

REPORT BRIEF

Leadership Perspectives: Leading and Looking Ahead Through COVID-19

*The full e-book features 30 profiles and interviews with communication executives about the impact of COVID-19; the increased importance of internal communication; return to work; future of business and the industry; diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; impact of Black Lives Matter protests; and corporate purpose. **This brief focuses on one specific theme in the ebook.***

Theme: COVID-19 Response

Key Findings of How Organizations Responded to COVID-19:

- Organizations recognize the importance of the communication function, as teams have been leading many COVID-19 initiatives.
- Organizations had to ramp up communication about company changes, benefits, and support offerings to employees (both current and furloughed) and suppliers during COVID-19. Communication executives offered a plethora of virtual connection opportunities to keep employees engaged.
- Connecting and collaborating with other functions was a top priority.
- Communication leaders relied on primary data, as well as guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Employees expected frequent, proactive, and transparent communication from organization leaders.
- Leaders said being flexible was key to communication success as was the ability to respond and pivot quickly.

“In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, few marketing priorities have proven they will remain as vital an asset as communications. From reporting accurate, global health information to supporting the maintenance of business continuity to adequately announcing new work-from-home (WFH), furlough and layoff policies, communications roles and priorities have played a vital role for clients and corporations over the past few months of upending change.”

-Barbara Bates, Global CEO, Hotwire

“At Novelis, our communications efforts have been aimed at helping ensure employee safety and business continuity. To that end, we have significantly increased our communications with employees, customers and suppliers, establishing and maintaining new and innovative channels to keep stakeholders informed about the company’s actions and operations during this evolving pandemic. A majority of our actions – specifically around safety – have been informed by global government agencies and health authorities.

We have made every effort to keep our people employed – we believe that is the best way we can keep our families and communities safe. Novelis has also made targeted charitable contributions, as well as PPE, to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in our local communities and to provide aid to those who have been adversely impacted. These donations include in-kind and financial support to local hospitals, food banks, community health organizations, and school systems around the world. Communications has been instrumental in this work (CSR is a part of our function) and has made – and will continue to make – these types of recommendations moving forward.

We activated our Global Crisis Team to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach across all Novelis regions and facilities to effectively respond to the evolving COVID-19 situation. The Team includes our CEO, CFO, Regional Presidents, Global Security, Environmental Health & Safety, Legal and Communications personnel. This group has been meeting three times per week and will continue to meet for the foreseeable future.

Like many companies, we have become very familiar and increasingly facile with virtual meeting technology solutions – you name the technology, we’re probably using it.”

-Matt Bianco, Head of Corporate Public Affairs, Novelis, Inc.

“Macy’s is dedicated to keeping our colleagues, customers and communities informed, from the policies in place to keep them safe as our stores reopen, to ensuring our colleagues have the resources and information necessary for their wellbeing. As we have furloughed team members across the country, we have worked to keep these valued colleagues updated on the business, but also in the loop on key initiatives that impact them, such as benefits open enrollment and the company’s support of equality in the face of national civil unrest.

Some challenges we have encountered are around keeping our furloughed colleagues engaged. We are also working through the challenges of keeping up with the speed of change and having fewer team members to get the job done.

We continue to look to government agencies, such as the Center of Disease Control (CDC) for accurate and up-to-date information related to COVID-19.

The safety and wellbeing of our colleagues, customers and communities is a top priority. Communications has been closely partnered on all efforts to ensure we are doing what is best for our colleagues and the communities we serve. We've implemented safety and wellness practices in our stores, call centers and distribution facilities, including hand sanitizers, temperature checks and plexiglass partitions. We've also addressed the emotional toll the pandemic has had on our colleagues, encouraging those eligible to utilize personal time off, practice work life balance and seek support through our Employee Assistance Program, which provides resources and counseling at no additional cost to our colleagues.

Collectively, we are all in the trenches, and our C-suite leaders are together with us on the front lines to help make decisions and drive change.

We've leveraged existing technology and our intranet sites to reach our colleagues, as well as email and text message when appropriate. We've also embraced virtual platforms to bring our teams together, including Microsoft Teams for webcasts and collaborative meetings. While sheltering-in-place has kept our teams separated, our communications efforts are allowing us to stay closer than ever before."

-Jill Carapellotti, Group Vice President, Global Communications, Macy's Inc.

"We've got a range of communications workstreams across the board so there's really not one aspect of COVID where we are not involved. We've also had a different set of workstreams around employee communications because in our operations and in our sales force, we've had thousands of people that are continuing to go to work every day in the middle of COVID because people still need medical devices, such as pacemakers and stents. We've had a big segment of our workforce who have been going to work every day so we've had to communicate security, safety and health measures so they can continue to work.

We've also had to reconfigure our manufacturing operations for social distancing while moving other employees to remote work. We've also had to account for a range of external communications regarding ventilators as we are one of four of the largest ventilator manufacturers in the world. To expedite the production of ventilators, we did an open source initiative where we put our engineering plans online for a particular model and had over 200,000 registrations for that information globally. That's resulted in a whole host of external communications.

But, I'd say probably 75% of our work is focused around employee communications, 20% around ventilators, and the rest has been communicating the impact on the business, which has been dramatic. Our CEO does a weekly video on our intranet. He's been doing a weekly COVID update, which has been incredibly popular. We did a live town hall last week, our first quarterly town hall, and we had 22,000 people attend online. We've just been producing story after story

on COVID, the impacts on the business, what our business is doing, human interest stories and what we're doing from a philanthropic standpoint.”

-Rob Clark, Chief Communications Officer, Medtronic

“Surprisingly in Hong Kong, we haven't been affected as much by COVID-19 as many other parts of the world. Business is certainly down, but we’ve taken on new business and placed people during this period, and they've joined their respective organizations, even going into the office because we haven't ever been in full-blown lockdown. But, inevitably, in a lot of markets the onboarding process will be impacted and delayed.”

-Sarah Crawshaw, Managing Director, Asia Pacific, Taylor Bennett Heyman

“Transparency and accountability are two of our core values and that is how we’ve centered our communications approach during the crisis. Even during a disruptive time, we are value focused, which makes it more business as usual from a communications standpoint than disruptive. Sure, some of the mechanisms and cadence may change, but the alignment to these values does not change.

For us, we don’t have a scorecard on “what has gone well” or “what has been challenging” because we are always transparent with and accountable to our internal and external stakeholders. Although our intention hasn’t changed, where we have focused and learned is with cadence and message clarity since this is a different situation and there is a greater demand for information and guidance. Some of what we learned will be considered as we move into our return to office/field communications.

