6 Best Practices to Help You Navigate Through These Difficult Times

"You don't have to control your thoughts. You just have to stop letting them control you."

Dan Millman, Author of "Way of The Warrior"

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I've been frustrated and distressed by the coverage of the media regarding the COVID-19 virus. In "the old days" the media's job was to provide facts and allow the audience to form their own options. Personally, I feel the media is sensationalizing their coverage, cherry picking information to present, creating panic and hysteria all in the name of hooking an audience to increase advertising revenue and profits.

Whether you agree the media is over-reacting and spreading fear or not, there continues to be a lot of mixed emotions regarding COVID-19 as the pandemic continues globally. Making the potential for significant business impact a reality.

Keep in mind I'm Not a lawyer, nor have I ever played one on TV. When it comes to HR or Legal matters, make sure to seek legal counsel from a Lawyer in your area.

I've gathered together information from multiple sources to create some Best Practices, guides, policy templates and email templates.

My hope is this information will prove useful to you personally, your staff AND to your organization. Please feel free to edit the boilerplate templates as needed to fit your situation.

I know your world is probably on fire right now and likely overwhelmed with everything going on. So, if you need help in getting your staff to work remote, I know a few fast, easy and inexpensive ways to enable them to work securely from home that won't break the bank.

We also have techs available to assist if you have an IT emergency.

Not looking to hard sell you anything – I'm happy to simply help you come up with a plan, no cost and no agenda other than to help.

Team Cybertools is up and running remotely, and we have the ability to throw you a lifeline if you are in need of one. Let me know how I can be of service.

Dedicated to your success,

David Stone
President, Cybertools, Inc.

P.S. I'm known for harping on never clicking links you don't know, however strange days and all…I have personally verified each link and have personally visited them.

6 Best Practices for Business Amid CORVID-19

Based on conversations with business leaders, business coaches, peers and fellow business owners, along with research from official sources like the World Health Organization, Public Health Agency of Canada and the Center for Disease Control in the US, I've put together 6 Best Practices for dealing with the disruption of COVID-19.

1. Practice Good Health Hygiene

As is typically the case, start with the basics. Practice them yourself and spread the word (not the germs) to family, staff, clients and strangers.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially when you enter and exit a building
- Eat well, sleep well and exercise – be sure your immune system is in tip top shape
- If you are sick, feel sick, look sick – STAY HOME
- Use your elbow or a tissue to block your sneeze or cough
- Avoid contact with people who are sick with respiratory symptoms
- Avoid hugs and handshakes
- Make good choices outside of work – avoid large groups, gatherings or crowds and practice Social Distancing

2. Prioritize Issues of Greatest Urgency

You've likely heard me say this before - **the wrong time to run a fire drill is during a fire!** Same when it comes to decisions about what you need to focus on first in time of crisis. Planning ahead could save you from a costly knee-jerk reaction.

Determine what business processes are absolutely essential in order for your organization to function and survive and focus on those first.

Develop a communication plan for both staff and clients. What will you tell them? When? And who is authorized to do the communicating? Who should eb the one to deal with Media should they come a calling?

Immediate decisions could include:
- What must do we do to keep our employees safe?
- Which customers are most likely to be significantly affected by the pandemic? What can we do to help them?

- Which customers are likely to leave because of this crisis? Why and what can we proactively do to prevent this?
- Should we cancel, postpone or reschedule events?
- When do we require employees to work remotely? Does it apply to all employees? If not, which ones?
- Develop an action plan should someone in your office becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at one of your Workplaces.

3. Communicate Communicate Communicate

In this time of uncertainty, there will be many quick and rapid changes/decision that will need to be communicated with specific people and all staff. Best practice is to huddle (meet) at the beginning of the day and the end of every day adding in additional communication when needed.

- Start every huddle with the latest update, what's going on, what changes have been made, etc.
- Follow your normal rhythm to share anything that needs to be shared/solved among the team including but not limited to COVID-19 updates.
- Outside of the daily huddle, maintain open communication with team members at all times – daily is recommended.
- Regular communication to clients is essential to maintain their level of comfort and confidence in your organization, especially during times like these.

