

COVID-19 Resources



Tailored resources to help your small business and employees build resilience in the midst of COVID-19 and racial injustice in America

The year 2020 has brought unprecedented challenges, affecting every aspect of our lives. With the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, many Americans have had to adjust to working from home as businesses shut their doors. Frontline workers and service industry employees have stayed at their posts, risking exposure to the virus and fatigue from the sheer emotional and physical toll. On top of the pandemic, the high-profile murders of Black Americans this year has forced the country once again to reckon with the reality of deep-rooted systemic racism. Mass protests across the nation shone a painful light on all the work we have yet to do to create a country that's truly safe and just for every American at home and at work.

For small businesses – the culture keepers of their communities – this year has been a true

crisis of survival. Despite the hardships of these times, many small business owners are continuing to put their employees first, looking for ways to keep staff safe, engaged, and supported as they continue to serve their communities.

We at PCV are proud to support small businesses in this effort by providing resources and advice on how a focus on good jobs can help you and your employees navigate these uncertain times together. Now, more than ever, a good job matters. *COVID-19 Good Jobs Resources* is designed specifically to help you weather this storm through a good jobs focus centered on inclusive and equitable employment and leadership practices.

If you're a small business owner looking for information on how to support your staff during this challenging time, you've come to the right place. Below you will find tips and links to resources for keeping your employees physically and psychologically safe during the pandemic, providing support, adopting management practices rooted in equity, and more. Note that this page includes a select set of resources that can help your business address challenges posed by the pandemic. There is much more information on our [Good Jobs, Good Business](#) website that can help you continue in your journey towards building an equitable and inclusive workplace that prioritizes good jobs to drive business success.

Managing Employee Compensation During The Pandemic

One of the most important ways to put your commitment to good jobs into action is to ensure pay equity among your staff, especially for Black and Brown employees and women. You can also explore temporary or one-off COVID-related pay options for frontline workers and those navigating new working conditions.

Prioritizing Pay Equity

[Equity](#) refers to “achieving fair outcomes for a given group by designing processes that recognize the root causes of distinct challenges, needs and histories and address them in solutions.” Pay equity means compensating employees equally for performing the same or similar job duties. Federally, the [Equal Pay Act](#) (1963) requires equity in compensation between men and women performing “substantially similar” work. Most state laws provide additional protections around pay equity beyond gender, including race, age, disability and other protected classes. It's good practice to review wages among your employees regularly, paying close attention to the pay of employees of color and women. This practice will not only ensure that

you're complying with the law, but it will also help you to identify opportunities to strengthen equity in your employees' earnings, benefiting staff who may have experienced or are currently experiencing pay inequity. To demonstrate your commitment to pay equity across race, gender, and other protected classes, here are a few practical strategies you can implement:

Don't ask for pay history when hiring. Not only is asking for pay history [illegal in some states](#), it also [reinforces cycles](#) that prevent people from achieving equal pay for equal work and gaining economic mobility. Even if you don't intend to pay someone less on the basis of their identity, you could inadvertently perpetuate pay inequity they've experienced in the past by basing their new wage on what they've made previously. Pay disparities also occur when businesses opt to pay a worker at the rate she requests, even if this is below industry standard or the amount other employees in the same position are being paid. This practice too often continues the [pay inequity](#) that women, Black and Brown workers experience. Instead of asking for salary histories, research salary ranges for the position you're looking to fill in the region where you operate your business.

Publish starting pay in job postings. Instead of putting the responsibility on candidates to bring up the question of pay, consider sharing pay information upfront in job postings. Jobseekers hold less power in the interview process, especially during economic downturns when jobs are scarce. Additionally, for many jobseekers, the risk of rejection is too high to negotiate or ask for what they're worth. Remove the game: be clear and upfront. Being open about pay – even if pay is lower during COVID-19 – could also save you time: applicants who require higher pay won't apply, only to turn down an offer later. Finally, pay transparency is linked to [stronger work performance](#).

Audit wages every year. Check for pay inequities among your staff across gender and race on an annual basis. Remember: employees must be compensated the same for the same or substantially similar work.

