BACK TO THE OFFICE
INSIGHTS AND IDEAS

PRESENTED BY

ILLUMINATE CONSULTING GROUP INC.

APRIL 2020

CONTENTS

A PERSONAL NOTE

Within this document you will find the summarized brainstorming and workshop wisdom of over 80 communication professionals from North America, South America, the Caribbean, India, Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia. Many have never met me or each other. You each entrusted me, the facilitators and other participants with your experience, ideas, worries and hope as you grapple with the prospect of welcoming your organization's people back to the workplace.

While each organization has its unique challenges, around the world they face similar pandemic response questions. It is a privilege to create this collaborative planning space and these planning resources for communication professionals.

My goal is that by all of us coming together, each of your paths will be a little easier going forward.

Thank you,

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P.S. Please forgive any typos, my goal was to get this to you quickly, not to be perfect!

RESOURCES

HELPFUL REMINDERS

1. You are not alone. Communications colleagues around the world are facing similar communication challenges. And we love to talk through our plans, which leads us to…

2. Ask for support when you need it; knowing when to ask for support is a sign of strength.

3. Find time to recharge, none of us can keep up an accelerated pace for 18 months and stay healthy.

4. Focus on progress, not perfection.

LINKS RECOMMENDED BY PARTICIPANTS

- World Health Organization
- Canada's COVID centre
- White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again

- Edelman Trust Barometer Coronavirus Special Report
- Institute for Internal Communication COVID Centre
- Gatehouse's Communicating in a Crisis Survey (Infographic)
- Academy of Business Communications' The Fearless Communicator's Guide to Scary Global Pandemics (Part 1 and 2)

- Employee Survey discussion thread on IABC's The Hub (IABC membership required)
- Ragan Communications Employee Survey template

- Headspace mindfulness app (Android and iPhone)
- Staying resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic (video)
- The Working Mind COVID-19 Self Care & Resilience Guide (PDF)

INSPIRING IDEAS

Ideas that you may want to borrow from others…

Communication team approach and tools:

- Tracking all the communication tactics and web site changes (e.g. external messaging about COVID-19 impacts, rules around equipment going home) so that they can be 'undone' and the effort required can be assessed. And redone if future isolation is necessary.

- Embed Communication employees in teams planning the return to work / future isolations.

- Leverage the power and honesty of "I don't know that yet and we're working on it" in planning and messages.

- Get support for changes they previously could not (e.g. couldn't get full approval for bi-weekly updates to the public, received approval due to COVID-19 and will be able to continue it).

- Leverage new business priorities to quickly implement technology and programs in weeks, rather than the months it was expected to take because the technology and programs were now considered essential. For example, Microsoft Teams and work from home for unionized employees.

- Use this a pivot for improving the culture, looking at how that can gracefully happen (by design) so that the focus is what can be better rather than returning to the old normal or things that didn't work well.

- With some companies that are not facing layoffs or financial constraints, CEO has opened up budget to provide lunches and invest in creature comforts.

Employee communication tactics:

- Dedicated COVID-19 Resource page (plan to leverage for return to work material).

- COVID19 and other dedicated email addresses.

- CEO AMA (Ask Me Anything).

- Fireside chats sharing stories about employees living values.

- Executive townhalls.

- Daily/weekly COVID-19 updates, with a focus on what's changed.

- Launch new technology to stay connected: Yammer, MS Teams, Slack, private Facebook Groups.

- Leader selfie videos.

- After a leader townhall, you or the leader call 10 people ask what is working and not working (trailer calls).

- Weekly voicemails (from CEO/Executive).

- Flyers about stress from a personal and professional perspective.

- Kudos section on the website / special print edition newsletter to share all thank yous.

- Series of photo and video montage of employee stories, similar to this type of feel good video.

- Internal 'Alone Together' challenge is a weekly series with themes for each week. Share photos of what you are doing outdoors, your pets, what are the wild things you are seeing in your backyard, home office. (Great comments and people are proud.)

- Weekly contest the relies on what is in your home. Employee tips working at home, pictures of office, make your own masks, handwashing with kids, pet pictures, and how they can engage extended members of the family.

- Informal chats and virtual drop-ins (coffees and lunches). For example, on MS Teams from 12-12:30, it's a virtual watercooler, people can pop in and chat with others about anything except COVID and work. Helps those who miss being in the office and shifting minds out of the crisis.

- Friday morning check ins, for active employees and those on temporary lay-offs / furloughs.

- In manufacturing areas, campaigns on "here's what we're doing to keep you safe, here are the protocols". They were shared internally and externally, with different videos for different locations. That way if an employee is at home because of a voluntary layoff, they saw what we're doing. Have had people come back saying: now that I know I'll be safe, I'll come back to work.

- To help people know what to expect when they return to work, pictures/videos of modified offices, common areas and safety measures.

- Letters mailed to employee homes.

- Branding safety items - a company in the waste disposal industry ordered custom masks that say 'We love talking trash.'.

- Virtual campaigns on mental health, will be leveraging the upcoming mental health week to encourage conversations that it is ok not to be ok.

- On internal social sites, employees give personal recommendations for things such as movies, restaurant delivery. On Facebook group, hire personal trainer to provide exercise at home routines and other activities to both engage and distract people.

- Add employee COVID-19 content to external site for unwired employees.

- Resources for employee's family.

- Mandatory webinars to encourage behaviour changes.

- Creating a thank you book for employees, having employee's children submit thank you letters and drawings. An inspirational and different way to recognize employees (will be displayed at facilities).

- Videos from employees in China with inspiring message of "we've been through it".

Customers, members and other external stakeholders:

- Go to where your customers are: leave notes on garbage cans after pick-up "we're thinking of you".

- Updates to corporate web site and/or microsite to talk about safety to employees and customers.

- Videos instead of press releases.

- Providing suport to stakeholders (e.g. tech support for students with school tablets).

● Activate charitable giving activities.

COVID-19 communication experience in a hashtag

#collaborative #artofthepossible   #upanddown #resilient #essential #rocketsled
#isanyoneevenreadingthis #coupedup #wow   #diverse #multitasking #somanymeetings #whatdayisit

POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

In crisis, we are forced to focus our time on what really matters. So we created a moment of reflection to capture the changes made over the past two months and what everyone would like to keep for the long term (see Appendix A for detailed notes).

The big win was higher levels of influence through increased (sometimes new) engagement with senior leaders and being at the planning table. Though not directly experienced by all, overall, the value of internal communications is being seen and appreciated.

We asked: The change in how work gets done required a change in how we communicate. What communication changes have created meaningful impact that you'd like to keep for the future? What have you been able to eliminate (and you would like to stay gone)?

