Helping Your Team Handle These Uncertain Times

All businesses depend on cohesive and effective employer-employee relationships. In an era of unforeseen circumstances like the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to keep businesses afloat may cause strain in these relationships, thereby leading to a drop in employee output. While these are trying and new times for all, employers and organizations must seek to calm the fears and anxieties of their employees.
In order for employers to maintain the optimum level of output from their workers, it is pertinent for them to understand these concerns and try as much as possible to develop strategies that promote the mental well-being of their workforce.

Anxiety, Fear & Uncertainty

Owing to the nature of the pandemic, many countries and governments have advised that companies and organizations let their employees work from home to curtail the spread of the virus. In such circumstances, it is not unusual for employees to be concerned about their job security. In fact, a survey recently conducted by a construction company in the United States showed that anxiety amongst workers led the majority of the responses.
This is because employees of construction companies are concerned not just about their job security but also the heath of their families and loved ones. They are also worried about debt and rising expenses while their earnings have been interrupted. The recent clamor for remote work has jeopardized the earning abilities of many such as janitors, gardeners, and other employees whose job description does not afford them this luxury. The majority fear that, if and when the pandemic is over, they might be out of jobs as companies and organizations look to reduce their workforce to adjust to the effects of the pandemic.

The Multi-Front Problem

Covid-19 has left our routines, lifestyles, and work cultures in disarray, causing a compounded threat to employees and organizations. For instance, Covid-19 is constantly highlighting the underlying health challenges of many. Statistics show that an estimated 20% of the U.S population has underlying diagnosable mental health conditions. The major conditions were found to be anxiety, panic disorders, depression, and substance abuse.

Covid-19 has also isolated humans from one another. Humans are socially inclined by nature, and the onset of this pandemic has created an obstacle to human interaction, denying many workers the psychological benefits of the workplace. There have been numerous project suspensions, office closures and even simple social interaction has been reduced. This has left many feeling stuck or stagnant in their careers as well as missing the loving connection of friends and family or the strength and camaraderie of the workplace.

Furthermore, the resultant uncertainty associated with Covid-19 and the dark future it forebodes has caused professionals to worry about not just their own efficiency but also the efficacy of the plans they had for projects before the pandemic set in. While it is hoped that the pandemic goes away soon, concerns remain that some employees and employers may be causalities of Covid-19, rendering some projects and organizations handicapped and unable to function unless some drastic changes are made.

Role of Employers and Organisations

It is essential that in all of the uncertainty, plans must be made on how to proceed in the post-COVID era too. Employers must be careful not to overburden their staff simply because "they are home all day", companies need to bear in mind that employees are human too with families and loved ones to worry about. It is known that anxieties or mental health challenges make it difficult to focus and can disrupt concentration. Company communications should, therefore, be done as empathically as possible. You need to reassure the workforce that they will remain in the loop about changes, emphasize the importance of complying with physical distancing, and stating plans for providing assistance to employees in need.

Stress Relief Mechanisms

Employers may attempt to help alleviate stress through the use of newsletters or emails. These messages should include activities for the employees to engage in that help relax their nerves and reduce stress. They should also contain behavioral health tips to prevent employees from contracting Covid-19. Employees should be provided with someone to talk to about their mental health challenges or anxieties. The goal is to make employees feel comfortable enough to speak about their concerns and challenges. Employers must seek to provide their staff with credible information as untrue or partly true information is bound to increase panic among employees.

As the world tries to adapt to the life changing effects of Covid-19, companies mustn't abandon their employees. We all need each other and in times like this, employee care, inclusiveness, while fostering a sense of belonging are all incredibly important. Having a workforce that is displeased or distrustful of the management is obviously counterproductive. Companies should, therefore, aim to make their employees a priority and create avenues that cater to their anxiety and mental health by remaining engaged and empathic.