



MAINTAIN A CULTURE OF CARE DURING COVID-19

Three Tips to Ensure Your Company Culture Remains Intact

It is important to not let the fear and uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic erode established company culture and values. It is human nature for people to gravitate towards others like them and distance themselves from those who are different during times of crisis. But, in order to maintain the progress companies have made towards creating more inclusive workplaces, now more than ever it is important to reinforce your company values and ensure employees feel like they belong.

1. DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY IN ADDITION TO PHYSICAL SAFETY

Include in your company COVID-19 Response Plan and/or staff emails, resources for employees to manage their mental and emotional safety while working. Examples could include:

- Information on how to access an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Point of contact in Human Resources for employees to ask questions and/or share concerns
- Quick access to helplines for workers struggling during this crisis such as:
 - Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 800-273-8255
 - Crisis Text Line: text Home to 741741
 - Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990, TTY 1-800-846-8517, or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, TTY 1-800-787-3224

Regularly conduct mental health check in's with staff. Ask how employees are doing with changes to work situations and/or work/life balance. Encourage employees to share any concerns or fears they may have.

Recognize and support employees who have been impacted by a COVID-related death. It is important to remember that COVID-19 deaths have disproportionately affected African Americans and older adults, particularly those with underlying health conditions. Here are a few things you can do to support employees who have had lost a family member, close friend or colleague due to COVID-19:

- Show empathy.
- Acknowledge that grief is ongoing and remember that grief is an individual process.
- Give the employee space and time off, but don't ignore them. People who are grieving a loss often feel invisible because when someone doesn't know what to say, they often don't say anything at all. A simple "I'm sorry for your loss" goes a long way.
- Watch for warning signs of prolonged grief. Offer resources for professional help, such as an Employee Assistance Program. such as poor grooming, severe withdrawal, substance abuse, or other uncharacteristic behaviors might be warning signs.

Use this opportunity for company leadership to express their appreciation for their staff. Show your employees you care about their wellbeing, value them as employees and will continue to support them.

2. REINFORCE ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT, HAZING & BULLYING

Asian Americans have reported almost 100 incidences of coronavirus-related discrimination, harassment or assault since March 19, 2020 through a new website – [Stop AAPI Hate](#) – developed by the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council and Chinese for Affirmative Action.

Remind employees that we are all experiencing the same anxiety, uncertainty and fear about COVID-19 and that harassment hazing or bullying of any kind – including coronavirus-related incidences – will not be tolerated.

3. MAINTAIN A CONNECTION WITH EMPLOYEES DURING TELEWORK AND/OR SOCIAL DISTANCING

Use technology to video call for meetings that would have otherwise been in person (e.g. kick-off meetings, progress meetings, staff/team meetings). This gives your teams a chance to talk to each other “face to face.”

Host a virtual happy hour.

Share optimism and confidence. Optimism is contagious. When company leaders express optimism about the future it trickles down to employees and helps relieve anxiety and fear.

Create a reoccurring check-in time for colleagues to communicate with one another.

It’s a good idea for senior management to deliver a weekly update on company status. This helps create calm and gives employees a sense of clarity.