COVID-Related Pay Approaches

Offer hazard pay for frontline workers, if you can. Essential, frontline workers who don't have the option to work from home [are disproportionately Black and Brown people](#). As the U.S. has not yet managed to stop the spread of the coronavirus, essential workers in our communities are at greater risk of contracting the virus. If possible, consider offering [hazard pay](#), raising the hourly wage for your frontline workers taking on the greatest risks. Under federal law, this kind of pay

is [not required](#), but can be negotiated between an employer and employee. Be sure to pay attention to local guidance and laws around this kind of pay, as it is an evolving issue. For more on how to raise wages, see the [Employee Compensation](#) section of our Good Jobs, Good Business website.

Offer remote work stipends. Remote work became a necessity for many employees in 2020. If this is true for your business, remember that not everyone has the same resources at home to work comfortably and effectively. Some employees may have access to work space, while others don't. Some may be navigating the loss of family income, while others aren't. Consider offering remote work stipends — in any amount that you can — to support employee needs like wifi access, setting up a desk space, or obtaining a printer, among other things needed to perform a job from home. In some states, employers are [legally required](#) to reimburse employees for “reasonable” expenses to set up a home workspace and other work-related expenditures. Consult a legal advisor if you're unsure whether such laws apply to you.

Physical Safety

Physical safety is a top priority right now. As you're making accommodations for your workers, remember that the COVID-19 crisis does not impact us all equally. Black and Brown individuals are contracting and dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than their white counterparts, and are more likely to be essential workers who don't have the option to work from home. The pandemic is revealing the depth of the cracks in our society, including the impact of structural racism, which has prevented many Black and Brown workers from accessing and receiving quality healthcare. Black and Brown frontline workers are also facing increased acts of overt racism, undermining their safety in the workplace. These persistent threats to physical safety have compounding effects on employees' emotional and mental health. Below are some things to be aware of as you think through ways to keep your employees safe — especially those who may be feeling this crisis more acutely than others.

Supporting COVID-Weary Employees Working In Person

Everyone is experiencing more stress these days. This is a particularly difficult time for frontline workers facing the fear of contracting or spreading COVID-19 at work and home. To protect your workers, make the following actions a priority:

Adopt safety procedures in the workplace. Understanding how to reopen or continue operating your business safely during the pandemic depends on your business type and where you're located. [This website](#) from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce offers guidance specific to your state and sector. Get support and clarity on requirements for social distancing, cleaning and sanitizing, employee screening, and more. For more specifics on how to keep your workers and customers safe, stay up to date on the [guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

Offer accommodations for high-risk employees. Different employees have different vulnerabilities when it comes to COVID-19. These may be visible or invisible, known or unknown to managers and business owners. Most importantly, keep an open dialogue and work collaboratively with your employees to understand who may be especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and what accommodations might support their safety and wellbeing. This could mean providing additional protective gear, setting up a physical barrier between the employee and customers, or changing schedules to arrive and leave at times that are less busy.

Offer or expand paid sick leave. Essential workers who hold lower wage positions – many of whom identify as Black and Brown – are contracting COVID-19 at higher rates than their white counterparts, and yet are less likely to miss a day of work because they cannot afford it. Implementing paid leave enables staff to get the medical care they need or provide care for a sick loved one and return to work safely without risking loss of income. Businesses across the country have been required to extend sick leave under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(2020\)](#), though many small businesses were exempted. Business owners are encouraged to read up on the law and consult with a legal advisor to see whether the policy applies to them. For more information on how to adopt a paid leave policy, check out the [Paid Leave section](#) of our Good Jobs, Good Business website.

Consider providing telemedicine as part of a healthcare plan. If you can, offer [telemedicine](#) (the opportunity to access medical providers virtually as opposed to in person) in your benefits package. This creates greater access to healthcare for staff who may not otherwise seek medical care. In order for this service to be accessible and equitable, be sure to evaluate the cost to your employees and any [access issues](#) they may have – for instance, limited access to wifi, computers, or smartphones – before offering a telemedicine benefit.

