How To Manage During Crisis

Strong leadership matters more than ever during crisis or a significant change. Being decisive and clear with employees help them grasp what will happen and by when.

Allay fears and reduce resistance to change by making a concerted effort to increase and improve communication, sharing what you know, what you don't know and commitment to follow up.

Here are some practical tips that enable team effectiveness, during difficult times:

Develop and Maintain Trust
- Trust is the foundation of success for the relationship between leader and employee.
- Encourage a culture of empathy and support. Swapping stories, commiserating about this unusual time and listening.
- Don't just be the "boss". Develop relationships by learning more about your team members – ask about the challenges *they* face.
- Demonstrate you're open to flexible solutions.
- Show that you understand. They may be dealing with a lot more than day-to-day work.
- Ask your employee to set up regular video meetings with you and *empower them* to set the agenda.
- Recall previous conversations when checking in.

Communicate Endlessly
- Establish open lines of communication. Don't rely solely on email. Video and phone calls are best for real two-way conversations.
- Schedule regular conference calls with the whole team so they can connect and update each other on the status of their work. Team members can hear what each other are doing and actively share ideas with each other. This is also a benefit for team building.
- Ask *open* questions: questions that cannot simply be answered with a yes or no answer.
- Try to meet face to face at least minimum once a week.
- Seek a healthy balance of effective human interaction and technologies that support the individual and team's objectives.

Tools & Technology
- Use tools and technology to remain connected. Lead by example, learn how to use them extensively and support your team to do the same:
  - Cell phones, email, intranet
  - Web-based presentations & training
  - Video and phone conferencing systems
  - Collaboration tools (file sharing, instant messaging)

- Make training on technology available to remote workers so they are confident to deal with issues on their own.
- Be prepared to support them for technical support to restore operability should they experience technical difficulties.

Performance By Result
- Set the standard then coach, coach, coach.
- Set clear objectives, measures and other accountabilities for their role (leader and employee to have same understanding).
- Use other tools *besides* direct observation to assess their performance: such as results achieved; activity reports; feedback from others; surveys.
- Do a "temperature check" periodically with other team members to obtain feedback.
- Make sure there are specific tasks and milestones identified for work. These should be tracked and will allow you to "see" where employees are with projects.
- Whenever possible, create small teams to work on projects together: they hold each other accountable for work.
- Ask high gain questions to encourage the employee to self-assess; adopt a "curious mindset" approach as you may not know how they are doing and what obstacles they may have encountered.
- Ask them how you can be helpful to them in meeting their objectives. How can you help them remove barriers?

Actions speak louder than words, especially when dealing with crisis. Feelings of insecurity can translate into decreased performance and negative team dynamics.

Your team will be watching your every move so be mindful of indirect messages you are sending!

For more leadership tips or support for team effectiveness visit www.dotsleadership.com.