



5 Ways to Improve Employee Confidence during a crisis.

By: The Growth GPS Team

Now more than ever, Leaders need to build Employee Confidence

As we enter a new realm of the modern workplace with COVID-19 (Coronavirus), the way you react as a leader will have a huge impact on your employees.

And the way your employees react can have a huge impact on your business.



Your employees are likely already stressed out with their day to day activities, deadlines, goals, etc. Add on a crisis like the Coronavirus and their mental state can plummet quickly.

With the Coronavirus continuing to spread, organizations are being pushed to think about employee safety in a whole new dimension – addressing ways to handle disease prevention in the workplace. And addressing employees’ well-being at home – especially as schools are closed which drives more working parents to take time off work.

In many cases, companies are moving to a remote working environment using technology to drive collaboration and conversations. An estimated 42 million Americans or about 29% of the U.S. workforce, are able to work from home according to a Bloomberg report. But not all want to and certainly not all are able.

On March 13th, Gallup released data from its new Remote Work Survey: Productivity Measurement Amidst COVID-19, detailing how workers felt about their employers' preparedness for extended remote work as a large part of the country shifts to work remotely.

- 49% say they had never worked from home prior to the COVID-19 outbreak
- 23% say they only work from home during special circumstances, such as caring for sick kids or during extreme weather events.

The study goes on to say a significant number of workers felt uneasy about working from home, with 43% noting that a work from home policy would seriously harm their productivity. But it's far more than productivity they're concerned about.

Their confidence in the future of their jobs, their families, their savings, and more is shaken to its core. When the future is unknown and unpredictable, we don't know how to act, how to prepare and what to prioritize.

Confidence Crisis

This confidence crisis happens when people have more time to overanalyze and focus on the "negatives" of what's happening around them, like the Dow crashing or every store being out of toilet paper, than the "positives."

It's simply human that as our minds begin to swirl out of control, our emotions take over, creating a mental and physical storm of anxiety and no place to go to ease it.

Consider: What are your employees feeling and thinking about?

- Stress about how to get their work done
- Worry about how to care for loved ones
- Uncertainty about what's going to happen next
- Panic about food and supplies
- Anxiety about paying bills

These emotions take a toll on every aspect of an employee's life, including work. 56% of surveyed employees say that anxiety affects their job performance, and half report a negative impact on relationships with co-workers, peers and family.

Even the CDC recognizes the impact of a crisis on employees with the following action on its Business Pandemic Influenza Checklist:

- Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your employees and customers: Evaluate employee access to and availability of mental health and social services during a pandemic, including corporate, community, and faith-based resources, and improve services as needed.

Be the Confidence-inspiring Leader

How many companies do you think are prepared to create a positive employee experience that instills confidence? In a way that supports employees mental, emotional, and physical needs?

During COVID-19 or any crisis for that matter?

Many companies are focusing on communications as the primary means to help employees. That's a keen first step, but it's only part of a much bigger opportunity to keep employees engaged, productive and confident.



Here at Growth GPS, our driving mission is to help clients build healthy cultures, where employees want to work and customers want to do business.

Healthy cultures begin with putting people first, employees first, and building everything else to embrace that. Employees are people first, far more than "human resources."

It begins with leadership. Follow the tips below to put people first.

5 Ways Leaders can Improve Employee Confidence

1. COMMUNICATE

Remember communication is a 2-way street! In addition to informing employees about what your company is doing about the crisis, be sure to ask them what they need and what they think the company should be doing.

It's a time to over-communicate and be transparent about it. If there's no specific action plan yet, don't be afraid to tell employees that. Let employees know what you're struggling with, the options you're considering. Be human. It's not a time to be super-human, we're all in it together.

Be sure to update employees as things change. Just as we see on the news, recommendations and actions taking place by our government change almost daily, and they probably are with your company as well. Employees will appreciate more frequent, shorter communications.

Oh, a very big thing: email is not communication. Email is a way to share data. Which brings us to #2.

2. CONNECT

During times of great unknowns, connection is a powerful motivator. Connection is personal. Connection keeps us grounded and linked. Connection reminds us we're part of a team, a group of people who depend on each other.

Have your managers and supervisors reach out personally to their team members verbally to make sure they're ok. Offer an open dialogue anytime the employee feels overwhelmed or needs help with work-related items.

Working remotely or on an unusual schedule is isolating. They add change to what we feel is a changing environment all around us. Building connection goes to the heart of breaking that feeling of isolation.

This may seem like standard fair, but most managers believe texting and emailing is all they need to do. That's not connection! Texting and emailing are impersonal and don't trigger the endorphins that a conversation does. Responding to texts and emails only piles-on to workload. Don't text, connect.

3. CARE

Without becoming a therapist, ask employees how you can help them with their work. Do they have access to a computer at home? Can they access emails from work at home? Do they have a means to reach other employees? Can they reach HR?

With a little more time on their hands, many employees working fewer hours or remotely have a rare opportunity to focus on their wellness. Studies claim it takes 2 months on average before a new habit becomes automatic. Given the recommendation for social distancing may last that long, this is a good opportunity to form some new beneficial habits, like meditation.

Investigate your Benefits package in detail. Explore what your health insurance covers that employees can take advantage of now in addition to the standard medical coverage. Do they cover wellness initiatives as well as medical conditions? If so, promote that to employees; if they don't, consider doing so.

4. COMMUNITY

Encourage employees to build virtual communities to provide opportunities to connect people who otherwise don't work together, forming new relationships and friendships.

A community could form around a particular employee's passion or hobby, such as meditation or yoga, which that employee can share with others who may want to give it a try or simply "tune in" to connect with colleagues.

Employ your technology tools such as MS Teams in new ways. Allow employees to share recipes, exercise tips, productivity tips and other hobbies with one another. Encourage employees to create online communities like movie review groups, gamers, etc.

Besides the immediate benefits, your company will benefit by employees experimenting with collaboration tools during this "downtime" so they are more comfortable with them and inclined to use them for business purposes when things return to normal.

5. CREATE

As the unusual and unpredictable swirl about, the crisis offers fertile ground for creativity. Inject fun into some of this – do your best to make “laughter the best medicine.”

Provide opportunities for creativity in what might otherwise be boring, work stuff:

- Start virtual meetings by asking participants to share a funny story
- Celebrate in new ways – imagine what an online birthday celebration might look like, and how you can achieve higher participation than if it were taking place in your facility
- Giving back – many companies encourage employees to give back to their local communities together, often by providing 1-3 paid time off days a year dedicated to this. How can employees at your company make a lasting difference by doing something out of the ordinary now?
- Challenge employees to share ideas for what else your company can do to help them, help their families, help the community.
- What ideas do employees have to fairly spread the work schedule around to everyone who wants to work?
- Create an Online Idea Box!

About Growth GPS

Growth GPS is an independent consulting & training firm that assists organizations to achieve sustainable growth through culture development, aligning and engaging individuals and teams to courageously embrace change and perform flawlessly. We build “Employer of Choice” cultures, with our most successful clients recognized as Top Workplaces (Detroit Free Press/Energage) and Cool Places to Work (Crain’s).

It’s our pleasure to share tips here for the benefit of our clients and those who will be. For any questions, email us at info@growthgps.com. Learn more at www.growthgps.com.