

Houston HR Leaders Share Tactics and Strategies During Covid-19 Crisis

On Tuesday March 24th, Egon Zehnder's Houston office hosted 20 senior HR leaders in a virtual conversation to discuss their insights from managing business continuity and leading their organizations through the short-and-long term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. We've summarized the key takeaways for the participants and for those who were unable to join.

Companies are facing two sets of employee challenges, one for corporate and/or other employees who can work from home, and a second set of issues around field and operational personnel.

- **Work-from-Home:** We seem to be past the initial scramble of getting everyone set up from home and starting to process ways to drive productivity and support for the longer term. For example, the SVP of Administration of a large power generator said that she had found that "starting Webex sessions 5 min past the hour helps avoid peak demand load on the tool and prevents technical glitches."
- **Operations:** Companies are experimenting with pragmatic approaches to enable operations to continue safely. The NA HR leader for a global EPC Firm shared that his company is "staggering start-times and lunches, providing physical reminders of distancing (e.g. taping a checkerboard on the floor), slowing production to reduce crew sizes, conducting health checks, and moving to multiple shifts to prevent the entire team from getting sick."
- **HR and business leaders** are looking for ways to ease the strain on employees (e.g. waiving parking fees, broadening access to tele-medicine, scanning mail to enable continued processing)

Communications are absolutely critical with the following priorities:

- Finding a single platform to ensure employees know where to go for the truth (Yammer in particular was mentioned by two participants as the platform of choice)

- Ensuring a high frequency of interactions, 3-4 times per week or more in most cases
- Creating a mix of local and corporate (CEO) engagement and interactions to deepen local connectivity
- The North American CHRO, Communications, Marketing and CSR leader for a global utility player said she is “Sharing good news and celebrating employee actions and contributions in addition to providing guidance.”

Focus is largely still near term (tomorrow and next week). Many seem to be at early stages in thinking about implications 2-3 months out (e.g. the impact of intern programs, new hires) and on business scenario planning for the longer term or considering implications if upwards of half of the workforce were to be affected in worse case scenarios

Taking care of ourselves too. Leaders are finding ways to create a new normal (e.g. get showered and dressed each day even if you don’t leave the house, make sure to find a way to find a way to step away vs. work 24/7, and to ensure to take time for resilience building and stress relief “yoga and margaritas!”)

Moving beyond Tuesday’s call, we remain ready and willing to connect individual participants as requested to share documents and ideas. It is wonderful to see collaboration across company lines as we all manage through these volatile times.

As you continue to lead your organizations, these additional learning from our gatherings with leaders may be of help to you or your CEOs. Please feel free to share them.

[Leading Through the Coronavirus Crisis](#)

[Leading with Care, Purpose, and Resolve During a Pandemic](#)

[CEO Community Call: Leadership through Crisis](#)

For more information, contact:



Michele Moncrief
Houston
michele.moncrief@egonzehnder.com
713-331-6793



Heather O'Keefe
Houston
Heather.OKeefe@egonzehnder.com
713-331-6720

Covid-19 Micro-Website

We have launched a micro website where this and other informative pieces are posted. This site will be regularly updated: [click here](#) for further details.

About Egon Zehnder

Egon Zehnder is the world's preeminent leadership consulting firm, sharing one goal: to help people and organizations transform. We know what great leaders can do and are passionate about delivering the best solutions for our clients. As One Firm, our more than 500 Consultants in 68 offices and 40 countries combine our individual strengths to form one powerful collaborative team. We partner closely with public and private corporations, family-owned enterprises, and non-profit and government agencies to provide a comprehensive range of integrated services: Board advisory, CEO search and succession, executive search, executive assessment, leadership development and organizational transformation.

Our leadership solutions cover individual, team and organizational effectiveness, development and cultural transformation. We work with world-class partners including Sinequanon (SQN), a firm we have invested in that uses AI and advanced analytics to improve workplace culture and performance, and Mobius Executive Leadership, a transformational leadership development firm. In addition, we have partnered with Paradox Strategies, co-founded by Harvard University Professor Linda Hill, to develop the Innovation Quotient (IQ), a proprietary culture diagnostic.

Our goal is that the work we do contributes to successful careers, stronger companies – and a better world.

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