May 7, 2020

COVID 19 Discussion: Director RoundTable

**IRI Guidelines**

 1) Take ideas back to your organization 2) Competitors on call but IRI is in compliance with all anti-trust laws, 3) Summary will be sent out in addition to attendee list.

**Call Summary**

**Question 1: Gut check - What are you focused on right now?**

* Return to office with a strong focus on the physical space, considering working in shifts, examining ways to return to the physical space safely and effectively.
* One participant stated that they are running a “stage zero” set up as their company had no people in the office or labs at all throughout the pandemic. They are focusing heavily on cleaning guidelines and whether new cleaning protocols will actually damage their product line in any capacity.
* Re-entry conversations taking place for all attendees. One company has decided to develop a more general policy for the 20 plus sites in North America. This was necessary as each state has a different policy and is uncertain about what guidelines to follow. They decided to follow set guidelines from the state that is being the most conservative and cautious and implement those guidelines for all 20 sites.
* Shift staggering is a universal best practice, a dedicated swat team, project prioritizing, and looking to labs in Asia for what to emulate are all practices that are effective and taking place across all companies. Participants agree that leadership is in no rush to bring all employees back any time soon. An identified issue includes people who have been working on site throughout the pandemic being nervous about the influx of new people.
* Office reconfiguration is taking place at most companies. Examples include re-shifting offices, removing middle rows, one-way stair cases, elevators taking people up one at a time.

**Mask Policies:**

* Participants agree that masks are mandatory when interacting with others in the office setting. Whether a mask is necessary when sitting in an office is debatable and policies will be developed as more people begin to return to the office.
* Mask material is being investigated as people report overheating and discomfort with cloth masks and cloth masks are hazardous in the event of a chemical splash. Reusable plastic masks may be safer in the event of a chemical splash as the mishap can be detected much quicker. One participant stated that masks printed on 3D printers are effective for employees working with hazardous materials. Other options include using disposable masks in manufacturing and cloth masks when at desks.
* The heat issue is further compounded by goggles and eye shields getting fogged up while working. Companies are trying to offset this by using anti-fog treatment. A participant stated that there are always secondary effects of all the social distancing and safety practices that we are all putting into place.
	+ One attendee recommended an anti-fogging product: Bausch and Lomb – Sight Savers with Silicone.
* Many companies have implemented temperature checks.
* A suggestion was made about new filtration materials that assist with cleaning and the comfort of the new required equipment (contact Tom Culver, RTI, tculver@rti.org for more information). Another suggestion was made to use wipes and baby shampoo to offset the fogging. Anti-glare rolls are also available for face shields and glasses. Another suggestion was made to order bandanas and neck gaiters.

**2) Future scenario options, what comes next and accelerating innovation in response to a pandemic?**

* Participants agree that priority programs are running and that many training programs have been put in place to keep people working at home engaged around data science, modeling, innovation, and simulation.
* A particular company is focusing on market driven innovation, protection of surfaces, market pulse, what can you give back, travel vs. budget, anticipated travel in coming months? Companies are in agreement that travel will be reduced and that reduction is being factored into budgetary concerns now.
* Critical work, laboratory work, and testing are all prioritized and that will continue.

**3) Morale and Team Building- how are your companies working on this?**

* Concerns raised about morale and team building now that everything is happening virtually.
* Virtual happy hours, coffee hour, getting teams together and using the video camera is encouraged. Discussion of non-work related items is encouraged as well.
* More global discussions are taking place about purpose, checking in with people and what they like about work, and what is hard for them. This is a nice break for people as it is an alternative to work/task discussions. Scenario analysis suggested that looks at the future and what implications are for clients and encouraging clients to do the same thing.
* One company is revamping the physical plant in a fun and creative way so that employees may have something fun and different to come back to. Ideas include painting walls, swapping water fountains with fill stations and allowing for casual summer attire (jeans).
* Combat pay has not occurred but one particular company has allowed employees to take certain office supplies (such as docking stations and headsets) in setting up their home offices.

**4) Helping Hands:**

* Checking in every single day for a team meeting for 15/30 minutes
* Sharing good news stories has been shown to raise spirits.