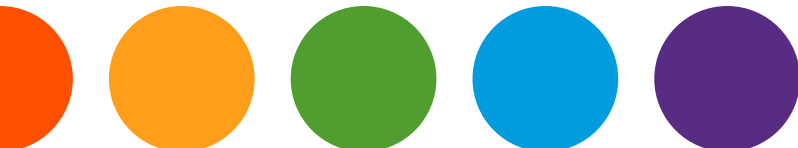
No matter how good your cross-training, there will be an increase in risk due to rotation and a generally smaller workforce completing comparable work. From a safety perspective, you have employees on unfamiliar stations who are rapidly familiarizing themselves with new procedures. In terms of quality, there are dozens of new potential disruptions that can occur, from less experience on the floor to acceleration of work with less quality review.

## Solution:

# Digital Tracking of Training and Skills for Optimal Job Pairing

eLearning allows you to more efficiently prepare people to rotate between job stations, but it doesn't necessarily mean everyone is perfectly matched to their strengths. Increased traceability is vital during a period of high turnover. It allows you to digitally track and record employee training to quickly identify the best job pairing and adjust efforts accordingly. Increased traceability is also achieved through digital workflows and checklists that companies can use to capture key quality data as goods are produced - this information can be accessed at any time.

A Digital Andon Cord can play an important role in supporting your employees at this stage as well. For new employees especially, things will be fast paced. Providing them with a help button via Andon Cord is a great way to manage exceptions in real-time when there are process failures or interruptions.



## Challenge:

# Most Front Line Workers Don't Have Email Accounts

Without a dedicated email address, the only way to update a large and distributed workforce is over the phone, which simply doesn't scale. Simply establishing bidirectional communication poses a challenge. Companies struggle to provide official updates. Front line workers lack an easy way to ask for direction and support. Wellness updates are even more difficult, and it becomes easy to lose track of workers or their sickness and quarantine times.

## Solution:

# Connect Your Front Line with Social Media-Like Solutions and Establish a Bi-Directional Communication Channel

Digital Andon Cord works seamlessly on existing mobile devices, without the need for a separate email address that most front line workers do not have. This keeps workers and staff in communication at all times, allowing the sharing of information in real-time, and reducing the risk of messages being missed in the mix.

Device cleanliness is another major issue that can be addressed with a bring your own device (BYOD) policy. This not only ensures germs are spread unnecessarily between users and devices, but allows for faster onboarding. Similarly, devices like smart glasses are a major issue due to how difficult they are to clean.



## Challenge:

# Front Line Centers Need to be Disinfected Regularly to Avoid Contamination

One of the single most important things businesses that remain open have been asked to do is to clean thoroughly and disinfect regularly. For front line centers, this can be especially challenging, requiring not only additional resources to keep things clean, but a system by which to track and validate the cleaning process.

## Solution:

# Implement a Digital Checklist to Track Validation and Verification of Cleaning

A real-time assessment solution that can track both infected and disinfected areas can help to keep things streamlined as much as possible. A digital checklist can be centrally updated when there is a change in policy or CDC recommendations, and the results can be audited from a single location to ensure the procedures are being followed properly. Checklists allow for verification that the disinfection was done properly - especially when most companies have these procedures subcontracted or outsourced.

Touching of surfaces should be minimized as much as possible. Bring your own device policies are increasingly being implemented as the safest and most manageable processes for this reason.

## Challenge:

# Operations Support Staff Cannot Perform On-Site Functions

One of the most disruptive changes organizations currently face is the implementation of work-from-home-orders and the closing of state and international borders. Operations support staff in equipment maintenance, machine controls, process audits, and compliance audits are unable to physically travel, and cannot perform on-site or face-to-face functions at factories. This can have a direct impact on operations continuity, safety and quality.

## Solution:

# Empower and Direct Local Front Line Staff with a Digital Checklist

Guide your front line staff with step-by-step digital checklists to audit, verify and correct situations remotely with expert support. Using a digital checklist, it's possible for off-site experts to provide remote guidance and verification digitally.

In many cases, these experts are the only ones qualified and certified to perform certain tasks and they travel frequently to complete these functions. Remote guidance and verification for the outbreak amidst travel bans that have closed the borders both interstate and international, will be a persistent challenge for months to come.



## Challenge:

# Supervisors and Managers Being Quarantined if Presenting Symptoms

Working remotely shouldn't eliminate your ability to keep the business going. Of course health and well-being must always come first, but in addition to the time it takes to recover, those who are diagnosed with coronavirus are also being asked to remain quarantined for up to three weeks after they present no symptoms. For supervisors, this means more than a month off the floor. Being able to remotely supervise teams, communicate, coordinate, and follow up is imperative.

Extreme rotation and absenteeism may also impact middle management as their availability to communicate, coordinate and follow up is hindered. It will become important to eliminate time and space constraints and enable your supervisors to follow up with twice as many associates as they used to manage.

## Solution:

# Digital Andon Cord and Automation Keep Workers and Supervisors Connected

Smart Work Station enables remote guidance and supervision without time and space constraints. Using the built-in Digital Andon Cord technology to connect supervisors with employees regardless of distance, teams can overcome the challenges of a prolonged quarantine without losing valuable insights needed on the floor.

# Responding to the New Reality of Coronavirus

No one knows how long this situation will last or how much of an impact it will have on individual businesses or the economy as a whole. What we do know is that technology is available to tackle these challenges and enable work across barriers.

The impact of Coronavirus, and the new reality of work once the pandemic passes necessitate a new approach to front line work. An emergency response plan for your front line workforce is needed now.

Smart Work Station addresses issues related to high absenteeism, geolocation tracing to identify who was exposed for quarantine, checklists for managing disinfection of work stations, and support for staff who cannot be on site due to social distancing rules.

The safety and well-being of your employees is the most important factor when planning for how to address the impact of the outbreak.

To help support frontline workers, for a limited time, Andonix is providing our platform free of charge to any business to help them run their teams remotely during the crisis.

**Signup Now For Our Free Remote Worker Platform**

[Request a Demo](#)







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