WORKPLACE **OPTIONS**

Leading Teams in a COVID-19 World

A Guide for Managers

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WORKPLACE **OPTIONS**

Introduction

In one sense everyone has been in this together: COVID-19 is a worldwide pandemic. But in another, each individual has had to chart their own course.

The world has changed dramatically in 2020 as COVID-19 has emerged and spread across the globe. Governments and public health agencies have mandated measures, including selective business closures. Organizations have responded by shutting down, ramping up, cutting back, going virtual—doing whatever has been needed to adapt to fast-changing business and societal needs while trying to keep employees, customers, and communities safe from infection.

Each country, state, community, and organization has had to find the "right" path to steer between responsible control of contagion and addressing economic and social needs.

As a manager, you've been in the middle of it all. Your organization relies on you to make its rapidly changing strategy a reality, to implement new work practices, to motivate your employees to do their best in what can be a scary and confusing environment. And your employees look to you as the representative of your organization. They come to you with their unique needs, concerns, and challenges, many of which, these days, you may never have encountered before nor know how to address.

Responding to this pandemic has not been a lockstep or one-size-fits-all process, with clear guidance that's easy to explain and act on. You've probably been working in a gray area where judgment calls are constantly needed as you, your team, and your organization adapt to new realities.

You may have had to scramble to get people the tools and training to work virtually for the first time, or to follow safe work practices when connecting remotely isn't an option. Customers may be coming to you with requests you had not anticipated.

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Introduction
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Managers around the world are supporting workers who are

- working with children at home because child care or school has shut down
- at special health risk from COVID-19, or who live in households with others who are vulnerable
- experiencing illness, loss, and trauma, with impacts on their work

It's always a challenge for managers to lead through change and to engage and motivate teams of diverse individuals. It's even more of a challenge now with the huge and rapid changes in work practices and customer needs, the emotional storms this pandemic has unleashed, the massive job losses around the world, and the wildly different reactions to events that may be felt by different members of your team.

This guide offers ideas and best practices for leading in this time of uncertainty, based on what's known about effective management, what's been learned from other disruptive or traumatic events, and the information that's emerging about the range of emotional reactions and practical needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Step 1:

Understand your organization's plans

Step 1: Understand your organization's plans

As the pandemic situation changes over time, your organization's operating plans and priorities are also likely to change. That might involve bringing people who have been working virtually back to work in company facilities or back to in-person interactions with customers. It might go the other way, too, finding ways for additional employees to work from home or extending furloughs or workplace closures. It will likely involve measures to keep employees safe from infection when more of them resume work together in person—changes in behavior, sanitation, and spacing in the workplace. Those strategies around who works where could change from week to week, and even from day to day.

Your role as a manager in this time of rapid workplace change is to understand the directions of your organization's leaders so that you can translate them into actions for your team. You'll need to understand what discretion you have in deciding where and when people do their work. You'll need to communicate clearly, honestly, and often with your team, and allow for an appropriate level of discussion and questioning to make sure everyone understands what is expected of them.

In order to answer the questions your employees are likely to have, you'll need to gain a solid understanding of your organization's plans yourself, especially the steps that will be taken to balance the safety of employees with the need for productive output. At the end of this guide, you'll find a checklist of the kinds of measures your organization might take to balance employee health and productivity, such as

- limiting the number of people who come into the workplace
- spacing within the workplace
- using tests or temperature checks to screen employees for COVID-19
- steps that will be taken when an employee tests positive for COVID-19

While detailed, the list at the end of this guide is not comprehensive. The measures taken will, of necessity, be different for different types of organizations and for people in different roles within an organization. Some of these steps may be taken to comply with government and public health guidelines or mandates, and some at the discretion of your organization to keep workers safe. It is offered here to give you an idea of the measures your organization might be taking or planning and that your employees might ask you about.

The more informed you are about how your organization is working to keep employees safe from COVID-19, the more helpful, credible, and trustworthy you are likely to be in the eyes of your team members. And that is critical for giving them the confidence to move forward.

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Step 2:

Adapt your organization's directives for your team

As you are alerted to changes in your organization's workforce strategy in different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, and before you communicate specific directives to your team, think carefully about where you have flexibility in implementing that strategy, especially when it comes to where and when the work gets done.

You've probably already done this in deciding who you have asked to come into the workplace, who you have authorized to work from home, and how you have made staffing changes to manage increases or decreases in the workload. In the months ahead, you'll need to keep making those kinds of decisions.

As you weigh these decisions, consider what you have learned from earlier phases of your organization's and your team's responses to the pandemic:

- What work can be handled efficiently and productively by employees working from home?
- What work can get done if only some of the people are present in the workplace?
- How have social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and disinfection measures at work reassured employees and protected them from infection?

Based on what you've learned so far, think about how you might build on what's working now as you begin the next phase of your organization's plans:

- How might your team do their work differently if only some of the people are present in the workplace?
- How will you handle ongoing communication and meetings if only some of the people are present in the workplace?
- How will you plan work schedules so that employees can maintain social distance in the workplace?
- How will you factor job roles, health vulnerabilities, parenting responsibilities, and other personal issues and priorities in deciding who will come into the workplace and who will work from home?

