



# Up and Running:

**How to Get Your Workforce Back to 100% (or better!)**

# The Wheels of Change Continue to Turn...

It's been quite a year, but after several months of near-complete shutdowns in many sectors, the country is starting to get back to business.

Only things are very different and continue to change on what feels like a daily basis. Such ongoing and extreme change can feel chaotic. Rules and guidelines can make it difficult to move quickly. And it can sometimes feel downright impossible to get back into a strong rhythm of high productivity.

## But you can.

By building on the momentum you've already generated, you can get more done in this "new normal." In this eBook, we will talk about:

- Whether it's possible to be productive in extreme circumstances
- Identifying the changes that will mark "the new normal"
- The importance of safety
- The challenges employees and employers face in boosting productivity
- How you can improve productivity by focusing on employee health - both physical and mental
- Tips for managing remote and blended teams
- Using schedule optimization to promote productivity
- The best partnership you can form to help navigate workforce changes

## Let's get started!

# Is It Possible to Run a Productive Workplace in Chaotic Times?

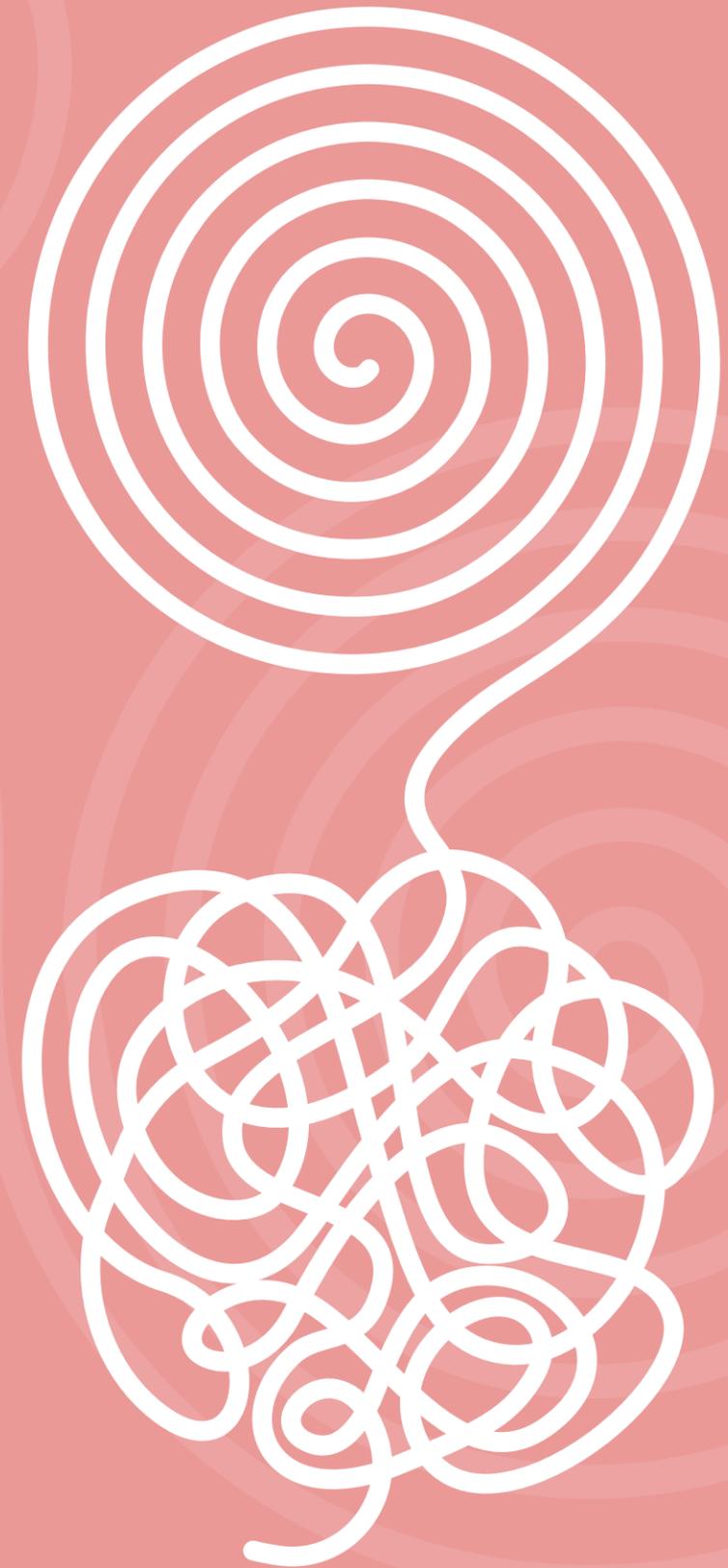
The short answer is **YES!**