As for COVID-specific sources, we rely on the CDC, WHO, as well as state departments of health and country-specific health authorities for up-to-date information and guidance. With a large sales force, we are relying heavily on state level guidance to determine a safe reentry into the field.

The overall employee response was a massive coordination between internal comms and human resources – not just on the rollout of the COVID-specific benefits, but also on all of the overall messaging used to answer pressing employee questions and develop surveys to test how employees are feeling. The communications function helped to make sure employees feel supported and know they are in safe, good hands.

Overall, our internal communications played an integral role, in partnership with our human resources organization, in the messaging and as well as guiding people toward the current benefits that exist.

From a pure tactical, HR benefits standpoint, we instituted a COVID-19 Leave Policy, which offers two weeks paid leave for recovery for an employee or his or her family member; 12 weeks of paid leave for severe COVID-19 cases for an employee or family member; policy also offers 12 weeks of paid leave for our medical professionals to volunteer or be called upon for their services. In addition, our existing wellness benefits include MD Live, a service for

employees feeling ill to virtually connect with a physician; an Employee Assistance Program which provides professional support and guidance on a range of topics related to family, work, money and health; and Headspace, an app that each employee has a membership to, offering meditations and sleep aids, which all proved and continue to be particularly useful during the pandemic.

Additionally, the internal communications function developed a COVID-19 specific intranet page, which served as the “source of truth” for Horizon-focused support and information along with feature articles on how to work remotely, and stay healthy, connected and engaged. For parents, we created a distinct community on our intranet that included helpful resources and activities to do with kids.

We have been very deliberate with C-suite communication, particularly with our CEO, from a cadence and message standpoint. Typically, we have CEO-led, quarterly all-employee meetings supplemented with e-mail milestone-driven e-mail communication. In addition, our human resources colleagues historically hold monthly leader calls. During the COVID-19 crisis, we adjusted the cadence for the CEO all-employee meetings and e-mail communications to bi-monthly so that employees were hearing from him every week. The leader calls moved to once-weekly so that company leaders were hearing from other C-suite executives and the human resources team with increased frequency.

The CEO-led, all-employee meetings have been surprisingly successful and well attended. We have consistently had 98+ percent of our employee base attend. The key learning for the communications team has been the structure of the meeting itself – focus the meeting on only Q&A and less on prepared remarks/updates. We quickly found that employees want to be informed, feel secure and trust leadership. Our CEO would spend the majority of the calls answering 50-60 questions from employees. As a result, he created a space where employees wanted to participate and be transparent about how they were feeling. We have always had an open and transparent dialogue during our all-employee meetings, but spending a significant amount of time answering employee questions is something we will likely implement moving forward.

There isn’t anything that is hindering our ability to respond. Internally, we have relied heavily on our intranet, e-mail, video and virtual meetings (Cisco). Externally, we have relied primarily on our owned social channels.”

-Geoff Curtis, Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Chief Communications Officer, Horizon Therapeutics

“The Stagwell Group has been very proactive throughout the crises – to assist our clients and the business community overall. Among the added activities we put in place:

- The Harris Poll’s COVID-19 Tracker: As a public service, the team at The Harris Poll curated key insights to help leaders navigate COVID-19 by going in the

field on a weekly cadence to poll American consumer sentiments across various topics.

- Stagwell's Back to the Future Webinars: A weekly webinar series to facilitate conversations with industry leaders about the New Future of the industries, platforms and people with whom we work.
- Repurpose for Purpose: Program created in conjunction with Trade X Partners to help businesses affected by COVID-related event cancellations by up-cycling unused corporate assets for other goods and services companies need to operate their businesses.

Internally, we accelerated all communications and offered our team members extra time off, meditation and personal and team support.

Stagwell has more than 3,000 employees operating in more than 25 offices around the world. All have been working from home. The key has been to keep everyone connected, creative and client-focused. We have relied on direct contact with our team members – from town halls to daily check-ins. We also have made clear that our business has invaded our employees' homes – and not the other way around. We told our team right from the start not to apologize for interruptions from children or pets. Family and people came first during the crisis, and we are very proud of the Stagwell team responded.

Our Managing Partner Mark Penn has conducted weekly calls with all of our C-suite leaders across the company portfolio and the business community. These check-ins with business leaders and executives have provided our leaders the opportunity to lean on each other's experience and understand how we're all pivoting and adapting during this time of uncertainty.

Stagwell's strength is the fact that our companies were born digital-first, and we're technologically savvy in how we work and serve our clients. We, of course, used videoconference and other virtual tools to stay connected – all while delivering solid performance throughout our business. We also took our digital-first mindset externally – including helping the canceled SXSW put all of its content online and meeting nearly every day with the C-suite of major companies, assisting with their own digital transformations, research and insights, marketing and communications, and content and media."

-Ray Day, Vice Chair, Stagwell

"Our communications have been frequent, proactive and transparent, with an emphasis on taking actions and making decisions based on the health and safety of employees (and contractors) and their families and loved ones, as well as the health and safety of our customers, all stakeholder groups and society. We have leveraged one-way communications such as emails and video messages as well as virtual town halls for businesses and functions. We launched an internal CEO podcast. There is a thirst for communication from the employer, as a source that can be trusted. Participation has been very high for all virtual town hall meetings – we have seen 80%+ and 90% participation. We also do quarterly Brand and Corporate Communications crisis drills; we had one scheduled for March 5 that we repurposed

from the planned topic to COVID-19, which was very valuable and we have continued to scenario plan throughout the crisis.

Almost all of our 6,000 employees work remotely and we have remained open for business. Our CEO has been communicating well internally, with weekly positive messages on Fridays and a CEO Q&A podcast to address top questions. We have made sure to focus on our people and their wellbeing by encouraging breaks during the day, and time away from work calls and the computer. We have also encouraged the use of PTO and non-PTO for mental breaks. There have been many Zoom meetings to stay, and feel, connected – I hired a trivia game facilitator for a one-hour Zoom Team Trivia session for our 40-person team session; everyone loved it and we’re doing in on a monthly basis now.

Throughout all of this, we asked for employee feedback. The overwhelming majority of employees agreed with the direction that we’ve taken as a company and the support they’ve received. Our survey highlights included:

- 91% of Voya’s people said, “I’ve been able to do my job effectively, despite changes in work arrangements due to COVID-19.”
- 90% of Voya’s people said, “Communications have been effective at helping me understand how Voya is responding to the COVID-19 crisis.”
- 87% of Voya’s people said, “My manager helped me get what I need to get my job done.”

Early on, the main challenges were uncertainty and societal fear; then, things externally seemed to stabilize; then, racial injustice and societal unrest became the primary societal concern and we focused our communications accordingly.