[Supporting Black, Indigenous, And People of Color \(BIPOC\) And LGBTQ+ Employees Who](#)

Experience Harassment

As many as [4 in 10 Black and Asian adults](#) have reported experiencing slurs, jokes, physical harm, verbal slights, and/or people showing obvious discomfort in their presence since the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, these kinds of harassment can occur at any time and be directed at anyone. The uptick in these incidents in recent months places BIPOC workers at greater risk of physical harm. Below are some steps you can take to be prepared and take action.

Make a plan to confront workplace racism – as well as homophobia and transphobia. Being harassed for one's race, ethnicity, gender or any other identity is a reality for many workers, especially in the service industry. There are several ways to protect your staff and your customers when these incidents occur:

Be prepared. Set up a clear policy regarding workplace harassment that includes the treatment of staff by customers and clients (third parties). [Here](#) you can access information on creating a third party harassment policy for your business. Make sure your employees are familiar with your policy, and consider posting a statement about your commitment to maintaining a hostility-free environment in a prominent, public place where customers can see it. This messaging could be as simple as, "We actively foster an environment free of discrimination and harassment. No forms of it will be tolerated."

Prepare your staff. Establish a formal process for handling situations where customers make racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or otherwise offensive remarks to employees. It's a good idea to work with an HR professional if you can. Make sure your employees know the steps involved, including notifying a supervisor or you, as the owner, if they experience harassment. Ensure that you and your staff in leadership roles are prepared to stand by employees who experience harassment.

De-escalate when possible. When you or an employee encounters a customer making offensive remarks, it's important to remember that every situation differs, and you should always use your best judgment in the moment. But there are some steps [recommended by experts on workplace harassment](#) to de-escalate such situations and protect your employees:

- Stay calm. Reacting in a knee-jerk, angry, or fear-fueled way can escalate tensions or provoke further comments. Focus on de-escalating.
- Remove the targeted employee from the situation. Asking another employee to step in can

prevent further harm to the employee experiencing harassment, though be mindful of the identities of the employee and potential impact of engaging another employee

- Say something to the customer or client making offensive comments. Even better: have a go-to response prepared. Familiarize yourself and your staff with this language so that you are prepared to use it in the event that you need to.
- Don't make jokes or try to defuse with humor. Making light of the situation only signals to the harasser that what they've said is acceptable, even humorous. Even worse, it signals to your staff that you don't take such behavior seriously.
- Ask the harasser to leave. If the harasser does not stop the behavior after you or other employees have confronted them, consider asking them to leave. Point to signage (if any) that indicates your policy regarding harassment, and ask the customer or client to leave immediately.
- Document the incident. Write down or instruct staff to write down detailed notes about the event immediately after the incident occurs, including the date and time, what was said by whom, and any intimidating behavior exhibited. These notes may be used should an investigation of the incident be needed.
- Check in with the impacted employee(s). Racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic incidents do not come without damage and trauma to the victim. Check out the mental health and wellbeing resources below to understand ways to support your teams after traumatic experiences.

Mental And Emotional Wellness

In late June 2020, [40 percent of adults](#) in the U.S. reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse. Younger adults, Black and Brown individuals, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers are experiencing mental health challenges from the pandemic at [far greater rates](#) than others. Here are a few resources to help you support both the mental health and emotional wellbeing of your workers as they navigate this difficult time.

Supporting Your Team's Psychological Safety

Your workers are suffering whether you can see it or not, and they need to hear from you. Silence does not work; you must acknowledge, listen, speak, and act. Remember that you will sometimes say the wrong thing, but it's far better to mess up than to stay silent.

Acknowledge that this is an extremely difficult time. Letting your staff know you're aware of how challenging it is to focus on the work at hand during a pandemic can be as simple as one sentence. The acknowledgement is what matters.

Proactively check in with your team. In check-ins and team meetings, ask about team members' wellbeing before you discuss work. Give your staff space to talk openly about the toll the crisis is taking on them with questions like, "Recognizing there's a lot going on right now, what is one word to describe the weather in your head today?" Giving people the option to share how they're feeling, even in simple ways, can help staff feel safe and comfortable talking about their stressors – and in the process, offload some stress.

