

RE-ENTRY: THE BIG CONCEPTS

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We live and work in unprecedented times. There is no historical model to reference. Nor is there a proven roadmap. We live in a time where best practices may or may not apply – as we reconcile the new workforce and new normal in which we all operate today. We need to know that there is a clear path to the future, but the reality is that there remain many unknowable variables in order to define that direction. So, leaders can do what they do best – lead through the chaos and transition in which we are navigating now.

This guide is designed to support the many important things that you are doing as leaders and to spark ideas of things that can serve as a bridge to not only the future, but to your people and their journey back to work. While uncertainty will prevail, one thing we do know is that organizations are made up of people – how we support and connect with them will determine our future and that of our organizations.

UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHE AND CURRENT REALITY

The Reality:

- There is a need to restart businesses immediately.
- There is intense conflict: deciding the right and safe time.
- The unknown will remain the greatest unknown.
- Each of us may believe that we are practicing safe standards, but we're not convinced that our co-workers are being as careful as we are.
- As a society, we have invested in the understanding that "Stay at home = Greater Good."
- We have questions wondering if our customers are ready for us and if they can pay for our goods/services.
- There are competing considerations - COVID-19 spread vs. fear of return vs. fear of continued employment and income.

Understanding Employee and Consumer Psyche:

- People don't know what to believe.
- People want to get back to life and their place of work, but are fearful.
- People don't know what is safe.
- People don't know whom to trust.
- People are concerned about any risk to their health and the health of those closest to them.
- People are concerned about their financial well-being.
- People don't know where to begin or how to prioritize.
- People think they are supposed to stay away for the good of our community and to slow the spread.
- People are disconnected from the future.

Our leaders need to feel safe. Our employees need to feel safe. Consumers need to feel safe. Trust must be built with and within each constituency.

THE BASICS: NEUTRALIZE. BUILD TRUST. CREATE ACTION.

The Pathway:

In order to understand, inform, educate, and connect with our employees and customers, we must approach our efforts in three distinct categories:

Neutralize. Build Trust. Create Action.

Neutralize: Employees are fearful. They are incapable of fully moving forward with the uncertainty of the business and health environment and conflicting news they consume daily. We must actively work to provide a sense of balance and work to create a neutral environment from which they can begin to process the concept of the “return” to business.

Build Trust: Without trust, there is no relationship – inside or outside your company. Trust is one of the core elements a psychologically safe environment requires to work and function. Leaders must find new ways to build more authentic relationships with not only the employees, but with the employees and their trust in the organization and its leaders.

Create Action: Many people believe that action is what is required to reignite the economy and get us back to “normal.” However, we need to encourage responsible, thoughtful and intentional action. We cannot encourage action for action’s sake – someone will get hurt, energy will be wasted and it will take us in a direction that is not healthy for the business.

A High Level Approach for Companies

The goal of every leader is to establish credible, trustworthy practices and actions that will reassure each employee, calm consumers and give everyone the confidence to keep moving forward. This will be built on the belief that people are prioritizing their personal health and that of their family. Work to educate and continually reinforce the fact that your company is prepared, thoughtful, safe, and ready for your employees first, our customers next and then your community. Accept the belief that health starts inside the company with the actions and practices you take consistently for your people, which will extend to the care they provide for others.

SOME BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL STARTERS

THERE ARE SOME BASIC BUSINESS PRACTICES THAT COMPANIES ARE CONSIDERING AS THEY PREPARE FOR RE-ENTRY.

1. Employee health protocols and practices
2. Safety reviews and additional safety protocols
3. Policy reviews
4. Business strategy + adaptation
5. Leadership communication strategy
6. Business unit modification and review
7. Culture protection and evolution
8. Strategizing the future

These tasks touch on leadership functions that companies across the world are addressing. As companies begin the process of moving forward, each of these areas of focus will remain, however, some will be reprioritized. Most notable, the first two should remain at the top of every company’s priority list – you cannot operate without the health of your employees and the safety of everyone you impact.

