



Keeping Your Workforce Engaged During Disruptions:

Quick Tips to Help Employees Feel Secure and Motivated



Your employees' engagement is directly linked to different aspects of their wellbeing — what they eat, how active they are, their relationships outside of work, and so much more. When their wellbeing engines aren't firing on all cylinders, morale, productivity, workplace safety, customer experience and other critical outcomes that drive your business all suffer.

Awareness around always-on distractions, multitasking and burnout is growing, and organizations are implementing solutions to help employees feel their best in all aspects of their lives.

But what about disruptions? Major domestic or global events, such as natural disasters, political unrest and health epidemics, fueled by a 24/7 news cycle and social media, can impact your people and the physical work environment. The outbreak of a new coronavirus, COVID-19¹, is the latest example of such disruption.

These unexpected events can leave employees feeling distracted or just plain stressed out. Just last year, Gallup reported that worry and sadness are at an all-time high globally.² Our always-on news and social media culture may contribute to heightened anxiety.

As an employer, you're in a unique position to put your employees' minds at ease, direct them to resources and ensure that they have the support they need during difficult times. These tips are designed to help people feel and perform their best while remaining connected and engaged during workforce disruptions.

Create a Communication Plan

Maintain a steady line of communication to keep your workforce informed, aligned and engaged. Prepare by having a templated communication or FAQ document that can be amended for different situations. Work with the appropriate stakeholders within your organization or in the community to gather the information you need to compile a single source of truth for your employees.

A proactive communication approach can also establish an open environment and minimize fear, uncertainty and doubt and discourage the spread of rumors or negative talk. Lead with facts and keep the focus on how employees can stay informed and protect themselves.



Guidance and Templates for Crisis Communication

1. [Crisis Communication Plan - Ready.gov](#)
2. [Communicating with Employees During a Crisis - SHRM](#)
3. [6 Crisis Communication Plan Examples & How to Write Your Own - Hubspot](#)

Focus on People, Culture and Values

In some situations, it's not just what you say, but what you do, that matters. A unified response demonstrates that your organization is addressing the situation while keeping your values and employees' best interests top of mind.

Uncertainty can increase stress levels and cause breaks in normal routines. Self-care is just as important now as it is at any other time.

Continue to encourage healthy habits in and out of the workplace to help employees maintain their physical and mental health. Your wellbeing program and platform can be a highly effective way to communicate and keep employees engaged during any disruption you may be experiencing. Virgin Pulse members engage with the app an average of 21 days a month. By putting your communications front and center where employees are already going for their wellbeing, you'll break through the noise of excessive emails and ensure everyone across your organization has access to the best information in the moment of need.

Depending on the event, company-wide challenges can foster camaraderie and awareness and help employees focus on daily goals and tasks to support their health and happiness. Consider offering to match employees' donations toward initiatives. During the historic bushfires in 2019, individuals, groups and companies banded together to donate \$67 million dollars to the Australian Red Cross to provide disaster relief for firefighters, evacuees, wildlife and more.

You can connect people across your organization and breakdown workplace barriers by providing them with opportunities to take action together.

Leverage Your Wellbeing Platform to Streamline Communications and Engage Your Workforce

Your wellbeing platform is the trusted place that your employees turn to for all of their health and wellbeing needs. Leverage yours to provide updates, information and activities specific to COVID-19 and your workplace.

- 1. Use the calendar functionality in your Virgin Pulse app to promote company communications, meetings or webinars about your plans to safeguard your employees for COVID-19.**
- 2. Information is key right now. It's imperative that you provide factual and timely updates to all your employees, regardless of where they are. Use custom daily cards to better inform and further educate your population.**
- 3. Promote healthy habits related to maintaining good health and hygiene — such as hand washing, wiping down surfaces in shared spaces and disinfecting commonly touched objects like mobile phones, computer mice and laptops — with custom habits.**
- 4. Practicing healthy behaviors can help support your immune system to fight viruses. Launch a company-wide activity challenge to keep employees engaged and moving while they're working from home.**
- 5. Leverage a promoted healthy habit challenge across your organization to encourage healthy behaviors. You can create your own or choose one from our library, such as stretching, mindfulness or reading, to help manage stress and engage your population with their wellbeing.**
- 6. Mobilize your internal wellbeing champions to get the word out about daily healthy habits employees should be practicing and the best resources available to them.**
- 7. Use daily cards to promote relevant programs to your population, such as telemedicine, health coaching, Next Steps Consult™, benefits concierge services or internal staff support.**
- 8. Launch a custom survey to get the pulse on how your employees are feeling so you can respond in real time.**
- 9. Help employees manage key stressors such as anxiety, sleep, nutrition and mental health by promoting and connecting them with relevant support, programs and benefits.**

- 10. Visit the Client Resource Center for instructions and ideas on how to customize your communications to promote your response plan.**

Ensure Employees Have Access to Benefits and Resources

Disruptive events can cause employees to worry about the unknowns. These feelings of stress and anxiety may require immediate support. Point your people to your employee assistance program (EAP) for counseling, health and wellness resources. If you have access to health coaching, benefits concierge services or internal staff support, include that information as well.

Depending on the situation, some or all your workforce might need time off or accommodations for alternative working options.

Remind employees of their time off benefits: floating holidays, emergency days or mental health days. Plan for a remote work policy for affected employees during times when travel or large gatherings of people should be avoided i.e. extreme weather events or infectious disease outbreaks.

Some people may cope more effectively and recover from stressful events more quickly than others. A facts-forward, solution-oriented approach is the best avenue to keep your workforce on task, but managers and executives should mobilize with a heavy dose of empathy for every individual's unique situations.

¹<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

²[Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report. https://www.gallup.com/analytics/248906/gallup-global-emotions-report-2019.aspx](https://www.gallup.com/analytics/248906/gallup-global-emotions-report-2019.aspx)