

# Leaders and Managers TOOLKIT

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*Strategies for managing engagement and productivity during the COVID-19 crisis ...  
and beyond*



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## Maintaining engagement and productivity

With the global COVID-19 outbreak upending the modern world as we know it, everyone is dealing with their own challenges. In addition to managing their personal concerns and worries, business leaders have the added uncertainty of keeping their organisations afloat, whilst caring for the wellbeing of their employees.

Despite these challenging circumstances, the future offers opportunities for those leaders who can push forward, finding ways to remain positive, and doing things differently. In addition to surviving, business leaders and managers need to find new ways to thrive.

This toolkit provides resources, and guidelines to help you navigate these challenging times. Emphasis is placed on communicating and engaging with employees, ensuring that productivity remains high.

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*When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is comprised of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.*

”

*John F. Kennedy*

## 1 Be purposeful

- Constantly remind people why it's so important that we exist.
- See this crisis as a vehicle to purposefully serve colleagues and customers in new, meaningful, value-creating ways.
- Leverage your organisational purpose as a new tool for innovation; purpose can touch lives in new ways.

## 2 Be empathetic

- Acknowledge other's stress in this situation.
- Know that people are also struggling with personal and family issues, beneath their business issues.
- Show you care about employees versus the enterprise only.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat.

## 3 Be calm, clear and confident

- Communicate with realness, clarity, authenticity, and regularity: tell the real story.
- Express a vision of the other side of this ... elevate from 'now' to 'next'.
- Convert anxiety to the attitude "we will get through this together."

## 4 Be both action oriented and reflective

- Reconcile the paradox of pause and action; both are critical.
- Avoid being too passive or too hyperactive during these times.
- Step back to reflect, learn, and strategize when the pace and bias for action are too high.

## 5 Be inspiring

- Share stories that reveal your enduring values, emphasising what is really important now.
- Remember the purpose of the organisation and rally people around it.
- See the crisis as an opportunity to understand the needs of your customers and people, then strive to serve them better.

## 6 Be resilient

- Take care of your energy, wellness, and fitness.
- Encourage others to take care of themselves and demonstrate by modelling it.
- Show your willingness to take on these challenges with energy and innovation.

## 7 Be aware of mindsets

- Move from fixed/fear mindsets to growth mindsets.
- Know that our 'openness' and 'closedness' opens or closes others.
- Catch yourself in fixed fear mindsets and move to growth mindsets before acting or behaving.

## 8 Be courageous

- Make the tough decisions on purpose and with courage.
- Pay attention to fear-based, reactive decisions.
- Inspire others with your courage, energy, and positivity.

## Scenario planning for the future

*What will it take to navigate the COVID-19 crisis? Leaders need to act across five stages, moving from the crisis of today, to reimagining and creating an exciting new vision for the future. Share these stages with your teams and engage them in all planning activities. This will help engender a sense of confidence that the organisation has a clear roadmap going forward.*

### The five horizons



#### **RESOLVE**

Address the immediate challenges that COVID-19 represents to your workforce, customers, technology, and business partners.



#### **RESILIENCE**

Address near-term cash-management challenges and broader resiliency issues during virus-related shutdowns, including economic knock-on effects.



#### **RETURN**

Create a detailed plan to return the business to scale quickly as the COVID-19 situation evolves and knock-on effects become clearer.



#### **REIMAGINATION**

Reimagine the future: what does a discontinuous shift look like? What are the implications for how organisations should reinvent?



#### **REFORM**

Be clear about how regulatory and competitive environments in your industry may shift and adapt to them.

## Building organisational resilience

*Organisational restructuring, anxiety about health issues and job security already have many of us on edge. These challenging times call for ongoing, consistent, and empathetic communications from leaders and managers. Ensure you incorporate the following:*



### EMPATHY FOR DISRUPTION



Starting now, make sure your employees know that you are focused on helping them to cope with disruption across all aspects of their lives. Take steps to support them with adjustments (e.g. childcare). Equip them with tools to collaborate. And, above all, provide access to supplies and information to protect their health.

### COMMUNICATING THE CONTEXT



If you are displacing employees during the crisis, be sure to help your entire workforce understand the context. How has the crisis impacted the company? What steps have already been taken to reduce expenses? Why are the cuts happening now? How will displaced employees be supported?

### NEW TECHNIQUES TO MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT



With much of your workforce working remotely for the foreseeable future, make sure that you provide digital tools and virtual forums to keep employees engaged. Equally, take care of frontline employees who are undertaking their jobs in the face of a very real health threat.

## Managing engagement and productivity

*There is no such thing as overcommunicating in times of crisis. Things are changing fast, and leaders must connect with employees in real-time – as real people. Honesty is especially valuable, as everyone’s ‘honesty radar’ is on high alert.*

### ACTIONS

### BENEFITS

**Communicate, communicate, communicate**

Make a quickly shifting strategy clear, and constantly build alignment. Create engagement by fostering an empathetic environment.

**Put health and safety at the top of the agenda**

Guard your most critical asset – your employees – both physically and mentally. If organisations want employees to do and deliver more, then employees must feel valued as people.

**Be realistic about the promise – and the reality – of technology**

Digital technology has been a lifeline during this crisis, but it can be frustrating to use. Candid conversations about the use of digital platforms relieves stress and helps gain real time learning through proactive feedback.

**Take employees’ personal challenges seriously and provide relevant resources**

By emphasising medical options, employee assistance programs, and company support, you show employees that you care.

**Rethink time management and rearrange the workday if needed**

It can be a challenge to balance the traditional workday with personal demands at home. Open conversations about different time management approaches can both revive productivity and lessen invisible distraction and strain. Consider ‘chunking’ time into on and off blocks.

**Hone-in on what is critical – and what can wait**

A moment of crisis and overload can really highlight how much ‘clutter’ exists in everyone’s working life. A clear and frequently communicated view on the essentials will create movement on ‘make-or-break’ initiatives.

**Acknowledge that employees’ experiences may be quite different – and ever changing**

Being treated as an individual creates the feeling of being valued – especially at high stress moments.

### Address rewards and performance metrics

Rethink what success looks like in this new situation. By clarifying success factors, you create new pathways to excellence.

### Acknowledge and tackle the gap in informal interaction

Whilst research shows that productivity can be the same or even better when people work remotely, informal connections also have a critical role to play in generating innovative ideas. Provide platforms for informal interactions (e.g. ad hoc chats, virtual coffee meetings and so on).

### Most importantly, give people a voice

Meaningfully implementing all of the above steps will improve engagement and productivity during a crisis – but they will fall flat unless you implement a final initiative: giving employees real, palpable channels to express what they think, feel and experience. Constantly find ways to seek experience.

Source: Korn Ferry



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**ABOUT**

**ENGAGE ME**

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**We make internal communications more engaging, helping employees work with clarity and a sense of purpose.**

