



mhca's e-Newsletter

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Morale Matters

Despite our initially optimistic expectations that a two-week quarantine would flatten the curve and then we'd all get back to business as usual, most of us have come to the realization that, while masks and quarantines may eventually go away, many things will never return to the way they used to be.

This extended period of rapid change and uncertainty about the future has left nearly everyone feeling exhausted and anxious. During our conversations with members over the past few weeks, there has been a common theme of concern for employee welfare and morale. Leaders who are stretched thin themselves are seeking new ideas about how to support their employees and keep their spirits up as they adjust to entirely new ways of working. They understand that low morale is both a human concern and a serious business concern as low morale can cripple an organization by reducing creativity and collaboration at a time when it is most sorely needed.

I'm proud to see leaders expressing empathy and compassion for their teams, and we've collected the following list of morale-boosting activities for your consideration:

COMMUNICATION

1. While good leaders understand the importance of frequent and transparent communication during times of crisis, great leaders understand this communication must involve sharing their struggles so their team feels safe sharing as well. Make sure you're checking in with your team regularly, allowing yourself to be vulnerable, and really listening to what they have to say.
2. Recognize that right now, there is a lot going on in our lives that is beyond our control. Don't make things worse with lots of new mandates developed without employee input. Involve front line employees in the decision-making process as much as possible, but especially when the decisions will directly impact their day-to-day work.

CONNECTION

3. Staying informed is not the same as staying connected. With remote workers and social distancing and masks in the office, the ties that help bind a team together, like the feeling that your peers are sharing in your work and your life, are weakening. Help teams stay connected by hosting virtual events that encourage the typical water cooler talk:
 - a. Themed days, akin to spirit week activities, are a great way to inject a little fun into a long week. Team Colors Tuesday, Wacky Wednesdays, Fancy Dress Friday, Funny Hat Day – whatever gets your team excited and talking.
 - b. Some organizations are hosting [Meme Challenges](#) on their Intranet or Slack channels. You could offer a prize for the funniest meme shared each week. Just be sure employees know to keep it clean and apolitical.
 - c. Employee milestone celebrations are also a great way to keep spirits high – so don't overlook the opportunity to acknowledge milestones publicly during team meetings.
 - d. [Virtual team bonding games](#), like pub trivia and scavenger hunts, are also a fun way to help teams stay connected and share a little laughter.

APPRECIATION & PRACTICAL SUPPORT

4. A little appreciation goes a long way. Acknowledge individuals for their specific contributions publicly – or if that isn't possible, hand write thank you cards.
5. If your budget will allow, consider practical ways that you can alleviate some of the burden on staff that must report to work:

- a. Assistance with childcare
- b. On-site laundry services
- c. Healthy take-away meals at the end of shifts
- d. An extra day off that they're mandated to take

The best way to determine what support would be most valued and appreciated by your employees is to ask them. Consider establishing a staff committee to lead employee engagement initiatives/activities. The time spent on engagement initiatives is a sound investment as improved morale also improves overall productivity and reduces staff turnover and related costs.



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