Keep	Stay gone
✓ **Increased compassion and empathy**, inclusive of all employees, general focus on employee stories and minimize leader cascade (open and available to all).	✗ **One-off requests** that take a lot of time, don't require communications expertise, don't add value or drive business results.
✓ **Trusted single source** (typically the intranet) and better balance of push/pull (less reliance on email).	✗ **Long meetings**, meetings that can be email, calendars filled with meetings.
✓ **New/improved** channels, tactics and cadences (some that couldn't get approval before the pandemic).	✗ **Travel time** between multiple sites to attend meetings that can be done virtually.
✓ **Fewer meetings,** more productive meetings, more purposeful meetings.	✗ **Email as primary mass communication tool** and/or being a necessary prompt for employees to read the intranet.
✓ **Quick (fast-tracked) implementation and embrace of technology**; especially internal social channels, video posts and video conferencing.	✗ **Onerous and lengthy approval** processes and other roadblocks.
✓ **Overall leader communication accountability** and senior leader engagement in communication (especially selfie videos).	✗ **Everyone needing to be involved in every meeting**, rather than rely on transparency and trust.
✓ **Remote work and flexible work** arrangements	✗ **Overreach on accountabilities** due to over engagement issue (software developers trying to answer finance questions/ solve communication problems/ help with HR and things get muddled).
✓ **How the communications team works**; break out of silos, tracking tactics and building horizontal alignment across other departments.	✗ **Focusing on the clock** to mark a successful day, rather than focus on the people and the work.
✓ Have **online and virtual teams as part of the mix** of HOW we work.	

TRUST

For the majority, the crisis response by companies has increased trust. In fact, 63% of employees say they trust their employer more than the media (Edelman Trust Barometer Coronavirus Special Report). In crisis, there is an opportunity to improve culture and engagement.

As trust strengthens an organization, it makes Communications a source of truth. Of course, that puts extra pressure on Communications to find the truth when the facts provided by and actions of health authorities and government lead to constant changes.

Ultimately, leaders are accountable for building organizational trust through their actions, decisions and personal communications. Some leaders are really shining in this situation and coming out of their 'shell'. Communicators are enabling leaders do this in the most appropriate way and help create meaning and engagement.

Still, some leaders continue to resist, thinking that everyone already knows what they need to and assume everything is fine. Without the senior leader's engagement, it can be extremely difficult to build trust.

Trust building activities during the pandemic include:

- Emphasize people first in decisions, live the values, move fast and implement programs to keep people safe and give them the information they need. The messages are consistent, honest, include facts and acknowledge what isn't known yet.

- CEO video updates (or voicemail message if video adverse), at least once a week, posted on internal social channels and sent through email to employees.

- Program tweaks such as extending benefits to contractors, giving Good Friday off as a Day of Reflection, Doctor as a concierge service for employees (also available to communications for Q&A).

- Regular updates on the state of the business, facts to reassure and minimize negative impacts of the rumour mill.

- Democratize the majority of information (everyone receives all at once), rather than cascading through leaders.

- Overall, increased leader communications to small and large teams.

- Displaying vulnerability.

- For those that continue to work on site, providing supplies and protocols to keep them safe.

HOW TO MAINTAIN / STRENGTHEN TRUST MOVING FORWARD

We've seen people bring their authentic selves to work, display vulnerability and take extra care in relationships. How will that manifest as we go back to the office? How can we keep this momentum and positivity going?

- Trust model for senior leaders: gratitude, showing confidence, standing next to tragedy and sharing triumph.

- Less scripting, greater authenticity from leaders. Have them call out what others may think. For example, for the executive who wears a suit while working from home, perhaps that is him/her at their most comfortable. Own it and say, I like it and at the same time, I don't expect you to dress this way for remote work.

- A strong, trusted advisor relationship and open lines of communcation with senior leaders and the C-suite.

- Continue to keep communication regular and consistent, plus continue an increased frequency of leader communications while maintaining their new levels of accountability for communications (e.g. selfie videos and townhalls). Communications may need to help build capability of front-line manager / leaders (over the long term).

- Continue to be honest, recognize uncertainty and provide insight (within reason) into discussions that are occuring so employees have a sense of what's to come (minimize surprises). Includes emergency and crisis planning approach and helping them understand there is a great deal of fluidity that everyone must deal with.

- Continue (or even expand) on the current crisis cross-functional touchpoints. For specific projects, create a task force with representation from all levels. Creates cross-collaboration and connections that can build solutions that won't be thought of in silos.

  Example: in 30 minutes problem solved the issue of increased insurance claims because incident process not understood by stakeholders.

- Acknowledge that each geographic location is at a different point in the curve and under different government and health direction. Not all locations will re-open at the same time and they may not re-open at the same time as competitors. Share the criteria/priorities being used to make decisions (e.g. health and safety, business risk).

- Gather employee feedback through likes, comments and formal surveys or pulse checks (more on pulse checks in Preparing for the Return).

- Share supplier and client feedback.

- Shift from all COVID-19, all the time to shining the lights on employees (volunteer, adjusting, essential workers), business success and mental health stories. Create pride in the organization, people and the community.

- Answer honestly what is known and not known about changes to policies that employees are already questioning (e.g. work from home, travel, health benefits, vacation).

- Set the expectation that trust is a two-way street: earning trust to come back; earning trust to work from home.

- Address tough issues, head on and with compassion. For example, for companies that did not allow remote work before the pandemic and plan to keep the same policy after the pandemic, be clear that it is a temporary arrangement during a crisis.

PREPARING FOR THE RETURN

Even if you've dealt with crisis before, the COVID-19 pandemic is a new type of crisis for all of us and will continue for at least 18 months. It will change:

- consumer behaviour and purchasing;
- employee work arrangements;
- supply chains;
- government programs and debt;
- economy; and,
- business strategy.

That's a lot of uncertainty.

Right now, your organization's goal is to ensure employees feel safe in their return to the workplace. Ideally, the plan reflects your company values, guiding principles and contains preset triggers/criteria for different scenarios.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to last at least 18 months, so it is an evolving crisis without a known end date. To get this far in the crisis, organizations and communication teams had to be nimble, while keeping an eye on the different scenarios that may happen.

We expect to face future periods of physical distancing and public health orders. Consumer needs and behaviour will change, so will business strategies. Everyone, personally and professionally, is being asked to make behavioral changes (especially with regards to safety) while they worry about their financial and health futures.

Expect the return to take much longer than to took to get everyone working from home. If you are not realistic and transparent about the time that process will take, you could erode the trust and goodwill that has been built. Always remember that to your employees, the decisions have significant personal impact. If you aim for perfection – having every piece of information in front of you at once – you'll never get it.

Consider focusing on the following so you can be nimble when decisions are made:

- Progress rather than perfection, be comfortable saying 'we don't know but we're working on it' and share information at a pace that doesn't cause panic.
- Be at the planning table so you understand the different scenarios and their triggers.
- Conduct a survey/pulse check so you don't have to guess how people are doing.
- Identify what's out of your control but will impact you (e.g. collective bargaining).
- Evolve your tools so you can more easily respond to new information and decisions. For instance:

  o update your employee and stakeholder personas to reflect factors such as:
    - technology enablers/barriers;
    - public transit user;
    - has school-age children and no child-care;
    - lives with a health care worker;
    - has underlying health conditions;

- socioeconmic status means they can't afford not to work;
- on furlough, temporary layoffs;
- essential workers (on site), remote workers

  o use the employee and communication questions in Appendix B and Appendix C to create a list of must-have and nice-to-have answers you'll need to communicate effectively.

