**Organisational Behaviour**

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Tutorial 6

**Impact of COVID19 on employee engagement**

“There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen.” Nothing is truer than these words by Lenin. At this moment the world has come at a standstill as the entire human race gets gripped by a deadly pandemic

As states and communities balance reopening with social distancing and other COVID-19 safety protocols, uncertainty around the workplace persists. For some healthcare organizations, reopening means transitioning specific roles from the remote-first setting back to the office setting, full or part time, or maintaining remote-first practices. Regardless of each state’s policies and organizational and team member choice, uncertainty, stress, and fear are likely

Workforces and leaders returning to an office setting in the wake of COVID-19 are confronting significant concerns, such as the following:

* What will social distancing look like in the office setting? Will safe practices allow for effective in-person communication?
* How suddenly will my employer make the shift back to the office? Can I balance working from home with work on site?
* Are accommodations in place outside of the company to allow for effective and safe childcare and elder care? Will my employer be flexible if those systems are not yet fully functioning?
* As an organization, how will we respond to societal and cultural changes in the wake of the pandemic? (e.g., Am I expected to shake a client’s hand, and can I wear a mask during meetings?)
* What accommodations will organizations make for high-risk team members or those with high-risk family members?

Such wariness and fear can threaten team member job satisfaction, productivity, and wellness—in the workplace and beyond.

However, one of the most interesting things about employee engagement is that, when things are going well, you can easily not notice it. But when an organisation is struggling, that’s when it really comes alive. When you need your employees to step up and work together, your culture can really flourish.

Organizations are evolving and introducing new engagement initiatives as also figuring ways out to measure their engagement effectiveness. From hosting virtual coffee sessions to team lunches, managers are leveraging several techniques to connect with their team members they no longer meet in-person every day.

Organizations must follow the **4C’s – Communication, Caution, Care, and Compassion**, to deal with the current times.

* Open layouts will change, however: Desks could become spaced out, partitions could go up, cleaning stations stocked with hand sanitizer and antibacterial wipes will become the norm, and workers may seek out spaces for focused work, such as privacy booths.
* As travel of all kinds is halted, telecommuting is adopted at scale and companies attempt to cut costs and balance their budgets, many experts believe business trips as we know them will be a thing of past.
* To combat the spread of coronavirus among essential workers, some of the biggest employers in the country, have begun taking the temperatures of their employees before they are allowed to work.
* Wearing a face mask around the office may become commonplace, especially in bigger companies with more workers sharing tight quarters.