**CHART Virtual Training Forum (VTF) – Notes on Best Practices**

*Note: Updated information and resources gathered since these VTF notes were taken can be found on* [*CHART’s COVID-19 Resource Page*](https://www.chart.org/training-tools-and-resources/covid-19-resources.html)

**Employee Well-being**

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

**What are You Doing to Help Ease the Stress on Your Team?**

**When your team is still in corporate office or on premises**

* Be much more flexible on work hours for anyone who can be – allow them to come in and out on a schedule that works for them.
* Dress Down – let people wear what they are comfortable in if they are not customer facing.
* Counterpoint: Try to keep it as normal as possible if open for business, even if limited operations. Some people feel better if they dress for work and feel like it is business as usual.
* Schedule mindfulness meditations for everyone that is working. Virtual meeting to center and focus on how to accept what this is and do what we can. Not mandatory. Maybe twice a week for 15 minutes.
* Virtual happy hours with CEO. Keep groups small -maybe 15 people. Interdepartmental.
* Encourage small acts of kindness – things done personally, not by company. Bring in cookies or flowers, etc.
* Offer employees some games and activities, worksheets, coloring pages, etc. for kids to occupy them during work or conference calls – entertaining kids and make them feel like they are “working” too.

**Whether your team is furloughed or working**

* Create a team Facebook page. This has been recommended by CHART members repeatedly.
* Allow team to post anything positive and happy and good, including personal milestones, birthdays, etc. Two HR people manage it to approve posts. Ask them to post pictures of pets, or favorite recipe or whatever.
* Fill it with resources for unemployment, mental health services, job placement services, continuing ed opportunities, etc.
* For people working in the restaurant, offer employees much more free food than before, to let them bring home to families.
* Furloughed Kitchen – giving away free food to furloughed families.
* Encourage people to take short breaks, go outside and have just a little time to center themselves, absorbing nature and the sun.
* Create weekly activities or contests that drive wellness – eg. scavenger hunt to find 40 things that you would see outside to encourage people to go out and walk around, or a Disney sing-a-long on zoom just to laugh and do something to give them a moment to focus on something just fun.
* Mental Health Mondays and Wellness Wednesdays – Provide a 5-minute video or article or podcast – and send out to all employees – corporate, onsite and furloughed.
* Weekly email to all furloughed employees. Seems like most asked for help is assistance in getting unemployment process.

**Reintegrating employees with as little friction as possible**

* When bringing people back, remember that not everyone has had similar experiences. It can lead to tension and sensitivity. Processes have all changed. If some employees have been working throughout and some have been out, reintegrating those furloughed people as they come back needs to be handled delicately. There has been a dramatic shift in people’s shared experiences and commonality.
* Exercise extreme sensitivity in re-entry discussions. Employees will be sensitive – some made more on unemployment than those that worked. Many throw away comments made with no ill-will can really be insulting:

“You must have loved being home relaxing for 2 months”

“You made more staying home than you would have working”

“I’m so glad you are all back in the office because nothing was getting done with this work from home”

**Emotions Starting to Run High**

* Many note that the mood has shifted from the initial feeling of “we are all in this together.” Growing irritation or us versus them. Just generally all a little war weary.
* Some employees are objecting to masks because guests are not, or because it is very hot in the kitchen and hard to breathe, etc.
* Watch for trauma responses as it presents differently in different circumstances and personalities.
* Consider offering leaders training in identifying trauma responses and signs of problems with mental well-being. Need more advanced soft skills, and adaptation and resilience are now more important skillsets.

**Testing**

* Testing all employees as they arrive at work and some are testing guests too, even though temperature is proving to be an unreliable screening process. More just to show they are taking it seriously. When taking temps, also checking to see that they have a mask and shoe covers and asking if any symptoms or contact with anyone diagnosed, etc. First question can just be “How are you today?” It’s a great way to start their workday by checking in with them and getting a read on their situation.
* Don’t ask medical info – only ask what state tells you to with clear guidelines. If they answer yes to any of those questions, send them home.