



In this time of crisis employees are dealing with heightened levels of stress and anxiety. One factor that will dramatically impact the mental health of an employee is the information they are receiving. Misinformation in a crisis can create a negative environment and impact the morale of an organization.

A recent study by the Society for Resource Management identified that 63% of employees valued information from their employer more than government resources (58%) and traditional news sources (51%). These results solidify the importance of an employer having accurate information and being willing to communicate that information in an effective manner.

Chris Rosica, president of the New Jersey-based company Rosica Communication strategies stated, "People panic when they feel a lack of control, and if you are consistent, calm, and communicative, you will be supporting those who matter most and protecting your organization's best interest."

Below are some action steps that will help to ease the confusion and manage the stress of your employees.

Begin by creating a Communication Management Plan:

- Establish a team from the differing departments in the organization to address the organization's COVID-19 risk.
 - The departments that should have one to two people on this team are the Leadership, Communications, IT, and one representative from the various departments because they are the subject matter experts and will have a better grasp on how the virus can affect their department.
 - This team needs to select who should be disseminating the information to the organization.
- Develop a protocol for monitoring updates from credible sources on an hourly, daily, and emergency basis – including industry-leading associations.

What and how to communicate to create dialogue and understanding:

- Regular timely updates need to be given, even if there are no updates.
- Staff need to be informed who to go to with questions and understand that if they do have a question to please ask it.
- Constantly reassure your staff and customers that everything is being done to ensure consistent service while addressing their safety concerns.
- Communicate any changes with employees so they can share the information with customers and clients and limit the rumors and false information.
- Let your staff know what measures are being taken to ensure their safety and the safety of the customer.
- Share the organization contingency with your staff, including both the best- and worst-case scenario so that people are aware and are not potentially surprised later.

Maintaining good two-way communication within the organization helps to identify the concerns of your staff and customers. It's important for leaders to remember that your staff are vital to sharing information with your clients and customers and therefore are your customers. Modeling great customer service within your team empowers them to do the same and lessens the impact of stress during these challenging times.

References:

Employees Look to Their Companies for Coronavirus News- Society for Human Resource Management - <https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/employee-relations/Pages/Employees-Look-to-Their-Companies-for-Coronavirus-News.aspx>

10 best practices for Communications Management of Covid-19 – PR Boutiques International - <https://prboutiques.com/best-practices-for-communication-management-of-covid-19/>

The Village EAP is taking COVID-19 very seriously and we are working to provide the best continued services to you. If you feel like you or an employee could benefit from talking to a counselor, don't hesitate to contact The Village EAP at 1-800-627-8220 to access your free and confidential sessions. We are here so you don't have to go it alone.