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Step 2: Adapt your organization's directives for your team
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- Who will you ask or require to come into the workplace in the next phase of pandemic response? And, for what days and hours?
- How will you convince employees that your staffing plans are fair and reasonable? Will you solicit ideas and suggestions from employees to strengthen their buy-in to your plans? Or, will you make those decisions yourself and commit to reviewing them periodically and making adjustments based on the team's input?

You are responsible for leading your people through these changes

The role of a manager is complex. You wear many hats. You are a leader. You are a motivator for your team and a compassionate counselor to team members. You may also be a compliance officer or production manager. You probably wear other hats as well.

Your organization's high-level strategy offers you guidance in this challenging time. But you have the authority and the responsibility to implement that strategy in ways that balance what may be conflicting goals—for profits or productivity on one hand, and personal or public health on the other.

What is the right approach for one department might not be right for another. And what makes sense for an employee in one role might not make sense for an employee in a different role.

You also have the responsibility to communicate and explain the organization's plans and the more specific plans for your team to your direct reports. In doing that, you're almost certain to be faced with widely different emotional reactions.

Human responses to change

It's important to understand that employees are still processing a variety of emotions triggered by experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Forced social isolation, cancellation of meaningful events, fear for personal health and the health of loved ones, financial anxiety, and grief over deaths are just a few of the factors that may be affecting your employees' emotional wellbeing. Some employees may have found new joy in the extra time with family and may be dreading a return to a commuting schedule.

When you announce changes in your team's work, such as a return to in-person work, your news could intensify the emotions employees are feeling, prompting strong reactions. Some may be happy with the changes while others may react with anger, sadness, or anxiety. Practical considerations will affect emotional reactions, too. Families with children may not be able to work as they did before, with schools and child care closed.

That mix of emotions can lead to tension and friction on your team, as people who are emotionally brittle react to each other with tears, angry outbursts, or withdrawal.

Step 2: Adapt your organization's directives for your team
(Continued)

Leading any change is hard. It's normal for people to respond to change with denial and resistance at first. Leading change in a COVID-19 world could be especially challenging, given the emotional environment.

Your goal as a leader will be to help your team acknowledge and recognize the need for change. You will be the face of your organization to the people you manage and will need to inspire trust by showing that you are well-informed about company policy and disease prevention, that you care about your employees' health, and that you understand the different needs and priorities among individuals on your team.

Step 3:

Communicate to build trust

No matter how good a job your organization's leaders are doing at communicating with employees through the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, your people also need to hear from you and feel that you are hearing them. When organization-wide announcements are made of changes that affect employees' work, you need to follow those quickly with communications of your own and with calls or meetings at which your team can ask you questions. Your people will want to know what the changes mean for each of them.

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Step 3: Communicate to build trust
(Continued)

Too little communication leaves an information vacuum that people tend to fill with speculation, rumor, and fear. This is a time for extra communication: more frequent, with more detail, and with more opportunities for questions and discussion.

How you handle that communication will be key to whether your people feel comfortable in following the plan and whether they are motivated to give their best work. A big part of their reaction—and how they behave moving forward—will be based on their level of trust in the organization and in you.

How can you build that trust as a manager? By communicating clearly, honestly, and often, and by taking the time to listen to your employees' concerns. If your team members believe that you and the organization care about them as people, that you understand their work and personal needs, they are more likely to follow and give their full energy, focus, and creativity to their work. If, on the other hand, they feel that their needs—especially their health needs during the pandemic—

aren't understood or respected, they may withdraw into feelings of resentment, follow directives only reluctantly, or even consider finding other work.

Here are some ways to communicate and listen to build trust and engagement:

Communicate often. In times of rapid change and disruption, your team needs to hear from you often. Share relevant email and posted updates from the organization as they come to you. Your team may also need more frequent opportunities to discuss issues and plans together.

Stay connected with your team. Consider a schedule that includes regular check-ins for individuals and the team, including those working remotely and those who are in the workplace. Use the check-ins both to communicate casually (one human being to another) and to maintain focus on work objectives. Consider building extra time in meetings for social interactions if the team is no longer together in person. You might even schedule a weekly time just for catching up with each other, with a rule that work discussion is off limits on these calls or video conferences.

Ask, don't assume. Ask about the best times for check-ins and meetings; don't assume what works for you will work for each of your employees. Those with children at home may have new schedule constraints, for example. Ask how employees are doing; don't assume everything is fine. Ask how the technology you are using for meetings is working. Ask whether people understand new directives and priorities. When you ask, pause to give people time to think and respond, then listen carefully to what they say.

Step 3: Communicate to build trust

Frame your communication with positive messages. Even when delivering tough news, share the facts, then shine a light on the positive and hopeful aspects of the situation.

