

LEANING INTO THE TURN

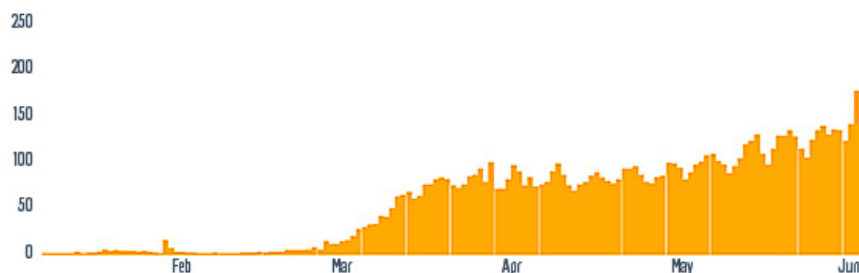
Refocusing Leadership and Communication in the Continuing Coronavirus Crisis

By Jay Millen & John Wallace

While the scientific community had hoped the heat and humidity of the summer months might limit the spread and severity of the virus, we are seeing that the dreaded specter of community spread continues to be a problem in many states, provinces, and dense urban landscapes. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said recently that the world is still 'knee-deep in the first wave' of the Coronavirus pandemic and that action is needed to curb the spread.

For the period ending June 30th, Johns Hopkins experts reported 10,512,583 cumulative cases with just over 173,700 confirmed cases reported on June 30th alone:

Number of Cases Reported:



Source: John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center

In Canada, the US, and the United Kingdom, the following statistics are relevant for understanding where we have been, where we are, and where we may be going with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future:

Canada:	United States:	United Kingdom:
2.8M tests	32.2M tests	9.4M tests
106K confirmed positives	2.6M confirmed positives	315K confirmed positives
8.7K deaths	128K deaths	44k deaths

Source: John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center

Based on what we're seeing, there is little reason to believe the virus will stall out in this quarter and is more likely to gather steam and spread on an exponential basis as we move into the fall. Every model has essentially been wrong, predictions change every 24 hours, and we're seeing responses ranging from sheer panic to total apathy in our fellow citizens. As a result, it is incumbent on leaders - especially in our business and not-for-profit communities - to think carefully about the steps needed to galvanize their organizations, continue preparing for and reacting to rapid change in the spread of COVID-19, and redouble their efforts to engage with and protect their team members and families in the months ahead.

BEST PRACTICES

There are some critical "checklist" issues to review and capabilities to examine to prepare for the next several months to potentially well into 2021, pending the development of therapeutics and vaccines to combat the virus:

- 1. Remote working:** Traditionally office-based employees who are now working remotely are developing signs of emotional stress, "burnout," and over-reach. Consider some of the following:
 - Check with your health care providers for mental health and employee support options, and review your processes for evaluating health and safety for this part of your workforce.
 - Create routine check-ins with no agenda other than a "community" check-in if you aren't already doing it at the small team or "natural group" level (i.e. department, geography, functional group).
 - Insist that team members understand the need for work/life balance when both their life and their work are at home and resource appropriately.
 - Consider alternate shift or moving hours for different teams or team members balancing child and elder care responsibilities.

- 2. Field and manufacturing operations:** There are signs of waning vigilance in many work communities and a false sense of security where the virus has yet to spike. Stay on guard and reinforce the following:
 - Safety protocols, social distancing on the job, and personal protective equipment maintenance/exchange are essential.
 - Social distancing at job site meetings and during shift changes is a must.
 - Temperature checks should be conducted at the beginning of each shift of work.
 - Interactions with vendors, customers, and government agency workers need to have the same (if not more restrictive) guidelines than with natural teams and crews.
- 3. Stay in touch and find ways of creating positive momentum:** “Battle” Fatigue may be setting in with your front line leaders and business unit leadership. Think of ways to add some positive messaging and potential fun into the cadence of communicating and leading:
 - Virtual coffee breaks or end-of-day mixers (delineating time to shut down)
 - Theme-based video/zoom meetings (specific customer profile and trivia; regional sports trivia; regional outdoor locations profiled)
 - Have a socially distanced outdoor meeting as/if possible in a park or athletic field
 - Focus on the wins in the business, or above and beyond results from specific team members
- 4. Communicate early, often, and always:** If you are asking yourself “*Am I communicating enough?*” or “*Has it been too long since I reached out to Joe or Jane?*” then the answer is yes, it has been too long:
 - Increasingly we are losing track of days and weeks since the “last” event if we aren't formalizing it into our calendars, so put reminders in for critical team members and for overall communication to happen.
 - Listen more, talk less – ask open-ended questions such as “What are you seeing, or hearing?”
 - Rotate leadership of meetings and calls – this is an opportunity to turn everyone into a facilitator – don't put them on the spot, let them know their turn is coming and offer to help them get ready.
 - Attention spans and focus are challenging in these times. Remember the old adage: “Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you told them.”
- 5. About the Board and investors** – They have been in the COVID-19 Time Warp as well. If you have the CEO or senior leadership role in your business, make it a point to provide more frequent interaction by video or telephone. Consider creating opportunities for your leader team and high potential future leaders to engage with the board and investors with specific projects, business activities, or strategic updates.