- It's expected that the return to the workplace will differ by region, so assess your channel strategy and approach to ensure you can target communications to specific locations, while providing employees with an overall view to progress.

- Identify the desired culture shift (e.g. increased levels of connection, better use of meetings, authentic selves at work, recognizing trust is two-way, increased work from home, how people greet each other when physically distancing, leaving specific 'old ways' behind).

- Identify what's needed, especially behaviour change, to achieve the desired culture shift (e.g. earn the right to return to the office, earn the right to work from home, senior leader selfie videos).

- Improve the processes used to shift people from the office to working from home.

- Create methods for identifying when people stop being adaptive to change and consider how to keep people engaged over the 'long haul'.

- Document the steps and activities in sending people home, so it's faster prep when you bring them back. Then if they have to go home again, you have a list and can quantify the amount of work required to execute. (E.g. pandemic wait times or retail locations on corporate web site, logistics of people taking equipment home).

Scenarios discussed (assuming staggered/phased return):

- Use percentages (e.g. 25% in week 1, 25% in week 2, etc) to phase the return.

- Partial teams, staggered on site shifts (e.g. 3 days at office, 2 days at home or week at office, week at home).

- Prioritizing those that do better when working from the office.

- Functional groups that can work remotely, may stay that way.

Triggers/criteria discussed:

- Government(s) or health agencies provide direction, then senior leaders need to take that information and decide next steps for the business, using:
  o Corporate risk matrix.
  o Business impacts, including legal ramifications.
  o Reputation/comparison to competition.

ASK THEM HOW THEY ARE DOING

Many are working on (or have already completed) a pulse check or survey to understand how employees are doing. It is different than a typical engagement survey; it is specific the pandemic induced changes and how they are coping.

People's mindsets will be different (for a while anyway) and their personal experience (bad or good) will influence both how they engage and what they need going forward. Many may already feel 'stretched' by the crisis, which reduces their ability to adapt to change. (See Resources for links to survey materials.)

Themes to explore:

- Do they feel productive and supported, or distracted and isolated?
- Effectiveness of communications to date.
- Are they feeling fear, anxiety or distrust? What is causing it?
- What challenges do they face that creates concerns about going back to the workplace? Do they have to home school? Need childcare? Are they living with healthcare workers or have underlying health conditions?
- What are their expectations?
- How they feel about working from home?
- What information they feel they need that they don't currently have?

Possible questions:

1. How are you feeling (today/this week)?
2. Relative to how you feel when working from the building, how do you feel about working from home?
3. Are you getting the information you need? Where do you get your information?
4. Are you getting the support you need?
5. Do you want more flexible work arrangements, hours?
6. What would need to happen before you feel comfortable returning to work? Check all that apply.
7. Do you have new ongoing personal situations requiring accommodation?
8. Do you have concerns about coming into the office – public transit, office hygiene, physical distancing, etc.?
9. What do you need from your manager, the organization for a successful return to normal?
10. What are you most looking forward to/what worries you the most?
11. What's your biggest learning/positive story as a result of working through the pandemic?
12. How do you feel about going back?
13. What will be important for us to consider when you do return to work?

14. What worries you?

15. What excites you?

16. What will help you?

17. What do you need from your leader, peers, execs?

18. Does the relationship with your leader instill confidence?

Word clouds are great visual tools for assessing sentiment - consider creating a word cloud from the verbatim responses. We created a word cloud from the brainstorming exercise and the results spoke to the uncertainty that people are feeling. The word 'will' was mostly used in questions where people were pondering what the future held.
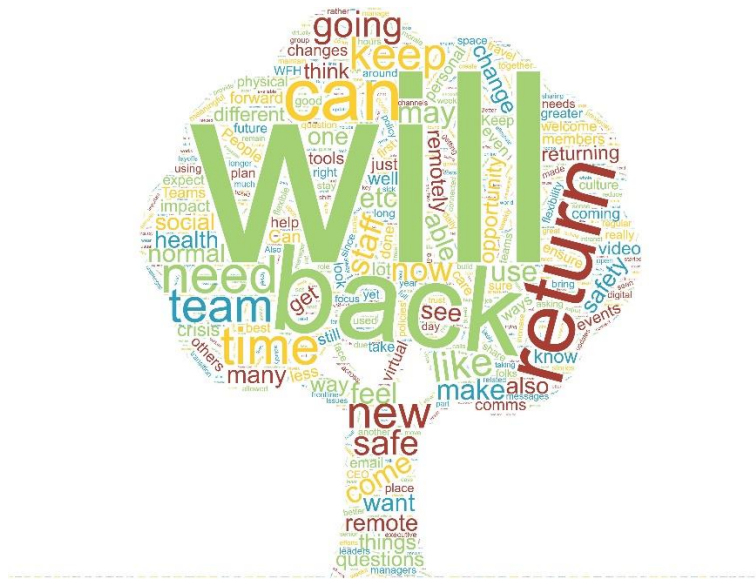
TONE

Finding the right tone is a high wire act. Based on what you shared, my assessment is that the return is not a celebration, it's the next step in the journey and how each employee feels about it will be an individual experience. It may be a sigh of relief; it may be a worry. You'll want people to feel welcome, respected, informed and appreciative when you can put a smile on their face.

Why?

- They are going back to a workplace that will not be or feel the same.
- They may need to wear masks.
- Depending on the physical distancing approach, there may be less people there.
- Some may have been sick, had family members that were sick or know someone who lost their life to COVID-19
- Some companies have serious financial challenges where they have laid off or may need to consider laying off employees.

BACK TO THE WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

There are a lot of intricacies to consider when planning your communications. The whole company will need to understand overall progress and specific locations need targeted information about what to expect.

If there were essential employees that have continued to work while others work from home, those essential workers may think those working from home had it easy. On the flip side, the employee who is living in a small condo with their spouse and three kids they must homeschool, may wish they had the ability to work from the office all along. Real or perceived inequity will erode trust; find ways to build empathy and understanding through communications.

Welcome back activities

When planning activities, it's important to remember that if there were layoffs or other tough financial decisions, employees will question spending money. In the list below, there are many low cost, effective options.

- To create comfort and let employees know what to expect, consider using pictures and videos to show the changes to the office space.

- Welcome back video that includes compilation of employee photos during the pandemic.

- Banner

- Drop-in coffee chats and lunches (depending on safety protocols)

- Sanitizer, gloves and masks (safety)

- Guerilla marketing, celebrate and provide surprises on an individual level rather than a big corporate splash by using small ways to make people smile and feel welcome:
    - sticky notes / stickers left on desks saying 'welcome back';
    - fresh flowers; signs that say 'missed you!' or uplifting messages;
    - thoughtful, handwritten card;
    - something unique to your culture and respects financial circumstances - a company in the waste disposal industry ordered custom masks that say 'we love talking trash'.

