



MONSTER HIRING AND RECRUITING IN A CRISIS THE LESSONS OF COVID-19



PART 1: CRISIS MANAGEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented upheaval across the board. Everything from the simplest task (grabbing a cup at your favorite coffee shop), to complex decisions (how and when should your company adapt new hiring strategies), has become a challenge. And many of those challenges can't easily be overcome.

The scope of the coronavirus crisis has caught us all by surprise, and the impact has been felt by companies of all sizes, across all industries. Some tough decisions have been (and continue to be) made regarding layoffs, policy changes, hiring, and unfortunately, in some cases, whether or not to shut the doors permanently.

We understand you may be struggling with this new way of doing business and could probably use a resource to turn to for answers. Monster, with our long history of supporting companies, is here for you with curated crisis management content for businesses.

We've created a three-part eBook series that takes a look at lessons learned and strategies developed during the pandemic, and how these can help companies be better prepared for, and able to move forward, during challenging times in the future.

Crisis management

In part one of our three-part series, we see how companies initially responded to the COVID-19 crisis and the lessons learned. From travel bans, to quarantines, to the sudden need to adjust policies (like work from home), many things changed both temporarily and permanently. We also delve into what companies did to protect their brands during this time and how these tactics are helping them build stronger reputations going forward. Lastly, we offer support to managers striving to emerge as strong leaders, as they help their teams navigate difficult circumstances.

The Monster Team

CRISIS MANAGEMENT: HOW COMPANIES RESPONDED TO COVID-19

The world is still in the midst of what could turn out to be one of the biggest pandemics of the century, and it's hit people hard where they spend a huge chunk of their time: at work.

With massive industry conferences canceled, mandatory travel bans, quarantines, and work-from-home policies in force, companies have been faced with balancing the health and safety of their employees with the need to keep the lights on.

"There are no rulebooks for this kind of stuff," says John Bremen, managing director of human capital and benefits for advisory firm Willis Towers Watson. "This is really a new and evolving situation."

Now that worldwide cases of COVID-19 are numbering over three million, and entire countries have been on lockdown for weeks, we asked recruitment professionals about how they handled the pandemic as it happened in real time, and expert advice with dealing with similar crises should they occur.

How companies handled travel bans and work from home policies

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state health departments offered (and continue to offer) guidance on travel bans for employers, but in the initial post-COVID period, companies stopped travel to

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There are no rulebooks for this kind of stuff.

John Bremen
Willis Towers Watson

affected countries first, then halted all business travel. Future considerations around travel bans and work from home policies will largely depend on where you operate and who your employees are, as well as government restrictions.

If you encourage employees to work remotely, your IT departments should have already been prepared to provide



laptops to those who need them or to set up technology so employees can access company systems from home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, “the CDC and the state departments of health have been trying to avoid large groups of people,” says Regina Morek, a human resources consultant in Ithaca, New York. “Employers might test ways they can have core staff—not a large group—at the workplace and then others working from home.”

How should you communicate company policy and developments to employees?

Employers should be using any and all channels to keep workers updated. “In times like this, I think overcommunicating is absolutely fine,” Morek says. She recommends communicating via email, via phone for those employees who don’t use their email or who don’t have access

to email and creating a special area on your website or intranet for COVID-19 employee updates.

Another option: create a dedicated phone number employees can use to find out the status of the workplace. “Supervisors must listen to employees and allay fears, as best they can, by conveying knowledge and facts,” Morek says.

That goes for more general COVID-19 information as well. More than half (59%) of companies have organized communication campaigns geared toward preventing the spread of the disease. (hint: wash your hands.)

