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Chapter



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Navigating COVID-19: Top 10 Practices of CRE Leaders CoreNet NorCal Special Interest Group Session #1 – March 16, 2020

In response to the impact COVID-19 is having on our members and member-companies, the CoreNet Northern California leadership has 'stood up' the COVID-19 Special Interest Group (SIG). The intent of this SIG is to convene (virtually) members from member-companies to share challenges and emerging best practices related to COVID-19 and crisis management generally. We will be convening this SIG frequently to both support our members and member-companies, and to create a body of resources and best-practices.

Session #1 of the COVID-19 SIG was held March 16, 2020, bringing together 12 CRE leaders representing 10 member companies. We have also recorded a special podcast – details to follow – specific to COVID-10.

The following list of 10 practices emerged from Session #1:

1. **Activate or leverage a Crisis Management Team.** Each company in the SIG has a COVID-19 Crisis Management Team in place, serving as a critical body for managing the crisis cross-functionally across each company. Each CRE leader has a 'seat at the table' on the Crisis Management Team, while two members are leading their company's Team.
2. **Have a clear Incident Response Plan.** All agreed that responding to a confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace requires clear action plan that includes an organized intake or reporting process from afflicted employees, one that ensures their confidentiality and privacy. Important to the process is carefully identifying who was potentially exposed, and notifying those who have been exposed, along with clear guidance as what the exposed should do next. Following up with a workplace 'deep clean' of any affected areas is also important.
3. **Define essential and non-essential services.** With the 'shelter in place' orders expanding to all of California, and now many places in the world, the group confirmed that understanding who and what makes up your 'essential services' required to keep the business running at a site or office level is important. In many cases, this may be your workplace maintenance and cleaning crews, whose productivity may be impacted (children at home, illness in the family, fear of exposure, etc.)
4. **Leverage work-from-home for all/most.** Most had already adopted a global work-from-home posture early in the crisis; therefore, most were well prepared when the shelter-

in-place orders were issued across the greater Bay Area and, subsequently, all of California.

5. **Support employees in their work-from-home setting.** All participants focused on ensuring employees working from home are supported, with some allowing for desktop equipment to be taken home. A shorter list is offering financial support to help employees provision their home offices.
6. **Know your sources of truth.** There is no shortage of information on COVID-19, some accurate, some not. All agreed that it is important to have clear sources of truth that CRE leaders can use to inform and make important decisions with and behalf of the company. Government and law enforcement sources were common across the group, as well as subscriptions services like ISOS and others leveraged by in-house security teams.
7. **Continue to create community and focus in employee experience.** Most important are the efforts to keep employees – both those in the CRE org and our internal customers – connected and collaborating as best possible. Social distancing does not mean social isolation. The use of video collaboration is common across the team, as well as creating and delivering virtual social gatherings that are common in the workplace in both small and larger settings (happy hours, celebrations, etc.)
8. **Continue to pay your hourly workers, and your service providers.** All in the session believe that continuing to support our service partners and our hourly employees is critical. Generally, the team is focused on wage continuation and creating flexibility for those with childcare challenges resulting from school closures.
9. **Begin to prepare for various return-work-scenarios.** Returning to the office will not be a single motion when the time comes. The group is expecting there to be phases, and some level of chaos involved. Additionally, there is an expectation that some will not return to the office either because of ongoing personal impacts – closed schools, etc. – or preference.
10. **Lead with empathy.** All agreed that it's important to remember we are humans first and CRE leaders need to lead with empathy. Everyone reacts differently in a crisis, especially one as unprecedented as COVID-19. Employees are looking for leaders for guidance, support, and empathy. Additionally, all deserve equal treatment; shut down any bias early.