

3 Ways to Engage Employees in Uncertain Times

The only thing constant is change. As people, we understand this, and yet for many of us, we appreciate our routines, knowing what's expected of us, and making sure we have the necessary tools and resources to succeed. But what happens during times of tremendous change? Are our employees equipped to succeed? When tremendous change occurs, we need to be ready to think differently about the way we lead others. During times of uncertainty, leaders must amplify their emotional intelligence to promote active employee engagement. Review our 3 strategies for engaging employees when leading in (and through) uncertain times.

1. Check In over Check Up¹

During times of uncertainty, *checking in* with employees to ask how they are doing, what support they need, and sharing what you're working on promotes collaboration and teamwork, gives employees an opportunity to connect their work to the bigger picture, and supports autonomy. Employees also feel that their manager cares about their wellbeing. If you're only *checking up* on the status of a patient or project, the employee may feel micromanaged or that you don't care how they're feeling. Questions to consider asking:

- What's one-word or sentence to describe how you're feeling right now?
- What do you need to accomplish this task or project?
- What support do you need with your patients today?

2. Be Courageous and Curious

Your employees will look to you for answers. Be ready for their questions and be prepared to not have all the answers. It's OK to admit that this time of uncertainty is new for you too. Rely on your experience but also rely on your team. Carve out time and space for your team to brainstorm and strategize. Need to approach a project differently? Ask for suggestions. Need to implement a new staffing structure to better care for patient volume? Ask for input. Your employees will feel a greater sense of contribution and buy-in knowing their ideas are helping shape the way forward.

3. Lean into the Languages of Appreciation²

You know those five languages of appreciation (gifts, words of affirmation, acts of service, appropriate touch, and quality time)? Lean into them in recognizing and appreciating your team. Celebrate the small wins. Recognize both publicly and privately so your team knows you value their contributions, especially during uncertain times. Whether through rounding, huddles, and meetings or nDorse, emails, and texts, make sure your employees know they are valued and appreciated regularly.

¹ Amabile, Teresa and Kramer, Steve. "Checking In with Employees (Versus Checking Up)." *Harvard Business Review*, 07 May 2012, <https://hbr.org/2012/05/checking-in-versus-checking-up>

² Chapman, Gary D., and Paul E. White. *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People*. Northfield Publishing, 2019.