

# COVID-19 CHRO PEER CALL RECAP

Compare/share/learn - March 25, 2020

On March 25, 2020 we had a call with industry CHROs across Canada to discuss the global ripple effect to organizations as the COVID-19 crisis unfolds.

## ONE ORGANIZATION'S EXPERIENCE WHEN THE VIRUS BEGAN TO SPREAD

Stefan Hockley, VP of HR, Sierra Wireless

A quick overview of Sierra Wireless' business - based in Richmond, BC we have 1500 employees; 400 APAC (150 mainland China; 150 in Hong Kong; 100 in Taiwan); 300 Europe, mainly in France; and the remainder is balanced in Canada and US. Our involvement began during the Lunar New Year which is a very big event - it's equivalent to US Thanksgiving - folks return to their families and celebrate for a week. First, the lockdown happened in China and then we were affected on two business fronts:

1. There were 150 R&D employees who were stranded in different locations about a dozen of whom were stranded in Wuhan.
2. A major component of our business is making physical products and so with China shutting down, our supply chain shut down as well.

We had a large business problem.

We formed a tiger team of stakeholders, led by our CXO and co-sponsored by me. In the early days our reaction and employee communications were equally important as the programs, customers and supply chain. Hong Kong was an uncertain environment, so people went to remote working early on. We formed an empowered team and met daily to discuss all issues and take action. We went from 30 min check-ins to 1-hour meetings. Update FAQs and actively communicate to internal stakeholders in these times of uncertainty - it's a continuous process.

Everyone is at a different stage in dealing with this crisis, and we are learning a lot from having employees work from home. For example, there were a number of bandwidth issues at the start. Recognizing this, we pre-ordered additional bandwidth but we don't have that up and running yet and recognize the additional measures that had to be taken to successfully accommodate the work from home capacity. We also allowed employees to take desk equipment home.

Three weeks ago, people started to go back to work in China and movement started happening, the Chinese government was incenting businesses to start work again. However, things are changing dramatically outside of China. France is in complete lockdown, the US and Canada are now working from home. The factories in China are back up and running, but the business environment is shifting and now there is a demand issue as other parts of the world are on lockdown. The supply part of the equation has been solved but demand is now an issue.

Hopefully we've done some good things to protect our employees as well as our business.

We are definitely monitoring things closely and made the decision to have Hong Kong work from home as a precaution. This was in line with what the Hong Kong government are doing and decided to follow suit. If there is a second wave, we'll see how that plays out and monitor things closely in both Europe and North America.

## LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE AT TRANSALTA

Jane Fedoretz, Chief Talent & Transformation Officer, Transalta:

A concern for our executive leadership team was how are people doing working from home? How is their mental health? To address this concern, we consulted with a psychologist to get some coping strategies for our people.

From a medical perspective, we also wanted to debunk what's out on social media and provide our employees with studies and real data. We wanted to ensure that our essential workers were protected. We spoke to an expert on infectious diseases, which was tremendously valuable and, in turn, held a town hall with 745 people via Cision. We received a lot of positive feedback from our employees that this was an important thing to do. Having the connection from our CEO/COO was really important. The constant communication.

The doctor addressed all our concerns to help put our employees' minds at ease, relative to how the virus spreads. We want to ensure our essential workers are safe. We want to be sure we're doing everything we can.

## SOME INSIGHTS ABOUT THE VIRUS:

- This is a very sticky virus and it is readily transferred and transmitted. More so than medical experts have ever seen before.
- Because it's sticky, it does survive on surfaces. It could stay alive on plastic for 3 to 5 days.
- It's very important to stress healthy hygiene and personal hand washing.
- The positive is that you can kill this virus by practicing social distancing and healthy hand washing. We can get ahead of this thing. Ultra violet light kills it, bleach agents can kill it, hot water and soap.

It's empowering to know that you can fight this virus and it's something that \*you\* can do.

