

The Role of Human Resources in a Crisis

What is the role of Human Resources in a Crisis?

Businesses will survive times of crisis. Every leader in business has a role to play in helping their organization through crisis. What is HR's role?

Here are six of the important roles HR will fill in a crisis:

- Protect the safety of all employees
- Communicate Corporate Initiatives
- Promote Communication / Prevent Isolation
- Ensure continuation of pay and benefits
- Monitor changing compliance and implement necessary updates
- Help leadership with the difficult decisions

Protect the safety of all employees

As the Chief People Office, HR must put the employees' safety first. Whether the crisis is man-made or natural, HR must take action steps to remove the employees from harm's way. HR must be familiar with their companies' Safety Plan at all times.

Communicate Corporate Initiatives

In times of crisis, more than ever, companies must be nimble in making decisions and taking actions to protect workers and the business. HR has knowledge about each employee, the reporting structure, any accommodations currently in place, and the business continuity plan for the company. HR will serve as a clear voice in the transition of operations from its current state to the response state, and will ensure that all actions are within the corporate guidelines and goals.

Promote Communication / Prevent Isolation

It has become common place that most crises require employees to work remotely for a period of time. In other cases, many company employees may already have remote home offices. When there is a period of crisis, it is the responsibility of HR to promote and ensure communication between displaced and worried employees. Regularly scheduled emails and team phone calls will go a long way in keeping communication

lines open. You may have employees who suffer greatly in isolation, which can lead to depression. HR must encourage daily touch bases between team members to avoid such isolation.

Ensure continuation of pay and benefits

Employees will worry about their pay and benefit continuation in times of crisis. HR must be proactive in communicating what will and will not be affected by the crisis. HR must make sure that the message is honest and accurate. Transparency and timeliness are key critical for successful messaging in this area.

Monitor changing compliance and implement necessary updates

In times of crisis, state and federal legislatures may look to enhance existing laws or implement new laws to offset employee hardships or severe economic challenges. HR must stay closely attuned to all current events, paying close attention to any immediate changes that may need to be made to the company policy.

Help leadership with difficult decisions

The best companies know that their people are their most valuable asset; however, in times of crisis, sometimes there must be a reduction in work which will lead to reduced work hours or lay-offs. HR will fill an important role in helping leadership determine the best course of action, deliver the appropriate message, and ensure that all affected employees are given every resource available to them.

Ultimately, credibility is of the utmost importance in a crisis. Before HR delivers a message to an employee, business partner or company leadership, HR must ensure the information they are giving is the most accurate information to date. In a crisis, an error of competence is much easier to forgive than an error of confidence. When HR takes the time to be honest, direct and empathetic, they fulfill a role in crisis management that benefits the whole company.

For more information, or for answers to any questions, contact:

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