Handling absences due to COVID-19 quarantines or school closures

How companies manage worker absences will vary depending on that employee’s vacation allotment, their

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duties, and their benefits in general. If a worker gets quarantined, for instance, but they can still work from home, they may not have to take any vacation or sick leave. During the COVID-19 outbreak, some companies pledged to continue to pay hourly workers their regular wage even if their hours were reduced. Uber offered drivers and delivery workers 14 days of financial assistance if they were quarantined or ill due to the coronavirus, Olive Garden (part of Darden Restaurants) pledged to offer all hourly workers 40 hours of annual paid sick leave, and Walmart provided two week's paid sick leave if they've been advised to quarantine for medical reasons, without using their existing sick leave.

For employers of workers in the service, food delivery, or healthcare industries where human contact is

necessary and/or the work can't be done remotely, it's important that you review PTO and sick leave policies. Workers are grappling with tough choices, trying to decide between working during the outbreak or losing pay if they don't have paid sick leave.

In a recent Wall Street Journal report, HR consulting firm leader Arthur J. Gallagher said he anticipated that companies would be willing to adjust their PTO policies due to the talent shortage many are experiencing. "With the tight labor market, most employers do not want to have to replace existing employees," he said. "I do suspect we will see an increase in flexibility," he said.

"Companies are trying to do what's in the best interest of their employees," Bremen says. "For some, [absence might be treated as] paid time off, for some it might be sick time, and for some it might be short-term disability leave."

You'll want to be clear about your policies and what will happen if workers must go home for extended absences. "Does it qualify as paid family leave?" says Matthew Burr, a human resources consultant in Elmira, New York. "Are we paying people to try to get them through the hard times or is it unpaid?"

Are we accepting doctor's notes? All that stuff needs to be hammered out."

What policies and procedures should you employ to keep business running while following necessary protocols?

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If you don't already have a contagious disease policy or business continuity plan, now might be a great time to create one. "If employers neglected to implement a contagious disease policy during the West Nile or Ebola virus outbreaks, the severity of the coronavirus is all the impetus

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I think over-communicating
is absolutely fine.**

Regin Morek
HR Consultant

companies need to develop a written policy," says Melissa Gonzalez Boyce, JD, legal editor of human resources site XpertHR. "Written policies help prevent the spread of disease by creating work rules that promote safety through infection control and minimize the negative impact of sudden emergencies."

Likewise, a business continuity policy will guide business operations when decisions must be made quickly in a chaotic atmosphere. It might also outline a contingency plan for vital duties and functions if an important employee (or team) is too sick to work for an extended period.

It's also important to practice and encourage empathy at a time of uncertainty and stress. This is especially true since fear about COVID-19 has led to social stigma toward certain people or places. It can also result in stigma or avoidance of people who have been quarantined for the disease. Employers can discourage negative behavior or beliefs with the following practices:

- Maintain privacy of those who may be seeking healthcare for coronavirus
- Share accurate information and correct misinformation about how the virus spreads
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative information on social media about people or groups of people
- Share images responsibly and ensure that they do not reinforce stereotypes
- Thank healthcare workers and responders

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN A CRISIS

Sometimes in the worst of times, you see the best of humanity. Many employers were shown to be doing great things to support their employees and their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. They weren't just doing the right thing; they were also living their company values.

Many big-name companies that had to close up temporarily announced that they were offering at least two weeks' pay to their staff. These include REI, Lululemon, and Workday. Other organizations recognized for standout actions in the wake of the pandemic included:

- Darden Restaurants (which owns Olive Garden, Longhorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, and other restaurant brands) implemented an Emergency Pay Program that provided three weeks of pay to hourly team members in restaurants that have experienced a significant business disruption as a result of COVID-19.
- PepsiCo is providing any employee who is unable to work from home but must care for a child who can't go to school or daycare, at least two-thirds of his or her pay for up to 12 weeks.
- Canopy (which provides tax software for accounting) employees have been invited to take part in a 30-day wellness program which focuses on physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- At Truist Bank, employees earning less than \$100K per year, are being given a \$1,200 pre-tax bonus to help offset financial pressures caused by the pandemic.
- The CEOs of Delta and Marriott announced they are giving up their salaries for the year to try to diminish layoffs. The CEO of Texas



Roadhouse restaurants has pledged to do the same, forgoing his salary and bonus for a year to pay front line employees.