## THE ENBRIDGE EXPERIENCE

Mark Weil, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Enbridge:

This has been an evolving crisis in trying to help employees as well as continue operations.

Overview of Enbridge:

14,000 employees across North America w/ diverse operations

- Gas distribution in Ontario
- Crude oil transportation network spanning North America
- Gas transmission assets across North America
- Power operations in in NA and Europe

Deemed a critical infrastructure, one of the benefits coming into this crisis is that Enbridge had an extensive business continuity plan in place in the event of a crisis and essentially enacted that plan.

We have a public health emergency support team and pandemic planning, which links to a corporate crisis management team shared by the CEO. We set a regular cadence on the public health emergency support team meetings with medical expertise. We have an internal health services team with occupational health nurses and medical experts on call for leaders and employees that we were able to set up pretty quickly.

Working with government really early on to ensure that critical infrastructure is available for all during this time that people are home and working from home. Providing 24/7 support for leaders and employees. We called work from home across North America for those who could. Our field sites and nerve centres, those are jobs you have to be on-site and we've been really focusing on these employees. We've been very clear on social distancing guidelines. We are actively planning out on a 4-month rolling basis, looking at very different scenarios. Not knowing if this will be shorter or longer. We've been looking at HR policies. Providing resources for employees - daily bulletins, links to podcasts, mental health awareness, etc.

In terms of communication, we currently have daily employee company bulletins and we are contemplating taking that down to 3 days a week. We've had an overwhelming response from our employees about the frequency and transparency of our communication, but we don't want to desensitize employees.

We have implemented hazard pay on a case by case basis. We have premium pay for day and standby pay at two of our control centres – Edmonton and Houston. We've also looked at, should we need to isolate employees from their families, an approach for isolation pay. We would provide an extra day of pay for employees who have to be away from their families.

## THE PERSPECTIVE FROM A LEADING RETAILER

Chris Taylor, CHRO, Best Buy Canada

Pay is a big thing. Some of us are handling layoffs. Our stores are closed for walk-ins but we offer curbside pick-ups. We have added premium pay of \$2.50/hr for those who are in the stores. We expect this to last well into the end of the year. Want to know how others are handling.

## FROM THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mark Porter from WestJet

Yesterday was a very difficult day . . . we've never done layoffs in the last 24 years of operating. Cash is obviously an issue and we've been running models. We went from over 700 flights daily and down to 50 flights. Loads were at 90% and now 15%. Our people have put their hands up for early retirement or reduced work hours. During tough times you see the worst and best in people and thankfully, we've been seeing a lot of the best. We will continue benefits for all who we're letting go. First phase we're calling liquidity, second phase is stability and third will be recovery. We just don't know when that will be.

## TO FINANCIAL SERVICES

Deborah Best, Vice President and Head, Human Resources, Raymond James Limited

We are all working from home but can definitely help clients. Our professionals are looking at this in a long-term view. The general feeling is that this will be a rocky time and it's going to last, in terms of the instability, several months to a year. It could have a couple of waves. When this comes back it will come roaring back. Prepare from a conservative point of view, from a worse-case scenario. We are in touch with our clients, and it makes a huge difference to talk to people.

In terms of individuals we are trying to advise our employees to talk with your own advisers to work through the stress. In the very short term, anticipate that people will be struggling.

## KEEPING FOOD ON THE TABLE

Doug Galloway, Vice-President of Talent & Culture, Oppenheimer

It's certainly been an interesting time. Our business is importing produce from across the world and selling it to retailers. Every year we move about \$1B in produce. We now have separate crews to sort and deliver. The biggest challenge is getting the produce into the country and getting that supply across the country, since the ports have been shut down. For example, at one point there were 1800 ships waiting to be unloaded and by the time they got to unloading, it was all garbage. It's transport on a timely basis. We keep our products apart so that if one crew is affected, other crews won't be impacted.



## 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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