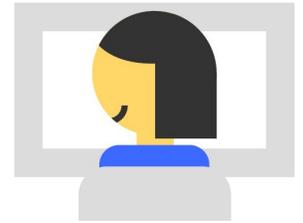


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## Culture in the time of coronavirus



### **Supporting caregivers during the coronavirus outbreak**

As the coronavirus spreads throughout the US, businesses are taking bold measures including limiting travel and on-site visitors, canceling events, and encouraging employees to work from home (WFH). In the most affected areas, schools and daycares have already closed, and this trend will likely continue as the virus spreads.

In this paper, we are focusing on the impact that coronavirus will have on working parents. How will working parents successfully WFH while also taking care of their children? Juggling work and parenthood is challenging in the best circumstances, balancing work and parenthood during coronavirus will bring unprecedented stress for your parent employees.

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In times of crises, it is critical that organizations come together - harnessing culture and empathy to support one another.

However, when your employees are anxious, distracted, and concerned about the welfare of their families this can be an incredible challenge.



We're here to help you think through these issues.

We've talked to experts, followed best management principles, and spoken with working parents across the country to create this guide. We focus on practices you can use to enable your employees to WFH effectively and ways to support working parents at this critical moment.

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## Culture in the time of coronavirus

### **Organizational considerations:**

- 1) *Stay informed:* [Here's a good primer on COVID-19 from the CDC](#), [this site has excellent updates](#), [this map](#) shows confirmed case locations.
- 2) *Establish a communication pace:* Let your entire workforce know what the operational plan is and to do so very frequently (even if there are no updates). It will inspire trust and confidence in leadership.
- 3) *Check and test your tech:* Ensure that your tech department is ready, willing, and able to support a fully distributed team. Slack, Zoom, Trello, VPNs, servers etc must be ready. Do your employees need any further training on how to use this tech while out of the office?
- 4) *Manage from the top:* It's a good time to do some quick training on leading virtually. Ensure your managers know how to and are comfortable using any new systems. Secondly, push your managers to start setting clear expectations of their teams about how they will work while remote.

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### Working from home (WFH) effectively:

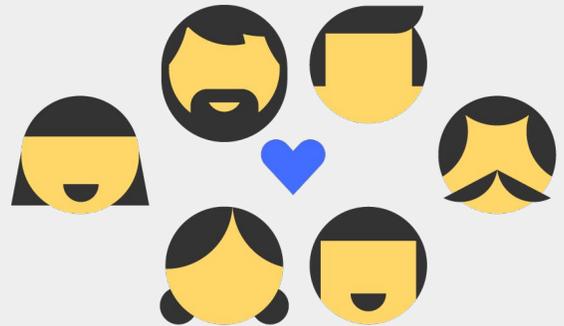
- 1) *Be explicit about rules & practices:* Be upfront about what the expectations are for work-hours, meeting attendance, background noise, and participation. If you don't have established WFH guidelines, now would be an optimal time to compose them.
- 2) *Be trustful:* Just because people are home doesn't mean they are just watching *The Price Is Right* in their PJs. Give your people the benefit of the doubt but do check in and make sure they are tracking to fulfill projects and assignments.
- 3) *Provide some latitude:* Encourage employees to take breaks, have a walk, squeeze in a lunch time run. It can be a needed change of pace that also boosts productivity. Think this seems counter-intuitive? [Research shows otherwise.](#)

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- 4) *Make it fun:* Perhaps most critical, is maintaining and building culture while your workforce is distributed. Without the group lunches and water cooler banter, WFH can be isolating. Making sure that your employees feel connected is just as important as having the technology to connect. Try events that connect your employees:

- virtual coffee breaks
- light hearted interviews with senior staff
- video hangouts
- employee spotlight
- WFH office tour
- updates to the work blog
- podcast clubs



Test and try things that fit your distinct culture, while creating space for your employees.

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## Culture in the time of coronavirus



### **Managing working parents :**

*First some questions for you consider:*

- Can you subsidize childcare for your employees?
- Will you enable employees to move their working hours?
- Can you stagger shifts?
- Can you organize a childcare co-op among employees?
- Will you force them to use sick days if they are unable to work a complete 8 hours?

*Best practices:*

- 1) *Be gymnasts:* Your working parents will be extra stressed and WFH continuously from 9-5 will likely not be possible for them. This will require you to be trustful. Give them the flexibility to manage their own schedule. Yet, ensure you have alignment on KPIs. You may be surprised how efficient they will be.

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- 2) *Divide and conquer:* If your employee's partner is also forced to WFH, encourage them to set their own schedule so they can both work and provide care.
- 3) *Subsidize care:* A high impact option, but expensive. Providing a subsidy for childcare would go a long way to supporting your working parents through this period.
- 4) *Designate space:* Encourage them to dedicate a space in their home to work. The more habitual and routine the place of work, the more they should be able to focus. If possible (and it may not be), your parents will likely find it most helpful to physically separate themselves from their children.
- 5) *Communication systems:* Let your parents schedule calls/meetings during their children's nap times. Also, your parents may find it helpful to hang a sign on their door or desk to signal when it is and is not ok for their child to come in/say hi.
- 6) *Act as a broker:* You may have to help promote and broker arrangements with working parents and their teams to find a solution that is both practical and sensible.



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## Culture in the time of coronavirus

- 6) *Promote community*: Set up a digital space for working parents across your workforce to connect so they can share tips, advice, stories, and just be human. It's a simple way to show you understand their unique needs.
- 7) *Provide additional support*: Leverage the tech and tools you have to provide additional resources to support them through this time. Hire a productivity expert or a family coach to do a digital Ask Me Anything session. Their world has been thrown upside down and expert guidance can go a long way.

**Empathy is the most important tool you can bring to work (and home) everyday. While these guidelines are meant to help you plan your firm's response to the coronavirus, they should also be considered best practices for WFH in general.**