Encourage job crafting. [Job crafting](#) is a practice where employees shift or alter some of their responsibilities, or take on new ones that they find personally satisfying. For employees who aren't able to work from home, job crafting could involve shifting some of their regular tasks to other staff who have more physical and mental energy to take them on. As a leader, ask yourself if it's possible to temporarily shift duties and responsibilities, being mindful of what each employee is going through. In conversations with your team, consider turning off some work, reassigning work, or encouraging employees to find new projects or tasks that make their jobs more enjoyable. Giving employees this kind of agency has been linked to reducing stress and boosting wellbeing.

Encourage – and model – self-care. Remember, we are all people first. Prioritize taking care of yourself, including finding ways to rest and unplug from work. Ask your staff about what they're doing to take care of their emotional health during this time, and encourage sharing ideas with one another.

Support activism and civic participation. Some of your employees are feeling drained from the political realities that affect their lives. To the extent you can, give people time and space to participate in civic processes, for example volunteering, demonstrating, and/or phone banking for candidates or causes they support.

Create supportive, facilitated discussion spaces. If you can, try to partner with a skilled facilitator who can help you plan and lead discussion sessions with staff as appropriate, including on the interconnected issues of mental health, racial justice, and coping with the pandemic. These kinds of conversations are very important, and require conscious planning and skilled facilitation to be effective.

Develop a formal response to the crises facing the country and your community. Consider your

company's public response to crises carefully. What you present to your staff and to external audiences can go a long way in demonstrating that you stand in solidarity with them, whatever challenges they're facing. Look up what other organizations are doing to demonstrate support for people experiencing the greatest suffering right now. What can you learn from them? Make a plan to follow words with actions and commitments. Your employees and customers will be looking for actions that back up your words.

Review your bereavement leave policies or practices. Most bereavement leave policies were designed in a pre-COVID-19 era. Now, the grief process has shifted. With social distancing, many people are unable to mourn the loss of loved ones together with their families and friends, and some may be experiencing losses in rapid succession. Consider ways to provide more [thorough support and flexibility](#) with time off for bereavement. For example, don't limit bereavement leave to just a few days or to a specific time period after a death – work with employees to determine the appropriate amount of time. Don't define "family" for your employees – let them tell you what family looks like to them, and respect their definition. If you can, work with staff who take leave to develop re-entry plans that allow them to "ease back in" when they are able to return.

Seek extra support for yourself as a leader. Your role as a leader among your staff is more complex and important than ever. Don't take on the work of shepherding people through a crisis alone: work with a group of peers, a consultant, or a professional organization who can help you navigate these challenging times. For more advice on showing up as a leader, see the section on [Leadership Presence & Decision Making](#) below.

Protecting The Wellbeing Of Workers Of Color

In addition to protecting the *physical* safety of workers of color, it's very important that you support their emotional and mental wellbeing.

Challenge offensive behaviors or comments in team settings. Remember that racist, homophobic, transphobic and other kinds of harassing language can be used among coworkers, [and not just between staff and customers](#). Don't let these types of comments slide – even (especially) when they're made as jokes. Without addressing them in the moment, you could normalize such comments and signal to employees of color that you don't care about their wellbeing or sense of safety. When a team member makes an offensive comment, try posing a question in the moment to bring attention to the underlying bias, like "What made you

say that?” or “What did you mean by X?” Focus on asking the question from a place of calm curiosity. This is more likely to invite conversation and avoid defensiveness.

Avoid colorblind communications. Making broad, well-intentioned statements such as “We’re all in this together” or “no matter what we’re all X” can minimize the unique suffering of some communities. Remember that COVID-19 does not impact all of us equally, and the very public instances of racial injustice in recent months have only served to increase the pain endured by BIPOC people. Instead of using sweeping, general statements, use language that acknowledges that this time is difficult for everyone, but calls out the specific challenges for people of color. See an example in this *Harvard Business Review* article from March 2020, “[How U.S. Companies Can Support Employees of Color Through the Pandemic.](#)”

Connect your Black employees with virtual therapy circles. Online group discussions led by professional therapists are available specifically to uplift and support the Black community as they experience racial trauma. Upcoming events are regularly posted [here](#). More tips and resources are available through [Mind Share Partners](#).

