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Rapid Responsiveness During Covid-19:

Transitioning to a Remote Workforce in 5 Days or Less

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CONTEXT

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is challenging organizations to expand telework on a broad scale. As public health developments demand that more employees work-from-home indefinitely, organizations must act to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees, while securing sensitive data and technology and preserving business continuity.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As our understanding of the disease and our local public health responses evolve, many organizations find themselves having to create or expand processes that were never intended to support an entirely remote workforce. Organizations may not have the time to develop a thoughtful, orderly process to transition as many as thousands of employees offsite with little advanced notice.

Those charged with implementing these transitions must have: 1) the tools and processes to protect company assets and protect sensitive information; and 2) a personnel management approach that provides clear direction and maintains morale.

SOLUTION

Maintain Business Continuity in the Face of Uncertainty. Federal and State agencies and programs are being required to move at breakneck speed to respond to daily changes in the US response to COVID-19. Without the benefit of extended planning time, large organizations must quickly assess their ability to support telework while various social distancing orders are in effect. Support for such drastic and unexpected shifts in work patterns calls for a well-orchestrated workforce management approach that relies on cross-functional collaboration and over-communication.

Create the Virtual Workplace. With an eye on business continuity, Cognosante's technical support teams can help achieve minimal disruption as the organizations transition entire employee populations to telework status. An effective technical support plan should focus on security, enterprise applications, and user support.

Security (Physical). An all-electronic process for managing physical assets is critical when working to move staff off site unexpectedly. For organizations seeking to obtain or maintain an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 20000/IT Service Management (ITSM) certification, it's imperative that equipment assigned at onboarding is similarly tracked as you allow that equipment to leave your facility. As you prepare to move your team to remote status, leveraging cloud-based tracking tools such as DocuSign will ease the management process for IT teams.

Employees should be issued Asset Receipt forms in DocuSign where they can electronically note what equipment they will take home and IT teams can then create an asset tracking log for what is expected to return. Forms should be printed, and IT should match forms to employee items and obtain employee signature as each team member leaves the building. Signed forms can then be returned to DocuSign and downloaded to your organization's Human Resource Information System (HRIS) for end-to-end electronic management.

Security (Digital). Maintaining security outside of on-premise networks is a key consideration when making the decision to transition to remote work. To maintain a secure environment, keep the following best practices in mind when shifting to a distributed workforce:

► Enable multi-factor authentication to ensure employee identities. Utilize security tools to prevent malware infection, protect against asset loss, support encryption, and prevent data exfiltration

- ▶ Frequently scan for and patch network vulnerabilities
- ▶ Promptly disable terminated users
- ▶ Monitor security incidents and events using a log aggregation tool
- ▶ Automate alerts to Engineering and Help desk teams

Leverage Enterprise Applications. Unexpected, rapid transitions at scale can be accomplished with relative ease when a comprehensive cloud application strategy is in place. Hosting mission-critical applications such the following in the cloud allows for rapid provisioning and enables a "work from anywhere" solution that preserves business operations while remaining responsive to changing directives.

- ▶ Email
- ▶ Collaboration/Conferencing
- ▶ User support
- ▶ Telephony
- ▶ Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- ▶ Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- ▶ Travel and Expense
- ▶ Contract Management
- ▶ Security and monitoring

End-User Support. Successful, rapid transition of a large workforce must be accompanied with robust user support for technical needs. A balance of process, people and tools will ensure your newly remote workforce can continue supporting customer needs quickly and without technical disruption. Comprehensive user (employee) support should focus on:

- ▶ <u>Access Points</u>. Web ticket, chat and phone support create a range of options for users to request support quickly and return to supporting customer needs as soon as possible.
- ▶ <u>Managing Requests</u>. A ticket management system improves issue resolution time by allowing for prioritization and tracking of support requests.
- ▶ <u>24/7 Support.</u> Remote employees in the time of COVID-19 may work non-traditional hours so making support available 24/7 -through documented resources and live support – enables business continuity by reducing downtime.

Managing a Newly Remote Workforce. Managing a remote workforce requires a focus on aspects of the employee experience that may be less critical in the onsite environment. Communication becomes critical to maintaining employee connectedness and overall satisfaction. In the unique circumstances of COVID-19, it may also be necessary to evaluate how potential mandated or desired policy changes impact the approach to workforce management.

Communication. Communication both early and often amidst ambiguity can be calming and encouraging. Maintain employee satisfaction and boost morale by committing to frequent and transparent communication throughout the transition. Consider both daily and weekly briefings as necessary to cover a range of topics including policy updates, leadership perspectives, and team-building opportunities.

Offer Clarity. Making every effort to be clear and detailed removes apprehension and uncertainty for employees. Try to anticipate questions about virus testing, personal health information, and policy guidance and focus communications accordingly.

Channel Distribution. Not every employee accesses information from the same source. In order to ensure widespread awareness and understanding of company communications during the transition, utilize a range of communication channels including:

- ▶ Email
- ▶ Teleconferencing
- ▶ Video messaging
- ▶ Internal reference websites
- ▶ FAQ Documents

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Connection. Employee engagement becomes *more* critical when employees are remote, not less. When not traveling to an office each day, the common cultural threads that bind employees to the organization and to each other can begin to fray. Every employee has varying need for connection and belonging so presenting options for how teams should continue to engage with each other, with their leaders and with the organizational culture is critical to maintaining employee satisfaction.

OUTCOMES

Effective and responsible leadership requires a commitment to serving your customer and employee populations with minimal disruption and confidence in a shared, successful outcome. In as little as three (3) days, organizations can fully transition to remote with relative ease and zero loss of productivity.

Here are six things you can implement immediately to facilitate orderly transitions and maintain employee morale.

1. ***Implement protocols for an orderly transition to remote work.*** Provide detailed timelines, points of contact and asset checkout procedures.
2. ***Implement protocols to maintain social distancing for onsite employees.*** For programs that cannot work remotely, organizations should provide clear guidelines for protecting the safety of onsite employees.
3. ***Provide employees with the tools to adjust to their new environment.*** Provide detailed guidance on telework and provide web training to all employees on successful work-from-home strategies. Communicate telecommuting and security policies clearly and make those policies easily accessible.
4. ***Maintain Employee Morale.*** Utilize technology to keep employees engaged. Gather with teams to connect, share remote working tips, etc. Provide virtual opportunities to avoid burnout and isolation by virtually gathering after their work hours to keep in contact and maintain team chemistry.
5. ***Show appreciation and empathy.*** Acknowledge the hardship that remote work and school closures are having on employees. Provide resources such as Employee Assistance Programs, opportunities to engage with leadership, and management support to work through individual issues.
6. ***Frequent Communication.*** To ensure that employees have information to make informed decisions, distribute regular communication that provides up-to-date information on your organization's response, detailed guidance on company policies and benefits and tips on prevention. Consider:
   - Weekly electronic newsletter
   - Regular Town Halls/Check-Ins
   - Centralized reference website (updated frequently)

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE

Jamil Hermes, Chief Growth Officer, Cognosante, LLC
Jamil.Hermes@cognosante.com