



## Daily Best Practices for Today and Tomorrow

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**Let's Rally.**

## Daily Best Practices for Today and Tomorrow

At the time of this writing, we are well into the COVID-19 global pandemic, the likes of which none of us has experienced. Everyone is scrambling to establish daily best practices, and routines have been altered substantially. If projections hold, the changes we are experiencing at work and home may be with us for some time. We look forward to a time beyond social distancing and furloughed workers, and hope that in the coming weeks the situation will be much improved.

Life-altering circumstances bring about renewed emphasis on policy, procedure, and practice – and cause us to focus on methods and systems, especially when the safety and well-being of our team is at stake. As more knowledge is gained about COVID-19, more resources become available which provide guidance for critical infrastructure organizations, essential businesses, and their personnel. Working through practical solutions and adhering to such guidance will increase the prospects for a resolution to this pandemic, and the lessons learned will benefit everyone in the future.

### Two Become One

As many safety practitioners are aware, safe and healthy behaviors away from the job are just as important as those in the workplace. We advise and encourage all clients to include KPIs for such behaviors and stress their importance. This need is front and center during present times of economic and social crisis.

COVID-19 has not only forced changes in the way we think about safety and wellness, it has caused companies and organizations to assess the methods and practices necessary to drive engagement and meaningful participation. This is especially critical today, when as many employees as possible are working remotely. Telecommuting is nothing new – but the number of associates working remotely is unprecedented.

The potential negative impact of this is two-fold. First, those that are now forced to work remotely are having to adjust to a daily routine away from the workplace. Productivity will decrease until they become accustomed to working a different way. Systems may need to be enhanced or developed to accommodate the new way of working. Secondly, those that are unable to work remotely are asked to do more because the number of onsite personnel is reduced. With this comes the potential for increased workplace stress and injuries.

The COVID-19 pandemic adds a new layer, causing us to think about safety and wellness as one concern; one that equally emphasizes safe and healthy behaviors at work and at home. Just as the purpose of any safety initiative is to drive and reinforce safe behaviors so that the employee can return home to the family at the end of work – the reverse is just as important.

Behaviors critical to reducing exposure are important, whether at work or away, so stressing these behaviors becomes paramount. Behaviors such as those recommended by the CDC can be enforced at work, but employees may behave differently when away.

The CDC recommends the following behaviors to curtail exposure to COVID-19.

- Practice social distancing as much as possible (maintain six feet separation)
- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water (20 seconds minimum)
- Use hand sanitizer when unable to wash hands
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth)
- Minimize personal interaction
- Do not shake hands or hug
- Common areas should be frequently cleaned and disinfected
- Practice healthy respiratory hygiene – cover sneezing and coughing and discard tissue immediately
- Self-quarantine if feeling sick or if exposed to COVID-19

Message frequency and consistency will compound effectiveness, so use all means possible to communicate with your remote and onsite associates. If your business is in the service sector and your employees have contact with customers or patrons, this is even more critical, due to an increased potential for exposure.

It is vitally important to communicate policy for all associates and visitors to your campus. Use all means available, including internal and external communication (text, email, posted notices, etc.). [Short videos](#) can be highly effective as well.

## One Becomes Two

While a unified (work and away) strategy is important for increasing engagement and driving safe behaviors, there is also an important two-dimensional aspect to consider. The first is your current safety and wellness program (in place prior to the COVID-19 outbreak). Safety goals and objectives have not been suspended because of the pandemic and are just as critical today as before. Emphasis on those goals must be maintained through all circumstances and this is made more difficult by a dispersed workforce. The second is the new COVID-19 related requirements which must also be emphasized and enforced.

Angelica Grindle, Ph.D. provides a perfect example in a recent article for [foodsafetytech.com](https://foodsafetytech.com) entitled *Control Exposure to COVID-19*. Addressing the food industry, she says,

“Safety is defined as controlling exposure for self and others. Going into 2020, the food industry battled safety concerns such as slips and falls, knife cuts, soft-tissue injuries, etc. As an “essential industry”, food-related organizations now face a unique challenge in controlling exposure to COVID-19. Not only must they keep their facilities clean and employees safe, they must also ensure that they do not create additional exposures for their suppliers or customers.”

Grindle goes on to mention that these challenges increase while employees may be distracted by stress, financial uncertainty, job insecurity, and health concerns for themselves and their families. These new factors are true for the food industry and others, too.

## Looking to the Future

One of the most effective ways to maximize employee safety and wellness initiatives is to utilize a behavior-based safety process as part of a comprehensive employee recognition program. These programs provide a central point for establishing, reinforcing, and communicating core values, goals, and objectives.

Research has consistently shown a positive, progressive linkage between employee recognition, employee engagement, and company performance. Such programs should be designed to support, reinforce, and amplify current (and new) policies, procedures, and core values.

Several elements are critical for success:

- clearly defined and communicated policies and procedures,
- safety guidelines by job type and responsibility
- clear procedures for reporting near misses, unsafe conditions, or conduct,
- the means to develop solutions to workplace hazards,
- safety gear and established policies and procedures for its use,
- establish safe operating guidelines and procedures for equipment and vehicles.

Communicating core values is essential, especially for today’s workforce in today’s pandemic. According to Glassdoor, culture and values are the top considerations in what matters most to employees. In fact, 65% of millennials consider culture before salary when it comes to job satisfaction, and 52% of those 45+ feel the same way. A comprehensive employee safety & recognition program is a powerful vehicle that can deliver and sustain that message.

Finally, we have observed that clients who have invested in a behavior-based, comprehensive employee safety & recognition program are able to use them very effectively in providing much-needed appreciation and positive reinforcement to their employees and their families. These programs are proving their worth in the current crisis and will continue to play a vital role when the economy and social conditions are healthy again.

While the only way to the other side of this crisis is through it, we can (and must) be practical in the present, consistent in our message, and focused on the future.