

{Re}opening. {Re}connecting. {Re}turning to the workplace.

Key Considerations for Employee Engagement

It's a hot topic among employees today; "when are we going back to the office?" Returning to the workplace for people who have been working remotely for the past year can be considered either exciting or scary (or inconsequential).

Incentive Services University is always looking for positive examples in the workplace, and in the past year, there were many positive ways companies improved their employees' experiences. Better yet, these evolutions morphed into changes for the better. Covid created creativity and forced companies into hybrid concepts that addressed unique scenarios for frontline workers who still showed up every day at the workplace, as well as others who worked remotely.

Here are a few considerations around your recognition strategies to ensure your employees have a smooth transition back.



Keep the good karma going!

Don't let the engagement efforts you put in place during the pandemic go away. Take time to re-calibrate what you are doing to recognize and reward your teams – some of whom may be returning to the workplace, some may be managing a hybrid schedule, and some may continue to work remotely. Likely before the pandemic hit, you had an engagement plan in place, then once the pandemic hit, you created new efforts to keep teams engaged. Now it's time to morph those strategies together and figure out the best way to effectively connect your employees and keep the good karma going.

Recognize team leaders for their creativity & resourcefulness.

Over the past year, leaders had to creatively develop, manage, and execute engagement strategies for their teams. There was no playbook from which they could work. With that in mind, consider what recognition strategies you can put in place to appropriately and authentically let your team leads know:

1) why they matter to your company 2) how important they are for the future 3) where they impacted the most

Remember that not everyone has the same level of resilience.

It was a big change to "change up" employee engagement efforts when suddenly no one was physically together. Now after more than a year of acclimating to video calls, different team structures, and "waist up" business casual, it's going to be stressful for some. Not everyone has the same level of resilience. "People are going to have anxiety around picking the commute back up, getting into their routine, getting accustomed to the new protocol in their offices, working with people who have a different view of the virus, and maybe take different precautions or fewer precautions," says Organizational psychologist Cathleen Swody, director of assessment at Thrive Leadership. The bottom line? Ease back into whatever strategies you may have effectively used in the past to move forward in the most appropriate way.

<https://www.voanews.com/usa/all-about-america/returning-office-after-covid-could-be-stressful>