Offer culturally informed mental health benefits. [Employee Assistance Programs \(EAPs\)](#) – employer-sponsored programs designed to help employees handle a variety of personal challenges, such as mental health crises and substance abuse – are traditionally underutilized and often not well-suited to the needs of people of color and LGBTQ+ communities. Adding to the stigma that already exists around mental health for many of these groups, it can be challenging for some people who identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ to find reliable professionals with whom they identify. If you offer mental health benefits such as an EAP, work to make sure providers offer flexible and easy scheduling, are representative of the diversity of your workforce, and can provide [culturally-informed mental health services](#).

Make addressing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) challenges a priority. See the sections on [Employee Engagement & Belonging](#) and [Leadership Presence & Decision Making](#) for more tips on improving your DEI practices.

Providing Greater Flexibility

Offering flexibility in scheduling and completing tasks is a way to meet your staff where they are – that is, keeping in mind the challenges they’re facing in their lives right now. When possible, consider adopting [flexible scheduling options](#), especially to support employees managing new

responsibilities like children's schooling, caring for a sick loved one, or treating physical or mental health issues. If you can offer flexibility in work hours, talk to employees caring for children or other relatives about how they can cover their tasks, even if this means working in off-times or during non-business hours. Talk to staff members about covering for other employees with more on their plates. Flexibility could include a compressed work week (working 10 hours in 4 days, for example), reduced work or part-time opportunities, and job crafting or job sharing.

To learn more about flexible scheduling, check out the [Scheduling](#) section on our *Good Jobs, Good Business* website.

Employee Engagement And Belonging

This year has challenged workers in many different ways and many bring those struggles with them when they show up to work. It is easy for team members to feel disconnected because of physical distancing and work-life changes due to the pandemic. Additionally, BIPOC people often feel emotionally isolated due to their colleagues' limited understanding of the impact of systemic inequity in their lives. Strengthening connection and community among your team helps meet the belonging needs of your staff. Studies show that high levels of staff engagement and a sense of belonging [lead to better business outcomes](#).

Foster A Culture Of Inclusivity

Creating a culture where each person feels like they belong in the workplace starts with acknowledging that it is both a difficult time and a time where staying connected will help them persevere. Offer [opportunities for employees to connect with each other and show up with empathy](#) for what they're each going through. Inclusive leadership is a key building block to fostering a work environment where team members can confidently say that they belong. You can promote a culture of inclusivity by demonstrating some of the following traits in your leadership and management of your business:

Commitment: Make diversity and inclusion a priority by actively striving to understand the uniqueness of every employee and treating everyone with fairness and respect. Take personal responsibility for diversity and inclusion initiatives and authentically communicate the value of them to your employees.

Courage: Be humble by acknowledging your personal strengths as well as your weaknesses, asking for help or suggestions when required, and admitting when you have made a mistake in fostering an inclusive workplace. You must also be brave in order to challenge established attitudes in your organization and to hold others accountable for noninclusive behavior.

Awareness of bias: To promote an inclusive workplace, first become aware of and account for your own biases by asking employees for honest feedback, ensuring that decisions about others are not influenced by personal views, and creating a workplace environment that is rooted in merit.

Curiosity: Be willing to have an open mindset and actively listen to the perspectives of your employees, withholding immediate judgment, and engaging in respectful and curious questioning to better understand someone's viewpoint.

Culturally intelligent: Take an active role in understanding the different cultures of your workforce in order to effectively manage cross-cultural interactions.

Collaborative: Work to empower your employees by giving them the freedom to handle difficult situations and make decisions that impact their work, holding them accountable for the performance they can control, and ensuring that everyone is comfortable to speak up and contribute.

You can read more on steps you can take to create an inclusive workplace [here](#).