- All 30 Major League Baseball teams have pledged \$1 million to pay ballpark employees who were relying on income once the season started.

Helping the community

Some companies are utilizing the skills of their workers to help the greater good. This not only keeps people on the job, but there it also gives them satisfaction in knowing that their work is making a difference. Some examples include:

- The Four Seasons Hotel New York was transformed into a near-medical-grade dormitory, where front line healthcare personnel could stay free of charge.
- Christian Siriano, the fashion designer, shared that his team has shifted from producing couture clothing to making personal protective equipment to help address the shortage.
- Various distilleries and breweries—including Pernod Ricard SA, the French spirits company—are producing hand sanitizer to address the supply shortage. Anheuser-Busch also recently announced it will begin producing hand sanitizer.

- eBay has put \$100 million into its “Up & Running” program, which is designed to help small businesses without an ecommerce presence make the transition from brick and mortar to click and mortar.
- Salad chain Sweetgreen is pivoting its Outpost platform to deliver free salads and bowls to hospitals in the cities it serves.

Banding together for an important cause

Not only are some companies stepping up, but they’re extending a hand to other organizations to create partnerships and prove that there’s strength in numbers.

- NewsCred, a marketing work management software company with seven global offices including New York, launched an initiative with other NY-based startups to raise money to purchase and distribute one million N95 masks to New York City hospitals. So far, 17 companies have signed on with \$10,000 donations.
- Hilton has partnered with companies that are quickly expanding their workforce including—Albertsons, Walgreens, Publix, and more—to create the Workforce Resource Center. The goal is to help their displaced staffers find temporary work.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN A CRISIS

- Ford is teaming up with 3M and GE Healthcare to help produce personal protective gear for health care workers and ventilators.

Employer good will extends to new hires

For the companies that do need to increase staff to meet new demands, giving people a reason to choose their organization (beyond simply needing to find work fast) is more important than ever. “Especially in times of crisis, it’s critical for hiring managers to lead with the company’s core values,” says Bob Bailey, Managing Director of Healthcare IT Leaders, PAC Leaders and Locum Choice. “Candidates are attracted to organizations with purpose and that take care of their employees when times are good and bad.”

Applicants may be motivated by the desire to do something “essential” to support society but knowing that a prospective company really values their services can go a long way as well. Take it from these two corporations:

- CVS Health is not only hiring 50,000 more workers, but also delivering bonuses to employees who are required to work on-site during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Walmart has exceeded its goals, hiring nearly 200,000 employees

since March, and paying out nearly \$550 million in bonuses or accelerated incentives.

“Building a reputation as a quality employer that cares about people—and then showcasing those qualities during a crisis—is the best way to attract candidates that are a strong fit to your culture,” says Bailey.

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It’s critical for hiring managers to lead with the company’s core values.

Bob Bailey
Healthcare IT Leaders

Now, more than ever, your brand is so important

A strong brand story can show your employees and candidates how you’re supporting them in these uncertain times. [Our employer branding solutions](#) will help you create a 360° brand experience that shows candidates who you are. From job branding, to company profiles, to career sites, we’ve got you covered.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TEAM IN A CRISIS

Your team members are under a lot of duress, and they need a strong leader to help them through it. Be that leader.

Usually, managing a team during a crisis is about what to do in a weather emergency—imagine the chaos after a category 5 hurricane or massive flooding. But now the world is in the midst of a pandemic, and thousands of workers are managing people under conditions that previously only existed in disaster movies. In addition to that, many are learning how to manage their teams remotely.

Nonetheless, the lessons of managing in a crisis can be applied to the situation with the novel coronavirus as well. Try these strategies to keep your cool—and help your team keep theirs—under stressful conditions.

Remember that some employees have never done this

Many workers have never been through a hurricane, earthquake, or the attacks on 9-11. The concept of shutting down an office or the onset of a global business shutdown may be foreign to many of your younger employees.



