

Engaging Health Care Workers During and After COVID-19



While health systems are focused on delivering high quality patient care and protecting their staff from COVID-19 as best they can, they are also fast approaching a breaking point; hospitals are reaching near capacity, doctors' offices are overwhelmed, some are losing staff and others are closing down completely. The new normal is supply shortages, staff concerns, and abrupt changes in policies and procedures in an effort to cope with the virus. Mid-crisis and post-crisis burnout are major threats. Keeping health care workers informed, inspired, and engaged is critical to surviving this crisis.

Based upon what we're seeing from our clients, and our experience in crisis management and employee engagement, here are three best practices to help reduce staff stress and guard against burnout.

RECOGNIZE THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF STAFF

In a crisis, there is a critical need for genuine, authentic demonstrations of appreciation for staff from inside and outside the organization.

Employee Appreciation Campaign

Collect and produce "Thank a Health Care Worker" videos from individuals and organizations in the community to be used on internal channels and/or pushed directly to health care workers on their personal social media channels using geo-targeting. Content can be generated by donors, volunteers, retired employees, business partners, and man on the street interviews. Using a dedicated hashtag, content can be also be collected from individuals across communities to show the breadth and reach of support.



Thank a Health Care Worker Video

Community Engagement Program

Like what we've seen across the nation in terms of veterans' appreciation, organizations can secure pledges for discounted or free products and services from local organizations and companies into create an Employee Appreciation coupon book that can be distributed during or post crisis to build staff morale.



Coupon Book

LEVERAGE THE C-SUITE TO BUILD EMPLOYEE CONFIDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Our research tells us that the #1 most important thing to employees working in a hospital setting is having trustworthy, visible leaders.

Daily Leadership Message

C-suite visibility and leadership are critical in a crisis. Leaders should send daily communications focusing on how they are taking actions to resolve issues, positive developments in fighting COVID-19, how staff are making an impact, and how health care workers can focus on mental health during this time and avoid burnout.

Leaders should also ramp up communications on their personal social media channels to keep internal and external audiences informed, while demonstrating visible leadership, and building reputation for the long-term.

LOOK AHEAD NOW

Although it is unclear when the crisis will end, now is the right time to begin planning for your post-crisis communications. Assessing staff morale and impact to your internal reputation will be important to developing your post-crisis internal communications program.

- **Assign someone to think about the future.** What you do now will pave the way for how quickly and easily your health system can recover and return to normal.
- Begin to chronicle your **lessons learned and best practices** so that staff understand you will be even better prepared for the next crisis.
- Examine your most recent **employee engagement results** and decide what changes need to be made to reflect the COVID-19 experience.

APCO is here to help. With decades of experience helping health care organizations manage crises, we can help you navigate this landscape and emerge more resilient and agile for the future.

For more information about how APCO Worldwide can support you during and after the COVID-19 crisis, please contact:

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