

WELL-BEING AT WORK:

why it's more important than ever

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is dominating all of our conversations this week and will likely continue to do so for a while. You can't switch the news on or open a newspaper without seeing a story about it. Classes have been canceled, whole cities have gone into lockdown and millions of people are now working from home. But one thing that's important to keep top of mind is well-being. Safeguarding the health and physical well-being of your employees, clients, and communities should be your No. 1 priority.

Establish a crisis management team: Set up a task force to monitor the ever-evolving situation closely. Be prepared to alter employee policies to provide improved support. For example, consider introducing staggered hours, prioritize annual leave for those who have childcare issues, and increase sick leave or paid time off for all or on a case-by-case basis.

Communication is key: Make sure you communicate with your employees on a regular basis and let them know what you're doing as a business to try and limit the spread of COVID-19. If you haven't already but are in a position to do so, implement work-from-home policies for your staff. Regularly reach out to employees to ask if they're OK, and if they're not, provide additional support.

Provide the tools necessary to be effective working remotely: Working remotely is easier than it has ever been thanks to the digital era that we live in, but for those who are working from home for the first time, providing access to IT helplines around the clock is vital so that employees can seek help if they need it. When working from home, it's important employees feel engaged and reassured rather than isolated.

Provide flexibility to those who can't work from home: It's nigh on impossible for those in healthcare, retail, and the emergency services to work from home so provide extra support to people in those roles. Introduce flexible hours to allow for changes to public transport timetables and carry out additional cleaning in workspaces.

Encourage video calls: Use video conferencing technology as much as possible for internal and external meetings. Seeing a friendly face can make all the difference to someone's day and can help to reduce feelings of isolation for those who aren't used to working from home.

Use corporate social media platforms to lighten the mood: Ask employees to use internal corporate social platforms and instant messaging services as much as possible so they still feel like they are part of a team. Live stream yoga sessions and home workouts to get people moving. And host some fun competitions to lighten the mood. Not everyone will have a home office - some people might be working from the kitchen table, the spare room or even the attic so why not ask people to post photos of their workspaces and get everyone to vote for the ones they like the most!

Remind employees that it's good to talk: Most organizations offer mental health services for employees so make sure you remind them this is on offer. Anxiety levels are rising so remind people that it's good to talk. Host regular virtual Q&A sessions for those who have questions or concerns.

During times of crisis, employees look to their leaders for reassurance. Being able to react quickly and flexibly, while providing regular updates is imperative.