We continue to face unprecedented volatility and uncertainty in our business and personal lives; much of which is out of our control. In this environment we have an obligation to be as empathetic as we can; humane in executing on difficult business challenges such as furloughs and curtailed work hours; and as thoughtful as possible in keeping the organization vigilant, responsive and prepared for what lies ahead.

A FINAL NOTE: IMPACT ON RECRUITING AND ON-BOARDING

As the virus continues to evolve, it may be difficult to stay ahead of evolving leadership and staffing needs. Changes in organizational structure, retirements, and normal attrition will be magnified by the impact on the group's ability to meet, assess, and select new executive and staff team members, as well as team members at all levels. Onboarding is also proving to be more challenging as leaders and new team members try to understand the culture, business cadence and operating methodology from a remote or video-based platform.

At Caldwell, we have integrated some lessons learned and best practices into our initial recruiting process with our clients to create the best possible engagement within current COVID-19 constraints, as well as to provide useful insights into the onboarding process.

Our modified efforts include socially distanced interviews, the extensive use of formal and informal interviewing via video conference, and added "candidate touches" from additional team members to provide as accurate an assessment as possible given physical interviewing limitations. Our modified process and recommendations can be found [here](#).

As you reflect on how to modify your assessment, selection and onboarding processes, the same concepts apply to communication: communicate early, communicate often, and stay in contact with candidates more vigorously than during a normal selection and onboarding process.

PROCESS OVERVIEW AND POTENTIAL RISK MITIGATION CHANGES IN COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT



To stay informed more broadly, the best resources are:

US Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention Website:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/summary.html

Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center:

www.coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

Canadian Public Health Agency Website:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html

United Kingdom DEFRA and COVID-19 Websites:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs

APPENDIX 1

COVID-19 RISK MITIGATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POTENTIAL NEW HIRES

1. Are you currently in good health with no symptoms of cold, flu, fever, congestion?
2. Have you traveled out of state or province in the past 90 days?
3. Have you or any of your household family members been in direct contact with any person diagnosed with COVID-19?
4. Have you or any of your household family members been required to be tested or quarantined for COVID-19?
5. Do you have any current work or business mandated travel restrictions that would prevent you from meeting either locally or point-to-point destination or are there specific "NO GO" areas identified by your current employer?
6. Do you have to report or document any and all interactions outside your current employer to your current employer?
7. Are you comfortable participating in a video/social distancing interview process prior to the point of selection in lieu of face-to-face meetings with us and the client?

APPENDIX 2

WORKPLACE HYGIENE PRACTICES

1. Have a deep clean of all offices conducted weekly using Lysol and Clorox bleach agents.
2. Wipe down your workstation, phone and computer daily using Lysol or Clorox wipes in the office or at your home office.
3. Have a daily discussion with your office and family members about potential contact points, social interaction and public transit.
4. Avoid large gatherings with general crowds in which you do not know who is attending to limit potential exposure.
5. Wash your hands with soap and hot water before and after you eat, before and after making a location change, or after any physical activity.
6. Use Clorox and/or Lysol wipes to wipe down seats and or hand holds on public transit, Uber/taxi, or personal vehicles.
7. Cover all coughs, if you have any symptoms of cold or flu, do not go into your office and call your personal physician as well as notifying your immediate leader and teammates.
8. Be aware of your surroundings at all times, avoid choke points or tight enclosures with crowding, and steer clear of those routes even if it requires extra time.
9. Cover any scratches, open wounds or cuts, and disinfect them frequently.
10. Avoid touching your face, eyes, and mouth.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JOHN WALLACE is Caldwell's president and CEO. A relentless results and client-focused leader, he draws on 20 years of successful executive search direction experience to drive exceptional results based on objective measures, market intelligence, strategic planning initiatives, and clear targets for growth.



JAY MILLEN is the managing partner of Caldwell's CEO & Board Practice and leads our Charleston office team. Working with publicly-traded and privately-held companies, Jay assists clients in senior-level recruitment and in the development of board and CEO succession plans as well as industry specific leaders at all levels in the natural resources and manufacturing sectors.



WE BELIEVE TALENT TRANSFORMS

At Caldwell we believe Talent Transforms. As a leading provider of executive talent, we enable our clients to thrive and succeed by helping them identify, recruit and retain their best people. Our reputation—50 years in the making—has been built on transformative searches across functions and geographies at the very highest levels of management and operations. With offices and partners across North America, Europe and Asia Pacific, we take pride in delivering an unmatched level of service and expertise to our clients.

Understanding that transformative talent is not limited to executive levels, our Caldwell Advance solution focuses on emerging leaders and advancing professionals who can also have a profound impact on a company's ability to turn potential into success. We also leverage our skills and networks to provide agile talent solutions in the form of flexible and on-demand advisory solutions for companies looking for support in strategy and operations. Our Caldwell Analytics division leverages an award-winning talent optimization platform with a suite of talent strategy and assessment tools that – when integrated with our search process – helps clients hire the right people, then manage and inspire them to achieve maximum business results as fast as possible.

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