Build Connection And Trust In An Unconventional Work Environment

Be proactive in understanding what team members are going through and what they need. You can achieve buy-in for your COVID-19 recovery plan by establishing a two-way dialogue and involving employees in its creation. By bringing employees into the conversation on safety measures, retraining, scheduling, and other decisions you are facing, you can harness a greater diversity of ideas and solutions. Work with them as partners in seeing your business through the difficulties you are facing. This is a time to learn from and with your team. This can take the form of check-ins with team members, short "pulse" surveys, and deeper dive surveys on the status of engagement culture in your workplace. Business owners and workplace leaders should create time to check in with every team member.

Three key questions to ask your staff:

- What are your biggest fears right now?
- How are you and your loved ones managing with (insert what you are asking about)?
- How can we show up for you during this time?

Use these questions (among others, as you see fit) to get a sense for your staff's challenges and needs.

Here are a few ways you can ask these questions:

- Use [pulse surveys](#) to quickly get an understanding on what challenges employees are dealing with, how they feel about management's efforts on engagement, their overall confidence in the business, and other immediate feedback they may have for you. They are frequent but short questionnaires used to gather near real-time feedback to inform actions and decisions.
- To begin understanding ways to foster a culture of strong engagement and belonging in the long term, try using anonymous surveys that provide data on the inclusion experience of your team members. These surveys typically ask demographic questions to understand what identity groups are represented on your team, followed by questions to understand the lived workplace experiences of your workforce. A few examples of online surveys can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Continually seek to understand the impact your actions and decisions are having on your team members. Ongoing check-ins and surveys can help. As a leader, you must repeatedly message your willingness for hearing feedback and make sure your actions back that up. This open door approach will provide you with critical information to help you make better decisions and build a stronger business.

You can read more on how to effectively gather and utilize employee feedback and input in times of crisis [here](#).

Decentering White Culture

White culture can manifest in standards and norms that dictate professionalism, hiring and firing practices, employee evaluations, and general day-to-day management. These standards can come in the form of "appropriate" dress codes and hairstyle, speech, accent or tone, and attitudes towards timeliness and work style. As a result, a workplace culture that may seem "normal" or "standard" could be leading to unintentional discrimination. Research shows that

people with non-white sounding names have [more difficulty hearing back from job applications](#), those with non-white or non-American accents have [more difficulty getting a promotion](#), and BIPOC workers face [more monitoring than their white counterparts](#).

Be courageously creative and implement solutions that are responsive to each member of your workplace community, not all. The distinction between 'each' and 'all' is important. Due to the centering of white culture in our history as a country, when we use terms like "all" or "most", we are actually talking about white culture. Shifting your thinking to 'each' calls that we are unique and that uniqueness matters. In the workplace, our uniqueness can be an asset to the business, if our uniqueness is seen, valued, and nurtured. As you consider actions to take to foster an environment of deep engagement and belonging, intentionally seek out how to engage and value 'each' of your team members.

You can read more on steps you can take to decenter whiteness in your business [here](#).

Leadership Presence And Decision Making

Small businesses have faced unprecedented challenges this year with no clear guidance on how to navigate them. You are faced with not only meeting your own needs but also those of your business and your employees. Your decisions have deep impacts, and how to 'meet the moment' is not always clear. Showing up as a leader for your workers right now is not about knowing all the answers, all the time. It is about moving through each day, each decision in conjunction with your staff. It is about collaborative communication and solution-finding, leading to ongoing tweaks to how you do the things you do, in the search of better.

Leadership And Communication

Leaders are looked to for comment during traumatic times, but leaders often struggle with their own response to the events. Give yourself grace as a leader – you too are only human. When you speak to your people, speak honestly about where you are, affirm the awful nature of the challenges we're facing, share how you are trying to cope with it and encourage staff to find healthy ways to process their emotions, and encourage them to ask for help as they navigate how the challenges are manifesting in their lives.

Communicate transparently about different business scenarios you may be considering and

reassure them that you're making decisions with them at the center. Share your priorities with them (for example, "My goal is to keep every staff member on board, even if we have to find more creative work schedules."). Let them know that you will not blind-side them should anything out of your control impact your business – let them know that you will remain open and transparent with them. This [article](#) provides additional practical advice on leading during tough times.

