

Leading Employees in Times of Crisis

Managers have a critical role to play during these uncertain times; indeed, how managers treat their employees today will continue to resonate tomorrow. Managers need a strategy for helping their companies get through the current crisis. The following 10 steps, organized under the acronym TAKE CHARGE, offer strategies for managing, motivating and leading employees during times of crisis.

T: Target fears and anxiety. Employers who act appropriately and provide a supportive workplace will be able to improve employee retention and loyalty after life at work begins to return to normal. People go through a range of emotions during crises, beginning with concerns for their own safety, their families, their friends, their jobs, and finally their financial security.

A: Accept the fact that performance and productivity will drop. In working with employees, expect to see forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, requests for sick leave, and increased absenteeism—all of which are normal responses in a crisis. People will need to talk more (a natural way to deal with tragedy), and the more they talk the healthier the organization becomes.

K: Keep lines of communication open. Information is powerful. Meet with staff members at all levels to express grief as well as to promote available resources and other services. Keep web sites updated and provide a place for people to watch or listen to news at the workplace.

E: Educate managers and supervisors. Supervisors and middle managers are the backbone of a company and the first line of defense in a crisis. They should be equipped with the resources, information and authority to assist employees who are close to the front lines. Training should include how to identify post-traumatic stress disorder and how to communicate with people who are under stress.

C: Convey a calm, confident and reassuring leadership style. Don't underestimate the importance of personal leadership style. In times of crisis, heroic leadership becomes important. Managers should attempt to compartmentalize their own personal fears and feelings.

H: Help those in need first. First and foremost, make no assumptions about how people feel in difficult times. Because some may need professional assistance, make sure that workers understand how to access the employee assistance program (EAP).

A: Allow people to display their emotions. People are as diverse as their emotions, and they display their feelings in different ways. Allow them to display flags, mementos and other patriotic symbols. Let them know that it is OK to cry and that anger is a natural part of acceptance and recovery.

R: Restrict negative behavior. Even though anger is part of this process, be sure the line is drawn at actual abuse, harassment and verbal venting of anger on other people. Make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that behavior of this sort will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the strictest way.

G: Get people to focus on a higher calling. Management's role is to try to give control back to employees and to focus their attention on a cause in which they feel they can make a difference. Encouraging employees to help with a charity or to donate blood will help them to move on after a crisis.

E: Expect and plan for recurrences. Keep disaster plans and emergency notification rosters updated and prepare for what could be a long and emotional campaign for America.

Stress	For free and confidential assistance, call your Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:			Marital Problems
Financial		(713) 781-3364	Se Habla Español	Family Problems
Legal		(800) 324-4327	(800) 324-2490	Alcohol/Drug Problems
Depression		www.4eap.com		Other Referrals

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide an Employee Assistance Program.