All has appeared to go well from a Brand and Communications perspective thus far. Out of all information sources, I trust the data, not the interpretation of the data by governments at the local, state or federal levels or the media and “media experts.” There is no “one trusted source,” which explains why employees are looking to the employer.

To mitigate the impact on our employees, Voya has offered employee benefit enhancements, EAP, and webinars and activities for families and kids. For me, while I’m managing my team, I encourage balance and flexible hours, echoing the CEO’s sentiment. There have been a lot of Zoom calls, so burnout is a concern.

For client support during this time, we have utilized our Cares Act Program, which provides fee credits and financial education. We have also taken the following actions to support clients during this time:

- a. From May 1: *The employees and families of Voya Financial wanted to thank all of the everyday heroes who are helping society during this challenging time. So we asked singer-songwriter Mandy Harvey, who rose to fame as a finalist on*

America's Got Talent and happens to be deaf, to help us say "Thank You!" Lots of positivity when the world needs it most! JMandy performed a live min-concert on Instagram on Wednesday night. It was pretty cool, as Mandy sang five songs and world-renowned American Sign Language (ASL) translator Amber Galloway signed the entire event, which included teaching viewers to sign the lyrics to Somewhere Over the Rainbow. It's now posted on Voya's YouTube channel.

- b. *From May 27: At 4 p.m. EDT today, during the closing bell ceremony, the New York Stock Exchange will recognize and thank Voya for its efforts to support and honor the frontline workers of the COVID-19 pandemic – thorough our social media channels as well as Voya's recent sponsorship of an Instagram mini-concert featuring a live performance by America's Got Talent finalist Mandy Harvey. The closing bell can be viewed here: <https://www.nyse.com/bell/calendar>. This recognition is part of the NYSE's #Gratitude campaign, which celebrates the extraordinary steps that NYSE-listed companies are taking during this challenging time. The NYSE closing bell will be featured on CNBC as well as the NYSE's social media channels. The attached image of Mandy with Rod at our most recent One Voya Day conference will be featured during the closing bell.*

We have been very involved. Moving forward, we will continue to be active. Returning to the office, whenever that occurs, will be a big undertaking. And racial injustice will continue to be a priority.

We have been using Zoom for mass conference calls and virtual town halls. Challenges are on the other end, as employee work-from-home situations vary widely – we have been working to accommodate them.”

-Paul Gennaro, Senior Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, Voya Financial

“At W2O, our founder and CEO, Jim Weiss, a veteran of the health care industry, has been leading efforts on behalf of the firm with the industry but also with clients in vaccine development, ventilator and PPE distribution, testing, employee engagement, and HR policies around mental health, to address myriad needs to solving the crisis. Being so deeply involved in the process provides weekly and daily forums to engage our staff in these activities raising morale, productivity and confidence. Many of our clients are either involved in vaccine development, testing, or some level of support in finding a solution. And all clients are dealing with employee challenges and the move back to the next normal and what that entails. This means most if not all of our staff are actively involved in the pandemic in one way or the other sharing insights and lessons along with practices with their colleagues.”

-Gary Grates, President, W2O Group

“Our goal throughout the pandemic is to continue to keep employees connected, even though they are working remotely. We immediately created a “Staying Connected” email that includes content about best practices for working remotely, business news, brand news and EAP resources. “Staying Connected” also includes a section about how we are helping our

communities. “Staying Connected” will continue as employees return to the office. In addition, we also stepped up our video engagement tool called “The Conagra Connection” where our Chief Communication Officer interviews leaders about key topics happening throughout the company. During the COVID-19 quarantine, we created a “home edition” that was very well received by employees.

The challenging part of the pandemic is the uniqueness of it. Companies have to learn to navigate in a new world on their own, with very few credible resources to pull from, simply because no one has experienced a pandemic. We found the best option is to reach out to colleagues across the industry for validation on communication strategies.

The Internal Communications team works closely with our HR team to ensure that employees are aware of the health and well-being resources available to them.

Internal Communications also works with the Foundation to ensure that community programs and partnerships are communicated to ensure employees that we are good citizens and supporting communities where we live and work.

Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has been involved in all communication aspects of the pandemic, which includes messaging to our internal and external stakeholders – employees, customers and consumers. We expect this SLT involvement to continue.”

-Jon Harris, Senior Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, Conagra

“Fortunately, venturing into the bond market late last year, Aflac raised \$1.5 billion dollars. No one ever predicts a pandemic; however, what goes up often comes down, and for the market that means the possibility of a recession. Aflac wanted to be ready for any potential downturn. With the company in a strong capital position, the Communications team began preparing to share Aflac’s key messages from a people-first perspective, starting with a 30 page stakeholder map, resembling extraordinarily ugly pieces of wallpaper knitted together without skill. What may have looked like bad art, is proving to be a backbone of success.

By starting with the business objective, considering each stakeholder, along with where, when and how each wanted to be met in terms of information, the team scrutinized every element of data and allowed the data to drive the strategy. The team curated and created relevant information for each audience, making the most important strategic decision right up front – provide content and then condition each audience to go to specific locations for the information most helpful to each of them. Teaching stakeholders to pull, rather than forcing the team to push, became a critical advantage in terms of speed of information and message control. This approach is efficient as only a single set of data per audience is being updated, most often housed only in one location. In spite of this, the detailed grid listing the tactics currently exceeds 69 pages – and is growing!

The business, taking a similar approach, has been asking, “How do we ensure all of our stakeholders remain whole, so that when the crisis is over, the business is fully functional and

poised for optimum performance? To answer this question and put the answer into action, the company assembled a cross-functional, virtual war room, shifting activities throughout the crisis, moving from driving technology efforts to get people out of the building to return to work activities – all the while ensuring the business runs smoothly. To ensure efforts remain on track, surveying of all audiences takes place frequently and regularly. To the company's credit, putting people first – the unanimous decision of leadership – has without fail been consistent through all messaging and actions.

