

MANAGING YOUR ORGANIZATION IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

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Canada is a very different place than it was a few weeks ago. We've had to make radical changes in our workplaces, with our work teams and how we work, not to mention within our personal lives. We have all had to rethink what is essential to us as individuals, as families, as communities and within our workplaces.

Although Pandemics are not new, reactive decisions had to be made, refocusing our attention from ramping up to ramping down our services and refocusing how we do business during a State of Emergency Pandemic in Canada.

COVID-19 is a worldwide crisis of epic proportions that is changing daily around the world. Organizations need to treat it as such – a crisis! These are uncharted and for most unfamiliar territory.

That said, there are things we can do to address the concerns of laid off employees, working with staff still present within our organizations who have concerns around their health and safety, heavier workloads and continued employment security. We also need to look at how to ramp up quickly once we start to move out of the state of emergency back to business as usual. – Or will it be?

In this article, we will address all of the above, navigating the changes, layoffs and planning for the future of your organizations in the golf/hospitality industry.

First, let's look at your workforce; those currently working and those you have had to layoff or holdoff hiring for the spring ramp-up to opening your golf courses. **Planning** by development of an **Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan** (your business continuity and pandemic plan) is key to your communication process with your team. The plan (its risk assessment, policies, procedures and communication documents) will help you outline how to address potential exposure for those who are still working;

non-occupational risk factors for those working from home, laid off or not yet onboarded for your spring hire and workers individual risk with the controls necessary to address those risks. This plan will better prepare you for the next time the country is in a state of emergency due to a pandemic (and yes, there will be another) and can be refined once this phase of the pandemic is done.

Ongoing **Communication** is key to keep concerns, fears and resentments to a minimum, but also to keep your entire team up to date on what is happening within your organization, today and about the organization's future plans. Proper communications will reassure your team and provide the supports they need as well as provide you the opportunity to assure them you will all get through this. Include your entire team in planning as part of your communication process. By addressing their concerns, letting them be heard and provide input will make them feel like they are in the driver's seat and a major part in the recovery process not only for the organization, but for themselves too. Should additional staff need to be laid off during this period, they will better be able to deal with it as they have been a part of the process and understand how the decisions are being made.

With any disruption follows recovery – planning and communicating that recovery process will be important to turn-around from the impact the disruption has played in your organizations. Disruption to their lives has been difficult. Allowing them to be part of the recovery process will give them direction, focus and hope for the future within your organization; no matter what position they hold. Communication needs to be both ways – from you to your team and from your team to you. Hold Zoom meetings and regular communication emails to ensure proper social distancing measures and include your work at home team, on site team and those not yet called back to work to keep them engaged and involved.



With the governments support paying 75% of wages backdated to March 15th, maybe you can bring some of your workers back to work – potentially in different roles, maybe in marketing and planning. We need to get creative to keep our workforce engaged and supported.

Empathizing with your team to show that you too have concerns. Although you may not understand how each member is feeling specifically, express that you understand that the situation is stressful, that they may be feeling periods of anxiety and concerns about the risks that they may be exposed to at work, at home and in the general community. Let your team know that you are there to support them through this and that you too are feeling stressed, anxious and have fears of your own. Encourage them to utilize the resources available to them such as an EAP program or other resources outlined in this article; and, always remembering to support yourself – address your feelings, your anxiety, your fears around the risks and your need for supports too.

Be Flexible with your team. Allow your team members the ability to stay home without a doctor note, to care for sick family members, to take care of their children or simply to address their own fears of coming to work during the current state of emergency. Refer to the Federal Government COVID-19 Response Plan.

Provide **Protection and Education** to your team that are still onsite working and/or coming back to work. Provide specific training, education, and informational material about business-essential job functions for your workplace and worker health and safety, including proper hygiene practices and the use of workplace controls (including PPE). Develop emergency communications protocols. Provide each employee with an awareness document that outlines protocols for working safely that include such things as avoid shaking hands, safe distancing measures, avoid touching your face, cough and sneeze with a tissue or into your elbow/sleeve if necessary and hand washing guidelines. Informed workers who feel safe at work are less likely to be unnecessarily absent.

Practice **Mindfulness**. Mindfulness is the action of getting ourselves out of our reactive mode and take ourselves back to the moment. It allows us to deal with stressful situations more clearly and be more focused on the needs of others and ourselves in any given moment. Be mindful of your employees. Start by ensuring you have up to date information on all your employees including their emergency contacts. Keep an eye on how your team is feeling and know when to advise them to go home. Reach out to your HR team or Emergency Response Team (Health and Safety Committee and Public Health in some cases) to identify what you can disclose and what you can't in regards to another team member health risks, infection or mental health (be cautious about disclosure).

Be Aware – know the symptoms of COVID-19 and how to respond should an employee contract the virus. If any employee has a fever or difficulty breathing, it is recommended that they be sent home and that they should seek medical attention by first calling Public Health. It is important to err on the side of caution. Should the employee have COVID-19 Public Health will be in contact with you, the employer. Take this time to train your supervisors on the importance of not overreacting and to follow the procedures you have set out in relation to COVID-19 in order to prevent panic among the rest of the team.

Ramping up. When it is time to ramp up business and re-open the golf course to patrons/members and events that had been put on hold, it may not be business as usual. What does this mean? It means, the future of your organization will look very different as a result of the current crisis. Outside of the predictable outlined below, you will need to plan for future catastrophic events that your business could face.

For now, let's look at some of the forecasting and planning you can do in order to ramp up quickly. What is going to be the recovery period? How to recover disrupted business services? What is your workforce going to look like?

Create a plan on when your offsite and laid off team members can return to the workplace and if additional recruitment measures are required. Develop new policies, procedures and training programs that outline new cleaning protocols and PPE that will be required as well as other policies to help protect the organization against future state of emergencies and pandemics and finally, define your communication and marketing strategy; setting it into play well before your ramp up begins. These will not be the only things you need to do; planning your communication to your members and other patrons also begins now!

RESOURCES

The federal, provincial and some municipal governments and other organizations have many new resources to keep your team and yourselves informed and supported throughout this difficult time. Check your local municipality, provincial government and federal government websites regularly to stay informed. Following, I have provided links to specific websites across the country to assist you:

- [The Canadian Mental Health Association](#) has developed new resources to support you and your team.
- Federal Government website [COVID-19 Response Plan](#)
- EI Response for employees and employers [COVID-19 & links](#)
- Links through CFIB to summarize the [COVID-19 Supports](#) (Public Health, Federal and Provincial Relief Measures by Province) and links to their specific sites.
- [The World Health Organization](#)