Many businesses found out literally overnight that they can adjust quickly to dramatic change, but new challenges are always arising. As soon as you get used to things being one way, the goalposts are moved.

The situation we live in today is extremely fluid. Counties and states across the country are continually changing their rules and guidelines for businesses, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the FDA are also continually evolving their guidelines.

The only certainty is that everything will be uncertain for quite some time. But you can maintain a productive workforce even in the face of uncertainty and ongoing change. It just takes focus and a bit of a shift in mindset.

Productivity used to be equated to “hustle.” Who showed up first, left last and logged the most hours? Now, the focus is on, “How do we get the best results?” And that comes from understanding your company’s new normal and the ways you can manage and support employees to allow them to do their best, most productive work - even under stress.



# What Is Your Company's "New Normal?"

No matter what industry you work in or what part of the country you live, businesses will have to work around a "new normal" for the foreseeable future.

## Corporate Offices

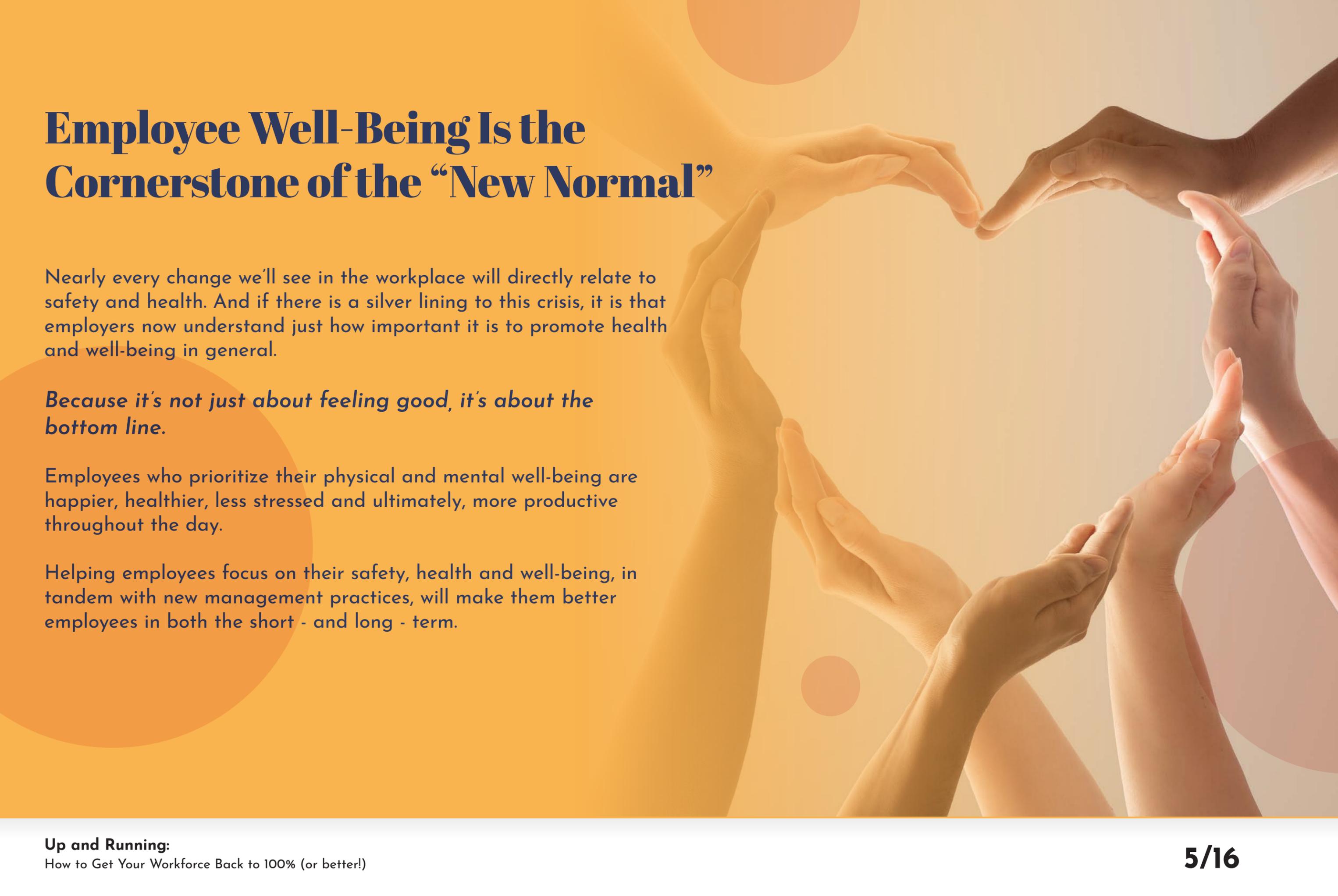
- Remote first and remote/on-site blended offices
- Flexible work schedules
- Six feet of space between workstations
- Traffic-directing arrows around the office