The following illustrates how Aflac is preserving its business and reputation through the crisis:

- There are approximately 5,000 Aflac W-2 employees in the U.S. Through a significant cash investment in technology, 98% of those employees are now outfitted with the equipment needed to work from home. Those employees deemed essential, with a duty to report, receive premium pay, personal protection gear and a safe environment subject to temperature screening and social distancing protocols.
- There are almost 30,000 independent sales agents in the U.S., licensed to sell Aflac products. They are independent contractors and their tax status is that of 1099. Their primary way of selling in these commission-only roles is through face-to-face engagement. Actually, Aflac's business model is cluster selling at worksites – not feasible in a pandemic of this nature. Not only did the company provide these agents with information on how to apply for government assistance programs, the corporation is self-funding a \$50 million no-to-low interest loan program, with generous repayment terms. Also, the company is absorbing the interest payments where such payments are applicable, which would be on loans greater than \$10,000, per Internal Revenue Service regulations.
 - Additionally, those 30,000 people would like to be able to sell during this time, so virtual enrollment centers and technology support have been provided by the company for these efforts.
 - Imagine being a recruit, waiting to sit for a licensing exam that may not be given for months due to social distancing protocols. By working with state regulators, Aflac's government affairs team has been able to get many states to grant temporary licenses to new recruits as an important stop gap measure. Also, labs are unavailable for drug screening and I-9 validation is virtually impossible with the emergency orders, adding to the complexity of onboarding.
- Policyholders are struggling too. Aflac proactively provided a 60-day grace period on premiums so that policies would not lapse and claims could still be paid during the window. Subsequently, some states have mandated grace periods.
 - To support small business owners, a microsite through Aflac.com has been established providing need-to-know information about programs to help keep them afloat.
- The community at large, the recipient of multi-million dollar donations, particularly to aid first responders with mental health and personal protection equipment support, has been incredibly appreciated.

- Aflac is renowned for its internship programs. The company provides an apartment, social activities as well as a paid work experience. This year's program looks very different with additional scholarship stipends and a virtual work experience.
- The shareholders, analysts and investors expect attention too.
 - Aflac conducted its first-ever remote quarter-end close and shareholder meeting.
 - The company also spent a great deal of time modeling financials, using previous global pandemics, most notably the Spanish Flu. This type of activity is critical to the shareholder community and to leadership in terms of making decisions for capital deployment.
- Acquisitions happen, even during a pandemic. Post-acquisition onboarding of new employees, making them feel appreciated, is difficult enough during the best of times – almost, but not entirely, impossible during a global shut down.
 - By using virtual tools like portals and WebEx, the latter being Aflac's technology of choice, senior leaders are doing their part to welcome the two companies acquired by Aflac during the pandemic.
- An interesting and rather non-traditional audience found itself in the form of local internet service providers (ISPs), who had to bolster infrastructure in its rural Georgia locations to meet the demand on capacity created by the influx of remote workers. The company's Information Technology team worked with the local ISPs to ensure a seamless experience for policyholders and employees.

It's also critical to look at the future and the challenges it holds, in order to plan for what companies will be up against going forward. That includes the possibility of reinfection spikes."

-Catherine Hernandez-Blades, SVP, Chief ESG and Communications Officer, Aflac

"Early on, Astellas' Corporate Communications / Events teams positioned our function and our work as strategic enablers, to help drive the COVID-19 decision-making process around travel, event attendance and work-from-home measures, maintaining an employee-first focus. We also quickly repositioned and created new vehicles for executive communications, awards, employee engagement and information-sharing, to adapt to the new environment and ways of working.

What's Working

Several new digital vehicles have gone particularly well. For example, our pre-produced talk show called Astellas ONE FUTURE Today allows multiple leaders and employees to speak on various topics regarding patients, products, performance and community support and have been extremely well-received. Ninety-eight percent of attendees have reported feeling very or extremely informed on how employees are supporting our culture.

We've also hosted virtual awards shows that recognize outstanding achievements for the year across the organization. Attendance and engagement have been extremely high, with employees giving constant kudos to one another over the chat function. Additionally, employees have actively engaged in Yammer campaigns with creative hashtags

(#ThankfulThursday, #PhilanthropyFriday), sharing stories of how they are helping their communities and each other. Numerous employees submitted stories of community support through an employee storytelling program, reinforcing our culture. Additionally, we've issued weekly news digest emails and posted more than 100 articles, memos and guidance documents to the COVID-19 internal hub to keep employees constantly informed.

From a business perspective, we have adjusted some of our therapeutic outreach and content, moving to virtual support of major congresses such as the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) meeting, creating an [online news hub](#) and issuing a virtual thank you [video](#) to oncologists supporting cancer patients, who are particularly at risk.

Room for Improvement

Technology and processes have remained ongoing challenges, which we continue to work through in order to maintain a steady stream of communications and the ability to effectively engage.

Sources of Information

We're referencing multiple external sources for information including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, National Institutes of Health, State Department, Johns Hopkins and state governments, among others. Benchmarking with peer companies and guidance from healthcare associations such as PhRMA have also provided data points.

Astellas and its employees continue to be engaged in many ways to contribute to serving patients and alleviating strain on healthcare resources during this critical time. These efforts specifically include the following measures, among others:

- **Volunteerism benefits** have temporarily been extended up to four weeks to specifically support the pandemic. Click [here](#) to access our total community impact efforts.
- We **expanded multiple benefit offerings for employees** including Bright Horizons crisis, student and childcare options, mental health offerings, financial resources, home office equipment reimbursement and more. A comprehensive look at our efforts to support employees can be found [here](#).
- We **launched a new job search assistance program to support immediate family members** of the company's U.S. employees laid off or otherwise adversely impacted professionally as a result of COVID-19.
- We **doubled paid military leave from two weeks to four weeks** to support our service member employees' military training obligations and remain committed to making up any difference in compensation between their military pay and regular pay for up to two years.
- [Astellas Pharma US](#) and the [Astellas Global Health Foundation](#) committed to expand support for global and local communities fighting COVID-19 by **providing**

up to \$2 million of new financial assistance, in aggregate, to meet the urgent demand for resources to help patients, healthcare workers and first responders.

- We implemented changes to Astellas' patient assistance programs and provided ongoing supply chain management to help ensure our **patients have access** to Astellas medicines.
- We issued an **internal call for ideas and proposals** in the fight against COVID-19 using Astellas' strengths, technologies and expertise.
- Additionally, we are responding to requests from Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries Associations and the Innovative Medicines Initiative and various governments to **provide access to compounds and provide counsel on countermeasures**.

We continue to explore opportunities to expand our benefits and offerings for employees, patients and the broader community and our function remains actively involved in promoting these enhancements internally and externally.

We've been closely partnering with our Commercial Strategy and Operations team to plan for and communicate the actions we're taking to maintain business operations and as we prepare to re-enter our facilities and resume field in-person activities, in the future. We meet twice weekly with a core team of functional experts and senior leaders to review our strategies and implementation efforts, and provide ongoing updates to U.S. and Global leadership on our progress and future plans.

We've leveraged several communications tools to engage employees and instantly them notify of changes, including Skype, SharePoint, Yammer, Intrado, Send Word Now and Know Before You Go. Like many companies, bandwidth and system overload have posed challenges in our ability to communicate, but we've worked to test and pivot to new platforms to maintain consistent communications."