CREATING A SAFE WORKPLACE: A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

In times like these, look to major health systems to see what they are doing and how they are addressing safety and community health. Safety is paramount in everything health systems do as leading and respected organizations of health. In working with a large health organization, they shared their perspective and practices. They constantly evaluate, measure and adapt to changing needs that impact safety across their organization. It is fundamental to their belief system, their values and their way of working. They do not sacrifice safety in any way at any time.

Safety, regardless of how embedded it is in the organization, must continually be practiced and discussed. It can never be taken for granted. The system sends communications, posts environmental signage, instills safe behaviors throughout their training and leadership on every level. Safety is a non-negotiable.

The following three charts are messaging from the health system:

WE'RE READY FOR YOU.

- WE HAVE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF PPE, ACCESS TO TREATMENTS AND RESEARCH PROTOCOLS, INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT OUR WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY.
- WE HAVE CONTINUED TO DELIVER BABIES, PROVIDE ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE, AND CONDUCT SURGERIES DURING THE STAY AT HOME PERIOD.
- WE HAVE CAREFULLY WORKED TO REDESIGN THE EXPERIENCE TO MAKE IT MORE PERSONAL, ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE.
- WE HAVE THOUGHTFULLY AND SAFELY MADE CERTAIN SERVICES OPEN BASED ON COMMUNITY NEED AND PROVIDED AN AMPLE SUPPLY OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT.
- WE HAVE PERSONALIZED THE EXPERIENCE AND SIMPLIFIED THE PROCESS FOR MEETING YOU WHERE YOU ARE (EMOTIONALLY + PHYSICALLY).

NORMAL WILL LOOK DIFFERENT.

- **WE WILL CONTINUE TO SCREEN OUR WORKFORCE AND ALL THOSE WHO ENTER OUR FACILITIES WILL CONTINUE TO WEAR A MASK.**
- **WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENFORCE A NO VISITOR POLICY.**
- **WE WILL CONTINUE OUR RIGOROUS STERILIZATION PROCESS FOR ALL FACILITIES AND FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES FOR INFECTION CONTROL.**
- **WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE OUR WORKFORCE HAS AN AMPLE SUPPLY OF PPE.**
- **WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRACTICE AND ENCOURAGE PROPER HAND HYGIENE AND OTHER PREVENTATIVE SAFETY MEASURES.**
- **WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENFORCE SOCIAL DISTANCING PROTOCOLS IN THE WORKPLACE.**

WE'VE REDESIGNED THE EXPERIENCE FOR YOU.

- **WE HAVE DEVELOPED THE "SAFE WAIT" SYSTEM – THROUGH FACILITY STERILIZATION, LIMITED WAIT ROOM EXPOSURE AND TEXT MESSAGING.**
- **WE HAVE INTRODUCED A "1 IN 1 OUT" PATIENT PROTOCOL, LIMITING PATIENT INTERACTION AND DECREASING OFFICE VISIT VOLUME.**
- **WE HAVE INSTITUTED EXTENDED HOURS TO BETTER PACE THE PATIENT VISITS AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL CONVENIENCE FOR PATIENTS AND SAFETY FOR ALL.**

Of course, there are many things that employers like this health system are doing to ensure the health and well-being of their workforce and everyone who interacts with them. These are just a few of the basics to ensure safety.

CREATING A SAFE WORKPLACE: A STATE PERSPECTIVE

Every state will issue its own unique guidelines, with some more restrictive and prescriptive than others. Below are some high level recommendations from the state of Texas. It is up to each person and each company to do what is right, what is best and what is safest for them. Below are basic protocols for adoption by all businesses in the state.

State Recommended Health Protocols for Employees

- Train all employees on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Self-screen for any and all symptoms of COVID-19.
- Screen employees before coming into work and do not allow an employee to enter the office with any of the COVID-19 symptoms.
- Send home anyone with symptoms or signs of COVID-19.
- Do not allow any previously infected employee to return to work, until cleared, in writing, by a physician.
- Follow the state's policy on COVID patients, including exposure to those they have come in close contact with, before they return to work. (At minimum 14-day self-quarantine after the last date of exposure.)
- Maintain 6 feet of separation with others and minimize all forms of contact.
- Do not ignore other illnesses and do not come to work feeling sick, even if the symptoms are different than COVID-19.

