



## Employee Engagement in the Covid19- Crisis

As the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect every business and organization, companies are increasingly scrutinized for the way they communicate and engage with their employees.

Amid public angst and uncertainty, companies must deploy effective internal communications efforts for confident, consistent and transparent leadership.

Communicating with employees right now is not just about giving updates - how your company responds to the **Covid-19 crisis** will have a lasting impact on your reputation.

In times of crisis, your employees are a key stakeholder group that needs to be prioritised to demonstrate that you are committed to their ongoing health, safety and welfare.

When handled well, effective employee engagement will ensure you have a team that remains motivated to act as brand ambassadors and corporate advocates.

New social distancing and working from home rules from governments have forced businesses and organizations to adopt new technology quickly, whilst considering how best to reorganize and retain their workforce.

Change is scary for many people and business leaders need to show they are human, supportive and understanding.



## Employee Engagement During Crisis

Employees look to their CEO and line manager for communication and reassurance to understand how the organization will manage the disruption and uncertainty.

Difficult business decisions may need to be made, such as lay-offs or reduced hours.

A disgruntled employee is a reputational risk during normal times, but even more so during this crisis.

CEOs need to be seen to put employees first and engage their workforce with the wider purpose of the organization.

A motivated and well-informed employee can positively influence brand perception throughout and beyond the **Covid-19 crisis**.

The level of external media attention is creating fear and the role of the CEO and internal communications now is to present the facts in the context of the business, guiding their employees through the obstacles and change.



## Establishing Effective

# Internal Communications

An internal communications plan must be established if you have not got this in place.

Following on from our recent Crisis Communications Guide and as part of our series of guides to help companies and organizations communicate with all stakeholders through the fast moving **Covid-19 crisis**,

**W7WORLDWIDE** now sets out recommendations and a **seven step** guide to effective employee engagement.

### 1 CEO Leadership

Supportive and understanding leadership makes an enormous difference at a time when employees are concerned about job security and their families.

CEOs need to be highly visible with regular updates and constructive communication.

When people are under stress, they don't process information well, so over communicate and send your message multiple times, repeating your key messages.

Use video technology to create face-to-face interaction with your team.

### 2 Regular Communication Cadence

Create a group of critical stakeholders to include your Communications and HR function.

Their ownership of the plan will make it more effective and devolve the necessary leadership required for rapid response situations.

Corporate leadership communication delivered to employees at a regular cadence will provide reassurance about the changing situation.

### 3 Certainty of Communication

We are all overwhelmed by alarming updates about the coronavirus spread in the media.

Your employees need you to be the voice of reason and explain what any new guidelines and business practices mean for them.

Direct your audience to a single source of truth whether it be your intranet, a dedicated web page, a daily newsletter or line management.

### 4 Establish Two-Way Communication

Crisis situations are not about broadcast.

Your employees need the opportunity to ask questions.

Promote dialogue to ensure communication efforts help engagement.

Managers must have two-way conversation with employees directly, recognizing that this is a stressful time and that they will want contact more frequently.

This is particularly relevant where there are social distancing and working from home measures in place, which can make employees feel disconnected, demotivated and isolated.

It is good to do a pulse check on current employee sentiment with a poll.

Feedback will inform your internal communications messages.

Bring some creativity and connect with your team beyond formal company updates.

The technology exists for virtual catch-ups and team meetings that bring people together in social ways.

This can provide an important forum where people support and encourage each other, exchange helpful tips to working from home and find relief from the constant stream of information about **Covid-19**.



## 5 Clarify Company Policies

Whenever there is a change of direction or policy that impacts the business and employees, the information should be cascaded promptly via the established internal channels.

The frequency will depend on the business need; however, it is good practice to send communications that reiterate the current situation even if there has been no change for several days.

Set goals and KPIs to achieve the immediate objectives of the business, so every team member knows what is expected from them to contribute to the common effort during the crisis.

Reinforce organization values to reduce the likelihood of misconduct and loss of productivity.

## 6 Employee Recognition

Give recognition to acknowledge employee efforts.

Engaged employees are doing meaningful work right now and need to know that they contribute to the company's mission, purpose and success.

Acknowledgement by management is the most effective way to build trust and a motivated workforce.

Send regular brief messages of support to the team and recognize individual effort.

## 7 Keep Planning

During a crisis it is easy to lose sight of any plans and vision.

Business leaders need to think about and plan for the next phases, such as the return to normality and the short-term and long-term recovery.

It is important to highlight the long-term resilience of the company and its strategy.

Communicate your plans to your employees, so they know your main objective is to keep your business going.



Most business leaders make statements that their people are their most valuable asset.

Now is the time to meet the greater communication needs of this key stakeholder group.

The number one priority is to build trust to tap into the full effort and commitment of your employees.

It is important to understand the specific challenges for each part of your workforce, such as frontline staff, remote employees and global country managers.

Communicate solutions, use all available technology and communications channels and be ready to respond to specific concerns as soon as they arise.



**W7STAYHOME**  
WORLDWIDE

Moving

Forward

**W7**WORLDWIDE's experienced Corporate Communications team is advising both local and international clients to help plan and manage their internal communications around **Covid-19**.





# About W7 WORLDWIDE



**W7**WORLDWIDE is an independent communications consultancy based in Saudi Arabia.

Our understanding of the local market converged with our global reach and knowledge enables us to bridge our clients with their audiences effectively.

We are aligned by the objective of filling the gap in communication that exists in the local market.

Therefore, our specialty lies in building bridges that sustain relationships and create brand reputation and value through innovative approaches.

Our array of services includes, but is not limited to:

- Stakeholder Mapping
- Crisis Management
- Internal Communications
- Reputation Management
- Media Relations
- Public Relations
- Social Media
- Marketing & Brand Solutions

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