## Industrial Workplaces

- Staggered shifts and break times
- Enhanced PPE
- Adjusted workstations to promote social distance
- Supply chain disruptions

## All Workplaces

- Temperature checks
- Sick leave policies to account for minimum two-week quarantine
- No visitors or strict visitor policies
- Remote interviewing/hiring
- Masks and PPE
- Outdoor breaks
- Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing
- Greater emphasis on transparency and corporate communication
- More corporate support of safety, health and well-being programs for employees



# Employee Well-Being Is the Cornerstone of the “New Normal”

Nearly every change we'll see in the workplace will directly relate to safety and health. And if there is a silver lining to this crisis, it is that employers now understand just how important it is to promote health and well-being in general.

*Because it's not just about feeling good, it's about the bottom line.*

Employees who prioritize their physical and mental well-being are happier, healthier, less stressed and ultimately, more productive throughout the day.

Helping employees focus on their safety, health and well-being, in tandem with new management practices, will make them better employees in both the short - and long - term.

# Safety Should Be Your Top Priority

Whether your employees are currently working on-site or will be in the future, one of the best things you can do for them and your business is to focus on safety. Building safe practices protects both employees and protects the company from setbacks and shutdowns associated with a potential outbreak.

Employees have a lot of questions and concerns about how employers will keep them safe and healthy on the job, so take every precaution to help them feel safe and to work safely.

## This can include:

- Temperature checks
- Company-provided PPE
- Company-provided hand sanitizer
- Breaks to wash hands
- Rearranging workspaces to provide a minimum of six feet of separation
- Cleaning shared spaces at least once per hour
- Placing barriers between desks and workstations
- Using signage and arrows to direct traffic one-way through hallways and work floors
- Providing paid time off for people who are sick
- Requiring workers who are sick to stay home, even if they do not have a fever
- Staggering start and break times
- Encouraging people to take breaks outdoors
- Looking at new ways to filter the air in your facility
- Allowing remote work where/when possible, even when restrictions are eased
- Providing a way for employees to securely report violations or questionable practices

Whatever you are doing to help keep employees safe, communicate it clearly, early and often and ask for suggestions from employees who might identify other ways to promote safety.

Remember, if you're hiring anyone new, they will want to know what you're doing to keep your employees safe. Doing the right thing won't just protect your people and your business, it will help you build a positive employer brand as you work to attract focused and productive employees.

# So...

## Is Work Getting Done Right Now?

With so much uncertainty swirling around and so much focus on workplace safety, many employers are worried that work is not getting done, especially among remote employees.

However, according to the Harvard Business Review, remote workers are getting more done at home - even with the distractions that come with a house full of other people. Why?

- The average American used to spend 54 minutes a day commuting. Now office workers only have to commute to another room in their home.
- Employees working from home can work during the hours they feel most productive, focused and energized.
- Remote employees are not distracted by colleagues physically interrupting their workday.
- Employers had to step on the gas pedal in providing remote collaboration tools which make working from home that much easier.
- People now know they can work well from home. Many Americans wondered if they could manage to work from home and have discovered they can be productive even when they aren't in the office.



