

FIVE TOP TIPS FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYEES DURING A CRISIS.



Jenny Perkins

Head of Engagement at Cirrus, offers advice for engaging employees during a crisis that will also set you up for future success.

What employers do now is more important than what they do at the end of the crisis. Don't wait – it'll be too late. Employees will judge their employers based on how they deal with them now. So, treat people well today and they're more likely to stick around tomorrow.

The number of people actively seeking new jobs usually increases in January and September following holiday periods. It's quite likely we'll see an increase following the current crisis. Although it's far from a holiday period, many people have either been furloughed or lost their jobs. They have time to contemplate their careers. Others are busier than ever, which can also lead them to reflect on what they really want from a job.

Communicate regularly and with compassion

Leaders and managers need to engage with people very regularly during this time. It's fine to maintain connections with furloughed employees – officially they cannot work, but an informal check-in over a virtual coffee to make sure they're okay is fine, and often much appreciated. Now is the time for all managers to really consider employee health and wellbeing. Many will be juggling new ways of working with caring responsibilities and the challenges of lockdown. Recognise the challenges and offer support when you can.

Keep developing your leaders and managers

Your leaders and managers may benefit from some learning and development opportunities to help them engage employees right now. Consider offering some online workshops on topics such as virtual communication and remote performance management. Encourage empathy and understanding.

Learn from what's happening right now

Right now, none of us know what the future will hold. However, there are things occurring now that we can learn from to make the future more positive. What positives are happening in your organisation? Are there things you could build on? For example, could you increase the number of virtual meetings you hold to cut down on travel when lockdown eases? Think about the negatives too. The current crisis may, for example, be highlighting issues with your supply chain or your IT infrastructure that need to be addressed.

Be open and honest

Be open with your employees. It's easier to get buy-in from people if you are honest and transparent. You may have to make some tough decisions and you may have to share bad news. People will be more understanding if you explain the reasons why. Maintain your integrity and treat people with respect.

Remember why you're all here

Now is the time to be very clear about your purpose, and to communicate it regularly. Think about why people want to work for your organisation and what it means to them. Your employer brand matters – it is a key reason why people are attracted to your organisation and why they decide to stay.

Your leaders and managers should continue to bring that brand to life every day with their teams. If you have a good reputation as an employer during the crisis, your people are likely to be great advocates for your business, helping you to both attract and retain employees in future.