The Top 5 Ways To Keep Your Employees Engaged (And Safe) Despite COVID Fatigue

Insights

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When the pandemic first began, most employees were ready to pitch in and do their part to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. They adapted to remote working while attending to their children. Others understood they were deemed "essential workers" and adjusted to the new normal when coming to work, which included temperature checks, symptom sign-offs, masks, and social distancing. But after months of being team players, we are all ready for the game to end. Many of your employees are feeling "COVID fatigue" just as we see COVID-19 exposure numbers increasing once again.

Complacency is something safety professionals are used to dealing with in their workforces. For example, employees get tired of being told to put in their ear plugs every day when walking into a machine shop. The worker who performs a confined space entry each week may get tired of testing the atmosphere every time they take off a manhole cover as they have never encountered any atmospheric hazards in the past. However, that one time they forget could lead to a serious accident.

Safety professionals are continually looking for ways to keep workers engaged in safety compliance. For employers not used to keeping workers engaged in safety protocols, this is new territory. It's especially dangerous when it comes at a time when employers themselves are feeling tired and anxious about when we may return to business as usual.

Now more than ever, it is important to keep all employees engaged and focused. This includes essential or critical employees who have had to keep working throughout this pandemic adapting their routines based on each new public safety order. Here are our top five suggestions for ways to keep your employees masked and socially distanced as we play through these final and extra innings.

1. **Your Leadership Must Be A Champion Of Safety**
    Keeping employees engaged always starts at the top. Successful employee engagement will depend on the support of the leadership team. The leadership team should be setting positive examples and following the same safety policies and protocols as employees.

2. **Listen To Your Employees And Create Ownership**
    Employees want to feel included in your safety programs. While many of our current orders are

being dictated by state government, make sure employees are asked how the programs are going and whether they have any ideas for making the process more effective or efficient. Many times, those implementing the safety checks on a daily basis will have the best idea to make it better. Regular check-ins are appreciated and needed during this time so your employees still feel part of your team.

3. **Remind Employees Why Their Job Is Important**
   This commitment goes beyond wanting to provide rent and food; it is how their role is part of the bigger picture. Are your employees helping to build that next school building or making sure the lights work in that healthcare facility? During this time of isolation, it is important to remind workers the role they play to help others, and how following COVID-19 safety protocols is one step in that process.

4. **Give Praise For Safety**
   Encourage employees to provide praise to other employees for a job well-done. Create an internal system so workers can easily give positive feedback to colleagues, whether it be during a safety-share at a morning meeting or on an intranet page. These can be COVID-related or not, but the point is to make sure employees recognize that their actions are not going unnoticed.

5. **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**
   Leadership can and should acknowledge how it can be hard at times to stay focused on the task at hand while implementing the additional safety protocols that are a part of our daily lives now. At the same time, discussing how the company is adapting and changing to implement new protocols is important. Asking questions, listening to employees, and letting employees know that you are getting through this together is all part of an effective employee communication.

Conclusion
COVID fatigue is real and it is important to acknowledge it. It is also important to keep your employees engaged on both their work tasks and the necessary COVID safety protocols. Following these suggestions will help your employees be part of the process and help employees remain committed to finishing as strong as they started.

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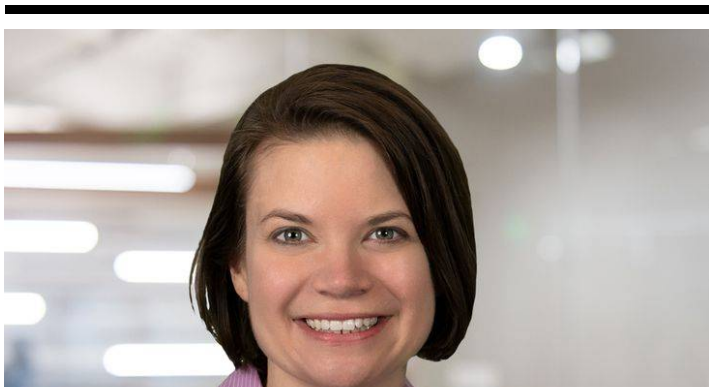
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