

Published by Pinellas County Human Resources. Issues for previous months are found at www.pinellascounty.org/hr/leadership. Any employee may request a new issue be emailed each month by [subscribing to Leadership Notes newsletter](#).

SPECIAL MAR 24, 2020

Help to Create a Sense of Control

We need to find ways to help create a sense of control for our employees so that they can feel a sense of forward momentum that moves us out of and past fear.

Here are a few ideas to get started:

1. **Communicate and educate like it's your job (it is actually).** Don't assume what employees do or don't know—about COVID-19, prevention strategies, how to work remotely, how to maintain social distance, etiquette for video meetings... Things are moving and changing so rapidly that I'm sure you are overwhelmed. Imagine how our employees feel as they are even further removed from the decision-makers. You cannot over-communicate in times like these. Consider daily team meetings, daily one-on-one check-ins, regular email updates/briefings on anything that's new or changing, etc.
2. **Recalibrate performance expectations.** As we shift to work from home or different operation schedules, it's time to step back and focus on what matters the most right now. Things that may have seemed important two weeks ago may not matter as much today. Spend time with your employees to talk through their performance objectives and projects. Identify what is critical now, what is less important, and what can be put on hold for the time being. Also discuss and clarify behavioral and communication expectations. For example, in a remote working environment, how are we going to communicate? What kind of response time expectation should we have of one another? As an example, with my team, we agreed that email is for things that need a response in one or two days, instant messaging is for things that need an urgent response. The more clear you are in expectations, the easier the transition will be.
3. **Allow maximum flexibility (and grace).** In this unprecedented time, employees are trying to juggle things they've never encountered before. Kids are out of school, and for some, there is an expectation of parents to "homeschool." Employees who never have before are working from home. Self-quarantine has us isolating from family and friends. Our routines and lives have been disrupted in more ways than we can count,

and it happened overnight. As leaders, we need to help people find their footing and establish a new normal. This is going to require learning how to manage a work/life mashup that most never wanted and didn't choose. Now is the time to both allow and encourage as much flexibility as possible in terms of both how and when work gets done. Provide tools, resources, and support to employees as they navigate this. And, perhaps most important, extend grace to your employees. Help them understand what the mission-critical work is that must get completed, and then allow them some wiggle room to sort out their life. Be generous and forgiving. Then, you can begin to craft the new normal.

4. **Make well-being a part of everyone's job.** In stressful times, it's easy to stop doing the things that help us stay well and healthy. We eat and drink more, we sleep less, we stop exercising (no time!), etc. On top of that, social distancing means we are likely to start feeling more isolated and disconnected. In a health crisis, allowing your wellness to suffer is perhaps the worst thing you can do. We can make ourselves less vulnerable to illness by investing time in our well-being. But your employees may not feel like they can allow themselves time for well-being activities unless you make it part of their job. Give them instruction to set aside at least 15 minutes a day for some kind of physical or mindfulness activity. Encourage them to schedule a 15-minute check-in with a colleague or friend at least a few times a week. Investing a couple of hours a week to support the well-being of people is an investment in the quality of all of the other hours of the week.

When this is all over and the pandemic has passed, people will remember how their organizations and leaders showed up. Did you prioritize their safety and well-being, even when it wasn't easy for you? Or did you wait, leaving them in their fear not sure what to do next? Those companies and leaders who step up now will emerge from this crisis stronger and with more loyal, committed employees than ever before.

Excerpted from <https://jasonlauritsen.com/2020/03/what-your-employees-need-from-you-right-now/>