- For those that remain remote (or had been before): online thank you cards, online scavenger hunt, online fitness class at lunch, note from CEO.

- Welcome back basket or product for customers / clients.

- Fireside chats (in person and virtual) to share stories of employees living their values.

- Forum for sharing what it's like to come back, resources for if people are struggling in some way (always powerful for leaders to call out the change and that it can be difficult to adjust).

Ongoing communication tactics

- Posters on doors and windows to let people know what the protocols when they return to the office.

- Develop regional communication channels to address location specific developments.

APPENDIX A: POSITIVE CHANGE DETAILS

Change details	Impact / what it looks like

Increased compassion and empathy, inclusive of all employees, general focus on employee stories and minimize leader cascade (open and available to all).	• "People first" approach and making decisions guided by values.
	
	• Increased positive reactions to communications sharing people-related stories, personal stories of helping/managing in the crisis, donations being made to help, etc. For some, senior management didn't endorse this type of communication before the pandemic.
	
	• Less overt marketing of corporate position/efforts to employees, instead focusing on what is needed to be safe, get the job done and recognize work.
	
	• More people are willing to engage/interact because they feel supported and trust has been developed. Also creates a kinder workplace through greater appreciation and understanding for each other, as fellow human beings.
	
	• Executives creating trust by being authentic and vulnerable about the real impacts they feel due to the crisis and caring.
	
	• In town halls, lots of meaningful questions being asked about both personal and business impacts.
	
	• Increasing importance of virtual connectivity outside of normal job functions, such as culture growth through virtual coffees/lunches.
	
	• Picking/building channels that increase access to information for wired and unwired employees. For some it means giving access, for others it's shifting to new technology.
	
	• Focus on mental health, understanding influencing factors, how to manage, where to seek help.
	
	• Addition of questions to meetings: How are you? Focus on personal before diving into business.
	
	• External publications are changing as well:
	   o External Annual Report shifted from professional photos/ in-person interviews/lengthy stories to a clear corporate reporting document with select impactful stories rather than a PR effort.
	   o Next issue of an external bi-monthly newsletter will shift from contract news and division features to the efforts to acquire vital goods and services, how the emergency management agency is coordinating distribution of goods, managing isolation hotels, working with the National Guard, and establishing field hospitals.
	   o As a health care services firm serving more than half of the nation's hospitals, supply chain is a key component of our business. There's been concerted effort to assist our

	member hospitals as best we can. This includes robust information sharing and education, which is open to our employees. ○ Being thoughtful in posts, retweets, etc. on social media. Efforts are focused on managing through the pandemic, rather that getting a new contract.
Trusted single source (typically the intranet).	• Employees seeking out information; self-servicing because they know where to find updates. • Intranets used for wired workers, website/Facebook/payroll software used for unwired workers.
New/improved channels, tactics and cadences.	• Video, video, video. Especially selfie videos from executives, has gotten great response. • Increased frequency of CEOs/Executives videos/townhalls (daily, weekly most common). • Authentic and impactful employee and leader generated content. • Using video and visual narratives and stories to drive engagement. • Regular cadence of comms from various leaders within the organization (not just one) • Restarted regular cadence of all employee emails for some who stopped, slowed emails where there was an overreliance. • Democratizing access to information, relying on leader cascade only when necessary for context/alignment. • Regular leadership calls to touch base on important topics from the senior executive team has kept the team informed. It's far easier to arrange a quick call than to rely on a quarterly meeting when you need to fill a day with relevant content. I would like to keep the calls on a routine schedule as well as the quarterly meetings. • Virtual video "team talk" once a month • Daily Top 3 (top 3 things to know) – PDF distributed via email or as a handout/posting, and mentioned in the daily huddle/check-in; possibly move to a weekly communication • Shift from segmented communications to corporate-wide, centralized communications • business unit manager group manager has held a weekly virtual coffee chat, a great informal channel for announcements and Q&A. • consolidation of a lot of different messages from across the company (business, IT, finance, HR, legal) into a weekly communication has streamlined what gets shared with employees.

	- weekly message that we have instituted to share positive messaging with employees and broad update messages. It is sent from the head of our organization and is composed in a timely manner with little red-tape. Feedback has been very positive and I think it makes sense to continue this as it is not resource intensive. - Daily huddles / check-ins for teams - Created new resources, often in dedicated locations, to support the COVID-19 response. PPE, physical distancing, protocols, support options all needed to be communicated.
Fewer meetings, more productive meetings, more purposeful meetings.	- Unnecessary meetings cancelled; emails that have replaced meetings. - Shorter meetings (some trying 30 minute limits). - Daily calendars not full of back-to-back meetings (time to do day job, improve skills and professional development). - No travel reduces the expense, time and environmental impact of meetings; need to reconsider 'necessary travel' in the future.
Quick (fast-tracked) implementation and embrace of new technology; especially internal social channels, video posts and video conferencing.	- Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Zoom has helped people stay connected on a personal and professional level. - Internal social channels (Yammer, Slack, etc.) provides informal venue for employee created content (memes, pet co-workers, encouraging words) and builds culture from the bottom up. Connections being created outside the normal flow of work. - Less emails, but for some, more notifications / tech to check. - Proven the ability to effectively meet without being in the same physical room. - Leaders have the tools they need to connect with and engage their team, regardless of location. - Business case proof points for remote work and flexible work arrangements. - Speed of implementation... how to do it faster in regular environment. - Individuals going paperless along with an administrative move to online forms and processes, saving time and reducing environmental impact of printed paper.
Overall leader communication accountability and senior leader engagement in communication (especially selfie videos).	- Overall, increased buy-in and engagement on communications by senior/executive leaders, believe that they better understand the value of communications. - Crisis structure provides central mechanism to share communication developments and approaches.

	• More frequent communications from senior management, including communication via video conference from executive to all employees. • Regular cadence of senior leader calls and key messages • Leaders handling more of their communication means less communication requests for low value work, allowing teams to focus on communications that have greater impact to the organization. • Increase of manager-led communications and touch base with their teams.
Remote work and flexible work arrangements	• Senior leadership embracing the importance, usefulness, and efficacy of remote work through technology. • Still meeting timelines, but there's more flexibility, agility, compassion. And less focus on the clock. • Move of technology and office supplies home to create more comfortable and productive home work environments • Now that people are juggling work, homeschooling, etc. and have embraced flexible work hours, we have eliminated the need to immediate respond to emails and texts. I'd like that to stay gone."

Improvements on how communications team works, combined with stronger alignment across HR and other departments.	• The fantastic camaraderie and abandonment of role parameters by our comms team who have sprung into action and just supported each other and done whatever was necessary
	
	• Use of a ""group chat"" to touch base daily, share funny stories, talk about how we're doing personally - and even answer work related questions
	
	• Communications planning in a more transparent and collaborative way and added emphasis on tracking that I would like us to keep. We have done less documenting of our strategy and I think we do need to bring this back when there is capacity/time.
	