# ... But There Are Barriers to Productivity

While many workers are thriving in a work-from-home environment, many healthcare, manufacturing and labor facilities are struggling with a whole new set of productivity issues that can lead to bottlenecks and other problems.

In order to keep people safe in the workplace, new processes have been enacted that are continually being tweaked based on everything from new research to the accessibility of PPE. Those challenges include things like:

- Temperature checks that can hold up start times
- Requiring people to take a precautionary two weeks off when they are sick
- Employees working in PPE that they are not used to that may hinder breathing and range of motion
- Stopping work for surface cleaning and hand sanitizing breaks
- Staggering breaks to limit the number of people in a break room
- Loss of individual productivity due to stress and fear
- Having to shut down areas of the workplace for deep cleaning when an employee is sick
- Developing new processes and procedures to meet local, state and federal guidelines
- The general stress of this “new normal” both at work and at home

And it's not all sunshine and roses for remote workers, either. While many of them are thriving, many are not. There are many employees who perform better in a traditional setting, and those employees are struggling with productivity right now.

# Is It REALLY Possible to Get More Done When Everything Is Different?

Your workplace probably looks very different than it did on New Year's Eve 2019.

But the good news is, you've managed to navigate serious change in record time. That is another silver lining that can be found in all of the chaos. You now know that you, your employees and your business can adapt quickly and effectively to unforeseeable change and extreme circumstances.

So while you are probably facing some struggles with productivity - whether with individual employees or process changes due to health and safety - you know you and your team are capable of rising to huge challenges.

As a leader, you can help your team overcome some of their productivity issues by supporting their health and well-being on the job and by adjusting management styles and practices to the new normal.



# For Optimal Performance, Prioritize Physical Health

Mental health is important for productivity, but so is physical health. And there has never been a better time to encourage employees to take their physical health seriously.

Regular physical activity lowers the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, stroke, etc.

Exercise also promotes better sleeping habits and provides employees with higher energy, which can improve attendance, boost performance and productivity.

However, according to the CDC, only half of all Americans meet physical activity guidelines for good health. Whether your team is on-site, remote or blended, there are things you can do to promote physical health in your workplace:

- **Enact a short activity break policy:** Implement policies that encourage employees to take a short break to move. Short breaks in sedentary behavior result in short- and long-term health improvements and allow employees to return to their workstations with renewed focus.
- **Stretch before starting work:** Encourage stretching before the start of a shift, especially for people doing manual or repetitive tasks. Also, encourage stretching during meal breaks. Pain during the workday can slow productivity and stretching can help reduce injuries associated with repetitive motion.

# For Optimal Performance, Prioritize Physical Health

- **Enact flex time:** Stagger shift starts or allow remote workers to work any eight hours they choose between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. (or whatever hours you choose). Encourage them to use found time to exercise. Flex time can eliminate the “not enough time to work out” barrier that so many employees face.
- **Lean on your healthy employees:** If any of your employees are certified personal trainers, yoga teachers or exercise instructors, have them lead 15-, 20- or 30-minute video classes throughout the day or in the evenings. You can encourage participation by providing rewards to employees who both lead classes and who attend those classes consistently.
- **Hold a fitness challenge:** Challenges can be individual or team-based. Tie rewards to the number of hours logged engaging in physical activity, rather than things like weight loss. The key is to encourage employees to prioritize regular physical activity.

# Mental Health Also Impacts Productivity

Stress has always led to low productivity and high turnover, and managing employee stress has never been more critical. You can help your staff manage and maintain their mental health by:

- **Creating a stress management resource center:** Work with HR to provide resources on stress management, self-care and mental health. This can be housed on your employee portal, or if you don't have a portal, it can be sent out via email. When choosing resources, make sure to use authoritative sources only, like the CDC, The National Institute of Health (NIH), The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and your state's health department.
- **Provide weekly tips:** Send out a weekly email with tips on self-care, overcoming feelings of isolation, etc. You can focus on what matters to your employees by sending out an anonymous survey asking about the things on their minds.
- **Post hotline information:** Extreme stress or depression can have dire consequences. Post information like the national SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline at 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- **Highlight benefits:** Have your benefits team put together a resource list for employees that showcase mental health benefits and even benefits like telemedicine that can make life a little easier in stressful times.
- **Minimize burnout:** Everyone needs a break, even employees working from home. Encourage your team member to take PTO, even if there isn't much to do out in the world. If your team is working lots of overtime, consider bringing in skilled temporaries to give them a break.
- **Talk about the company:** People who are employed today worry that they won't be tomorrow. Be transparent about the health of the company, so employees know where things stand. Whether the news is good or bad, it's always better to know what's happening than to be blindsided.