The obvious drawback of remote work is the inability for staff to have face-to-face interactions with their colleagues. To keep teamwork alive, setting up secure and reliable communication systems are crucial. The chat and conferencing programs you use to stay in touch should offer virtual face-to-face touchpoints to mimic an office setting

There are dozens of communications tools at your disposal for a remote workforce that will encourage long-distance collaboration and teamwork. For example, Google Hangouts, Slack, or Microsoft Teams are just a few tools that enable quick-chat, group-chat, client communications, and video conferencing

Resources:

Zoom Video Conferencing: www.zoom.us
Slack Instant Messaging: www.slack.com
Microsoft Teams: for Instant Messaging and Video Conferencing: Included with the following
Microsoft Office 365 Licenses: Business Essentials, Business Premium, E1, and E3 levels

Free Microsoft Teams Training (what is it, how to use it) from Bigger Brains:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlD_YJ6GN1HnBqUK9XQcl3EB2J3AwdyOq

4. Work from Home

Any staff member whose job function doesn't specifically require them to be physically at work, should be working from home.

Naturally people deemed essential such as staff working in warehouses, shipping and receiving departments, line workers at manufacturing facilities and the such aren't able to work from home as their job requires them to be physically present to deal with physical tasks. They should be reminded about the basics provided in Item 1 above.

When sending people home to work, make sure they are connecting SECURELY!!

Turning on Windows built in Remote Desktop software and exposing it to the internet is NOT recommended. Matter of fact the FBI back in 2018 warned that hackers were specifically targeting these exposed entry points into business networks and we've seen an increase of malicious network scanning looking for these vulnerable opening openings.
(https://www.ic3.gov/media/2018/180927.aspx)

The turmoil caused by COVID19 is bad enough, can you image also having to deal with being a victim of Ransomware and losing access to all your corporate data at the same time. Your organization might be able to survive the double whammy, but why risk it?
Choosing to use one of the "free" remote control programs available online also is not a great solution. Nothing is ever free. If you didn't buy the product, you ARE the product. Meaning there is a good chance those vendors are tracking information of those using their software and then selling it off to create a revenue stream.

Think that wouldn't happen? AVAST, formally a very popular Anti-Virus program, did just that. Users of their AVAST free edition had their activities tracked, recorded, reported and then sold the information to data clearing houses.
(https://news.thewindowsclub.com/avast-antivirus-caught-spying-on-user-data-97127/)

Cybertools has a couple of Secure Work from Home options that we are provided to our Clients. If you are in need of help, we have resources available to assist to get you over the hump. This is NOT a sale pitch.

Need help of have questions around getting your people back functional remotely you can book a call with me to discuss. https://www.scheduleyou.in/8Web4BJJm

P.S. Make sure staff understand a common tactic for bad actors is to capitalize on issues or events that trigger a gut response, namely fear, in the reader. Email subject lines like 'Corona News Flash' or 'X New Cases in (Insert City Here)' stoke the flames of uneasiness and try to get a user to click without investigating if the email or website is credible.

5. Cash is King

Cash is the oxygen of a business without cash a business ceases to exist. Below are questions to effectively manage your cash flow through this current crisis

- Have you determined your cash flow "break-even point"?
  (My business coach called it a Flash number – dollar amount number you need to come in the door each month just to keep the lights on and operations going)
- What refinancing opportunities do you have to take advantage of lower interest rates?
- Do you currently have a line of credit? With the rates so low have you drawn on that line for emergencies?
- Which contracts could you renegotiate if you had to? (HEY NOW – you NEED security and IT support in these turbulent times…)
- Do you have sources to meet future liquidity needs should they arise – lines of credit, factoring, etc.? Now is the time to make sure these are in place because it's too late when the need arises.
- Call your bankers and other professionals and build your support network – do it now and not in the heat of the battle.
- Are there projects or large capital initiatives you may need to stop or defer?

6. Look for Opportunities to do Something Extraordinary

The worst thing we can do is stand still. Once you have prioritized issues of greatest urgency, think about how you can enhance your brand with team members, customers, prospects and the community.

- Market Shifts: What do we see? How can we respond?
- Marketing & Sales Channels: How can you get in front of the eyeballs and get where your customers are?
- Products & Services: Which would be most valuable right now?
- Who can we help?

In times like these, just look for ways that you are uniquely positioned to help people.

That's why we're all here, right?

In Conclusion

Sending best wishes that you, your team and your organizations to get through these difficult times safely, healthy and that the current situation passes quickly so we can get back to like as "normal".