Business continuity during work-from-home: Lessons from WashREIT

Can your company maintain continuity and stay productive with all your people working from home? That’s the question facing organizations worldwide during the COVID-19 outbreak. As public health data and resulting policies shift daily, companies need to make sure their entire workforce is consistently up to speed and mobilized to keep their business running efficiently. That requires leadership to be at its best despite being in a fully digital environment, and employees to feel supported throughout the uncertainty.

WASHREIT MAKES IT HAPPEN WITH SOCIALCHORUS

Publicly-traded commercial and residential real estate trust WashREIT was facing many of these challenges. The company moved 100% of its office workers to work-from-home, but still needed them to fully support the field agents at the heart of their business. Following their business continuity plan and using the SocialChorus platform, company leaders have moved quickly to align workers with new policies, provide effective virtual leadership, and prioritize employee wellbeing.
How the company informs employees in real time

WashREIT uses SocialChorus’ push notifications to send employees real-time alerts of the latest COVID-19 policy changes. The platform’s intelligent automation identifies which employees clicked the notification, and sends follow-up emails to those who didn’t, ensuring that every member of the workforce gets the message.

The company also created a crisis response taskforce that provides a consistent source of truth for employees. This cross-functional group is responsible for gathering the latest situational data, updating policies and informing employees how the latest developments could affect them.

To measure the response to taskforce initiatives, WashREIT uses the new COVID-19 dashboard available to all SocialChorus customers. By tagging communications related to each initiative, the company can track how employees respond to new work-from-home policies, wellness support, safety procedures and similar efforts.

“With SocialChorus, we’re able to send push notifications directly to employees’ phones, and, if they don’t engage with mobile, they’re also sent an email. So they’re still getting reached everywhere. And we can really measure it—that’s important to us.”

DEANNA SCHMIDT
Sr. Director of Marketing and Communications | WashREIT
How the C-Suite leads in a virtual environment

As the impact of COVID-19 grew, WashREIT executives recognized that, to lead employees in a work-from-home environment, they would need to communicate with them more frequently and consistently than ever before. Working with the communications team, they launched a plan to create weekly videos from the CEO that would live stream directly to the workforce.

These live videos enable the chief executive to speak to workers in an authentic, unfiltered way that helps him build trust in this uncertain time. Questions and content are sourced from employee surveys, allowing him to address employee concerns directly.

WashREIT uses Analyze, the SocialChorus analytics suite, to help executives gain insight into which employees they’re reaching, gauge reaction to their content, and optimize it going forward. Additionally, they can use it to help determine how the workforce is responding to initiatives discussed in the content.

“Now, with the new Analyze dashboards, we’re able to create initiative tags, such as Coronavirus, for informational communications, another tag for culture and morale, another for IT—so we’re taking advantage of that to see which groups are engaged and which content do we need to re-target.”

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Sr. Director of Marketing and Communications | WashREIT
How WashREIT supports workers in uncertain times

In crisis situations, it’s critical for workers to have the information they need. WashREIT uses the targeting capabilities of their SocialChorus platform to get the right information to the right employees at the right time. For example, the company has created a dedicated content stream to help managers better engage their teams remotely and give them tips to improve employee morale.

The company is also sending out weekly surveys—giving employees an easy avenue to ask questions about COVID-19, new company policies, or any other concerns they may have. In addition, crisis response team members have made their direct emails available so employees can reach out to them one-on-one for guidance.

WashREIT communications campaigns support wellness and use humor to boost employee morale.

As global uncertainty grows, WashREIT continues to make the physical and mental health of employees a priority. Zoom workout sessions give workers a chance to bond as they stay fit, while a partnership with the Calm meditation app helps employees manage stress. The communications team has also run several morale-boosting campaigns to maintain company culture and deliver much-needed levity.
Making the real estate business work while working remotely

WashREIT’s communications efforts have built trust in leadership and enhanced employee camaraderie in a work-from-home environment where that can be a challenge. Most importantly, they’ve helped the company quickly pivot in a time of uncertainty to mobilize their workforce, maintain productivity and keep their business running as it should.

“Leadership can really see the need for real-time communications now more than ever.”

DEANNA SCHMIDT
Sr. Director of Marketing and Communications | WashREIT

Learn how SocialChorus can help your company maintain business continuity during COVID-19 and beyond. Visit our crisis communications resource center for more helpful guidance or contact us for a free demo.