	• We now use more tracking documents so furloughed comms people can see what's gone on during their off days.
	
	• We were able to implement a Pulse Survey (moving the typical engagement survey management from HR to Comms) and are currently acting on the results
	
	• Improved alignment and collaboration: communications team has worked more closely than we ever have on any other project because WE MUST. It still remains difficult, as we are a group of 30 and have always worked remotely and separate from one another, but we are definitely all working toward a common goal right now and perhaps weren't as much before.
	
	• Cross-functional teams based on subject matter expertise / experience vs. hierarchy or silos
	
	    "As a franchise organization, COVID-19 has
	    elevated the role of internal communication with

	key areas of the business, operations in particular. It's helped us forge new (stronger, really) partnerships with other aspects of our business; they've come to understand the business value we provide...we provide strategy to achieve business objectives, not just "make things sound good."
	COVID-19 has allowed us to empower others in the business to communicate non-priority information relatively effectively without our communication team having to handle it for them. This will increase our capacity to focus on higher priority and more strategic communication needs by eliminating some of the "publishing house" work we used to focus on. I anticipate that this will stay gone in our new normal."
Have online and virtual teams as part of the mix of HOW we work.	• communicate more frequently and more intentionally with remote staff, something that needs to be maintained with both remote workers and regional offices going forward.
Challenging issues.	• Speed of information developed and needing to be disseminated is creating a lack of process and clarity". • Better understanding, and use, of videoconference protocols (my team is dispersed across the province, so we used videoconference regularly pre-COVID, but didn't always use it well). • Quantity of emails has sky-rocketed as many people are 'looped in' to changes required on our multiple websites. • Leadership communication with staff has been difficult, as much of our leadership team is directly involved in acquiring PPEs and other goods for use during the pandemic. The marketing team is keeping everyone updated on their efforts through messages from the leadership team.

APPENDIX B: EXPECTED EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS

We asked: What questions are your employees asking about return to the office? Other questions you expect them to ask?

Theme	Employee questions
General	• When we will return to the workplace? What guidance does management use to make this decision? • Will it really be back to normal? What will the new normal look like? • How will our return to the workplace be managed (phased or all at once)? • Will there be different practices / protocols in different office / regions? How will I stay informed?
Communication	• Will the increased frequency of video updates and townhalls continue? • As someone how works outside head office, I feel more connected than ever due to increased communications. Will that continue?
People	• When can those who have been laid off can return? When will the furloughs end? • Will there be permanent layoffs? • Will the pay / incentive structure change? Will there be hazard pay for those who have high levels of interactions with others? • Should we expect layoffs due to efficiencies found during the pandemic? • Will our future health benefits change somehow? • How will vacations be managed? If there's future outbreaks, will we be expected to take vacation while social distancing? • How do we get our culture back/extend our culture gained?
Safety	• Is it safe? • Can you guarantee my safety? • What changes will I experience? Cleaning • What safety and cleaning practices/frequencies will be in place? Especially for shared spaces like bathrooms, doorknobs, lunch rooms, meeting rooms? • How can I take more ownership of keeping my personal space clean? Protocols • Will there be screenings? Will temperatures be taken on arrival and departure?

Theme	Employee questions
	• Will there be an expectation that people don't come to the office if they have routine illness symptoms such as runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat? We won't know if it's a cold, allergies, flu or COVID-19)?
	• If someone coughs, do they get sent home?
	• What if I have an underlying medical condition that puts me at higher risk: do I have to come to the office? Or a close family member does, and I take care of them?
	• What if my spouse has COVID-19 or is a healthcare worker that is around people that have COVID-19?
	• What happens if a nearby co-worker test positive for COVID-19 once we are back in the office?
	• Will everyone have to wear a mask, if so, will you provide them? Will we be provided with safety items like hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes and other things beyond soap and water?
	• Will there be changes to office space? Should we still have an open office? Should we continue to have hotelling space? Will the four foot cubicle walls be increased to six feet? For call centres with close proximity, will they be reconfigured?
	• Can we stagger shifts or work from home to reduce number of people in the office?
	• What happens if there is another outbreak?
	• What if I don't feel safe or see someone putting others or their safety at risk.
	• Can I skip in person meetings and employee events?
Work from home	• Do we have to come back and work in the office? Can we continue to work from home part-time or full-time?
	• School hasn't restarted and I don't have any other childcare options, can I continue to work from home? Will the company help with childcare needs?
	• Will the remote work policy change for the long term?
	• Can I keep the technology the organization provided for me to work from home?
	• How do we feel connected with people and as a team if some still work from home?
	• If I continue to work from home will I receive a T2200 (CAN tax deduction) to put towards my taxes?
Operation changes	• What will it look like for retail, consumer facing locations?
Business impacts	• How will our business strategy, objectives and targets change?
	• How can we better leverage the technology and tools rolled out during the pandemic?

Theme	Employee questions
	• How do we make sure we as efficient in the office as we are at home? Can we have designated social time in our work day to keep feeling connected?
	• Who is paying for additional equipment purchased (monitors, ergonomic home office chairs) that made work from home more tolerable?
	• How will the travel policy change?
	• Will we adjust relevant policies and programs based on lessons learned from the pandemic?
	• Will we have more remote work and less real estate in the future? Could my office be closed (I don't enjoy working from home)?
	• Does our organization structure still make sense?
	• Some too heavy workloads have reduced during the pandemic, what will be done to keep them managed? Recruit? Change deadline?
	• Will we continue to hold employee events (e.g. summer picnic)?
Privacy	• How will you protect my medical privacy if I get COVID-19 or I have an underlying medical condition that keeps from working in the office?
	• Will you conduct contact tracing if an employee tests positive?
	• Have there been any changes to my privacy rights?

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APPENDIX C: COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS

We asked: What questions do you have? An example: How do you welcome people back to physical spaces, is it celebratory or cautious?

Theme	Communication questions
General	• How do you plan communication for post-Covid? Especially when there are so many unknowns? • What are some ways to identify foundational work that will have to happen regardless of the pace/process for returning. • Is the return all at once, or graduated? Will people have options? • What tone do we set for return to work? What do employees need from management? • Do companies require a certain level of reviving or a reset? (We're not going to pick back up where we left off before COVID-19.) Some business functions may need a reset more than others. What could this look like? • What are legal/compliance issues to consider? • Should we do a survey? • We're a global company so offices will begin opening at different times. Does each handle its own tone and details?
Welcome back	• How do we acknowledge the pandemic and not just resume business as usual? • What creative things are others doing to welcome people back into the office? What will be appropriate? What if there's no budget? • We have remote employees returning, and we have employees deemed essential who remained onsite through the whole crisis. What is the best way to recognize both? • How do we create a positive experience for employees returning to the office, so the space doesn't feel stuck in time (empty for the past 30+ days)? • For those that work in physical spaces, in-person events are good. What's an equivalent gesture for those that work remote? • In a phased return, how do you explain who's in the first group and why? Will you try to make the employees who are returning to the office feel special? • How will we support/address employees who have anxiety about returning? • If it's a gradual reintegration, and/or a reintegration where a % of people continue at home, how do you do a "celebration"?