-Moyra Knight, Vice President Corporate Communication, Astellas US and President, Astellas Global Health Foundation

"The United Arab Emirates moved quickly in March to restrict movement among its population, closing the schools, limiting business activity and assessing its testing and patient care capabilities in the country. Mubadala followed suit by beginning a rotation of staff across our four campuses in Abu Dhabi, staggering the workforce into thirds so that were a single staff member to be infected, we could trace and isolate a team and location without paralyzing business activity. By mid-March, we had decided that it was best to move all employees to a work-from-home status as the country began extensive testing.

Working with our leadership and in line with our mandate as a company, we also wanted to contribute across our portfolio to the efforts in the communities where we operate. Our health care facilities in Abu Dhabi, including Cleveland Clinic as a partner, were on the front lines of patient treatment and testing.

The communications team, working with our leadership, designed and quickly rolled out our #WeAreDedicated campaign to inspire our employees and those within our portfolio companies. The goal was to harness the collective power of employees worldwide who were part of the Mubadala Group, to enlist them in efforts to combat COVID-19.

This took two forms: first was an employee contribution effort, based in Abu Dhabi, to financially support the local Ma'an Initiative (providing care to those affected) as well as the World Health Organization. We also raised funds to help our support staff – those who administer security, cleaning and back-office functions like photocopying – who were in quarantine, ensuring not only that they would continue to receive their paychecks but also have extra funds for necessities.

Internationally, our portfolio companies – across industries such as semiconductor manufacturing, real estate, and manufacturing to mention a few – both contributed to the creation and donation of Personal Protective Equipment as well as financial support to patient care in their communities, such as construction of a new temporary hospital in Brazil. All of these activities were captured and promoted internally and externally, via the #WeAreDedicated campaign hashtag with accompanying video when and where appropriate.

Our biggest challenge has been the unpredictable nature of the disease and its impact in the Emirates, and monitoring when our employees could return to a physical office environment to work as they continued to work from home. We have put our employee's safety at the top of the priority list and have worked closely with government officials so we are aligned on our activities. While we regularly did crisis simulations – which came in handy when it was time to activate a crisis management team and network, as well as the necessary IT backbone for working remotely – it was difficult to anticipate the daily vagaries of fluctuating infection rates.

Our internal communications function has been critical to alerting employees to what they need to know: governmental restrictions on movement; where, if necessary, to get tested; and what to do if a known colleague they worked with has tested positive. In addition, keeping employee motivation high and positive – particularly with the inspiring results of #WeAreDedicated – has been essential.

The daily crisis response has been led by our Deputy CEO, who has a working group of function heads (including Group Communications) coordinating activities on a daily basis. He has regularly communicated with the Group CEO and other members of our Investment Committee which serve as the company's top leadership. We've also had a monthly Leadership Majlis (gathering) online to update both our senior leadership – the level below the Investment Committee – and all employees, to keep them informed about developments affecting the business and its employees.

We were fortunate to have a strong video conferencing backbone in place, called BlueJeans, which we have used extensively throughout the year. It has worked very effectively."

-Brian Lott, Chief Communications Officer, Mubadala Investment Company

“When we thought about how to approach communications around COVID-19, we wanted to make sure that we kept our 4,000 global employees well-informed, that we supported them and their families through a difficult time with engaging communications that spoke to both their heads and hearts, and that we celebrated the work they were doing with our customers and in our communities.

Headquartered in New York City, McGraw Hill has offices across North America, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East and South America. We make our course materials available in more than 75 languages. Given the global nature of our work and what we saw happening in China, we formed a Pandemic Committee in February to address the issues we faced with the virus. The Committee continues to meet frequently and includes our CEO and representatives from Communications, Culture & Talent (HR), Customer Support, Finance & Treasury, Information Technology, Legal & Government Affairs, Procurement, Risk & Compliance and Supply Chain Management.

Our offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen closed at the end of January because of the coronavirus. As the virus moved around the world, our other offices followed suit with our U.S. and Canadian offices, where two-thirds of our employees are based, closing on March 16.

Inform

Our first job was to let employees know what was happening. We are fortunate to have a great CEO, Simon Allen, who not only understands the value of communications but is an empathetic and caring leader. Plus, he has a great sense of humor.

Simon, who began self-isolating in his home outside London in mid-March, worked with his wife Dana (very handy with an iPhone) to create regular video updates for our employees. Their dog Jasper, who had many appearances, was a huge hit. One theme that carried throughout Simon’s communications and those of our other leaders was that the well-being of our employees is our No. 1 priority. That came through in both our words and deeds.

To make sure that people saw Simon’s videos, we sent an email to everyone in the company with a link to our internal social platform, Spark, where the videos were posted. Our platform is quite robust and enables people to like, share and comment on content. In addition, we included a link to each video in our Daily Briefing, an email newsletter that the Communications team sends every business day to keep all of our employees up to date on what’s happening in our company, with our competitors and in education.

Support

While roughly 20% of our employees usually work remotely, making sure that nearly our entire workforce could be effective working from home was challenging. Our technology teams provided equipment and support to enable employees to do their jobs remotely. We added Zoom as a way to conduct virtual meetings. Our Culture & Talent team developed a Pandemic Policy to ensure that employees who were unable to work would continue to receive benefits, and offered sessions on how to work effectively from home. With kids out of school, child care became a concern and we provided resources for that. We also gave all McGraw Hill employees

free access to the K-12 materials we offer schools around the country so that parents could use them with their children.

We could see that with many people unable to leave their homes, more people were working on the weekends and many employees were putting in very long hours to help educators move their courses from print to online – something that we know how to do very well. Given how hard people were working, we told employees to take a “Chill Day,” a day off that didn’t count as either vacation or a personal day, so they would have some time for themselves.

To help our employees address the myriad issues they faced, we created three communities using Microsoft Teams – Juggling Act, Burnout Busters and Cabin Fever Fighters. Employees shared their coping strategies and inspired one another with stories and videos.”

-Catherine Mathis, Chief Communications Officer, McGraw Hill

“The communications team at Merck responded with creative problem-solving centered around four goals that allowed the company to maintain focus: protecting our employees and their families, ensuring our medicines and vaccines continued to reach our patients and customers, supporting healthcare providers and our communities, and contributing our scientific expertise to research efforts of COVID-19. We established a centralized communications structure through which all internal and external communications flowed to ensure everyone in the company was on the same page and speaking with one voice to employees, patients, customers and community leaders. We found new ways to connect—through WebEx and Teams and Webinars. And, we launched new channels—podcasts and videos that ensured people felt more connected.”

