

# Leadership Insights for the COVID-19 Pulse

Gallup's research indicates that 70% of a team's engagement is impacted by their local manager. Frequent, open and authentic communication to your team will be critical in successfully leading through this challenging time. We've created this guide to assist you in communicating effectively with your team, as well as having effective conversations around Gallup's COVID-19 pulse survey.

**A leader's objective** in all of these conversations is to move team members *away* from fear, helplessness and victimization and *towards* self-actualization and engagement by addressing the needs of their people right now. Leaders must:

- 1) Provide a path through the situation (a strategy)
- 2) Provide confidence that there is a way forward (inspiration)
- 3) Help team members see how they can contribute (tactics)

In your communications, it is important to be thoughtful about how individuals are processing the messages they are receiving from you and from the organization. Acknowledge their concerns and fears, while encouraging them to take action to overcome them, will be important to build trust, show compassion, reinforce stability and instill hope through meaningful conversations.

## Key Insights

### Future Outlook

*Lives have been disrupted and more people feel like it is going to last for more than just a few weeks.*

- 30% of working adults feel their own lives have been disrupted a great deal by the current coronavirus situation.<sup>1</sup>
- While only 11% of working adults are concerned that the coronavirus disruption will last for the rest of 2020 or beyond, 51% adults do think that the disruption is likely to continue for at least a few more months.<sup>1</sup>

### Wellbeing

*It is important to address wellbeing, especially with your remote workers. All areas of wellbeing – physical, career, financial, social and community – have been impacted by the crisis.*

- Those who are thriving in *all five elements* (listed above) are more than twice as likely as those who are thriving in physical wellbeing alone to say they always adapt well to change, while 41% report fewer unhealthy days. ([How to Keep Remote Worker Wellbeing High](#))
- 35% of working adults think the coronavirus situation will significantly harm their personal financial situation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gallup Panel Study of U.S. Full-Time and Part-Time Working Adults, March 13-22, 2020

## Engaging Communications: Considerations and Conversation Starters

Gallup has studied the needs of followers and, through Gallup's meta-analytics, has found four universal needs that followers have of leaders: Trust, Compassion, Stability and Hope. These four needs intensify in challenging times and become a guidepost for thinking about how we interact and communicate. People will look for their leaders to meet these needs as a signal that their life will be OK and that they can be part of the solution. ([COVID-19: What Employees Need From Leaders Right Now](#))

Consider the following in relation to the COVID-19 crisis:

- **Trust:** Communicate openly and authentically. Provide avenues to listen and respond.
- **Compassion:** Show you care. Make regular check-ins a priority with employees, even if virtual. Ask how they are doing and what they need.
- **Stability:** Highlight what stays the same for employees. For example, the fact that we are "client-obsessed" as an organization doesn't change, but how we deliver it might.
- **Hope:** Provide a sense of hope. Help employees see that these challenges cause us to innovate and grow in new ways.

Discuss what employees can contribute through their talents. Gallup knows that people are uniquely wired to respond to challenging times through their own talent and strengths. Consider how you process change personally as a leader and how your team members do as well.

### Openly Discuss

- What talent do you bring to navigating this challenge? (For example, an employee may have a talent to help the team develop a contingency plan.)
- What do you need from the team to navigate this challenge well? (For example, an employee may need regular touchpoints to feel they are in the loop.)
- What are you most worried about right now? What are you most thankful for?
- How are you communicating with your team members and helping each other right now?
- How are you adjusting to working remotely?
  - Do you know what is expected of you?
  - Do you have the materials and equipment you need?
  - Do you feel safe in your residence?
  - Do you have reliable internet?
  - What are you doing to maintain and/or improve your wellbeing?
- How is your family coping with COVID-19?
- Do you have enough work to feel productive?
- What could we do to let our team members know that we care about them during this pandemic?
- What is most important to us as a team right now?