Theme	Communication questions
	• Should be plan an event bringing all employees together or do we think people will be cautious of large groups? • Messages for public-facing team members vs corporate - putting some more at risk than others?
Culture and mental health	• What are the right messages for clients for returning back, knowing everyone's comfort level is different? • How do you make people feel engaged and comfortable when they may continue to be afraid to be in the office? Do we purposely re-socialize people? • What is the right balance of being careful and putting people first, while getting back to "normal" and ensuring we do have a company/economy to come back to? • Emphasis first has to be on employee safety and well-being, and that includes a comfort level that would allow for any type of celebration. • Do you establish new norms for greeting one another - handshakes? fist bumps? hugs? waving? • How do you support employee stress and anxiety? • How will we keep our own agency workforce motivated and uplifted? • What kind of post-COVID-19 anxiety/stress/hangover will they bring back with them? • How do you get employees to work in the "new normal" at the office when it represents the "old way" of working (e.g. being in close proximity, shaking hands, etc.)? We have a very strong company culture of One Team and some of these measures can potentially make it difficult to maintain the culture. How can we maintain our culture in the "new normal"? • How do we make them feel appreciated for what they went through by working remotely? • How and when should we be using humour? • Do we (should we) reward loyalty? What could that look like? • How do we balance the different levels of comfort people will have upon returning -- huggers versus those who need personal space and time? • How will managers need to shift their expectations around how to manage a workforce that will demand to continue to WFH?
How work is done	• If we have to wear masks all day and can't have a full meeting room due to social distancing, is it really safe and what's the point of returning vs. convenience/safety of staying at home?

Theme	Communication questions
	• How can our executives be more visible while social distancing?
	• Do we still need desk phones? We're now using Teams for most calls. How does that impact business cards?
	• How does COVID-19 impact future large meetings and events? How do we hold large all hands meetings that have many people attending once we're back in the office?
	• What will we do about employee events (town halls, etc.) going forward?
	• What new good habits have we instilled and how do we keep them going?
	• What digital tools are available to expand our internal communications capabilities, if more of our employees are allowed to continue working from home?
	• How to continue to leverage video in a face-to-face world?
Safety	• How do we build employee confidence that it is safe to come back?
	• How do we build employee confidence when everyone, including us is saying it's safe BUT wear masks and maintain physical distancing (it's contradictory), which doesn't build trust.
	• Do we change our physical workspace? Should there be procurement of items?
	• How to enforce back-to-the-office if staff don't agree that it's safe it for them yet?
	• How do we implement physical distancing in the cafeteria but yet balance the desire for employees to reconnect face to face?
	• How do we handle the lunchroom -- real estate would want to put physical Xs on every other table to space people out, but is there a more welcoming way to do it?
	• What distancing measures will become permanent behaviour changes?
	• Do you require participation in anything anymore without providing PPE to employees?
	• How to handle social distancing in departments who have bench seating (literally within arms' length of your neighbor)?
	• What if those who rely on public transit don't feel safe commuting to the office.
	• What if an employee comes to work and is obviously sick?
Work from home	• Do we reframe our work from home approach?

Theme	Communication questions
	• How do you message / manage expectations / manage disappointment when you have a company that didn't allow working from home and won't once this is over? • If we expand our work from home policy, how do you encourage team members to use the video feature of the conference? How do you connect your own team members with the greater organization? • For those that have to come to the office / worksite, it can be seen as unfair to allow people to work from home. How do you manage morale issues stemming from the misperception that those who are working from home are not actually working, but relaxing and doing personal activities? Or even that they don't have to commute and have an easier routine?
Privacy	• How do we make sure people feel safe to share that they may not be able to come back?
Communicating changes	• What protocols are they taking and what, have they found, has been the best way to communicate these protocols?
Business	• How do we strike the right balance between 'we are a strong organisation' and the financial and longer term impacts that we are still yet to feel? • How do we 'bring forward' some strategic business activity that makes sense to fast track as a result of learnings from COVID-19 (digital transformation activities)? • What types of policy changes (flextime, remote work, sick leave, etc.) do you anticipate seeing in the future. • Do we need to plan for layoffs due to long term impacts?
Normal but not normal	• How do you balance a return to normalcy with all the things that need to be different?
Questions for comms professionals	• What investments would you make in different communication tools moving forward? • What types of media and vehicles are other companies using to communicate with their employees, customers, etc.? How are they communicating directly with their customers? • How do you keep leadership from being all over the place when communicating? We find that information is often farmed between public affairs, human resources and the Provost's office. Unfortunately, the communication efforts are not assigned to specific leadership and their teams and there is a lot of overlap, confusion and frustration. How do you

Theme	Communication questions
	communicate to your leader (VP) that there needs to be detailed effort on who handles what communication when going back? • What is the appropriate tone for communications? What tactics have you considered for your communication approach? • How are you messaging differently for office vs field workers vs manufacturing employees?
Multiple locations	• How do we stay connected with changing conditions across all jurisdictions?

APPENDIX D: OPPORTUNITIES BRAINSTORM

We asked: What opportunities do you see?

To whoever said this… love your honesty and appreciate what it took for you to participate!

> "*Honestly, I'm not sure ... right now just overwhelmed with keeping up with the daily communication needs of my company!*"

Exactly why we did this workshop (and may do more)!

> "*Don't waste a good crisis. …. Co-create - include employees, partners, industry and others in what a future return to work looks like that is meaningful and appropriate for the employee and the business / economy / community. We learn a lot from other partners and industries (even if we have been leaders on many fronts). Don't lose sight of that and continue to work that way (not just in crisis). Continue being open and transparent.*"

Theme	Opportunity details
Atmosphere	• Work life balance • Working from home flexibility (previous reluctance to support this). • More efficiency. More focus. Better prioritization. More trust. • Greater empathy and understanding of flexible work schedules. • The biggest opportunity is to offer people real choices - allowing them to feel some power over their day-to-day. • Up to this point, remote workers have felt like step-children. Going forward, they will feel like they are on equal footing to office-based employees. • We've seen people bring their true authentic selves to work. How will that manifest as we go back to the office? How can we keep this momentum and positivity going? • Get employee input as to what they feel worked/didn't and leverage that is insights into future planning (short, medium and long-term). Better insights to align from an industry, municipal, community level as well as what works for our situation (not a one size fits all). Learning from the experience - what worked well and using that input into removing lengthy / outdated processes, programs or policies. Look at what learnings shape new best practices.

