

# Managing During The Pandemic:

Difficult Times When There  
Is No Solution

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## Brenda Neckvatal



- Award Winning HR Professional
- HR Force of Nature
- 30 Years in HR and Business
- Podcast Host
- Prolific volunteer

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## Objectives

- How to manage a hybrid workforce
- Develop the necessary soft skills needed to keep employees engaged and focused
- Provide potential solutions and ideas to unique real-time employee situations during this time in history
- Eliminate the feeling of isolation and fear that comes with ambiguity
- Experience the benefit of having an experienced HR professional walk through your challenges

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## Trust & Leadership

“You can’t lead without trust.”

Mike Day

US Navy SEAL – Ret.

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## Trust & Leadership

- Trust can be both created and destroyed
- In most cases lost trust can be regained
  - Long row to hoe
  - Takes time and genuine effort
- Trust can be both taught and learned
- It can be a leverageable and strategic advantage
- Leadership and trust – one hand washes the other

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## Trust & Leadership

“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago.  
The second-best time is today.

Chinese Proverb

“Now is the time to skill up your ability to build  
trust.”

Brenda Neckvatal

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## Trust & Leadership

- Start building or reinforcing trust in your team
  - Integrity
    - Keep to your commitments
    - No lip service
    - Demonstrate extreme honesty
  - Intent
    - Straight forward motives
    - Based on mutual benefit
    - Care for the people we interact with
- Capabilities
  - Talents
  - Skills
  - Attitudes
  - Knowledge
  - Style
- Results
  - Ability to get the right things done
  - Our track record for accomplishment
  - Our performance

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## Trust & Leadership

- Stand up for what you believe
- Confront reality
  - Avoid skirting the hard problems
  - Have hard honest discussions with people
- Be clear about your expectations
  - Don't assume your expectations are clear or shared
  - Discuss them
  - Renegotiate them if needed
- Be accountable
  - Hold yourself accountable
  - Hold others accountable
- Listen before you speak
  - Understand
  - Diagnose
  - Listen for behaviors
  - Don't assume you know what's important to someone else
  - Don't presume you have all the answers

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## Trust & Leadership

- Trust your employees and they will trust you
- Trust your remote employees are doing their job...

...and it's ok to verify they are  
meeting the expectations you set

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## Trust & Leadership

- Understand that the majority of your team working are doing their job
  - They are also:
    - Are also concerned about their family (i.e. older parents, special needs family members, member with cancer or serious illness, etc.)
    - Adapting to a new and somewhat unfamiliar way of working
    - Are dealing with their own personal fears and concerns with the world
- They are looking to you to help them sort through the demands of the job

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## Trust & Leadership

- How we respond to threats – we take a narrow view of the world
  - Our field of vision becomes restricted to what is immediately in front of us
  - Its normal & healthy evolutionary survival mechanism to stress & ambiguity
  - Its hard to recognize when we do it
- Leaders have to take a moment and open their aperture
  - Take a broad look at challenges and opportunities
  - Refocus and it will foster stronger leadership
- Take the long view approach - know you have to manage beyond the present

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## Trust & Leadership

- Plan for additional possible or additional crisis
  - train your team
  - trust your people to execute
  - Focus on what's necessary to emerge from the crisis
- Leaders get trapped in trying to control everything
  - Risk and ambiguity increase during crisis
  - Creates new layers of approvals for minor decisions
  - Employees become less responsive
  - Frustration grows with each new constraint

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## Trust & Leadership

- You're in the human business
  - Balance focus on your people and key performance measures
  - Companies exist in order to accomplish things together which individuals cannot do alone
  - No man is an island
  - Unite people in their efforts and goals as valued members of your team
  - They need a common and clearly articulated mission
  - Each person needs to understand how they contribute
  - Their contributions need to be recognized

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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- James Dunne
  - 1 of 3 partners at Sandler O'Neil (now Piper Sandler)
  - 40% of his team was killed during the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center
  - Lost his other two partners
  - The firm's survival became his mission



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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- James Dunne
  - He led on the people issues
    - Salaries
    - Benefits
    - Continuity
    - Attended funerals
  - He created an environment in which people were collectively contributing to their shared success
  - Business issues took care of themselves



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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- When employee's basic needs are met, then next step is to know they are safe
- When employees feel safe and their family needs are met, they can focus on belonging again
- You have to meet your people where they are



