ENABLING CONNECTED WORK IN AN UNPRECEDENTED ENVIRONMENT

COVID-19, the novel **Coronavirus**, is causing a lot of disruption in our global markets and almost all industries. Leaders in most organizations are considering how to best respond and are beginning to implement new policies to work remotely. For firms that have not already built the "connected work" capability, this can be challenging in the short term and potentially not have a long term benefit. Our advice is that you may wish to drive a 2-for-1 program:

- **ENSURE BUSINESS CONTINUITY IN THE SHORT TERM**
First, ensure your digital environment can support your employees, partners, and customers to work and collaborate easily through digital platforms, products, and services. Second, make sure your most critical processes and functions know how to work using these tools while working away from the office. Setting expectations will help reduce the chances of older office management practices unintentionally constraining your staff's ability to get the job done while working remotely.

- **NEVER WASTE A GOOD CRISIS IN THE LONG TERM**
If you have visions of a more diversified workforce, smaller office footprint, and new ways of capturing value, this is an excellent opportunity to begin shaping the long term "norms" of your organization. In stable times it is easy for people to push back on change. A crisis can be the catalyst to create a "new normal."

CGS has been working with clients for close to a decade to develop connected strategies and to break down the inertia inside of organizations that often holds them back. Here are our top 10 hints on how to succeed in a connected work environment:

1. **BE EMPATHETIC**
As many leaders drive rapidly into a 100% work from home scenario, many employees will not be prepared to operate in this new routine. Compounding the situation, many homes will have multiple family members working remotely and children trying to perfect distance learning at the same time. Allow for team members to flex into new daily routines and encourage teams to support one another, allowing natural patterns to emerge.

2. **SET JOB & ROLE EXPECTATIONS**
If working remotely full time (not just for a day) is new for your corporate culture, getting on the same page is critical so everyone (top to bottom) understands operational expectations.

3. **SEND "WHAT TOOL WHEN" GUIDES**
Unless a tool or service is already critical to daily work, many people don't know what is available to get their job done when they aren't physically in the office. Sending out a quick list of "What Tool When" for common collaboration platforms and services will reduce confusion and encourage the use of corporately approved technologies.

4. WORK WITH MANAGEMENT/SUPERVISORS FIRST

If your management team still walks the floor at 9:05 every morning to see who is not at their desk, they aren't assessing the right metric. Work with the management team to ensure everyone in the organization understands how to support and achieve corporate objectives. Empower the individuals to achieve success no matter where they choose to sit. They can then use the time they get back in an efficient manner.

5. PROMOTE "WORK FROM ANYWHERE" (WFA) NORMS

Working from home can be more complicated than people think. Provide everyone with a quick list of "norms" with *do* and *do not* lists to be used while working outside a standard office. This will help guide individuals into work mode when they aren't in their favorite cubical.

6. CHECK IN REGULARLY

Doing anything new causes some level of stress to the system and the individual. Block time on calendars to check in to see how teams and individuals are doing with the new setup. If something isn't working well, a little coaching goes a long way.

7. PUBLISH AN ONLINE ETIQUETTE GUIDE

Don't take someone's availability status (i.e. "Green") as an accurate reflection of their availability. Check in with them prior to assigning tasks to confirm their bandwidth. Remind everyone how to engage when you can't see each other so they aren't feeling pressured to respond at all hours. Everyone can instead focus on the right work.

8. MANDATE USING VIDEO ON CALLS

Countless studies show how without a single word, you can see how a person is doing by looking at her/his face. Make "video" the norm and "audio-only" the exception to encourage better connection while apart.

9. GET UP AND GO TO WORK LIKE NORMAL(ISH)

For the first couple of days, it is strange to work remotely because people lose their standard patterns. Encourage people to set the alarm and maintain their regular schedules and habits. Staying consistent helps keep the team moving together and enables individuals to maintain appropriate work/life balance.

10. TAKE A BREATH

With the magnitude of this crisis, everything isn't going to be perfect on day 1. Block some time on the calendar to take stock on how the day/week went and jot down some areas for improvement. You can even use one of the collaboration platforms like Yammer, Teams, or Slack to poll larger audiences for ideas on ways to improve while promoting a new way of collaborating. #winwin

We have been working with our clients to define connected strategies and to enable connected work for years. If you would like to discuss readying your technical environment or breaking down the barriers to respond to and get the most out of this emerging crisis, please contact us at CGS Advisors via the information below.

Email: **info@cgsadvisors.com**
Phone: **+1.248.658.8247**

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