Theme	Opportunity details
Return to the workplace	• Stay true to your values. The organization has an opportunity to go above what is 'required', and to exceed expectations. People are going to be wary coming back to the office, they need to know they are the organizations number one priority. • Opportunity to focus on those who are would benefit being some of the first to return, for mental health or ergonomic reasons. • Being very realistic and transparent about a return plan, in a way that engages employees. • Appreciate employees' personal situations and pressures. May need more emotional/psychological services for employees. • Reinforce relationships we spent a lot of time working on while working remotely. More united team who will take more time to generally care about each other. • We've built new momentum across a virtual team, and it will be good to keep that going on all fronts. • Continue having shorter, frequent meetings to maintain awareness of task status and activities. • Continuing to bring people together with compassion. • Celebration, discussions about meaning. • Increased mindfulness and respect for people's personal space. • Providing additional resources for our team member's families to help for a better home environment (see Palo Alto Cyber ACES program).

Theme	Opportunity details
Overall tone and approach	• Acknowledge trust. • Loosening up of "corporate" language and attitudes - less judgement. • Greater, more meaningful leadership communication to and interaction with staff. • Continue with internal comms content from our executive teams, who are displaying their hearts on their sleeves quite nicely right now. • Recognize and celebrate all that was accomplished under tremendous pressure. • Greater appreciation of our frontline staff (often our lowest paid) by those who work in head office and who got to work from home during this time while our frontline staff still went to work everyday. • Maintain increased collaboration, kindness, sensitivity, caring and employee engagement that was generated in the crisis. To maintain engagement with comms once the crisis is over, we are not sharing as many emotionally-based comms which our employees have been consuming to a higher degree. • Build more trust with employees and also possibly more engagement. • Current and future importance of health and safety in communications. • Growing better relationships in teams and with managers. • Building on the human skills that we have had to hone while in lockdown; especially developing their listening skills because the 'corporates' now recognise that listening is critical. • Celebrating successes among the team for what they accomplished and also recognizing clients for their continued contributions to the economy/food chain in the face of the pandemic.

Theme	Opportunity details
The communications team	• Dramatic change in how corporate communications functions. • Build more rapport with leadership to have more influence over the voice and messages in the future. • Stronger, ongoing partnerships between communication and other departments. • More permanent WFH team members could be a culture shift. We may need to communicate in even greater variety of ways and continue offering some of the new approaches to help keep those folks engaged, while reintroducing ways that are impactful for those in the office. • Opportunity to re-establish / shift the company culture. • Better use of asynchronous communication/collaboration and fewer in-person meetings. New audiences and channels to reach those audiences. A much better roadmap for crisis response. • Internal comms to play a strategic role in this important event for an organization and its employees; opportunity for the internal comms people to shine, to be a part of the process and be very immersed in the process of helping people return to the workspace. • Develop new ways to communicate with staff to keep folks engaged, updated, and involved. Continue cultivating employee created content. • We've all been amazed at the remarkable changes our team has made happen in a span of three weeks. This just shows us what we can do when we have a single united focus and I think we can build on that. There is no such thing as "impossible." • Ability to react quickly to moving parts. • Field management is aware that the marcom team needs photos, content to effectively share best practices with others in the company (an email description is just not enough).

Theme	Opportunity details
Improve our tech and channels	• Continue to use the technology embraced in the pandemic, especially virtual meetings. • Openness to innovation. • People are more tech-savvy than we gave them credit for and are able to learn/adapt to new technologies without much handholding. • Hoping we can capitalize on this increased use of technology and employees will be open and willing to continue their learning and exploration of tech tools upon return to the office. • Building/innovating our virtual communications capabilities, for both internal and external stakeholders. • More support for enhanced IT platforms. • Bringing forward key digital transformation activities now • Really take videoconferencing/webcasting seriously (i.e., make the investment in IT infrastructure to handle it). • Acceleration of our move away from reliance on physical industry events to digital communication-led value-adds to our industry. • Huge opportunity to increase our virtual capabilities and data around the care we provide our stakeholders. • Will create a more open mindset around what is possible when we have the right motivation • Moving away from some remaining paper based processes more quickly than originally planned.
	• Provide robust training opportunities on the tech and tools we use, while folks are out. This will result in a more efficient workforce upon our return.

Theme	Opportunity details
Policies and programs	• Operationally (and from a corporate social responsibility perspective), working from home brings opportunities to use less real estate, less electricity, less paper and less commuting. Great for companies with office space and/or parking issues. • Move to non-permanent desks (hotelling) more remote work. • This event shed light on disparities in some programs and policies companywide, such as sick pay policies. Some changes made during the interim period could become more permanent in some way, post event. • Continue to find efficiencies as we build on those found through the pandemic • Opportunities to improve health and safety as employees will be more aware of, going forward, that they shouldn't come to work if they are feeling sick; also maintaining stronger hygiene practices at work • Decision-making has been more efficient. Skill levels with new tools like Skype for Business, SharePoint and One Drive have improved. • In terms of mental health coverage, many companies thought they had a robust offering but have since determined their EAP is not nimble when there is real-time need for services. Many will take a fresh look at their provider and consider potential replacements or an add-on. • Rethink paid time off policies (sick time vs. pooled PTO). • We've had one entirely remote team for about a year now. This experience has forced us to get our ducks in row for remote onboarding and communication. Lots of opportunities to have more diverse remote teams in the future. We are also a Wild West company for guidelines and structure and this remote experience is shining light on the problem of relying heavily on informal channels for information sharing. • Travel policies – what is necessary travel? Using video conference for meetings that used to require travel. • Increased levels of keeping a clean and healthy workspace. • Less formal dress code, no one dressed up to work from home. • Due to layoffs and furloughs of so many people in travel, tourism, and hospitality industries that we no longer have recruitment issues for some of our frontline positions.

Theme	Opportunity details
Employee growth and movement	• Opportunity for self-reassessment – what areas were better, what was more of a challenge (e.g., dealing with technology hurdles, clearer understanding of personal limitations). • Some employees may have grown in their role – a crisis can bring out the best in some people. • On the flip side, others may have pulled back and need help re-engaging. Opportunity to train managers/leaders to deal with this. • Invest in line managers as communicators – help them understand their key role in communicating to their employees; invest in resources/training to help them.
External	• Companies right away, others enhanced their programs and policies, such as emphasizing flexibility for those struggling to work from home and providing care to other family members who were also home. • Many companies pivoted their offerings and services to support communities – some supplied PPEs, others helped with distance learning efforts • Opportunity to rebuild an organizations community or even establish one upon return through story and success, and sharing.

APPENDIX E: CHALLENGES BRAINSTORM

We asked: What challenges do you expect?