-Jennifer Mauer Head of Global Corporate Communications, Merck

“The larger community wants to bring students back to campus, but many are also concerned about a spike in COVID-19 cases when they return. Despite the fluid situation, the university community demands timely and accurate information, encouragement, and hope. Our communications aim to reduce the high levels of anxiety and uncertainty felt by all, and our responses follow a central guiding principle: to prioritize the safety, health, and well-being of our student body, faculty, and staff.

We are constantly reflecting on the information to share and the tone to strike in internal communications. Here are some lessons I have learned:

- This moment demands empathetic and ethical communication. Our faculty, staff, students, and our student’s families need reassurance and acknowledgment of their individual and collective circumstances. People are juggling their family and work lives and facing many pressures.
- This crisis requires us to strike a balance between a call to remain calm and a sense of urgency emphasizing the need to change behaviors to protect others, especially the most vulnerable members of our community. Clear policies, processes, and procedures, combined with agility and flexibility to address circumstances we cannot predict, reflect a sense of control and intentionality when anxieties are running high.

- Some updates are relevant to all members of the school community, but often specific groups expect guidance and insights that pertain directly to them. Finding efficiencies when email boxes are already overflowing strengthens the voices of our leaders as trusted sources of critical information.
- We need to be as coordinated as possible ahead of major announcements. At my university, the provost communicates the general messaging to the deans, and we tailor those announcements to our units.
- Consistency and repetition (within reason) are important as we try to capture the attention of our internal audiences and convey information clearly, especially when the messages they receive externally might conflict.
- Everyone around us faces their own set of circumstances, fears, questions, and concerns that deserve both nuanced responses and collective actions.
- Multiple brains are better than one. Empowering those with specialized knowledge and responsibilities is critical to an informed and functional community.

The way we live, work, and communicate needs to be more authentic and intentional. How we navigate the challenges we face today may lead us to a better future. But to get there, we must go beyond lip service and follow through with real changes for the benefit of all.”

-Juan-Carlos Molleda, Edwin L. Artzt Dean and Professor, University of Oregon

“When the extent of the COVID-19 crisis became clear, navigating communications felt like paddling a canoe in the middle of a tsunami. Every day new challenges would emerge and we’d be presented with issues to contend with that had no precedent or handbook to guide our path. I’ve spent most of my career handling crises and issues for companies around the world, but the most robust crisis communications plan seemed laughable in the face of the pandemic and could barely provide for the sheer breadth and scale of the challenges before us.

We quickly organized our leadership team into a series of cross-functional groups, to provide speed and agility in our response to the rapidly changing landscape. Communications played a dual role, informing and supporting decision-making, in light of new regulatory or competitive context, as well as helping our leadership team communicate changes in operations, standards and ways of working to our people, customers, vendors, investors and other stakeholders.

To support decision making, we established some early rules of the road, including:

- **Safety first, every time:** the implications for our business were clear, but all decisions were made with one priority above all else - the safety and wellbeing of our people, customers and the communities we served. In line with the government’s guidance and our own medical advice, this meant closing the vast majority of our stores and taking the decision to put many of our associates on furlough. These were incredibly difficult decisions to make, but they were essential to keep our commitment to safety.
- **Accelerate and go:** teams were empowered to review new information, assess and make decisions with delegated authority. Communications played a key role in ensuring there was clarity around actions and plans could be conveyed coherently and with

strategic intent. We established and implemented new safety standards, created training programs to speed their uptake by associates and closed sites quickly when we were alerted of a COVID-19 case amongst our associate team.

- **Communicate, communicate, communicate:** with so much change underway, we massively ramped up our internal and external communications. Our associate teams received updates, at least once a day, including regular videos from the CEO to put a face to our decisions in real time. We also introduced new technology platforms to reach associates on furlough to maintain contact and regularly update on the business. At the same time, we delivered ongoing communications to our customers, the market, suppliers and others to provide the latest information on changes we were making and the implications for them.
- **Be open, honest and transparent:** we weren't always able to provide perfect answers, but associate feedback told us that we needed to be clear and transparent about what we were planning. We provided daily updates on any cases of COVID-19 amongst our associate population to provide transparency. At the same time, videos from our CEO and leadership team allowed us to put a human face on our work, and we realized pretty quickly that it was better to be scrappy and authentic than worry about creating a polished piece of corporate communications. We've also sought feedback and questions throughout, responding as quickly as possible to maintain a link with our people while teams are working remotely."

-Dominic Pendry, Head of Corporate Communications, Bed Bath & Beyond Inc

"An internal communicator sits at the leadership table of most of our businesses, and the team plays a critical role in our organization and is well respected for its strategic counsel and execution. COVID-19 made that focus even stronger as the need for internal communications took precedence over nearly every other business need. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, a large percentage of Cox Automotive employees began working from home. The work-from-home isolation, coupled with health and safety fears, created an anxious workforce that needed a multitude of communications to help them feel informed and motivated.

So, we created a communications strategy that focused on the right frequency of the right content to the right audiences from the right leaders. We communicated decisions almost as they were made which meant more frequent and more visible communications, especially in the first few weeks of the pandemic. We also quickly established a COVID-19 section on the home page of our intranet in order to make it as easy as possible for employees to find the information they needed as well as to connect with their now-remote colleagues and share tips and photos of everything from work-from-home spaces and new co-workers (kids and pets) to inspirational playlists and favorite recipes. And we highlighted people who were making a positive difference in the lives of others and in their communities – heroes of every variety – which resulted in nearly twice as much engagement as usual.

We did everything we could to increase the frequency and transparency of information we pushed to our employees. And then we listened."

-Shirley Powell, Senior Vice President of Communications and Industry Relations, Cox Automotive

“Southwest Airlines has dealt with its share of emergencies, crises and tragedies, but nothing on the scale of the current pandemic. Each time we’ve faced a new crisis, we pulled on our previous knowledge, lessons learned and robust emergency planning contingencies and checklists to help us address the new crisis we’re facing. What has gone well for us thus far is a good reception to both our external and internal communication. In all facets—medium, frequency, tone and voice—we have received great feedback on our transparency and timely information even in this dynamic, unpredictable environment. The volume of our communications has increased 10x compared to our “business as usual” efforts. Our greatest challenge is keeping up with the unending desire for more information—everything from details of voluntary separation packages internally to what our route network will look like in each of the 100+ communities that we served before the crisis. Early on, we created a formal partnership with the University of Texas (UT) Southwestern Hospital system’s resident expert on infectious diseases, Dr. Trish Perl, and she has been a valuable resource for CEO briefings, policy reviews and to help us navigate the sometimes conflicting information from county health officials, state government and the CDC (like whether mask/facial coverings were a good idea to recommend or not).

