

These are Some Ways in Which Leaders Can Offer Support

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Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused a tremendous shift in the way we conduct business and our everyday life at large. One of the results that have widely been adopted is working from home. Because of the shutdown, people have not been able to move around as in normal times. This has harmed production and possible income. As this season of “working from home” is not a usual set up and has not been a planned phenomenon, it has put a strain on employees just as it has on companies.

There are a few things that managers need not forget during this team. As much as businesses are striving to keep production going on at the same pace as possible, this is not possible for every business in some sectors. Yes, some companies will naturally thrive as a result of the pandemic. It is a good initiative to strive in growing the business at any given opportunity but one must be very careful about how they go about this, lest they put too much strain on employees who are facing their challenges without enough support.

In this article, there will be some discussion on what managers can do during this lockdown. It is no more enough for leaders to focus on monetary results but it has become increasingly important to find out how employees are holding up. This is a key factor because the lockdown will be lifted and business will carry on operating again. It may not be in the same way it did before but people will return to work so it is important to take note of how the human capital is handled during this time away.

Mental health and emotional support

Many people have had to endure this lockdown alone as they do not live with parents or friends. This may seem like an ideal environment for business conduction to take place. After some time, living in isolation becomes the worst that can happen. Going on to social sites such as LinkedIn and Instagram, it possible to see how excited people have become to merely go to the supermarket. Leaving the house and walking around is not a right anymore and has become something that many are appreciating more. Without the factual knowledge of what will happen to everyone during and after the pandemic, cases of anxiety, stress and depression have increased all around the globe. An individual will be clouded with thoughts on their job security and the health of themselves and family members, both locally and overseas. Overthinking can cause so many health issues such as loss in appetite, stress among others. This puts mental health at the top of what managers need to be extremely aware of when setting our targets for employee performance.

According to the Occupational Health & Wellbeing (2020), “Employers also need to remember that their duty of care for people’s health and safety carries on no matter where staff are based”. If people are not in the direct view of managers, this does not mean that they are not doing anything or that they

can put in extra hours in their work “because they are at home”. Based on some discussions with friends and colleagues, this has been a challenge that they have been facing. Additional targets and stretched expectations have risen from the time that working from home became a global result.

As a manager, there must be constant communication between you and the people you lead. Since they are not in your presence, it is much more difficult to pick up on issues that they may be facing as there is no easy access to facial expressions and the voice tone used when communicating. When communicating, ensure that you ask others how they are doing instead of jumping straight into what they have done in terms of the deliverables that are expected at work.

The emotional and social needs of your team won't go on pause during the lockdown – in fact, they're almost certain to increase. As mentioned before, many people are staying alone and others may be living in situations that are not too friendly for their wellbeing and this needs to become apparent to the immediate manager. Instead of solely holding meetings to discuss the way forward in terms of business and making money, perhaps once a week, the team could plan a meeting where they drink coffee together and destress for a while. This would help those who do not have the social support that they would need regularly. Although this would be virtual, merely seeing other people may boost your happiness. I have seen some companies on social sites that have started implementing these traditions and the responses that they have been receiving are very positive.

Leaders who can communicate across the organisation can help prioritise wellbeing by encouraging staff to set up this sort of initiative and providing information or guidelines about the best ways to work from home. It is also very helpful to avail resources such as emails that guide employees on how to do things like negotiating space and quiet time with family while you're working at home, how to get into a routine and other ways.

Meetings

It is important to meet with your team regularly using a visual format like Zoom, Skype or FaceTime rather than by phone call. Depending on the nature of the work, this can start with a team check-in each morning or a few times a week. These meetings do not need to be long but just enough to know what everyone is working on and what they may need to do finish the work that they are given. Every other day, check how your team has been keeping up. This is not a check-up to shout or put colleagues down for the work they have not. Most times there is a legitimate reason for work that is not submitted on time. As the manager, allow yourself to get in touch with each person to understand their circumstances and better understand the work that they will be submitting.

During other times, make it known to colleagues that you are available for support. This is not the time to practice scare tactics on other people. Remember, it is important to retain the best employees and it is helpful to look at the way they are treated. To keep boundaries, you can create a schedule of when people can approach you for help in the work they are working on. As a leader, be willing to help and guide and not look down on those who are struggling and want to learn how to do better.

Conclusion

The lockdown has been a stressful time for most people and has put a strain on businesses. Many have slowed down and others have shut down completely. We must all remember that the Corona Virus pandemic was not a result of anyone in the company therefore employees must not be treated like they are being punished for working from home. Business is slow for everyone and all sectors are trying to maximise as much as they can during this time. Because the pandemic has caused people to work from home, leaders must not treat this as people sitting around not doing anything. It is very tempting to increase the workload that employees are normally given “to make up for the lost money” from the pandemic. No money will be recovered as the crisis is hitting everyone globally. It would be unfair to exert extra unnecessary stress on employees.

Remember that some people live alone, some employees are single mothers or single fathers. Some people have to take care of extended families and other groups of people. Before a person is an employee, they are a human being and they are certainly not a machine. These are some ways that employees can be supported during these trying times.

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