



The Changing Workplace, Trust & Culture

June 3, 2020

Summary

In our recent [webinar](#), *The Changing Workplace, Trust & Culture*, Ayesha Johnson, Elizabeth Levine, and Carla Reeves led an important discussion around ways in which employers can build and maintain strong workplace cultures, rooted in trust and community – a topic that is more critical now than ever before.

Trust as the Foundation of Every Employment Relationship:

Trust between employees and employers is a two-way street and will impact employees' ability to support and follow necessary changes to the workplace and workplace culture in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a high-trust environment, employees will be more willing to accept and adhere to such changes. In contrast, when employees lack faith or trust in leadership, employees will be suspect of and less likely to adhere to them. In general, employees working in a high-trust environment experience 40% less burnout, 50% higher productivity, 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, fewer sick days, and higher levels of engagement, as compared to employees in low-trust environments. You should strive to create a high-trust environment in your workplace.

Communication and Transparency:

In order to build trust, employers must communicate effectively and be transparent with employees. Employers should maintain a connection with their remote-working employees by regularly checking in with them via videoconferencing, phone, or email, in ways that are inclusive and replicate the direct interactions we are used to having in the physical workplace.

Keep your employees informed of the status of the business, plans to reopen the physical workplace, and steps the business is taking to provide employees with a safe place to work. Acknowledge that information may be subject to change and continue to keep employees informed of new developments. Do not be afraid to reach out to employees just to check in even when you do not have concrete plans or answers to every anticipated question. This regular and consistent communication is key to building and maintain trust with employees.

Demonstrating Care:

Communicate awareness of and empathy about the impact of the pandemic and what is happening in communities more broadly. Create space for employees to share their needs and challenges they may be facing due to the pandemic and quarantine, racism, police violence, and protest activity. Listen to what your employees have to say and accept what you are hearing as the real and unique experiences of unique individuals. Foster an environment in which employees feel supported in speaking up.

Flexibility and Adaptation:

Employers and employees must work together to shift the workplace from a traditional one, in which employees demonstrate their commitment by showing up to the workplace, to one in which all employees prioritize the needs of their colleagues and the workplace community. Employees must accept that they need to stay home if they are sick or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive, or is presumed positive, for COVID-19. To support and encourage employees to abide by these rules, try to be flexible in how you enforce your paid time off and sick time policies. Doing so can help to minimize the risk that employees will be incentivized to put the community at risk by coming into work when they should otherwise stay home.

Consistency and Commitment:

Understand that employees will be asked to make changes that may make them uncomfortable—such as wearing masks, social distancing, etc. Communicate that all employees will be held to the same standards to observe new workplace rules and protocols, including the highest performers and management-level employees. Ensure that you communicate consistently with employees at all levels of your workforce, including those that may currently be furloughed.

For More Information

Please contact your [Goulston & Storrs attorney contact](#).

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