- Choose words that inspire confidence and don't amplify fears—while maintaining honesty and openness.
- Keep yourself and your team focused on the present—the reality of the situation as you know it today, and what you and your team can do to make things better. Model the idea that "today we can do better."
- Remind your team to focus on what they control. It's draining and unproductive for people to worry about what they can't control.
- Encourage a problem-solving approach on your team. Ask for ideas on different ways to get the work done. Explore cross-training opportunities to build more flexibility as to who is able to do needed work at home and in the workplace.
- Demonstrate a calm, thoughtful, open-minded, problem-solving approach yourself.
- Discuss with your team what you are all learning from the changes you are going through: which new work practices

are effective and might be built on for further improvement; what you are learning about each other.

- Share successes and review accomplishments with your team to keep spirits up.

Anticipate questions employees will ask and be prepared with answers. If changes are being made to where, when, and how employees are to do their work, your team members are likely to have questions about

- safety protocols
- what training is available on safety protocols and new work practices
- what steps will be taken if an employee tests positive for COVID-19
- how decisions are being made about who comes into the workplace and when
- what to expect when coming back to the workplace for the first time after a period of not working or working from home
- whether attendance in the workplace is a request or a requirement, and the consequences of choosing not to come in
- how specific needs will be considered, such as lack of child care or high health risk

Step 3: Communicate to build trust
(Continued)

Demonstrate your strong and caring leadership by being ready with answers to easily anticipated questions like these. Study your organization's directives, ask questions of your manager and human resources (HR) representative to be clear on where you have leeway to make decisions and be flexible, and be clear in your own mind about how you will apply new work rules and guidelines fairly and with the safety of your people—and their families—as a driving priority.

**Be compassionate, honest, and open.**

- Show your compassion by being genuine in your communication and by demonstrating that you care about your employees' wellbeing.

- Listen more than you talk so that employees know that they are heard and so that you learn what they are experiencing and thinking. As a sign of active listening, summarize what you are hearing from employees during your discussion and ask for confirmation that you have understood. Ask open-ended questions to get people talking, and make an effort to draw out team members who are holding back.

- Share what you know, even if it's only partial information. In a rapidly changing situation like a pandemic, even experts don't have all the answers yet. Your organization's leaders and you will need to make decisions based on the information you have. The more information your team has, the more confident they will feel in moving forward.

- Be clear about your expectations. Goals and work practices may have changed dramatically. Make sure employees understand what you want from them and how you expect them to work together.

- Avoid jargon. Employees have an extra need now for meaningful communication and will not respond well to catch phrases that don't address their concerns.

- Don't be afraid to admit you don't know the answer to a question. When that happens, say that you don't know and commit to following up. In some cases, that might be by finding the answer from someone else in your organization. In other cases, it might be by finding out where the employee can get the answer.

- Build a culture of trust on your team by making it a safe place to express emotions and process reactions to changes and new information together.

Model emotional maturity. Employees look to their manager as a role model for how to react to changes at work or in crisis situations. If you appear anxious, they will feel and echo that anxiety. The most effective approach is to acknowledge when a situation is difficult and may cause stress, but show confidence that it can be handled and overcome. This mature attitude from a leader can help employees meet challenges successfully.

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Step 4:

Respond to emotional reactions
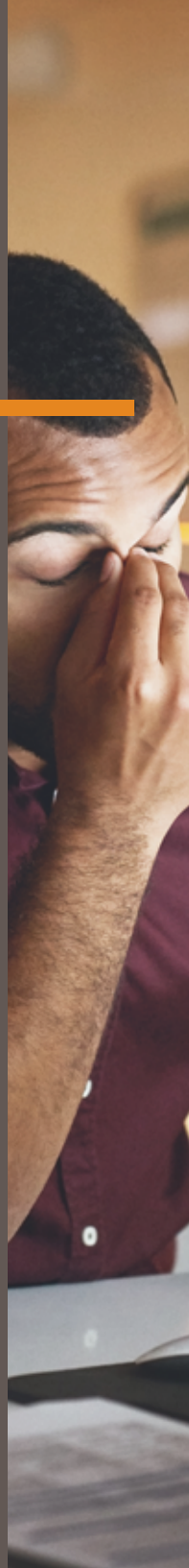
Levels of fear and anxiety are high around the world with the pandemic, and they are likely to be affecting your team.

Emotional reactions among the people you manage or work with might be intensified by

- fear of dying from COVID-19
- fear of bringing COVID-19 home to vulnerable family members
- reluctance to give up the positive aspects of work from home, including fewer interruptions, no commute, and the opportunity for more quality time with family
- sadness or depression as a result of social isolation
- eagerness to resume "normal" work
- irritation or anger at those who are fearful of returning to in-person work or reluctant to return for quality-of-life reasons
- grief, trauma, and fear in response to job losses among coworkers, friends, or family members
- grief and trauma in response to deaths in the family or among friends or coworkers
- trauma from exposure to widespread death and suffering or from being put in a position to make difficult moral choices, especially among health care workers and first responders (these workers are also at higher risk to experience post-traumatic stress reactions in the future)

Step 4: Respond to emotional reactions

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Listen and watch for signs of emotional distress

As you work with the members of your team, be alert to signs of emotional distress. Your role is not to be a therapist or solve the employee's problem but rather to be alert to signs of emotional distress, offer reassurance, and gently get people to the support they need.