“They might be less inclined to act early and decisively, simply because they don’t have the context of having been through a crisis,” says Paul Rubenstein, chief people officer at people analytics firm Visier. “Guide them not only through the issue of employee health, but what the realities of a global economic slowdown can mean.”

Help employees work remotely

Some people have never worked from home, never logged into video conferencing software, and never held

a virtual meeting. Get a “work from home” checklist together and give it to everyone or share information on best practices for remote work.

This might include advice about keeping a routine, taking breaks, taking care of their physical health and hygiene, considering the ergonomics of their workstations, and making sure they drink enough water and don’t over-caffeinate.

What’s unique about this crisis is that daycare and schools may be out, and your employees may also be working from home with their spouse or partner, or working from home with kids. “The number one thing we have to realize is that this is not the normal work from home,” Rubenstein says. “Your kid will interrupt a conference call. You may have to rearrange something because

your spouse has a conference call at the same time, and you have an infant. There is no magic solution around this, so have empathy.”

Make a communication plan

How will employees get updates about work and the company? How will you communicate important information?

“Not everyone reads email, and it can be annoying to dig through your inbox to find the most updated version of a travel alert,” Rubenstein says. “Have a web page that you can edit and publish yourself in real time. Communicating quickly to employees doesn’t happen with three layers of review and asking IT to update the site on your behalf—you need a megaphone to employees, not a complicated media process.”



HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TEAM IN A CRISIS



Be honest

Let employees know what's happening. Are there parts of the company that will be affected by this crisis slowdown? "Is there software that the company can no longer afford?" says Jason Patel, founder of college and career prep company Transizion. "Tell your team now that they can't go on with these tools. The earlier they can adapt, the better off the company will be." Similarly, give your team information

on company outputs—from revenue to new customers to cash flow—and which ones you'll need to keep an eye on. "These metrics are a signal—not a defining label—but only a signal for the team's performance in the crisis," Patel says. "As the dynamic around you changes, be sure to update the metrics you pay attention to."

Keep employees focused and on track

Your first priority should be the health of your employees and their families, and after that, the current state of the business. Your employees need clarity from you around what work is the most important. “They need to know what’s critical and what can wait,” says Amy Leschke-Kahle, vice president of performance acceleration at the Marcus Buckingham Company. “They will be able to bring themselves to focus more clearly if they also know that you are their number one advocate for the resources they need and that you will support them at those times when they need to take care of things outside of work.”

Include everyone

In a remote work environment, there’s the danger of quieter employees getting lost in the shuffle. Make sure you reach out to everyone, even people you’re not having meetings with on a regular basis. “It’s not about monitoring people’s work,” Rubenstein says. “It’s about making people feel connected.”

Similarly, it’s also important to make sure people feel acknowledged in business discussions, even though they’re weighing in from a distance. “They’re working remotely, and they’re not going to be as accessible,” says Roy Cohen, a career counselor and executive coach in New York City. “Everyone’s opinion and point of

view needs to be heard. It doesn’t necessarily require action, but you have to make sure you don’t ignore them, that you listen, that you don’t make them feel like they’re not important.”

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It’s not about monitoring people’s work. It’s about making people feel connected.

Paul Rubenstein
Visier

Practice compassion

Your workers are likely dealing with a lot. Now is the time to be flexible, not to be raising stress levels any higher than they need to be, and help manage your employee’s stress and anxiety.

“Normally, I am that push, push, push guy because that’s the role you fall into as a small business owner,” says Tim Brown, owner of the Hook Agency, a digital marketing company in Minneapolis, MN. “Right now, it’s more like, ‘I’m here for you, what can I do, how can I help?’”

RESOURCES

We're here to help you during these unusual times. Call us at 1-800-MONSTER with any questions, or visit us [here](#).

For details about the **Monster Employer Branding solutions**, please go [here](#).

To read the other two books in our **COVID-19 series**, click [here](#).