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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- People require structure – employees require structure
  - Communicate your expectations for performance
  - Reset your expectations to align with the current environment/situation
  - Let go or loosen your grip on how and when things get done
  - Allow team members to accomplish their responsibilities on their own terms
  - Focus on results and offer greater flexibility
  - Does not mean to go 100% *lassie faire*
- Stay in touch
  - Regularly not intermittently
  - Shorter communication cycles are more effective at building and sustaining employee morale and engagement

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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- Stay in touch
  - Hold daily huddles
    - Set the expectation and requirement all are present and no distractions
    - Rotate team members to host and lead the huddle
    - Model the behavior
  - Define for yourself how long to go before speaking with a member of your team
    - Half day
    - Full day
- Skill up and support learning opportunities
  - Share regular and planned short lessons
  - Rotate delivery of topics

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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- Skill up and support learning opportunities
  - Share regular and planned short lessons
  - Rotate delivery of topics
  - Allow the team to develop topics for discussion
  - Keep them short (adults check out every 10 seconds)
- Create “swim buddies”
  - A shared leadership model – prevents exhausting manager capacity
  - Experienced employees mentoring inexperienced employees
  - Creates a layer of support to combat isolation
  - Created learning opportunities for leadership development

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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- Interpretation is everything
  - Use your emotional intelligence
  - Understand you are listening through your own filter
  - Watch for patterns that are not normal
    - Sudden withdrawal from group discussions
    - Shorter e-mails
    - Listen for tone, rate, inflexion, volume and pitch
- Model optimism
  - It's contagious
  - Demonstrates confidence in the future
  - Helps team members find purpose in their work
  - Removes constraints that spark innovation

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## Leading Through the “New Norm”

- Communicate
  - Provide updates – even if there isn’t anything to update
  - Be consistent
  - Maintain transparency but protect what’s confidential
- Continuously gauge stress levels & address them head on

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## Leading & Addressing Challenges

- Decline in employee performance
  - Lack of face-to-face supervision
    - make this a priority
    - reduces individual performance
  - Absence of preparation or training
  - Lack of access to information
    - employees struggle with reduced access to information
    - getting answers to questions is an obstacle
- Social isolation
  - may feel they are “less belonging”
  - increases intention to leave the company

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## Leading & Addressing Challenges

- Address employee challenges
  - Provide several communication options
  - Establish rules of engagement
  - Provide encouragement and support
  - Offer the opportunity to “job craft”
    - Allow employees to redesign how the job gets done
    - Build different or better relationships
    - Changes perception of the job
    - Makes employees take and feel “ownership” in what they do
  - Draft challenges to match an employee’s potential

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## Trust But Verify

- Holding to your expectations
  - Eliminates fears that employees are hijacking time
  - Ensures the quality and requirements of the position are being met
  - Build confidence in your relationship with your team and trust in the process
  - Gives you an advanced ability to stop any major issues from happening
- What it isn’t
  - Micromanagement
  - Dictatorship
  - Nagging
- Maintains objectivity
  - Allows you to lead with out judging
  - Has a time and a place
  - Rules out suspected employee agendas

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## Technological Pitfalls & Risks

- Facebook
  - Anything you post on Facebook – you don't own
  - Anything your employees post on Facebook – you can't get unless subpoenaed
- Instant Messaging
  - Know your risks
    - Difference between free version and purchased versions
    - Cheap/inexpensive = higher risk
    - Is discoverable
  - Know what's protected under NLRB
  - Set your expectations
    - Write a use policy
    - Reinforce expectations
  - Monitor chatter
  - There is no expectation of privacy

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## Technological Pitfalls & Risks

- Terry "Hulk Hogan"
- Boella v. Gawker Media
- \$140m lawsuit in Boella's favor
- Employees IM chat – evidence
- Gawker Media bought & closed



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## Technological Pitfalls & Risks

- Timekeeping
  - Have clear policies requiring employees to record all hours worked
  - Have employees verify each week's work performed
  - Prohibit non-exempt employees from performing work outside of normal working hours
    - Checking e-mail
    - Responding to texts and calls
    - Compensable work such as online learning, research, etc.
    - Online meetings
    - Limit restrictions for on-call work
    - Know when you need to compensate a non-exempt employee for on-call work

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# Eliminate the Fear of Ambiguity

Stay in motion

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# Questions