- Have employees wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the business and after each interaction with any other person.
- Have employees maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, other measures such as face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation shall be rigorously practiced.
- If an employer provides a meal for employees, employers are recommended to have the meal individually packed for each employee.
- Act in a consistent manner with the actions taken by many employers across the state. Consider requiring all employees to wear cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth).

State Recommended Protocols for your Facilities

- Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, coffee machines, copy machines, countertops, shared areas, meeting spaces, and restrooms.
- Disinfect any items that come into contact with customers and after each meeting.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees and customers.
- Ensure proper spacing (even in open work environments) between employees at work.
- Consider having an employee manage and control access to the office, including opening doors to prevent clients/customers from touching door handles.
- Where possible, use disposable items in the office and dispose of them promptly after usage.
- Place readily visible signage throughout the business to remind everyone of best hygiene practices.
- Provide clear written communication to each employee of the expectations around the protocols for hygiene and office sanitation.

ASKING QUESTIONS: GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH TESTING AND NEW NORMAL

One of the biggest conversations for the foreseeable future revolves around testing. But, today questions remain more prevalent than definitive answers. Here are questions to get you started:

1. Which is the best test?
2. Is the test available for my workforce?
3. Where can it be administered?
4. How reliable are the results?
5. How long do the antibodies last?
6. What should employers use as the criteria for testing as we consider re-entering the workforce? Broad testing of all employees? Only those with symptoms?
7. What issues are you expecting with the rapid antibody tests?
8. Who are the best (most reliable) manufacturers?
9. What questions should we ask suppliers as employers consider purchasing or partnering with vendors to administer?
10. How can employers create the safest environment possible to avoid another spike in cases as people begin to return to work?
11. Do you anticipate there being any other forms of testing outside of the antibody test that gauges one's health prior to returning to work?
12. What is better: onsite testing vs offsite testing?
13. Would employees tested onsite at their work location be at higher risk of being exposed? (exp. nurse travels to x,y,z company 5x a week and tests 100+ employees a day vs. employee tests at referred/personal clinic)
14. Will other hospital systems try to do this or partner with the Quests/LabCorps of the world?
15. We've seen in the media about social distancing needing to be 20ft as opposed to 6ft - is this accurate?"
16. What is the correct PPE we should provide our employees?

For every question, there can be multiple answers. We continue to work through the data and research to identify the best and most appropriate and reliable answers. Our recovery depends on information and answers. It heavily depends on testing as well.

CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACE

We recognize that we can create every practice and protocol necessary and still people may not feel safe. This is where psychological safety comes into focus.

Psychological safety is the balance of fear with trust, employee voice, and empowerment. Organizational research has identified psychological safety as an important factor in understanding how people collaborate to achieve a shared outcome. As employees who will already be filled with anxiety and fear head back to the office, field, retail stores, etc., leaders and managers will need to have an understanding of how to create a psychologically safe environment that promotes a clear sense of trust, the ability to feel safe speaking up (voicing their opinion and concerns), as well as allowing employees to feel empowered to make decisions and get their work done.

What is employee trust and how do I ensure there is trust in my organization?

Establishing trust is foundational to any relationship, especially between leaders, managers and their employees. Everything a leader is trying to accomplish - inspire employees through a vision, execute on a strategy, hit key performance metrics, and of course make the company profitable, all rely on first building and then deepening trust.

Organizational trust is an employee's confidence in their company making decisions that will be beneficial or at least not harmful to the employee. It is a fair bar. Trust within organizations can be complex and multidimensional. People in the organization must trust their leaders to make good decisions, employees must trust their direct managers; and people must trust and believe in the company, especially during challenging times.

While each of these forms of trust are distinct, they are intricately connected in a high functioning company. Taking this multi-layered approach allows leaders and managers to approach trust with simple virtues, such as:

- **CONSISTENCY,**
- **CLEAR COMMUNICATION, AND A WILLINGNESS TO TACKLE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS OPENLY AND HONESTLY.**

Such simple, yet foundational tactics provide the building blocks to establish, build and over time, deepen trust within the organization.

