



5 WAYS TO MAINTAIN COMPANY CULTURE IN A CRISIS



by MARRIA POOYA
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Managing Partner of Greenwich Medical Spa, Marria Pooya has grown the company from a two-person operation founded in 2005 to employ more than 15 staff members. After moving the original Greenwich location to a larger facility in 2014, she launched a new location in Westport in 2017, and it has already shattered her demand predictions. Marria attributes the success of both Greenwich Medical Spa locations to the high level of service, continuously updated and upgraded treatment and product offerings, thorough client education, and customized treatment plans that the practices provide.

During this unprecedented time, we are all faced with uncertainty and are juggling many unexpected challenges. We may have more questions than answers. What will we do if the PPP money doesn't come through? Were our loan documents done correctly? Is my relationship with my bank strong? How should I manage the relationship with my attorney, my employees, and my clients?

Even more difficult, we are tasked with having to deal with these various challenges at the same time as we work to lead a remote workforce. As CEOs or small business owners, we know our employees look to us daily for empowerment and leadership, while we strive to understand a new business context and guide them on a day-to-day basis.

No one is talking about balance anymore. It's simply survival rhetoric. But I believe there are some fundamental methods we can use to give employees what they need in this uncertain time – and it all leads back to maintaining our company culture.

1. Provide Transparency and Communication

For so long, people have been talking about flexibility in the gig economy. But now, everyone wants to make sure they have job. Today, employees simply don't want to be laid off. In this atmosphere of fear, your task as a leader is to reassure your team through honest and transparent communication.

Hold daily meetings, preferably in the morning. Even if the meeting is just 5 to 10 minutes, it will help build and maintain relationships with your team. As a leader during this time it is paramount that you are honest and transparent with them –

keeping your employees informed about the truth of the situation and letting them know that situations may change quickly builds credibility and trust with your team. I host a daily company-wide "town hall" meeting with my team every morning at 10 a.m. This meeting lasts about 10 minutes, where we do a quick update and talk about what we are going to accomplish that day. We also hold our weekly one hour and thirty Zoom meetings on Wednesday where we talk about our long-term projects and solve weekly issues. Remember, during this time, we are not just career coaches, we are mentors and therapists. This means being willing to be totally honest, speak with candor, and be vulnerable. Right now, it's ok to overcommunicate. It's better than not communicating enough or at all.

2. Maintain Connection with the Team

Everyone wants to be part of something, and that is true now more than ever. Find new ways to keep employees connected or take your usual teambuilding activities virtual. Create a virtual book club, get together for virtual lunches or an ice cream social. Host a trivia night, quarantine BINGO, or a sunrise yoga class. Not only is this fun for your staff, you can invite your clients or patients as well. You could even get everyone singing along with a virtual piano bar. Have invitees send song requests with the chat function.

Keep in mind that everyone will have different experiences of the pandemic, and your worries may not be the same as those of your employees. Have empathy. Support and reach out to your working parents, those staff members who are single and home alone, and others who are scared

or part of the vulnerable populations. Recognize that some of your team may be comfortable at home in a large house with a backyard, while others could be stuck in a small apartment. Be there for them!

3. Foster Connection to the Community

Giving back is one of our core values, and during this crisis, supporting the community and asking your employees to be involved in that effort will help everyone feel more connected. There are many ways to lend a helping hand and get your team involved! At Greenwich Medical Spa, we used our three locations as PPE drop-off sites. We asked local nail salons, tattoo studios, and body piercing shops to join us by bringing in their unused PPE, which we matched and donated to our local hospitals. We also brought frontline workers healthy snacks and food baskets. When we launched our online shopping cart for skincare, we pledged 5% of the proceeds to local food banks. We made sure that our employees were a part of each of these efforts.

4. Display Real Leadership

Great leaders are present. This is the time to be available, be responsive, and be more than just a figurehead. You can initiate contact. Send a text message, place a phone call, or make a personalized comment on social media. You can let your team know that you know who they are and that you care for them. I mailed each of my employees a handwritten note, and they were even more well received than I could have expected. I text at least two to six people from my staff weekly just to see how they are doing and remind them that I am here for them. Don't forget

to acknowledge your staff for achievements and contributions now. A virtual pat on the back can go a long way toward making someone's day.

5. Focus on Learning, Growth, and Development

While we always emphasize education and professional growth for our team members, the current situation gives nearly everyone the time and opportunity to improve their skill set and knowledge base. There are many webinars, online courses, and interactive programs available for professionals in any industry to grow their expertise right now. We are learning from the multitude of educational offerings from our vendors on topics ranging from marketing to advanced injections, skincare, and communications. We share all of these with our employees and ask them to participate so they can develop their skills.

As business owners, we have the opportunity to deepen our connections, expand our impact, and increase our knowledge during this COVID-19 crisis. By staying focused on our company culture and keeping an eye on the values we have established during our many successful years in business, we will weather this storm and emerge stronger in the most important ways.