If you are not working together in person, be sure, in your one-on-one calls with employees, to ask how they are doing, then listen to what they say and pay attention to emotional cues. Some employees may choose unhealthy ways to deal with emotional distress, including substance abuse.

Watch for changes in behavior, too—signs of depression or substance abuse include
- attendance problems
- errors and inconsistent work quality
- reduced ability to focus on work
- mood swings
- crying
- withdrawal from coworkers
- sleepiness or fatigue
- less care of personal appearance

Those signs, plus actions like giving away personal belongings, statements like "the world would be better without me," or expressions of hopelessness, can also be indications of suicidal risk.

When you hear or notice signs of emotional distress, be prepared to offer appropriate comfort and guidance:
- Offer sympathy and encourage the employee to share how they are feeling. Let the employee know that you care and want to hear what they are going through, but don't try to solve their emotional problems yourself.
- Normalize the emotional response, with statements like, "It's natural to feel that way."
- Encourage the employee to practice self-care, with healthy eating, activity, and sleep habits.
- Remind them of the help available to them through the employee support program. Describe the ways the program can help and its confidentiality. Explain that the employee does not need to tell you what is causing the problem, and the information they share with the program specialist will not get back to you or anyone in the organization. (The only exception to this confidentiality is when an employee is at risk of harming themselves or others, in which case information may be shared with you, as the manager, or the HR department for safety reasons.)
- If you suspect suicidal risk, engage with the employee, and mobilize a response. Seek help from your HR department and contact the employee support program to speak with a Manager Assist specialist. Alert your manager. With the employee's consent, call the employee support program on their behalf, your community's crisis intervention, or suicide prevention helpline. In an urgent situation, call 911.

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Step 4: Respond to emotional reactions

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- If you suspect a substance use problem and it is affecting work performance, your HR representative or a Manager Assist specialist can help you plan for a performance-management conversation at which you suggest the employee seek help.
- If you suspect an employee is a victim of domestic abuse (a danger that can be intensified with stay-at-home orders), seek help from your HR representative or a Manager Assist specialist. Care must be taken to find a way for the employee to seek help without increasing the risk of harm.
- For less critical emotional issues, understand what options you have to offer the employee, such as time off from work or more flexibility in when and where they do their work.
- Follow up with the employee to see that they are getting help.

Handling emotional reactions in team settings

If emotional expressions threaten to overwhelm a team meeting, acknowledge that it's natural to have emotional reactions to the pandemic and the changes being asked of employees. If you have important work changes to review, ask that people hold their emotional reactions for the moment until you get through those. Then use your judgment as to whether to take time together to air those reactions or instead to follow up with individual employees.

In an appropriate way, you might share some of your own emotional reactions to the situations and changes you and your team have experienced—then step back and listen. The point of this is not to dominate the conversation with your own feelings, but to validate and normalize the emotions others may be feeling and encourage them to share what they are experiencing and thinking.

Handling conflict on the team

The emotions stirred up by the pandemic and associated work changes may lead to more conflict than usual on your team. As with any instance of conflict on your team, don't ignore it and hope it will go away. Address it quickly to prevent escalation and head off its productivity- and morale-damaging effects on your team.

In most cases, it's best if you remain neutral, without taking sides, and ask questions to understand what the conflict is about. Encourage the employees to work it out by themselves by listening to and understanding each other's point of view. You might offer coaching on how to do that.

You can't allow the conflict to continue and grow into a situation where employees snub each other and stop talking or become overly emotional when dealing with each other. At that point, the conflict becomes a performance issue for the team, and you'll need to play a more active role as a mediator. For assistance, check with your HR representative or a Manager Assist specialist.

Step 5:

Pay attention to your own energy and emotions

You are likely to be as affected by the pandemic and work changes as your employees—possibly more so, as you strive to manage your emotions and lead with a positive approach. You need energy and stamina to do that well, so it's important to pay attention to your own needs:

- Attend to your health. Exercise regularly. Eat a healthy diet. Get the sleep you need.

- Pay attention to your emotions. Recognize the physical signs of stress before they reveal themselves in unhelpful behavior or emotional reactions, such as anger or withdrawal.

- Take breaks to recharge—short breaks during the workday to pause and relax and breaks before and after work to calm yourself. Listen to soothing music. Meditate or use calming breathing techniques. Take a walk if you can, or exercise to regain focus.

- Maintain social connections. Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. Connect with friends by phone or video if you can't be together in person.

