

# COVID WEBINAR #7

**Expert Panelist: Sandy Anderson, Sandy Anderson Consulting & Coaching**

## Questions & Answers

**What are some of the biggest problems that business leaders are coming to you guys with right now? And what are the biggest concerns coming from their employees?**

Employees are still concerned about their health, safety, and children at home while schools and childcare are closed. From business leaders, we're hearing the dilemma of balancing flexibility and understanding with accountability. How do you hold employees accountable to the same rules in place from "before" when transitioning to a different work environment, new requirements, etc. There is no playbook and we've not dealt with these scenarios before, so working through each situation, trying to be flexible, yet consistent, has been challenging.

**Do you think it's appropriate to have some restrictions on digital staff meetings internally and with clients? Like not having dogs barking, or children playing behind you. Dress codes, etc.?**

It would be best to have Telework or Remote Work policies/guidelines with established expectations such as this. During this time when many employees are working from home for the first time, or have been forced out of necessity, and may have children at home, try to be flexible when these situations occur. If it

becomes a continuous issue, talk with the employee privately and ask or suggest some changes they might consider to alleviate the disruptions.

**If our business is only operating at 50% capacity right now, how do we handle it with employees when we aren't bringing them all back and we're having to pick and choose, or in some cases, we'd prefer to just let them go and hire someone else?**

It's important to determine who is "essential" and that may not be all employees right now, depending on your business. If that's the case, be sure you can identify and explain why some are essential and others may not be quite yet. Be very cautious in letting people go and hiring others to replace them unless you have a valid reason for termination.

**In your experience, do you have recommendations on specific processes that we should examine in our company? Where should we start?**

Over 60% of salaried employees are working from home and this was a fast & forced change for many companies with no time to plan. If you have Remote Work Policies in place, revisit them to ensure all bases are covered including those you've recently been dealing with. If you don't have any in place, it's a good time to develop new policies while these situations are fresh on your mind.

Business Contingency Plans should address all situations that could affect your business such as fire, severe weather, active shooter, and now pandemics. Plans should address challenges such as staff shortages, supply chain delays or outages, social distancing, cleaning, and safe work practices.

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Training for managers is critical right now – how to lead in a new work environment, communicate with empathy and understanding, and adding a new level of flexibility to leading.

## **I know communication with customers has to change too - how do we guide our employees on appropriate ways to manage those conversations?**

It's difficult to prepare customer-facing employees with every scenario and question that may come up from customers, but providing some training and written fact sheets will be a good way to ensure consistent information is being communicated to customers. Proactively contacting customers with information provided by the company is a good way to control the conversations and information being shared, rather than waiting for customers to call with questions and being caught off guard or unprepared.

## **Is it possible that our company mission statement might change because of the crisis?**

Absolutely. First of all, determine if your mission statement clearly states your "Why" and if it's relevant. Many companies have had to change their methods of operating recently and your "Why" may have changed. It's a great time to revisit your mission, vision, and values in relation to your current, and future anticipated situation and goals.

## **We have employees that are outside sales/marketing. They have been at home for 6 weeks paid doing very little while the remainder of staff is working on-site daily. At what point should you expect them to begin calling on**

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**customers again? We do not want to lay-off but it's so fuzzy as of what to do. It doesn't seem fair to other employees either. Not sure how to make it appear fair to the other staff.**

Sales/Marketing employees should certainly be staying in touch with customers to maintain relationships for future business opportunities. If your company is not in a position for them to be selling right now, there are many other responsibilities you can reposition them to – Think about new ways to sell/market under current circumstances. Can they make videos of product demonstrations, office tours, testimonials, etc? Proactively contacting and staying in touch with customers should be at the top of the list.

**I've heard projections that it will be 2 years before our economy recovers and things stabilize. Mark Cuban is referring to this as America 2.0 - saying it's not going back to normal. Should companies consider making these temporary work-from-home situations permanent?**

Yes, many already have. Projections are that nearly 50% of those working from home now may never return to the office full-time. Companies should be open-minded to consider more telework in the future if it's working well. Telework can save money for the company (floor space, equipment, furniture, etc.) and for the employee (transportation to work, commute time, gas money.)

**If the position is well-suited to teleworking, but the person currently in that position isn't, can we let them go and hire someone else?**

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Be very careful with decisions to terminate employment based on unique circumstances right now. If teleworking is the only option because employees cannot be onsite, but the employee does not have a good location, equipment, or resources to effectively work from home, attempt to work with them to be back at the office, or set them up in another location. If the employee just doesn't want to work because they prefer to be on unemployment, that's an issue that you can address, but would make sure you're not putting the company in a legal position of discrimination or violating any employment laws.

## **Participant Comment**

Thank you so much! This was great and gave me ideas I could not come up with alone. I appreciate it so much!

## **PANELIST - SANDY ANDERSON CONSULTING & COACHING WEBSITE**

<https://sandyandersonconsulting.com/>

## **PANELIST - SANDY ANDERSON: - Questions that Elevate Relevancy in Challenging Times**

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## **PANELIST - SANDY ANDERSON: - Worksheet**

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