As you share your thoughts, challenges, potential solutions, and business plans with your team, do so in a manner that demonstrates cultural competency. You can also use people-centered language and place the marginalized in the center, this includes Black and Brown people and frontline workers. Here's a good [article](#) on mitigating bias in your communication on COVID-19.

When talking about issues of racial inequity and injustice, focus as much energy (if not more) on systemic barriers to equity and justice. It's easy to focus on the individual levels of discrimination and take comfort in statements of how kind or fair we are. Kindness and fairness at the individual level are not enough. The more dialogue we can have about how inequity operates at institutional and systemic levels, the more chances we have to make changes that are deeply impactful and sustainable. To learn more see this [article](#) for additional guidance and resources.

Reimagining And Rewiring Business Practices

Many small business owners have been pushed to reimagine and rewire their practices as a result of the pandemic. Some of these changes are focused on improving the well-being of staff and have merit beyond the context of COVID-19. In fact, some of these newly implemented ideas can and are leading to more equitable workplace practices. [For example, flexible schedules](#) have helped to accommodate employees who have caregiving responsibilities outside of work to better manage their workload. Diverse and inclusive businesses perform better, both culturally and financially. In implementing some of these practices to face the challenges of COVID-19, consider how they may be embedded in your business long-term and support your goal of an increasingly equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace. Below are a few notes on personnel decision-making practices that may help you with where to start.

Hiring: Recruiting new employees during a pandemic is hard. Equity-oriented hiring can be even harder. The trick to hiring, at any time, is building relationships and a network that are an ongoing source of candidates – so that when you need to hire, you have great options at the

ready. If you're looking for diverse candidates only when you have a job to post, you're unlikely to find them if you don't already have a diverse set of relationships and networks. Additionally, look for opportunities to signal to anyone who comes across your business that you're open to meeting people who might be interested in working with you, and that you're seeking to build a diverse team and an inclusive work environment. Businesses usually do this by putting up signage in stores, or online on their websites or social media pages. One of the easiest things to do is to set up a digital or in-person way to continually gather information on folks who may be interested in learning more about working with you. Ask folks to opt-in to your email communications and keep them updated about your business along with all of your other stakeholders. You've now included them in your relationship network, where they are more likely to notice when you eventually have an open role – and you have a list of folks to alert who have already indicated interest in your business. Recruitment and sourcing doesn't happen once you have an open role, it should always be happening. A few tips on job descriptions, interviews, and more:

- Clearly state your must-haves on the job description – these should be based on the actual thing(s) you need someone to do. For example, listing a college degree as a requirement for a role that may not necessitate it can act as a barrier for candidates who are otherwise qualified. Clarify what is required for the duties of the role vs. what is a nice-to-have.
- Have clear decision-making criteria in advance of your hiring process. Once you know what the required duties are, make sure your decision-making criteria is based on those requirements and write them down in advance of interviewing candidates. Use this criteria in making your decisions.
- Approach interviews as a mutual dialogue to determine if both sides want to enter into this working relationship. To do this, communicate your must haves, hiring process, and timelines, etc. to your candidates upfront and on an ongoing basis. In addition, offer them the opportunity to share what they need to present their best selves and what they need to make a decision at the end of the recruiting process. Let them know that if your plans are disrupted in any way – particularly in this uncertain terrain, they will be updated with the latest information you are able to provide. Understand that every candidate may not be a hire today, but they could very well be the perfect hire for you at a future date. Build relationships through this process and consider everyone you encounter as being a part of your network moving forward. Include them in any stakeholder communication routines you have, i.e. newsletters.
- To manage interviewing during COVID-19, your starting point should be the belief that everyone is immunocompromised, so plan your interviews accordingly. Whether you're

using technology or interviewing in person, apply and communicate every possible COVID-conscious practice clearly.

For a new approach on finding people for your business – read this [article](#).

