

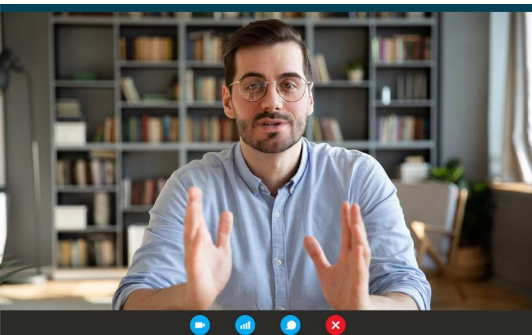
# Six Tips for Communicating with Workers During the Pandemic<sup>1</sup>



The COVID-19 pandemic changed the workplace virtually overnight. For employees, the virus fed stress and insecurity over health, over job security, and over the logistics of working from home. Employers faced not only the challenge of keeping their businesses viable but of leading far-flung and disoriented teams.

Today, those issues—like the virus—are still with us.

Here are some practical tips to help you stay engaged with your workforce in this age of remote work and increased mental and emotional stress.



## Before You Ask Them Questions, Ask Yourself Some

This is a great time to perform regular employee surveys. But before you do, experts say, take a step back. Ask yourself what you hope to accomplish:

- Do you want to boost productivity?
- Are you out to increase employee enthusiasm?
- Is this all about reducing turnover?
- Do you just hope to learn how workers are feeling?

## Choose the Best Ways to Communicate

By evaluating your survey goals, you ensure that you ask relevant questions. You get strategically helpful responses. You also may find which forms of gathering feedback, at which rate of frequency, are appropriate. Options include:

- Pulse surveys which ask five to 10 questions
- Employee engagement surveys, which typically are more in-depth
- Focus groups
- One-on-one interviews
- Listening sessions
- Group chats and threads

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/winter2020/Pages/measuring-employee-engagement-during-COVID-19.aspx>



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## Speak Frankly About COVID

When times are tough, it's vital that you regularly monitor how workers are holding up. And when you do, don't hold back. To really evaluate the situation, experts advise you to get to the heart of the matter. Right now, that means asking specifics about the pandemic:

- Are you experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19?
- Are any family members in your household experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19?
- What are your greatest concerns right now?
  - Health
  - Job security
  - Compensation
  - Family members

## Get a Regular Reality-Check on Remote Workers

The pandemic led to lockdowns and lockouts. It forced people across industries to quickly learn what it's like to work from home. As we move forward, the situation remains unpredictable, which means it's important to keep up on the status of your remote workers. Here are some of the things to ask:

- Do you have young children at home as well?
  - Are they helping kids with school while trying to work?
- Are you having challenges with technology?
- Are you getting time outdoors?
- What do you need to help you feel connected?

## Be Ready to Respond

Before contacting workers, think through how you'll respond—discuss with your management team how you can support your staff. When you do make contact, listen carefully. Avoid knee-jerk reactions; it's okay to be ready with a partial answer and a promise to return with a more thorough one.

For workers or families who've been hit by the virus, your responses may mean extended leaves of absence, grief counseling, and/or additional flex time. If it turns out, your staff members are worried about losing jobs or facing pay cuts, have an easy-to-understand explanation of how the crisis is affecting the company. If there is pervasive employee angst over the economics of the situation, you may need to commit to an ongoing communications effort. Promise to keep them abreast of the company's health, even as you monitor theirs.



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## Avoid These Mistakes

- In general, don't ask too many questions. Keep your check-ins short and to-the-point.
- Don't focus on the bad. Ask employees how they're entertaining themselves and managing life these days. Look for tips to share with others.
- Don't believe everything is important. If a question leads to an overwhelmingly negative response, dig deeper. The issue you're asking about may simply not matter to your workers.

The experts at EG Workforce Solutions are ready to share more ideas, feedback, and support for managing your workforce during a crisis.

## About EG Workforce Solutions

We've been in this business for decades and have developed a deep network of professional connections. Whether they're companies looking for talent, job seekers looking for work, or an up-and-coming store in need of some temporary help, we know the right people to bridge the gap between the hiring and the hired.

But what's more, we get to know people. From employers hiring to candidates looking, we take the time to listen and learn. We hear your likes, talents, and needs. We gain an understanding, and with it, we're able to facilitate lasting relationships between businesses and people.



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