Southwest has taken a myriad of steps to preserve cash and protect jobs, including: eliminated all discretionary spending; sought CARES Act stimulus payroll support, secured additional financing in the markets through supplemental securities offerings, credit revolvers and loans; trimmed our flight network back to essential flights connecting our route system in order to match capacity to travel demand; launched voluntary measures for employees to take time off without pay to help reduce payroll costs; launched a new voluntary separation program to help bring down overstaffing; and introduced new policies related to temperature screenings, mask wearing, and a contact tracing system to track COVID+ cases, treatments and return to work support. For the corporate campus, we launched immediate efforts to support remote working, like laptop/office chair sign outs and access to more digital collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, along with hints and hacks for effective meetings, managing a remote workforce, and how to maintain mental wellness in a stressful situation. For the broader community, we offered our air travel services to move both medical supplies and personnel to the places that most needed it, allowed our Customers to donate their frequent flyer points to key charities like Feeding America and donated spare snack/drink inventory to area food banks. Moving forward, we plan to monitor travel demand, adjust the fleet/capacity as we can to meet demand, and keep discretionary spending in check. We are hopeful that all the voluntary programs we put in place will help reduce the overstaffing we will have come the Fall, based on our travel demand forecast. We have a nearly 50-year track record of no furloughs, and as we enter our 50th anniversary year in 2021, we are hopeful to reflect back on how we managed through this prolonged crisis. Our CEO says: “Our goal is to thrive; our imperative right now is to survive.”

All the “other” meetings that were on the calendar have been cancelled until further notice to free up capacity and ability for the C-suite team and other collaborators to meet quickly to deal challenges presented by the dynamic situation. We have weekly meetings, daily business reporting, monthly customer and employee sentiment data and regular assessments of media coverage and social chatter themes. We can also access macro trends and data to see how the globe is responding to the pandemic, including Europe and Asia’s recovery efforts, changes in travel/hospitality demand, and other economic trends.”

-Linda Rutherford, Senior Vice President, Chief Communications Officer, Southwest Airlines

“Every organization has a unique culture, but I would say that a large, complex, highly decentralized university is more unique than most because of the number and diversity of activities and stakeholders, each of whom has a personal and passionate connection to the institution and looks to it for not just operational matters, but also for moral and emotional support and leadership. Thus, even in the best of times, our communications can be more like a cacophony than a symphony. Since March we taken unprecedented (for us) steps to consolidate and sharpen both the content and source of communications to ensure accuracy and consistency in our messaging, to provide actionable information to our internal community, and to utilize the intellectual resources of our faculty, research and health care experts to advance public knowledge and understanding of many different aspects COVID-19’s impact on society.

As the major health care provider in the region, Duke has been deeply immersed in both treating and educating the community about COVID-19. Likewise, the we have maintained direct, regular, and persistent communications with our employees about both workplace issues and broader health and financial matters.

Our senior leadership has been very involved in both the substantive response and communications. This has taken a number of forms: regular email messages from the President to the university community, participation in meetings and other open forums, videos and online interviews. This was also the catalyst for the President to begin social media engagement through his personal Instagram channel, which has become an important vehicle for reinforcing major institutional themes and messages.

With a widely dispersed and very diverse array of stakeholders, we are making the most use of the most accessible technologies – email, text, websites, social media and videoconferencing. Social media is important, but more as an amplifier than the principal platform for communications. We have found that the more complicated messages – and much of what we are conveying about health and safety information is complicated – are best delivered using the simplest technology, which is why email remains by far the most effective medium for reaching our community (students, faculty, staff and parents).”

-Michael Schoenfeld, Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer, Duke University

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, governors and public health officials have proven over and over that in fighting this virus, communication is as vital a weapon as any mask or treatment. Those who have spoken regularly and clearly called us to a purpose greater than ourselves have been the most effective in fighting the outbreak. They are the ones that get the highest marks from their constituents.

That model has been—and should continue to be—applied on a different scale in our workplaces. Our employees and colleagues, our customers and members, and the broader public need and deserve that same type of purposeful communication. It the antidote to uncertainty.

Internal communication is paramount. With employees scattered about in remote offices, this is the key to team cohesion. Successful leaders have discovered by now that in this new environment, in which routines were upended and uncertainty reigns, clear and regular channels of communication can ease anxiety and improve remote workplace morale. It is not just what leaders are saying to their teams; it is how they are saying it. A regular all staff meeting, preferably with everyone on camera, provides an opportunity for a reset even when there is little new information, while ad hoc, irregular convenings only add to the chaos.

A regular, predictable cadence is helpful for external audiences too. At the National Association of Manufacturers, we reimagined our communications operation more than a year ago so that we could serve as our own news organization—a news source for manufacturers and about manufacturers. That transformation laid the groundwork for us to be a trusted source amid the pandemic for our member companies—on everything from the latest state lockdown decisions to CDC best practices to Paycheck Protection Program application requirements.

We leveraged our existing channels, including Input, our daily morning read. And we were able to add new channels, including an afternoon daily email of the most important and actionable resources that came directly from our president and CEO to the leaders of our member companies and partner associations. Using predictable, established channels ensured that manufacturing leaders—already stretched thin navigating economic strains and protecting their employees—knew they could rely on one reliable resource.

Information has been gold in this pandemic. The NAM has seen the measurable evidence—in the form of record web traffic, to the tens of thousands that have joined NAM webinars on everything from how to sanitize the workplace to how to leverage the Fed’s lending opportunities.

Regularity and clarity are key. We are living in a just-the-facts environment. But that does not mean that we do not have an opportunity to inspire.”

-Erin Streeter, Senior Vice President of Communications and Brand Strategy, National Association of Manufacturers

“As communicators, it feels like we’ve lived a generation in just three months. Amid the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve had to rewrite our operating manuals, adjust crisis communications playbooks, address the confusion and anxieties of employees and help guide our leaders through the fog of uncertainty. Mike Tyson’s conclusion that everyone has a plan until you punch him in the mouth suddenly seemed personal.

One outcome of the COVID crisis is that corporate communicators have occupied a center seat at the table to help leaders make critical decisions that impact employees, customers and other stakeholders. Our insights into audience sentiments have supported accelerated decision-making at a time when being slow to act could have had dire consequences for the business. With communications in the lead, many companies have delivered timely health and safety information to employees; provided clarity to employees migrating to work from home; publicized assistance programs for financially struggling customers; and updated various stakeholders about the impact to business operations.