Assignments: Many businesses have greater diversity among their frontline workers and less among management or at the leadership levels. Small businesses must remain aware, as much as larger businesses, of this disparity. Many marginalized groups do not even get the opportunity to demonstrate their growth as employees in meaningful ways, so their opportunities for promotion or advancement are limited. As a business owner, use this time of flux to be intentional about how opportunities are distributed. Be sure that everyone is being professionally nurtured and has equitable opportunities to demonstrate growth, including the ability to step into a manager or leadership role. Here's a [tool](#) you can use to ensure that Black and Brown groups are getting a fair shot at opportunities that allow for personal and professional advancement.

Managing Performance: Much has been written about implicit bias in the workplace – the merit and failures of training on bias is a debate that is alive and well. The shortcoming of bias training is that most of the work stops at individual examination of bias. We need to take a broader look at how bias is reinforced by policies, practices, and our very businesses. One of the areas where bias runs amuck is in managing performance. Here, the role that individual and institutional bias can play is huge. You must continually examine and address bias at both levels to be effective.

At bare minimum, provide ongoing coaching to your team on ways to improve as well as celebrate their accomplishments.

- Establish a practice of [discussing performance](#) regularly (this can be quarterly, semi-annually, etc. – find a rhythm that works for your business). These should be conversations, a 2-way dialogue on what's working well and not working well for both the employee and the manager. This conversation should always include the career growth and advancement goals of the employee; and the manager should share any insight on the strengths and the potential you see in your employee. Finally, this conversation should end with creating alignment on employee goals and establishing an ongoing practice to update them as needed. The key to successful human relationships is communication; your workplace relationships are no different. You should be consistently coaching and having these conversations with your team members.
- If you don't have clear practices on how you determine that someone is doing a good job,

create these standards and gather input to arrive at your final version. Make sure the criteria you set for doing a job well is not biased in ways that will set up a particular profile of an employee to succeed. An example of this kind of bias is the introvert vs. extrovert tendencies. If you set a criteria with, for example, 4 main elements, and each of those elements are typically found in an extroverted person, you have already built in a bias into your process that makes it difficult for an introverted person to “do a good job.” For additional tools on mitigating bias in managing performance, and in other parts of your business, read more [here](#).

Decision Making Framework

As a business owner, you should make decisions based on as much information and insight as you can get. So, get curious about how a particular decision – whatever it may be – will potentially impact each person in your workplace.

Take stock of the diverse communities you currently have in your workplace, as well as those you hope to have as part of your future team. Here are a few aspects of identity to consider: Race & Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Ability, Immigration Status, Religious/Faith Practice Affiliations, Age, Language, Family/ Caregiver Status, Access to Resources (i.e. technology), Education, and Geographic Location and Neighborhoods. Some pandemic-specific identity or community groups to consider are: Frontline Workers, Immunocompromised Individuals, and Caregivers. Be mindful that most people belong to various and intersecting communities that are underrepresented and marginalized.

Strive to have a collaborative decision-making process when making deep changes to your business. This does not mean that everyone gets a vote or makes the call, but it does mean that everyone has a say – an opportunity to inform the decision. It also means that the way you proceed can be set up to provide equitable opportunities for different community and identity-group members to succeed.

Here are a set of core questions to ask when making decisions:

- To what extent, are [x_] community voices and perspectives represented in the decision making process? Another way to think about this is “What are the dominant perspectives informing this decision?”
- To what extent, have [x_] community voices and perspectives been consulted in the decision making process?

- To what extent, are [x] community members equipped for success as a result of the decision you take? Another way to think about this is “What barriers might prevent [x] community members from success in the context of the decision you take?”

If you find that the answer is generally positive for any of these questions, consider if some groups have been represented, consulted, or equipped more than others and explore opportunities to address that disparity. Ultimately, you’re asking these questions to understand this larger question: How will [x] community members be positively or negatively impacted as a result of the decision you take?

Don’t shy away from asking your team members to help you answer these questions. With these answers in hand, you will have a deeper understanding of the impact your decision will have, allowing you to make a final decision in alignment with your values and commitments as an equitable, diverse, and inclusive business.

Pacific Community Ventures is grateful to have partnered with Amanda Gulino (she/her/hers) of [A Better Monday](#) and Olanike Ayomide-Mensah (she/her/hers) of [Mosaic Consulting](#) to develop this page.