Theme	Challenge details
Decision to return to work	• How we can plan for a return with so many unknowns and some variables that we can't control for (e.g., collective bargaining). I fear that it could take even longer to figure out a return plan than it did to get everyone at home and that if we are not very realistic and transparent about the time that process will take we could erode the trust and goodwill we have built. • Be defining the "right" time to go back to our jobs, and then we need to determine the answers to these questions - how do we "ensure" the safety of our employees, what changes will be implemented, and how will those changes be accepted? • We will be planning for future closures in case of additional COVID-19 waves. How will we lead employees through a second phase? Will we be more prepared? Weary? Will we face indifference? If so, how will we handle that? What are the early warning signs or triggers?
Emotional state	• Returning to work when you don't want to. Being told you can't when you do. • Fear and/or anxiety of public transit, exposure, physical meeting guidelines, subsequent outbreaks. • Uncertainty, don't know what will happen in 30/60/90 days • General burnout, mental health impacts due to isolation and reduced social connection. • Are we prepared for issues such as alcoholism, drug addiction? • There has likely been a change in daily habits and work patterns. • Support for employees with continued child and senior care pressures, those living with healthcare workers; friction that may cause with others. • Motivation - some may be embracing the slower pace that came with the pandemic and may have a different approach to work when we return to the office. (change in priorities) • People's mindsets will be different (for a while anyway) and their personal experience (bad or good) will influence both how they engage and what they need going forward. Additionally, our company is high energy and folks already felt stretched. • Resistance to change despite circumstances; slipping into old ways of working and thinking. • Will telecommuting requests increase? Is leadership prepared to handle those requests?
External polarization	• This crisis has become politicized and the experts we listen to regarding whether it's safe to return are now seen through the polarized prism of which side of the political fence you're on. WHO and Fauci are loaded terms now among some staff.

Theme	Challenge details
Expectations	• Getting back into the swing of things, even though it's not exactly the same. Some will actively revert back to or expect old ways.
	• Remembering what it means to share an office with others.
	• Continuing the communication tactics and frequency of them that we've been building while at home - staying connected in the office.
	• It's a double edged sword - we have more tools to draw on... but we also HAVE to draw on more tools, so could stretch us.
	• Given how fast we were able to make things happen at our company in the past few weeks, is this going to become the expectation of our executive team? If so, I think it would lead to burnout.
	• If managers are able to make WFH decision, some will be more flexible than others and this may cause resentment due to unmet expectations.
	• Balancing between those who want things done quickly and those who are more conservative.
	• Productivity will be low to start as everyone adapts to another large shift in how we work.
	• There may be lingering suspicion of those who are sick.
	• Common formalities like shaking hands and hugging will likely change. We will need to have a replacement that is professional and friendly.
	• Will the continued need/desire for social distancing impede collaboration once people are back in the work environment. Will the pace of work ramp up to make up for lost time and negatively impact well-being and morale going forward?
	• Employees who were given greater responsibility or decision-making power while working from home may have that taken away once they return to the office and managers want to take back control.
	• People have become accustomed to working things out by themselves and may not want to interact or share information.
	• Micro-managers unwilling to accept that the world now works differently.
	• We relaxed the rules about having to have alternate childcare in place while working from home during the pandemic, so expect push-back when we reinstate the 'you can't work from home while looking after children' rule

Theme	Challenge details
Business challenges	• Learning how to approach long-term planning in a COVID-19 world. What is business as usual?
	• Slow economic recovery, what if some parts of the business don't survive and the ripple effects.
	• There's a lot of talk around screenings as we return to work, which seems very difficult given the current privacy rules. Also doesn't seem to align with many company cultures.
	• Figuring out the "right" way to do things will be challenging. Integrating the best parts of remote working with the best parts of having everyone in office.
	• Changes to strategic priorities leading to employees uncertain of their role focus.
	• Long term provision of now standard safety equipment (e.g. masks, sanitizer).
	• Sick time may increase as a result of hypervigilance/paranoia; fear of potential layoffs may cause people to come in when they shouldn't.
	• Delayed health care and postponed surgeries could cause a spike in company costs later in the year which we've not budgeted. And cause an increase in employee requests for time off later in the year and into next year.
	• Re-evaluate/re-set corporate priorities, ramp up on stalled 2020 initiatives, and begin to re-engage stakeholders on business-as-usual, pre-COVID performance improvement engagements at the same time they themselves are trying to recover from being on the front lines of the crisis. Their priorities will be different, and we will have to adapt accordingly. That will have an impact on financials, people, operations. We've been through a lot of corporate change in the past few years, so folks are used to it - and also weary.
	• If it happens again, what will the effect be on employee morale long-term (e.g., sense of unknown for both health and job security)? Are we prepared for the costs associated with a second wave/spike – including time off, health care, extended leaves.
	• Vacations.
	• Technology/hardware that doesn't come back to the office.
	• People wanting to out-bid each other on the hero award for sacrifices made.

Theme	Challenge details
Communications	• Information overload • How do we shift focus from "everything COVID" to other things? How to talk about stability rather than just negative news. • Everything that comes with basic change management. • The need for IT support will spike long term since there are more technology challenges when working remotely (e.g. VPN). Will our communication vehicles adjust accordingly? • Reduced budgets and the pressure on communications to stay small or get smaller. • As a global company, many employees travel to participate in face-to-face global team meetings; we will need to adapt and figure out how to maintain strong teams and collaboration. • How do we manage/recognize the tremendous amount of overtime that many communications and engagement folks put in during this difficult time? • How do we sustain pace of "crisis" with other work and priorities?
Recruitment and onboarding	• How do you engage and connect without a true connection? We had a new employee onboard last week - starting a new job is a challenge, but imagine doing it remotely, with no interaction with your new co-workers. • Possible competition for talent/workers. For some roles, we need to go through the rehire process. For other roles, we may have a need to fill; need to hire. Are we ready for a recruiting/hiring effort?
Locations / divisions	• Head Office/retail branch network divide • Biggest challenge will be figuring out how to manage when everyone is not in the same boat. Right now, everyone is working from home. If we move to a model where some people are and some aren't/when some people are coming and going, that is going to create a whole new "normal" that needs to be considered for employee engagement and experience, managing people, running meetings etc. • Still a challenge with non wired at work and essential frontline workforce - how do we engage and communicate here?

Theme	Challenge details
Other / uncategorized	• Ownership resisting more relaxed telework policies. • Employees resisting coming back to the office/feeling forced. • Decline in morale if coming back too soon/employees get sick. • It still won't feel normal for a long time until everyone is back in offices and all services are working again (cafeteria, coffee shop, fitness center) and we all feel safe. We're kicking around not going back to 100% occupancy until there is a vaccine. Also expect reductions in force or furloughs to happen - big challenge for morale and productivity if friends/coworkers lose jobs in these already tough times. • A lot of confusion. Communication coming from different people, especially employees with some authority but no understanding of how to handle communicating for their department publicly in a way that is inline with a university unified messaging. We saw this with initial COVID-19 information. Everyone wanted to put something on their website or send emails about testing and other information, but did not vet it through appropriate communication channels to ensure it was correct, appropriate and did not cause greater confusion for people reading it. We were able to finally get these people to understand that multiple messages in different places not cleared through appropriate communication channels was leading to major problems. However, I believe we will see challenges with this type of behavior again when it comes time to start phasing people back to work. • Reduced morale from those people/teams who were temporarily stood down (especially after being deemed 'non-essential')