

WCI Technology Times

Special Edition: Disease Outbreak & Your Business

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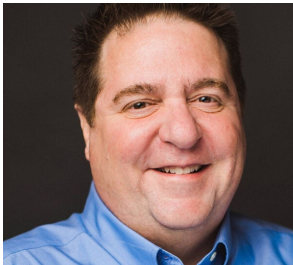
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Founder & CEO



Our Mission:
Technology systems that anchor your business and protect what you have built, from a company inspired to make the world better.



Can Your Business Survive A Quarantine?

Zoë Wright | March 13, 2020

With growing concerns surrounding the Corona Virus, we thought it was time that we addressed the fear surrounding disease outbreaks, and what those could mean for you and your business. Though this virus has now reached us here in Ohio, we know that the Corona Virus isn't the only outbreak we'll ever experience. In fact, according to the CDC, there is at least one disease outbreak every year that has the potential of becoming a global pandemic.

Far from wanting to frighten anyone, we simply want to take the opportunity to share some need-to-know information and helpful tips while this important topic is at the front of everyone's minds - and, with any hope, still a low threat. These will be useful no matter what season, or what disease is roaming about in the world.

Let's imagine for a moment that the Corona Virus impacts you in same way tomorrow (throw some salt over your shoulder so it doesn't). While an official quarantine of the state, or even your city, is highly unlikely, it's very possible that you may want to quarantine yourself. Maybe you've come into contact with a potential carrier, or maybe you're just like us and catch people's germs easily. Whatever the reason, you decide the best course of action for you, your business, and your family, is to operate from a decentralized office for the time being (a decision we thoroughly agree with - have we mentioned that we're germaphobes?)

But, can your business actually handle this quarantine? There's a lot more that goes into preparing your business for a decentralized office than you may think. Not only is there a concern about making sure your employees have the proper

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training and structures in place in order for them to know what they're doing from their location, there's also a concern about making sure that they have the right equipment and security in place to make their home location as efficient as when they're in the main office.

You may be reading this and thinking "Yes, I already know this," but ask yourself - are your phones capable of being programmed for decentralized operations? Are the computers and programs you need to use on a daily basis - including reliable Internet services - accessible to your employees, up to date, and secure when they're not working from the main office? Does your business *really* have what it needs in place to maintain efficient business practices, even when no one is coming into the same office?

These are major concerns that nearly every company is dealing with today, and not just because of disease outbreaks.

"The reality is that decentralized offices are growing in popularity, and are proving their effectiveness"

The reality is that decentralized offices are growing in popularity, and are proving their effectiveness, even without germs serving as motivators. In a 2017 Tedx Talk with Stanford Professor Nicholas Bloom, the results of a remarkable two-year study with China's largest travel company, Ctrip, were revealed, showing a substantial increase in employee productivity, as well as a 50% decrease in employee attrition among those offered the ability to work from home. Furthermore, for every employee out of the company's 16,000 that took the opportunity offered to them, the company saved nearly \$2,000. That's an enormous savings!

Operating from a decentralized office has incredible potential, as you can see, and not just because it keeps us away from other people's germs. We've been fortunate at WCI to work with some clients who are already moving in this decentralized direction, and because it's become so desired among company leaders, the features needed to make sure you and your employees are able to work effectively from remote locations come standard with our Ultimate Care Service.

Even if Corona Virus doesn't show up on our doorsteps tomorrow, we know the health of both your business and your employees is a main concern for you, which is why we're here to help if you decide to enable decentralized offices. Nothing is more important to us than making sure your business has everything it needs to thrive, in every condition.

Beware! Hackers & Scammers are Using Corona Virus to Trick People

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has issued a warning about a worldwide scam in progress relating to fears surrounding the Corona Virus. Their announcement reads, in part:



"Scammers are taking advantage of fears surrounding the Corona Virus. They're setting up websites to sell bogus products, and using fake emails, texts and social media posts as a ruse to take your money and get your personal information. The emails and posts may be promoting awareness and prevention tips, and fake information about cases in your neighborhood. They also may be asking you to donate to victims, offering advice on unproven treatments, or contain malicious email attachments."

Even worse, it appears that there are multiple campaigns like this, running in tandem. The standard precautions apply here. Unless you know and trust the sender of a communication, even if it's about something scary and important like the Corona Virus, don't click on links or open attachments. You never know where it might take you or what type of malware might end up on your system. Better safe than sorry, and you can always get Corona Virus information from official sources.

Information Provided By
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March 5, 2020

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5 Tips for Maintaining a Clean Work Environment

Zoë Wright | March 13, 2020

Regardless of whether or not you work from a centralized or decentralized office, maintaining a clean work space is crucial to keeping your business healthy - literally. Not only does a clean work environment help keep you and your employees physically healthy, it also increases productivity, according to Princeton University Neuroscience Institute. Many of us already understand the value of a clean work environment, though, it's the part about *how* to keep a clean work space that trips us up. So, here are 5 tips to help you maintain that clean and productive office of your dreams.

1. Clean your tech gear regularly.

Did you know that the two items you most likely touch more than anything else during your work day - your keyboard and your mouse - can have as many as 6x more germs on them than a toilet seat? Yeah, we were pretty disgusted, too. This is why it's so important for everyone in the office to clean their tech gear regularly. We have an in-depth how-to article posted on our website blog if you're at a loss as to how to do this. But, take our advice and clean more than just your keyboard and mouse, too. Think of all the things you touch while at your desk - your cell phone and or landline, lights, writing utensils, tablets, chargers - you name it! Give all those items a much-needed clean. We suggest cleaning your gear at the end of each work week, at minimum.