- Reach out for support after a difficult decision, conversation, or situation. Talk with a trusted coworker or friend, your manager, an HR representative, or a Manager Assist specialist.
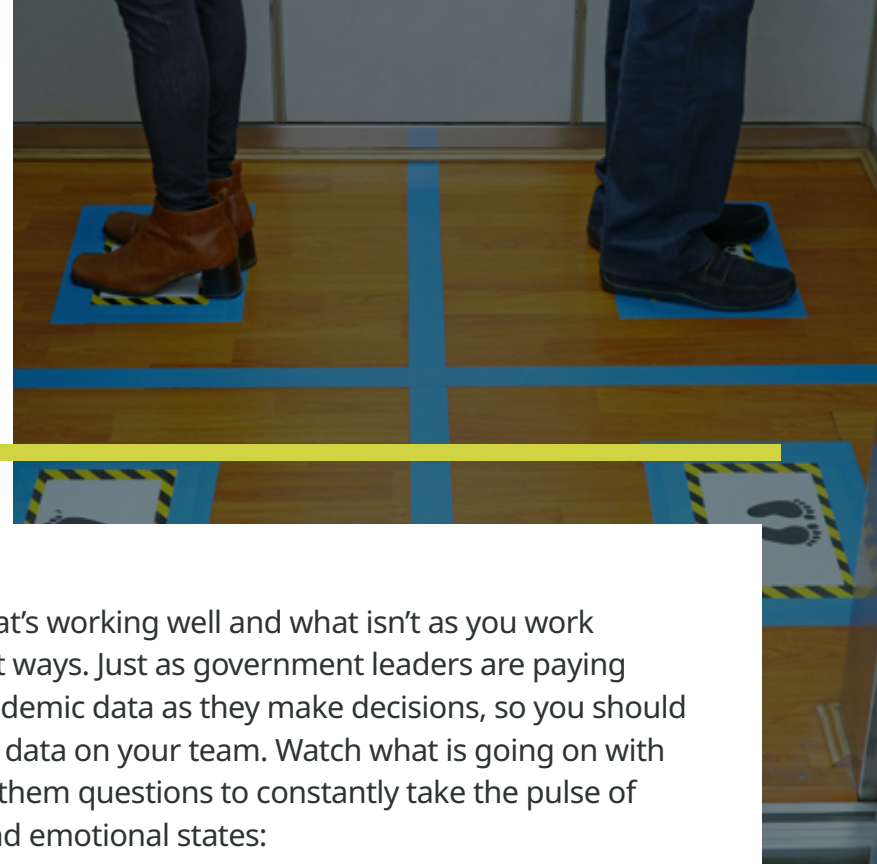
Step 6:

Continue to adapt

Working through a pandemic is a new experience for all organizations, and for all employees and managers. The coronavirus itself is an unpredictable player in the plans being made by governments and organizations, as are the economic effects of those responses. You see that in the changing recommendations from public health experts and government leaders. You probably see it in the changing directives from your organization's leaders. On a smaller scale, you, too, as a manager, will need to continually adjust how you and your team work together and what the priorities for your work should be.

Pay attention to what's working well and what isn't as you work together in different ways. Just as government leaders are paying attention to the pandemic data as they make decisions, so you should pay attention to the data on your team. Watch what is going on with your team, and ask them questions to constantly take the pulse of their productivity and emotional states:

- Are certain types of work more productively done from home or in the workplace?
- How has the response to the pandemic shifted workloads on the team? And, are they fairly distributed?
- Has cross-training been helpful? And, are there opportunities to do more of that?
- How are employees handling changes in work hours that may be required for social distancing in the workplace?
- Do you have any long-term, virtual workers on the team who could share best practices for communication?
- When you have had a particularly good or bad meeting, what went right or wrong? What can you learn from that for future meetings?

Step 6: Continue to adapt

(Continued)

- If members of your team are showing signs of stress or worrisome emotional reactions, what can you do to steer them to help? Is there anything about the work that you could change to help them?

- How has collaborative work been affected when working within the team and with other departments? How might you need to intercede to improve workflow and timelines?

Based on what you observe and hear from your people, continue to adjust the ways you work together. Be open to creative ideas for working in different ways and addressing new customer needs.

When you have promising new ideas, or when you identify an obstacle that needs to be cleared at a higher level, share your insights with your manager and others in a position to make those changes for broad effect.

Become a key part of your organization's efforts to steer through this crisis and come out stronger on the other side. The ideas you and your team come up with could lead to changes that have a lasting impact on your work and your organization, even after the risk and disruption from the pandemic has passed.

Ask for help

As you encounter challenging situations as a manager, don't be afraid to ask for help. Your manager may be able to offer guidance, or you might talk with your HR representative.

The employee support program is also available to help you and your employees deal with both practical and emotional issues. For you, as a manager, the program offers access to a Manager Assist specialist, who can help you come up with practical strategies when you are faced with difficult or sensitive situations, such as how to

- respond to intense emotions on your team

- recognize signs of trauma and depression

- prepare for a conversation with an employee about a substance abuse problem

Manager Assist can also provide guidance on dealing with specific employee issues and coaching to help you develop management skills. To access Manager Assist email managerconsult@ workplaceoptions.com.

