

# Essential Guide to Managing Employees During Disruptions:

Quick Tips to Help Your  
Employees Feel Secure and  
Motivated





## ABOUT TALENTMAP

A thought leader focused exclusively on workplace culture and engagement measurements and research, TalentMap is passionate about understanding the people behind organizational success: Employees.

Since 1999, TalentMap has conducted tens of thousands of employee engagement surveys of more than 14 million employees. In partnership with public and private sector organizations globally, TalentMap's deep understanding of the unique methodologies and assumptions alongside volumes of accrued benchmark data have become vital resources for organizations that value their people.

TalentMap offers customizable employee engagement survey tools plus expert consulting services, deployment, data collection, analysis reporting, and post-survey action planning. This proprietary workplace intelligence process — developed and delivered by people-oriented talent — is consumed by leadership teams and HR professionals wanting to create positive organizational change.

## ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE

The Your Workplace enterprise is a leading authority on work culture issues. Our brand consists of an award-winning magazine, published six times a year; events, drawing hundreds of delegates nationwide; an array of products devoted to inspiring thriving workplaces, and a website designed to be a one-stop shop for all things related to thriving workplaces.

Reaching decision-makers—executives, people professionals and leaders in progressive organizations—Your Workplace delivers leading-edge, premium content about culture, management, leadership, wellness and more. Our edgy style and experience in the market makes us a leading content company with a 360-degree view of today's workplaces. Your Workplace is nimble and current, and serves as the voice for the next generation of great people leadership in Canada. Make. Work. Better.

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## WHILE NATURAL DISASTERS ARE AMONG THE MOST SERIOUS CATASTROPHES THAT COULD BEFALL A COMPANY, THEY ARE FAR FROM THE ONLY CRISES EMPLOYERS MAY HAVE TO WEATHER. THAT'S PARTICULARLY TRUE THESE DAYS, WHEN VIRAL CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS CAN SPREAD AT LEAST AS QUICKLY AS ACTUAL VIRUSES, LIKE COVID-19.

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-19, is the latest example of such disruption. These unexpected events can leave employees feeling distracted or just plain stressed out. Just last year in the Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report, [Gallup](#) reported that worry and sadness are at an all-time high globally. 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.

### Additional Resources for Crisis Communication

- [Scary Global Pandemic e-Book](#)
- [Rising Up From Defeat](#)
- [Disaster Management](#)
- [Communicating with Employees during a Crisis](#)



## 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.

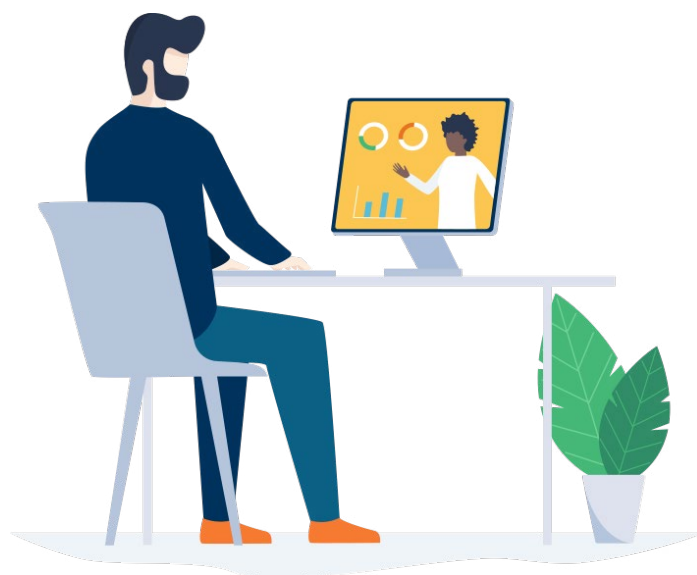
A proactive communication approach can also establish an open environment and minimize fear, uncertainty and doubt and discourage the spread of rumors or negative talk. Lead with facts and keep the focus on how employees can stay informed and protect themselves.

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

- 1. Get a team together.** Identify employees who will make up the crisis management team — the people who will know what to do when disaster strikes.
- 2. Information is key.** It's imperative that you provide factual and timely updates to all your employees, regardless of where they are. Use daily updates to better inform and further educate your population.
- 3. Promote healthy habits.** Institute 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. Practicing healthy behaviours can help support your immune system to fight viruses.
- 4. Avoid putting up roadblocks.** Trying to keep employees from communicating about crises via social media is futile. Instead, help them shape their messages by giving them correct information in a timely manner.



- 5. Act fast and only say what you know to be true.** Speed is of the essence when it comes to crisis communications, but it shouldn't come at the price of accuracy.
- 6. Mobilize internal wellness champions.** Get the word out about daily healthy habits employees should be practicing such as stretching, mindfulness or reading, to help manage stress and engage your population with their well-being.
- 7. Communication is critical.** If your organization is not yet ready to respond to an emergency, don't go silent. HR should at least let staffers know that the organization is gathering information and will follow up as soon as it can.
- 8. Launch a survey.** Get the pulse on how your employees are feeling so you can respond in real time. Help employees manage stressors such as anxiety, sleep, nutrition and mental health by promoting and connecting them with relevant support, programs and benefits.





## Focus on People, Culture and Values

In most situations, it's not 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 well-being program and any platforms you use can be a highly effective way to communicate and keep employees engaged during any disruption you may be experiencing. By putting your communications front and centre where employees are already going for their well-being, 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 upon the circumstances, company-wide challenges can foster camaraderie and awareness and help employees focus on daily goals and tasks to support their health and happiness. For example, 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. Consider offering to match employees' donations toward such initiatives.

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



## Ensure 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, which may include personal days, 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, such as extreme weather events or infectious disease outbreaks like COVID-19.

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



## Be Kind. Be Resilient.

When a disaster or pandemic like COVID-19 occurs, we need to be doggedly kind—kind to others and kind to ourselves. In moments of panic, we can forget how essential this is as we focus on feeling our own powerlessness. We are scared. As human beings, our natural response in a crisis is to come together. However, with COVID-19 we must practice social distancing. We must rise up and prioritize the health of our communities, both at home and at work. Make a choice: Choose to focus on kindness, compassion and resiliency in the coming weeks.

Nurturing personal resilience is never time wasted. Our ability to respond with optimism in the face of unprecedented challenge is a skill that will serve time and again. Building personal resilience is investing in the appropriate apparel to endure all weather conditions. We are in the midst of such a storm. Whether they be storms or squalls, or the conflicts and disagreements that occur at work, be resilient, agile and nimble.

Building resilience starts with a few simple steps:

1. Ask for help when you need it, and help those who ask
2. Share where and when you can, and avoid hoarding
3. Practice positivity, and see things that make you happy
4. When things get rocky, breathe deeply knowing that it will pass

When you are in the depths of an unprecedented situation, you will learn lessons in resiliency that you never expected. What you do and how you live through today will fundamentally impact how you will live, work and respond tomorrow. You are pre-paving your future.

Wherever you are in this beautiful global world that we share, be safe. Be well. Be kind to others. Feel the love and support around you. Use the tools you have at your disposal to feel as calm and centered as you can during uncertain times. Care for others the way you want others to care for you.