As a manager, it’s easy to focus on the business of getting work done and forgo the human touchpoints of managing employees, especially while working remotely. However, right now is when your employees need positivity and human connection from you the most.

The unsteadiness caused by COVID-19 brings to the surface a new level of anxiety and uncertainty. Concerns about remote work, the economy, children and one’s own health are heightened, and people are conditioned to think negatively when fears take hold.

That’s why it is so important you set the example by connecting regularly with your employees and practicing realistic positivity. Positivity and connection affect resiliency, which in turn benefit your employees, your department and the University during difficult times.

Employees look to you for leadership and guidance. As a leader you must show stability, calm and compassion while reflecting hope and garnering trust.

To do this, remember to focus on your employees as humans with needs. They need:

- Connection/Engagement
- Recognition/Gratitude/Celebration

These needs can be met whether your team is in the office or working remotely. If these needs are not met, employees can withdraw.

**CONNECTION/ENGAGEMENT**

**Communication**

To facilitate connection, it is essential you communicate regularly with your employees. When communicating, work to exhibit realistic positivity and clarity. Negative communication kills morale, and ambiguity causes confusion and problems. As a leader, it is your job to work at communicating as effectively and clearly as possible.

**Connection**

Connection is critical during this time of social distancing and remote work. You can foster connection with your employees through regularly scheduled video meetings and/or phone calls. To enhance your employee connection and bring fun and positivity to your meetings, look to implement virtual team building activities.

**Empathy**

In trying times, employees need their managers to understand the stress they feel from the numerous challenges they face. This requires supervisors switch from a get it done attitude to an empathetic one. To
practice empathy, take the perspectives of your employees and try to relate to their feelings. Ask them how they are feeling and work to listen so you can better understand them.

Trust

Trust is essential in working relationships, but especially during difficult times. It sends a message of positive intent. By assuming the best when it comes to your employees, you are showing trust, which in turn helps build employee resiliency. Trust shows flexibility about how and when work is being done. When you exhibit trust, you avoid micromanaging or thinking the worst about situations.

Show You Care

By talking to your employees about healthy work behavior and self-care, you show concern about them as people. Asking them how they feel and reminding them to set boundaries between work and home tells them you care for more than the bottom line. By encouraging your employees to care for their physical and mental health and reminding them it is okay to ask for help when they need it, you indicate how serious you are about their health and wellbeing.

GRATITUDE/RECOGNITION/CELEBRATE

Gratitude

Find the time to show gratitude and be consistent. Remember to say thank you. By simply remembering to thank your employees and showing gratitude, it goes a long way in keeping your team positive and productive.

Recognition

If an employee goes above and beyond, publicly recognize and praise them for their efforts. It is as easy as sending an email to the members of your department or office recognizing the efforts of those who did an exceptional job. In addition, you can give your employee a Kudos to highlight a job well done. Kudos are shared publicly to the University community through The HUB Digest and can be shared on annual performance evaluations.

Celebrate

Whether your entire team is back at the office or there is a mix of different work situations and locations for a while, it is important you establish and/or maintain meaningful and consistent celebration of your employees. Schedule a video call to celebrate special occasions such as work anniversaries or birthdays. Celebrations are a great way to foster positivity within your team.

As a manager during this stressful time, your employees need connection and positivity from you. By remembering their needs, you show your employees you care, their work has purpose and they continue to bring value to UHD.

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