Professional development training for managers is also available through the Global Learning Solutions catalogue, as another aspect of the employee support program. These are available as virtual classroom events (and, in normal times, as on-site events). To schedule sessions for your peers or your team, check with your HR department. Training titles and topics include

- *Mental Health at Work: Recognize and Respond*

- *AIR—Awareness, Intervention, and Resilience*

- effective communication

- leadership

- the art of motivation

- managing change

Best practices:
Managing virtual and on-site teams
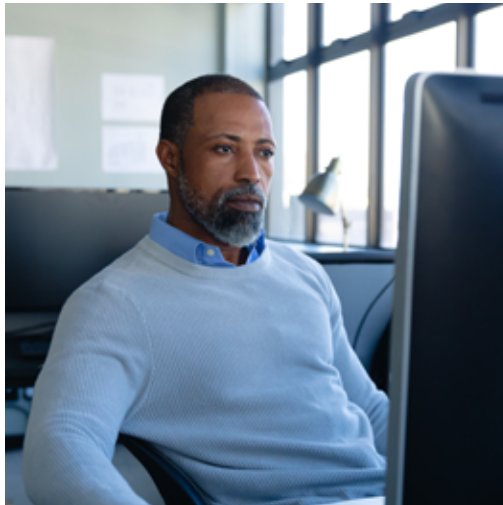
Social distancing recommendations for public health have led to an unprecedented increase in the number of employees working from home. By now, you and your team have probably weathered the early pains of that transition and found some of the benefits.

For managers new to widespread virtual work, the biggest challenge is often letting go of the need to monitor employees by visually checking to see that they are physically present. With virtual work, "face time" metrics need to give way to productivity metrics as a way to gauge performance. There's more than a silver lining to that attitude shift. Productive output is a far more meaningful measure of employee performance and value than mere physical presence.

If the work is getting done and customer needs are being met, does it really matter where your employees are working?

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Best practices: Managing virtual and on-site teams

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In the next phases of the response to the pandemic, public health recommendations include a gradual and controlled re-opening of the economy. Where offices, stores, and company facilities have been largely emptied, this will include a cautious return to in-person work—with only a portion of the workforce present at any one time. For many organizations that will mean a changing mix of virtual and on-site work, with some employees continuing to work from home while others go into the workplace. It will mean new social distancing and sanitation measures. It may mean shift changes to spread out the times at which employees are present. Those changes are likely to move both forward and backward as business activity and the number of COVID-19 cases in the community rise and fall. Experts predict it will be some time before organizations are able to return to previous work practices of full workspaces, large meetings, and regular travel.

Here are some suggestions for leading your team through these next phases of transition in response to the pandemic.

Continue best practices in managing employees who are working from home

- Out of sight can't mean out of mind. Check in regularly with employees to see how they are doing and whether they are encountering any problems in their work that need your support or intervention.

- Ask about how the technology is working to enable efficient work from home. Look for weak spots that may be hurting your team's productivity, and work with your organization to address them.

- Adjust performance metrics to include reasonable outputs given changing needs and goals. Look for achievable and measurable output goals as opposed to subjective factors.

- Trust your employees to be working to the best of their ability unless individual employees give you reason to believe they are not. Show that trust by resisting the temptation to over-monitor. The vast majority of employees want to do good work and will respond positively to a trusting and supportive manager.

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Best practices: Managing virtual and on-site teams

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Be sure you understand individual concerns and constraints when you make decisions about when and where employees are expected to work

- Discuss any concerns individual employees have about their own health risk or the health risk of other members of their household.
- Discuss how child care and school closures are affecting when and where employees are able to work.
- Discuss how your employees would get to and from work safely if they are asked to, especially if they normally use public transportation.

Demonstrate your care for employees who are asked to come into the workplace

- Show that you are on top of measures to make the workplace safe. The list at the end of this guide offers an overview of what those measures might include, but the specific measures for your organization will be decided by your leadership team. Explain your organization's infection-control measures to your employees when you ask them to come into the workplace. Take the time to answer their questions.
- Make sure your employees understand what will be expected of them to keep the workplace safe—how they are to practice social distancing,

whether they will be required to wear face masks or other PPE, whether temperature checks will be required, what sanitary and disinfection practices they will be expected to follow.

Show that you are monitoring adherence to the safe practices in the workplace, including the availability of hand sanitizer and PPE as required, and behaviors relating to social distancing and handwashing.

Make the most of meetings

- Manage meetings to encourage discussion. If you're simply telling the team news that doesn't require discussion, send or post the information rather than taking up the team's time in a meeting.
- Consider shorter, more frequent meetings for problem-solving as the team's work changes.
- Be respectful of employees' time when deciding who to invite and who needs to be on for each part of the meeting. For a team meeting, you might have everyone join for the start of the meeting for both social connection and news and discussion relevant to all, then allow some members to drop off as you begin detailed discussion of other items.

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Best practices: Managing virtual and on-site teams

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- Be attentive to the quality of group meetings when some people are in the workplace and some are not. Veteran, virtual employees can tell you how difficult it is to attend a teleconference when some people are together in person and others are not. The virtual attendees often have trouble hearing what is said in a meeting room. Because visual cues are important in jumping into a conversation, virtual employees can feel excluded unless specifically asked for their thoughts. With social distancing and PPE requirements, it may not be desirable to have any employees gather in a conference room. It may be best to continue all-video or all-telephone meetings even when some employees are present in the workplace.

- Be attentive to the quality of video meetings. If people are showing video of themselves, ask that all do, so that people can read each other's facial expressions. Note that some meeting technologies involve a slight time lag, which can make meetings awkward as facial expressions don't correspond in time to what is being said. Time lags can also make it difficult to have a natural back-and-forth conversation. If you find that video meetings are making people anxious or frustrated because of time lags, you might switch to phone meetings or a different video-meeting platform.