In a typical corporate environment that is more accustomed to working decisions through multiple layers and matrixed teams, how do we help leaders maintain this decision agility once the urgency of the pandemic fades? Maintaining a seat at the leadership table is step one, but we must also be equipped with rich data and analytics that help our leaders understand their audiences and the impact of their decisions.”

-Chris Talley, Chief Communications Officer and SVP Corporate Communications, USAA

“The post-COVID work environment will need to do a better job of balancing new personal habits now that they have now been tried and tested.

Communications teams – particularly employee and internal communications teams – will play a key role in making this new model successful. We will need to find new and creative ways to connect people and ideas, maintain corporate cultures, deliver important and timely messages, and create natural opportunities for engagement and fun.

In some cases, we can make small tweaks to old habits and do our jobs just fine. Earlier gripes about people multi-tasking or not paying attention on conference calls can easily be avoided by simply turning the camera on during a conference call instead of just “phoning it in.” And, to be honest, we likely will benefit from more voices chiming in and diverse experiences being represented as we more intently listen and participate. Instead of a two hour meeting every other week, we might need to host 30 minute meetings twice a week to make sure teams are all on the same page.”

-Jennifer Temple, Chief Communications Officer, Hewlett Packard Enterprise

“I think that our organization has done an incredible job of communicating through the pandemic. We have two primary audiences: we have our internal stakeholders, those who wear a badge and come to work every day. So, our doctors, our nurses, our other clinicians, and those of us who work in the support area. There's that cadre of people, as well as the community, because the community has looked to us to be a source of truth about the

pandemic. Because of this, we were always very clear that we had two audiences and we made it a point to communicate to those audiences, giving them information that mattered to them. From early on, we made sure that we stepped into the role of sharing information that matters. And we didn't allow other people to do that because there was frankly so much misinformation about the virus from the very beginning. We knew we had an obligation to share the facts as we understood them and to then help people understand the facts and how to act on them.

Misinformation caused a gray space where people didn't understand (then, and to a large degree now still don't understand,) what they should and shouldn't be doing about the virus. We realized that at the end of the day if we were going to help control the spread of the virus, that we had to make sure that our internal stakeholders and the community understood what the virus is, how the virus is spread, and what people can do as a practical matter to mitigate them getting the virus. It became as simple as that and as complex as that. Because remember, this was unfolding against a backdrop on the national stage where our President and others were saying it's not a big deal, and when the weather gets warmer it'll go away. All of these messages were being shared out there on the national stage. In response, we really had to say no, the data strongly suggest that *this* is what's going to happen. And as a result, we need to do these things.

Very early on, our CEO took the initiative to be an advocate. Even if he was the lone soldier, he was going to be the advocate for people understanding the facts and being really clear on what they should do with the facts, and how they should live their lives during this inconvenient period.

We then made his messages available in other ways. Internally, on our intranet site and through targeted emails to our internal workforce, and then through commercials, our website, and our social channels for the rest of the community. We offered him up to do media interviews so that he, and some of our infectious disease doctors who live in this space every day, could go out and share what they were understanding based on other credible sources. We were fortunate to have a CEO who's willing to do that because a lot of leaders would have said, "Just let people figure it out." That is not the stand that we took.

Very early on, we reorganized the structure of our team so that everybody had responsibilities for COVID. Everybody on the team put things on hold and worked with strategic communications in support of COVID. Also, I sit on the executive leadership team, so I'm one of nine leaders who provide strategic oversight for the organization. From the very beginning, we began to set the strategy of how we were going to deal with COVID and frankly, how we were going to run the healthcare system and keep the doors open during this time. Like all healthcare systems, we made the decision very early on to not do elective surgeries and procedures, because we didn't know if we're going to have enough PPE and we didn't know if current customers were going to be upset. There was not a single time when we were having a discussion and there wasn't a need to think through what we were going to say or do about some COVID-related matter. And so, being in that room and helping to make decisions for running the healthcare system is great. And then being able to weigh in on how we should

communicate strategically about the other matters is also extremely important. We're already looking at our structure moving forward once we get on the other side and COVID becomes one of those diseases that we just treat as a matter of course."

-Chuck Wallington, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, Cone Health

"Most employees have been very receptive to our company's communications efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, although some employees expressed interest in hearing more. Some wanted to get a better understanding about the thought process behind the decisions. Others wanted to know what the company was doing to positively impact the U.S. healthcare system. Others felt overwhelmed by the volume of conversations about the crisis.

Our company has begun a pilot program, opening its doors to a small number of employees. The office is dramatically different. There is technology at the front door that checks for an employee's temperature. You must wear a mask. Elevators are limited to two people. There are signs dictating the flow of walking traffic. There is an abundance of hand sanitizers. There are limited stalls and sink that can be used in the bathroom.

The coordination (with C-suite leaders) has been daily. We assembled leadership to identify the risks early on regarding employee safety. From there, we needed to assess the risk of our business and business partners. Then, we had to assess the appropriate technology platform to work with. Transitioning to video conferences and building that infrastructure wasn't easy. Determining how to best support employees is a daily question.

We're also constantly monitoring the impact via news and through employee surveys to get a sense of how our customers are reacting to employees. Decisions are made based on these research tools and through the collection of real-time, credible information.

Microsoft Teams has been a big winner for our company. Phones and SMS are also used more than ever to interact. Hindrance can be in an IT team that lacks responsiveness."

-Senior Communication Executive in the Pharmaceutical Industry

"The entire communications process and function had been amplified during this time. We are working directly with all of leadership more than ever. It is not something they are always comfortable with, but it has been a necessity.

It helps to have a voice at the C-suite table with a CMO who knows communications and its value. We were able to navigate quickly and rally those that needed to be rallied. Families and educators were at the center of this storm, and that is who we service and work with. We had to work with all of our coalition partners to develop and execute a new platform in real-time to address all of the issues that this brought. It was exhaustive hours at the onset, multiple workstreams we never anticipated. As a nonprofit, the communications team is small, and our workload multiplied. Strategy at times was more ad hoc than we would have wanted,

and sometimes there wasn't enough time to be thoughtful. Sometimes decisions were made and communications was a second thought. That was where we could have fallen down.

We were active from day one to communicate with the entire organization, as well as solicit their feedback. Worked closely with CHRO on everything. Internal or external became similar channels. We provided them new resources, new channels (Slack), work from home tools, etc. We have executed ongoing surveys as well as have weekly/biweekly all hands meetings. These helped and were a source of relief for the team. It was all new to all of us.

We have decided not to head back to NYC mostly because we are getting a new space and ensuring it is outfitted properly."

-Danielle Ward, Understood.org