What is employee voice and how do employees and the organization benefit?

As employees are being asked to return to the workplace, individuals will respond in different ways. For some it may be business as usual, others may be highly tentative and sensitive to the return, and others may be overly insensitive to the new

situation. This will call for leaders and managers to be highly attuned to what employees are saying (voice) and who they are saying it to. Even prior to COVID-19, research showed that regardless of how open a manager may be, employees aren't necessarily willing to speak out with their ideas or opinions. This makes it extremely important as we get back to work that leaders and managers build trust and make it safe for employees to speak up.

Creating safe ways for employees to communicate their views to managers is the main way employees can influence matters that affect them at work. Leaders attempt to promote transparency and open lines of communication through a variety of tools; open-door policies, satisfaction surveys, town halls, etc. Understanding and promoting employee voice is crucial. Employee voice contributes to sustainable business performance and the following capabilities:

- SUPPORTS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT,
- AIDS INEFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING;
- CONTRIBUTES TO INNOVATION.

What is employee empowerment and how does it contribute to psychological safety?

The third core element contributing to psychological safety is empowerment or providing employees the means for making important decisions and helping ensure those decisions are correct. Once again, as businesses bring

Each of these must be nurtured to ensure the employee voice is heard and listened to carefully.

their employees back to the office, field, etc., leaders will understandably feel the need to provide strong oversight to employees. Because of the financial standing of the company and industry, there will be an increased need for control, which can overtake even the best of leaders. The tighter leaders lead, the more closed off the employee becomes, leading to disengagement.

Empowering employees is in essence granting them the autonomy to do their work. This is all about performance at every level of the job. When the employee feels empowered, their performance improves, safety improves, satisfaction improves and defects and errors decrease. Additionally, empowered employees are more likely to go the extra mile, be more productive, have good communication, and embrace change. If an employee is consistently provided the autonomy to do their work they will be more willing to trust and speak up. This begins to create a psychologically safe work climate.

So, as you think about re-entry, prioritize: trust, employee voice and employee empowerment. This will provide the foundation of a psychologically safe work environment, where people feel safe to do what is right and best for the organization, especially in times of crisis and rapid transition.

10 CONSIDERATIONS FOR RE-ENTRY

1. It's all about safety – physical, emotional and psychological:

Safety is the number one priority for every organization. It is and will remain that way for months and longer. Safety must remain an actual priority and not simply become words. Actions matter to ensure every form of safety. Putting safety expectations, practices and protocols in place is step number one. But, leaders must also prioritize emotional and psychological safety. Psychological safety is the balance of fear with trust, employee voice and employee empowerment. Assistance you provide during times like these will define and further cement your culture and commitment to your people.

Consider beefing up culture practices and positivity. Provide additional mental health and coaching resources for your team to access.

2. Stay distant and remote:

While coming back together as an organization, it is vital to keep many of the practices that have defined our time away from each other. Being vigilant on safety norms is an organizational absolute. Encourage people to work remotely as much as possible and as appropriate for your company. Keeping people distant physically will be a key for long term health of the individual and organization. If they cannot work remotely, or if you cannot space the workforce or work day to reduce density in the office, identify other means to ensure distance. Avoid group meetings and instead host them digitally, even while everyone is in the office. There are ways to be connected and still keep the necessary and safe distance.

CONSIDER HOW TO KEEP PEOPLE IN THE OFFICE REMOTE OR HOW TO INCREASE CONTACT AND DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM.

3. Prepare without acting yet (say no, but consider yes):

Saying NO to ideas and strategies right now is as good as saying YES to something else. “No” is going to be very important. All sorts of scrappy ideas are being thrown around. It is great to encourage the ideas, but recognize that the best strategy may be to stay core to what you do best. Every company should be asking themselves, “Ok, within our box and with our available resources, how can we most effectively move the needle?” The challenge is that there is changing data and continuing market uncertainty. The facts are too wonky to make long-term decisions. Prepare for decisions and potential outcomes, but the world has hit pause. Be ready to hit go – when it is right for you!

CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN BALANCE THE NEED FOR INNOVATION WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF REMAINING FOCUSED AND STACKING UP EARLY WINS.



4. Admit you don't know:

Employees want to know what's happening with their jobs and the organization's health. Leaders have no choice but to provide honest answers. “I don't know” is okay, but employees want to hear what you do and don't know about what's next. Employees are desperate for their leaders to lead them. The questions will continue to populate and when employees return to work, the questions will likely multiply. The reality is that the answers may not be any more clear to you or them – you must still engage in the conversation regardless of the level of clarity you have.

Consider
leading with questions and be prepared to say “I don't have the answer, yet, but when I do, I will share it with you.”



5. Perfectionism is not the immediate goal:

Don't demand the perfect. Good enough might be okay in the immediate re-entry. It is good to just get back to work. Your people must focus on the task of the return and getting into a new normal. This does not absolve them from poor work or repeated mistakes, but it reinforces the importance of understanding their psyche and working to help them limit mistakes as they reenter the workplace. Remember, that things may not be new to you, but for the average employee, most things will feel new and they are more unsure of everything around them. Leaders need to be prepared

to be patient and compassionate, but very clear about expectations.

Consider limiting judgement of employee behavior right now. Educate and move on when you experience employees that are frozen or afraid.

6. Truthful information matters:

We are bombarded inside and outside of work with information. Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern what is real and not, what is true or false. We must work to prize truthful information from which to operate and react. Part of that will include educating the workforce and establishing the organization's position on health and safety as well as any host of other conflicting information. Encourage your organization to react to factual information. Value evidence and evaluate sources. Develop an openness to seek new evidence and be willing to change your mind based on data. Rumors

have fertile ground to take hold in environments where change is the norm. So, leaders must be extra vigilant to ensure the truth is not only out front, but lived in the organization.

CONSIDER HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO MAKE ANALYTICAL AND REFLECTIVE DECISIONS INSTEAD OF DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM EMOTIONAL AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

7. Encourage Mindfulness:

There is a science behind the practice. There is clear research that supports the fact that mindfulness is not only a feel good, but a good for business investment of time. There are many ways you can encourage mindfulness, including breathing exercises and meditation. Find ways to support your people in ways that you always have as well as new ways that recognize the times in which we are navigating.

Consider encouraging 5 minute meditation daily to start the practice at work.

8. Prepare for continued disruption:

No one can predict what will happen next with the health of our world. And, why try guessing? It's possible that we're in an open/close economic state of chaos for some time. The goal of leadership is to prepare for whatever dislocation is coming next - COVID-19 or whatever. We must think about how do we get our teams prepared for ups/downs and constant change. We must consider how we establish the new normal and all get comfortable with it. Nimble companies will have a strategic advantage.

CONSIDER HOW WILL YOU WANT TO ESTABLISH THE NEW NORMAL OF CONSTANT AND SOMEWHAT JARRING CHANGE.

9. Rid your company of looking back:

The world has changed and so have our perspectives. The past will not look like the future and the future will not look like the past. And, for many, that is a positive. But, it will require time, strategy and immense effort. It is easiest for the workforce to embrace “the good old days,” but our focus as leaders is to reorient them to future possibilities. The workforce must be connected to the vision. It is important for leaders to give hope, even with uncertainty, that the future will be filled with possibilities. Part of the future is embracing a leadership of positivity. This is the ultimate link to ensure people are looking forward and tethered to the company’s desired future state.

Consider

how leaders can incorporate positivity into the organization to keep the workforce focused on the future state.

10. Culture is everything:

This is about your people. It is about their safety, well-being and performance. Intuitively, organizations cut culture in times of financial difficulties. It is actually the time to increase culture focus recognizing the dislocation they are experiencing, the new environment they are reentering, and the reality that we are asking them to do more with less. This is your opportunity to rethink, redefine or reaffirm your values, behaviors and purpose – the foundation of your organizational identity. Leaders should go all out reaffirming that chaos will be the norm in the work environment, but culture will be your unmovable foundation.

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DOWN ON YOUR
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