For reference:

Measures an organization might consider taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19

This list of considerations for organizational leadership is offered to help you, as a manager, anticipate measures your organization might implement and questions about health and safety that your team members may ask. Different measures will be more or less important for different types of organizations, for employees engaged in different types of work, and in locations with greater or lesser levels of disease in the community.

This is not a checklist of steps all organizations are required to take. It has been compiled from guidelines published by government and public health organizations, including

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For reference: Measures an organization might consider taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19

(Continued)

the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA). As more information is learned about the transmission of COVID-19, as medications are developed to treat and protect against infection, and as immunity from the disease becomes measurable, the guidelines are likely to change.

Identifying and responding to evidence of illness

○ Instruction that employees stay home if they are sick

○ Requirement that employees report positive results of tests for COVID-19 (for themselves or other household members)

○ Screening at entrances to the workplace (temperature checks, questions about exposure to COVID-19)

○ Testing for COVID-19 illness or immunity

○ Action plan when someone who has been in the workplace tests positive for COVID-19 or is identified as having been exposed to COVID-19

○ Action plan when a person shows symptoms of illness while in the workplace

Changes to workspaces and behavior to ensure social distancing and prevent infection

○ Repositioned workspaces for social distancing

○ Barriers between workspaces or between employees and customers to reduce the risk of airborne-disease transmission

○ Changes in ventilation in workspaces to reduce the risk of airborne-disease transmission

○ Limits on the number of people who can be in the work facility at any one time

○ Placement of hand-sanitizer dispensers

○ Requirements to use hand sanitizers and surface disinfectants and how those will be provided

○ Provision of face masks, gloves, and other PPE

○ Requirements to wear face masks, gloves, and other PPE when in the workspace

○ Requirements for employees to wash their hands and practice respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes)

○ Behavior required to ensure safe social distancing within the facility and at entrances and exits

○ Changes in the use of common areas, such as meeting rooms, kitchens, and eating areas

○ Disinfection practices in shared spaces and points of common touch (doorways, security keypads, bathrooms, vending machines)

○ Requirement that employees not use others' workspaces or equipment

(Continued)

For reference: Measures an organization might consider taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19

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Scheduling protocols and planning

○ Changes in work schedules to reduce the number of people in the workplace, possibly including

- staggered shifts

- assigned days to work at home and in the workplace

- reduced workweeks (four-day or three-day)

- extended authorization to work from home

○ Guidance on how managers and teams will decide who will come into the workplace and who will work from home each day and at what hours

○ Whether decisions about who will come into the workplace should (or can, at the manager's discretion) factor in

- health vulnerability of employee (low vulnerability: people with presumed immunity; high vulnerability: older or pregnant employees, or employees with certain health conditions)

- health vulnerability of others in the employee's household

- availability of child care or school for children too young to be home alone

- risk of infection from commuting on public transportation

- essential nature of the employee's in-person presence

○ Organization's policy on responding to individual requests to continue working from home (full time or some days, indefinitely or for a specified period of time)

Training on work, health, and safety protocols

○ How health and safety training will be delivered to employees

○ Managers' role in delivering training or ensuring that it reaches all employees

○ Whether training will be required before employees resume in-person work

○ Training for managers on responding to individual schedule or work-from-home requests (for example, when flexible work options might be considered "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or how such requests relate to Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirements)

Responsibility for employee adherence to behavior protocols and safety measures

○ Who will be responsible for spacing workstations at each location?

○ Who will be responsible for disinfecting common rooms or common points of touch at each location?

○ Who will be responsible for monitoring adherence to behavior protocols at each location?

○ What steps will be taken if PPE or disinfectant supplies are unavailable or inadequate?

(Continued)

For reference: Measures an organization might consider taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19

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- ○ What steps will be taken if disinfecting practices are not followed?
- ○ What steps to be taken if social distancing behaviors are not followed?

Policies around interacting with customers, suppliers, and contractors

- ○ When customers, contractors, or suppliers come into the workplace, will they be required to wear face masks? Will they have their temperature checked? Will they be required to follow social distancing rules?
- ○ How will those rules be enforced?

Other considerations

- ○ How plans for in-person work will vary by location
- ○ How changes in plans for in-person work and safety protocols and procedures will be communicated to employees and managers
- ○ Business travel policies
- ○ Policies for interaction with customers outside of the organization's work locations