2. Keep your personal desk and work area ultra-clean

Okay, maybe not "ultra" clean - we're all human, right? But, by setting the example for your office staff by always having a clean desk and work area, you're subconsciously encouraging them to do the same. This will lead to a cleaner office space overall, which everyone will benefit from. Furthermore, pay mind to not only declutter your desk and office space (which is very important for your own mental health), but to also actually clean your space, especially when your staff can see you doing so. Having a clutter-free zone is great for anxiety-free work, but germs can still accumulate on all those surfaces. So, whip out those cleaning supplies and have yourself a cleaning party! And if someone in your office is truly a messy worker, maybe consider prompting them with a gift of some disinfectant wipes. It's worth a shot, right?



3. Avoid eating at your desk

Hey, we get it, we're guilty of it, too. In fact, one of our workers has a desk drawer full of snacks (it's me). And, honestly, sometimes you just feel like you have to eat at your desk because the day is so hectic. But, the more you eat at your desk, the more crumbs and germs will accumulate there. Whenever possible, avoid eating at your desk, and prompt your staff to do the same by encouraging them to get some fresh air and change in scenery when they eat. It's honestly just healthier for our brains to do this, anyways. And on those days where it just can't be avoided, always make sure to clean up after yourself and disinfect your desk and equipment afterwards.

4. Get everyone some hand sanitizer

Anti-bacterial liquid is your friend, and not that I spend my work time shopping or anything, but a certain fragrant store always has little bottles on sale in all sorts of scents. Why not be everyone's favorite boss and buy everyone in the office some? Just remember, hand sanitizer is great for all those in-between times (or when you don't want to be rude to the person you just shook hands with), but it doesn't replace actually washing your hands. Visit the CDC's website for a refresher on how to properly do this, and when if you're not sure.

5. Hire a professional cleaning company

Not every business is able, or even wants, to do this, but it's always a good idea to bring in someone who really knows what they're doing, whenever possible. Even if it's just a few times a year, it may be worth it. And if it's just not possible, do everything possible to encourage your staff to take pride in their work space by cleaning up after themselves and each other. It's not fun, and no one likes doing it, but it's part of being a team.

7 Technology Considerations for Your Business: Coronavirus and IT Impact

Zoë Wright | March 13, 2020

We realize that the IT impact that COVID-19 brings may not be the first thing that's on your mind at the moment, but it is still important to consider. Because of this, we've put together some things you may want to think about, from a technology perspective, in regards to this epidemic.

1. Potential Risk Scenarios Businesses Should Consider

- Protecting staff members from infection through transmission in the office
- Need for employees to work from home to prevent the spread
- Quarantine restrictions imposed by authorities
- Quarantine for employees travelling from regions at risk
- Quarantine for employees who have household members who are or may be ill
- School closures that force employees to stay home for child care
- Employees unwilling to take the risk of coming in to the office

2. Common Virus-Spreading Areas

- Shared computers and work spaces
- Keyboards and mice, even if they are not shared
- Keypads for doors and shared office equipment like phones, printers, copiers, scanners, etc.
- Doorknobs and common space hard surfaces, such as counter tops, cabinets, desk tops and tables

You can keep these areas clean and at a lower potential for spreading germs by limiting the use of shared equipment and spaces as much as possible, and by ensuring surfaces are cleaned with anti-bacterial, bleach-free wipes and cleaners often.

3. Business Continuity

- Review your business continuity plan and make necessary updates
- Communicate this plan with staff members
- Plan for a 2+ week closure, which would hopefully be the worst-case scenario
- Ensure that all contact information, including email, cell phone and home phone numbers, for both staff and clients is up to date in case something needs to be urgently communicated from home

4. Decentralized Operations

- Review who has the ability to work remotely, and who may already be doing so
- Ensure that every staff member that needs it, has remote access, should your central office need to close for 2+ weeks
- Ensure that critical business functions can be performed remotely in the event that key employees are unable to access the office
- If you currently have employees who work remotely only occasionally, make sure they test their connectivity from their location within the next few days
- If your employees don't have the necessary equipment needed to work from home, now is the time to consider company-issued gear
- Ensure all staff members are continuing to follow security and safety protocols while working remotely

5. Phone Systems

- Make sure that phone systems can be forwarded to cellular phones, that this has been tested, and that your employees know how to set this up
- If you have a VoIP system, you should be able to allow access to phones on your employees' laptop computers. Make sure you set this up and test it ahead of time
- Make sure that your employees have access to headsets to access the VoIP phone systems on their laptops and computers

6. Collaboration & Remote Meetings

- Verify that any web conferencing tools that you may use are capable of handling your entire team, if needed
- If you use Microsoft Office 365, you can leverage Microsoft Teams as a platform for collaboration and communication

7. Supply Chain Disruptions With Electronic Equipment

- Supply lines with China are being disrupted, and we are already seeing shortages on technology items, including laptops, monitors, and desktop computers. If you're planning any critical technology purchases in 2020, you may consider expediting them

Information provided by Vince Fung of Debian Information Technology, an award-winning Canadian MSP.