ONBOARDING & TRAINING
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
THE TRANSITION TO ONLINE ONBOARDING PROCESSES AND TRAINING DELIVERY

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With the current COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing measures prevent group gatherings for the safety of the public and exposure to contracting COVID-19. To protect workplaces, safety procedures must be put in place when carrying out organizational functions, including onboarding and training employees. The transition from face-to-face training to online delivery methods will take some adjustment but is necessary to abide by physical distancing measures and protecting the safety of employees. As these restrictions are gradually lifted, it will still be important to maintain physical distance to mitigate the risks of a second wave of the pandemic and ensure the safety of everyone we work with and our clients.

Within the golf course sector, employers have a duty to take every precaution reasonable to protect the health and safety of all workers. Employers should consult with Joint Health and Safety Committees/Health and Safety Representatives in the workplace on measures to protect workers in the workplace and carry out the duties of a workplace Marshall to ensure safety of your clients/golfers.

ONBOARDING

In response to COVID-19, hiring and onboarding practices of new employees and returning employees (on the new practices during a pandemic) must be altered to align with social distancing requirements and to ensure the highest degree of individual safety as possible. The delivery of such processes and functions must be delivered in a safe and convenient manner, this may include multiple methods of delivery.

When reviewing your current processes it is important to remember that the duties of the job may be altered to fit the "new normal". When offering employment to a candidate, ensure your current employment processes are adaptive to the current pandemic and that they enable the new hire to access supports and resources as normally as possible.

When welcoming a new employee on board or welcoming back an existing team member ensure that you have properly prepared the technologies necessary that the employee will need to ensure their success, and outlining new processes for their first day onsite. Ensure IT systems are connected and ready for use well in advance of your employee's first day, make sure there are supports in place if the employee encounters problems while utilizing technology and software.

Ensure you are still welcoming and making a warm first impression to the employee, this can be done through a welcome email, phone call or even video call. Your method of choice for welcoming your new employee should include information regarding the employee's schedule for their first day, the employee handbook and applicable checklists.
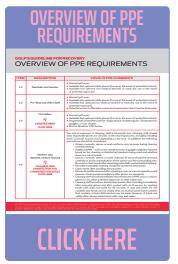
It is best practice to form an onboarding checklist of what you will do and provide for your new employee, this can include:

- Giving the new employee a warm welcome and introduction to the organization
- Ensuring the employee can access all employment forms and the employee handbook
- Checking that technology and software is ready for use
- Ensuring employee receives and is able to receive mandatory health & safety training online

It is important to make yourself available to the new employee and to be timely in response to new employee questions. Offer your assistance and availabilities to your new employee, with correct contact information and method of communication such as email or phone.

Transitioning to online practices due to COVID-19 may present challenges for an employee's learning style, make sure to communicate with the new employee on how to best support them in the workplace, what methods work for them, their comfortability with online technology, etc. Outline clear expectations for the new employee and the method of check-ins that will be used.

Be sure to maintain workplace culture of teamwork, such as setting up group virtual meetings with your team to integrate the new employee. Discuss and offer supports available to assist the employee through this new transition to boost morale and job satisfaction. It is recommended to organize group virtual meetings on a regular basis to keep the team connected and to make sure the new team member is adjusting to the new work culture. If face to face meetings are necessary physical distancing and proper cleaning protocols must be followed and necessary PPE provided.

OVERVIEW OF PPE REQUIREMENTS

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PPE SUPPLIERS

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TRAINING

Employee training is often done in group sessions at the workplace, due to COVID-19 the transition to online training methods becomes a requirement to avoid group gatherings to stop the further spread of COVID-19 for employee protection.

It is recommended that training being converted to online methods are to only be essential training to employees during this time. Essential training includes training that is related to COVID-19 safety measures and alterations in work procedures, reoccurring health and safety training, and any mandatory training for onboarding and welcoming employees to the workforce.

Everyone should be trained on possible COVID-19 transmission points in the workplace, what steps are being taken to protect them, and how they can protect themselves, including good handwashing technique and proper hand hygiene, sanitizing practices and not touching their face. Training should include physical distancing measures as applicable, such as:

- Having clear visuals to show where golfers may park, pay, and proceed safely to first tee etc. while maintaining physical distancing (more than 2 metres) between individuals at all times.
- Managing traffic flow and physical distancing with barriers and floor markings
- Staggering tee times to avoid congestion
- Encouraging golfers to practice physical distancing
- Practicing physical distancing during any job activities and within any designated break room areas
- Assigning staff to monitor areas of congestion to ensure physical distancing is taking place
- Ensure number of staff in a workspace is reduced and that each staff member has a 36 sq. ft distance around them from others
- Controlling the number of customers in one area at a time
- Considering online shopping options and/or curb side pick-up options for your pro shop
- Considering job rotation to share workload
- Increasing cleaning frequency of the workspaces, such as golf carts after each use, cleaning of common areas consistently and commonly touched surfaces after someone comes into contact with them
- Providing hand sanitizer at all workspaces, entrances and exits
- Ensuring all golfers are aware of the safety procedures in place to protect themselves and staff members
- Limiting golf cart use to one cart per golfer and including sanitization wipes in carts

- Providing safe place to dispose of sanitization wipes
- Training applicable staff on the cleaning procedures of each cart after use
- Assigning employees each to a piece of equipment to limit the use of it by multiple people
- Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if it is appropriate for the situation as indicated by a risk assessment and worn correctly
  - PPE that may be suitable for golf course workers include:
    - Gloves to help limit contact with surfaces and equipment
    - Goggles or face shield to serve as a barrier
    - Respiratory protection if advised by Public Health Ontario

Virtual training, either through eLearning software or webinars, is a key transition to make in organization operations. A variety of online tools can be utilized to encourage participation through online training such as polls, questionnaires', video chat, etc. Studies show that organizations who use a verity of formats to deliver online training improves the overall success and effectiveness of the training to employees. It is also important to accommodate employee's learning preferences for online training, whether that be specifications in audio/visual components, text sizes and colours used for easy viewing.

It is also important to ensure you keep track of employee attendance for online training methods. For training with video chat components, this can be an easy way to track employee attendance. For eLearning methods or webinars, potentially have employees complete a quiz on the content of the training afterwards where they provide their name or another form of employees signing their name following the completion of the training.

MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION

Even though your employees are working onsite, it is still important to ensure that regular communication is maintained with your employees. Staff meetings cannot take place like they used to. A best practice is to create a schedule on when to reach out to your employees, either through email, video call or phone call, on a consistent basis to check-in, as well as their overall wellbeing in adjustment to these new working conditions. Video calls can be done through Zoom, Facebook and Apple Facetime software, amongst others. It may also be helpful to ask employees for feedback regarding the new methods of onboarding and training and to adjust processes as needed for effectiveness in deliverance as well as the how they are adjusting to the "New Normal" in the workplace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynne Bard, President of Beyond Rewards Inc. has over 25 years of experience working in Safety, Human Resource and Training; taking the lead role in Safety and Human Resources for her clients. Lynne provides HR Expertise for ECO HR Blog, writes articles for HAZMAT Magazine and safety blogs for HAZMAT's online blog; develops and delivers many safety and hr training programs online and face-to face through Beyond Rewards and as a Professor at Conestoga College. Lynne's expertise has won several awards of excellence in the field and continues to lend experience and credibility to organizations with best practice solutions and processes that lend to the success of her clients businesses.

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