Managing in a COVID-19 world:
Key takeaways
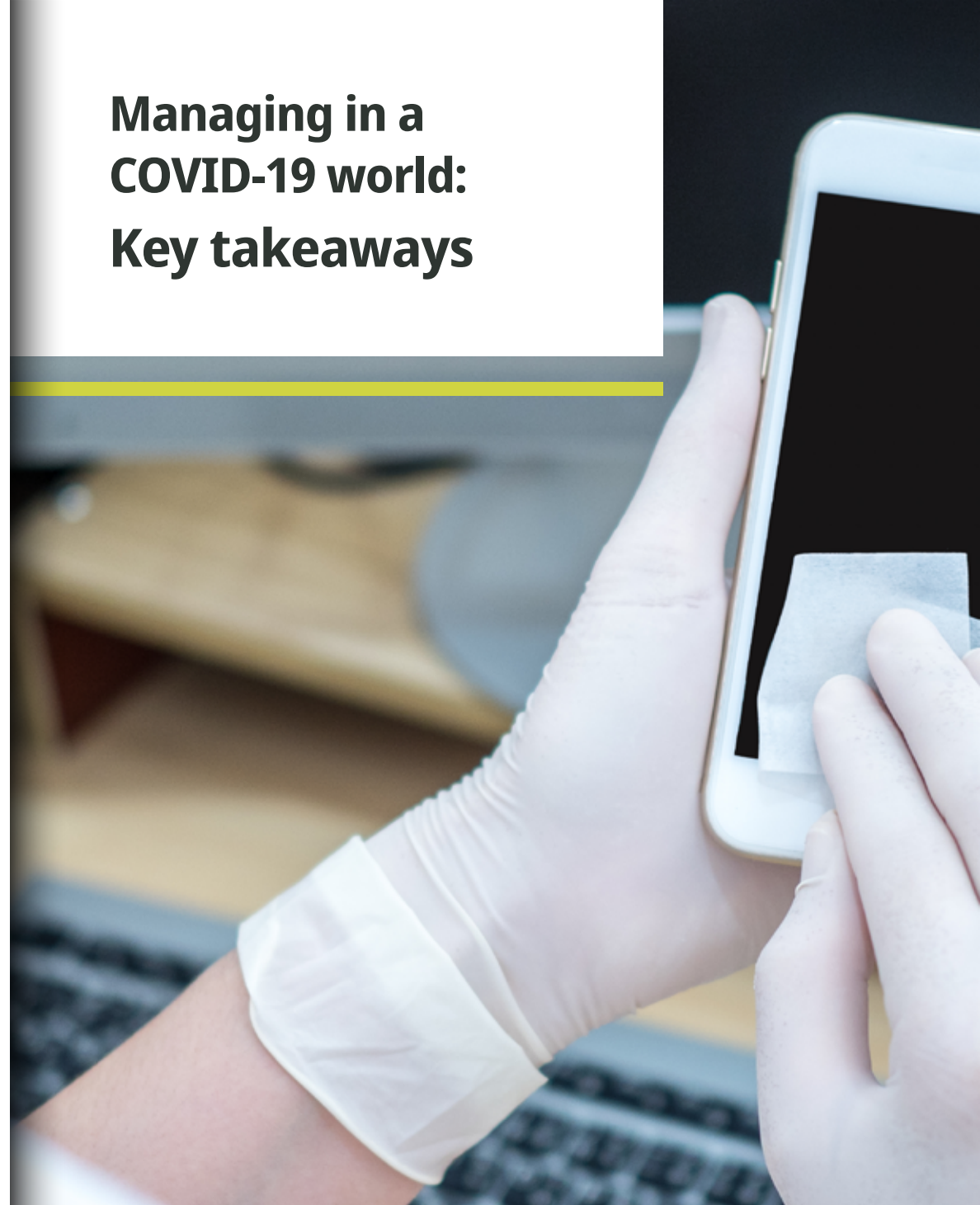
Managing in a COVID-19 world: Key takeaways

Step 1: Understand your organization's plans

- Study and ask questions to understand what will be expected of you and your team.
- Understand what discretion you have in deciding where and when your people will work.

Step 2: Adapting your organization's directives for your team

- Think about how your team might work together differently if some people are in the workplace and some are working from home, and how you will make staffing decisions based on different personal needs.

Step 3: Communicate to build trust

- Communicate often and stay connected with your team. Have regular team and individual check-ins.
- Frame your communications with positive messages. Focus on the present. Demonstrate a problem-solving approach.
- Anticipate questions employees will ask and be prepared with answers. They will want details on plans to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

- Be compassionate, honest, and open. Listen and ask questions. Share what you know. When you don't know the answer to a question, promise to find out and follow up. Build a culture of trust on your team by making it a safe place to express emotions and process reactions to changes and new information together.

Step 4: Respond to emotional reactions

- Listen and watch for signs of emotional distress, which include changes in work behavior. Engage the employee, encourage them to tell you what they are going through, and remind them of the help available through the employee support program.

Step 5: Pay attention to your own energy and emotions

- Pay attention to your emotions. Practice healthy eating, activity, and exercise habits. Take breaks to recharge. Maintain social connections.

Step 6: Continue to adapt

- Pay attention to what's working well and what isn't as you work together in different ways. Ask questions to constantly take the pulse of your team members' productivity and emotional states.
- Based on what you observe and what you hear from your team, continue to adjust the ways you work together.

Leading Teams in a COVID-19 World

A Guide for Managers

As the impact of COVID-19 changes over time and new and different issues emerge, this guide will be periodically updated. If you have thoughts on what should be added or changed, please send your ideas to: **CovidGuide@workplaceoptions.com**.

WORKPLACE OPTIONS