# Managing Remote and Blended Teams

Focusing on health and well-being is important, but managers must also adjust their styles to remote teams or blended teams where some work on-site and some work from home.

## Be Flexible With Time...

There will always be non-negotiable deadlines for tasks and projects, but beyond that, be flexible with your team. People are at home with children, roommates, elderly parents and spouses, which can make sticking to a 9-to-5 schedule nearly impossible. As long as the work is accurate, high-quality, completed on time and everyone is showing up for virtual meetings, don't police your teams' hours.

## ... But Be Clear on Processes

Flexibility is essential, but you can't lose workflow processes. Make sure employees are clear that your expectations on processes are the same for remote workers as they are for in-house workers. Processes keep productivity high, so communicate your expectations precisely.

## Provide Great Tools

Provide a variety of collaboration tools, including chat platforms, video conferencing, screen sharing, project management tools and cloud-based document collaboration tools. The easier you make it for remote team members to communicate, the more connected they will feel.

# Use Video Every Chance You Get

Video connections are especially important for teams that collaborate, as “face-to-face” conversations save time, reduce miscommunication and provide people with the sense they are still connected to their colleagues.

# Hold One-On-One Meetings

Schedule weekly, 10-minute one-on-ones with your employees. Check in on their workload, ask for feedback and go over their goals and performance. It will be good for you, good for them and good for productivity and morale.

# Be Transparent

Everyone in every industry is concerned about the future of their jobs right now. Be as transparent as you can with your team about where things stand and what the future might look like.

# Have Fun

Don't be afraid to have fun with your team. It can be scheduled fun like a virtual lunch or happy hour, or it can be impromptu fun like trying to make people laugh during meetings or sending uplifting emails now and then.



# Optimize Shifts to Maximize Productivity

Scheduling has always had an impact on productivity. In traditional shift work, medical and industrial facilities relied on three shifts to manage 24-hour workloads.

Unfortunately, those three, clearly defined shifts may not be the best way to balance productivity against health and safety today. It is no longer safe to have dozens if not hundreds of shift workers show up at the same time and take breaks at the same time. However, it's not always practical to stagger shifts or enact flex time.

As we move forward, schedule optimization will become critical. Optimized scheduling uses data to help management determine the right amount of staff and the skills required throughout a 24-hour day and a 7-day week.

A schedule optimizing tool creates a plan based on peaks and valleys while considering the potential for fatigue, the need for safe setup and teardown, the need for staggered start times and break times to ensure social distancing, mid-shift cleaning and other necessary activities that can impact productivity.

Finally, schedule optimization also allows you to take advantage of on-demand staffing when you need it. Instead of calling someone in at the last minute to cover an absence, temporary employees can be deployed quickly to fill gaps, keeping the team fully staffed without adding to employee stress and burnout.

**The result? Happier, healthier, more productive employees, benefitting the staff and the bottom line.**

# Navigating the New Normal Is a Team Effort

“We’re all in this together” takes on new meaning with each passing month. What was once a rallying cry for people quarantined at home now rings true for businesses as they navigate this highly fluid new environment.

As you navigate your company’s new normal, you might find you need some help. And that’s where a strategic staffing partner can help. The right partner can help you:

- Access on-demand, skilled, temporary workers to fill in for workers who call in sick or must be sent home.
- Create strategic workforce plans so you can adapt quickly to future changes in demand.
- Connect you with healthcare workers who can assist with temperature checks and other health-related issues on-site.
- Control overhead and risk.
- Reduce overtime and burnout.
- Hire new employees if you find new opportunities or new markets in the new normal.
- Turn fixed payroll costs into flexible, variable costs.
- And so much more.

**If you’re ready to boost productivity, talk to your staffing partner today.**