### Best Practices

- Be an active listener. Give your employees plenty of time to share their ideas, frustrations, and concerns.
- Address each person's concerns and model supportive behavior during this time of change and turbulence.
- Be supportive and individualize your approach. Doing this will let your team know you genuinely care about each person and his or her wellbeing.
- Encourage people to share opinions and ideas with one another.

- Cross train team members to perform critical functions in the event of an unexpected absence or quarantine of another team member.

## COVID-19 Pulse Meaningful Conversation Starters and Action Committee Interventions

We know as leaders and managers you may be used to receiving individualized results for your team to help you action on results. The COVID-19 pulse is for the organization as a whole, but you can still use the results from the ongoing COVID-19 pulse to help your team understand how the organization is moving directionally and to help start an open dialog.

### **My leadership has a clear plan of action.**

- High Results Discussion Starters
  - What have we done that has made us effective?
  - How should we refine our plan as things change?
  - What key communication points helped to establish a clear path forward?
- Low Results Discussion Starters
  - Do you know what our plan is? If you do, what do you think is missing from it?
  - Do you know what's expected of you during COVID-19?
  - Where you go or how do you receive important information from organizational leadership?
  - What are some ambiguities in the plan shared by leadership?
- Action Committee Interventions
  - Crisis Communications Planning
  - Leadership Coaching
  - Leadership Succession Planning
  - Strategy Re-Prioritization

### **I feel well-prepared to do my job.**

- High Results Discussion Starters
  - What makes you feel well-prepared?
  - Do you foresee this feeling changing at all in the near future?
  - How can you help others that may not be prepared?
  - What materials and equipment helped to make you feel well-prepared?
- Low Results Discussion Starters
  - What do you need to get your job done?
  - Do you have all of the information/resources/materials you need to do your job right?
  - Do you feel like you have asked for help and not received it?
  - What expectations need to be clarified?
  - What materials and equipment do you feel are missing?
- Action Committee Interventions
  - IT Support Guide for Remote Workers
  - Cross-Training Opportunities
  - Restructuring

**My supervisor keeps me informed about what is going on.**

- High Results Discussion Starters
  - How have I/we kept you feeling connected to the organization?
  - Can we improve our communication in any way?
  - Do you foresee the need for any changes in the future?
  - What was most important for you to know during this time of crisis?
- Low Results Discussion Starters
  - What gaps exist in keeping you informed about what is going on? Is it a lack of communication? Is it not the right information you need?
  - How do you prefer to receive important information?
  - How frequently would you like updates from me/the organization?
- Action Committee Interventions
  - Remote Worker Webinars
  - Five Conversations of Performance Development Discussions

**My organization cares about my wellbeing.**

- High Results Discussion Starters
  - Where is your wellbeing strongest? What has contributed to you thriving in that area?
  - How have different elements of your wellbeing changed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis? What is contributing to these fluctuations?
  - What have you been doing in your free time to keep busy? Can you still partake in any of your hobbies?
  - What advice do you have for others trying to maintain or improve their wellbeing during this time?
- Low Results Discussion Starters
  - What aspect of your wellbeing is most impacted right now (career, social, financial, physical, community)? What is contributing to that impact?
  - Are we doing enough to make you feel connected to our team/organization?
  - What can we improve upon to focus on enhancing your wellbeing?
- Action Committee Interventions
  - Sharing Employee Resources (Employee Assistance Programs, Mental Health Resources, Child Care Resources, Stress Management)
  - Wellbeing Action Committees
  - Intranet/Social Media Resources

**Over the past 24 hours, how often have you been practicing social distancing?**

- High Results Discussion Starters
  - Does our organization make social distancing easier or harder for you? How so?
  - What can we do to make social distancing easier?
- Low Results Discussion Starters
  - What are your top barriers to social distancing at this time?
  - What can we do to make social distancing easier for you?
- Action Committee Interventions
  - Reviewing Remote Working Policies
  - Reinforcing Public Messaging