

In this unprecedented and uncertain time, many leaders and managers are wondering what they can do to help the people in their charge. To a certain extent, this will depend on the situation.

Some leaders are still working with their people in person, either because they are in a location where businesses are still open, or because they work in one of those industries that are critical and must continue to function during this time. For leaders like me in northern California, I cannot even be in the same room with my people as we are limited to staying in our homes with our families. In the course of the next few days, I would guess that most cities and states will shut down like we've done here, leaving people to interact only virtually with their team members.

Regardless of your situation, I offer these three simple recommendations...

First, be exceedingly human. By that, I mean that you should demonstrate your concern for the very real fears and anxieties that your people are experiencing, not only professionally and economically, but socially and personally. Even though you don't have definitive answers to all of their questions, don't let that keep you from listening to them and empathizing with their fears. And, contrary to conventional wisdom, you should not be hesitant to share your own concerns with your people. They want to know that they can relate to you and that they are not alone in their concerns.

Second, be persistent. This is not a time to hold back. Send people updates and regular communication, even if there is not a lot of new information and the message is largely personal. No one will look back at this time and say, "my manager was so annoying with all the encouraging e-mails checking in on me." When people are isolated, over-communication is more important than ever.

Finally, be creative. Try new things. Call semi-regular video-conference meetings that allow employees to not only talk about work, but to share their experiences dealing with this situation. Heck, you can have them share movies and games and other tools that they are finding to be helpful with their families and invite them to tell stories about what is going on in their worlds. Crises provide an opportunity for people to come to know one another and establish

bonds that will endure long after the crisis is over.

What you should avoid is seeming cold or impersonal in the name of “business as usual,” or being absent or inconsistent in the name of “giving people space,” or being afraid to try something new. These unprecedented times call for you to stretch beyond your normal comfort zones and be even more vulnerable than usual. Six months from now, you’ll look back and be glad you did. Hang in there.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Pat Lencioni". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.