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## Feeding company culture through a global crisis

- Leading with a people first ethos
- Making sure feed work culture during remote working
- Understanding the role of an employer during crisis

*Johannesburg, South Africa –15 April 2020:* As we enter the second stage of lockdown in South Africa, a question for many business leaders is how to keep company culture alive and staff morale high through this difficult time.

At Mondelēz South Africa, we have always had an existing work from home policy that has been encouraged by leadership. For us, the happiness of our employees has shown a direct link to productivity levels. In fact, a [study](#) has shown that teams who score in the top 20% in engagement realise a 41% reduction in absenteeism, and 59% less turnover. It's no secret that empowered employees that feel valued, inspired and capable perform better.

But this is no ordinary work from home scenario. Working through a pandemic where people feel afraid, at risk and far removed from the comfort of routine can be a truly daunting experience. As humans, we are naturally drawn to a sense of community. And though standing alone has become an essential symbol of unity against the pandemic, operating in isolation is a new normal that we are not quite comfortable with.

### Understanding each other on a human level

What is clear through this global crisis is that no one country, leader, organisation or person processes crisis in the same way. As such, it's important that we look at fostering culture through a varied approach. At Mondelēz South Africa, we have offered multi-layered support to our employees, one of which was establishing a weekly bite-sized resourcefulness guide with a selection of articles and courses. There are a variety of topics covering health and well-being, remote working, personal resourcefulness and collaboration support.

Paramount to fostering culture within a remote workforce is prioritising and understanding the importance of human engagement. Within a workforce, transactional relationships are limited. Team dynamics and interaction must be nurtured to ensure optimal results. Even during Covid-19 this human interaction must be intentionally cultivated. It's as simple as a quick phone call to check in on how your team is coping or maintaining weekly catch up sessions via the variety of social platforms available to us.

Helping employees feel supported at this time is vital. A recent [report](#) has shown that 89% of HR leaders agree that ongoing peer feedback and check-ins are key for successful outcomes. As leaders, we need to be sensitive to those that are operating in vulnerable circumstances: people that are struggling with anxiety, or caring for young families or elderly parents – many who are doing so singlehandedly.

## **A true test of the fourth industrial revolution**

What this entire coronavirus pandemic has highlighted for me personally is that there needs to be a bigger conversation around skills development and how we equip our people to operate within this new reality.

This virus has fast-tracked us to a new world of work, the future of work, the fourth industrial revolution that we've been talking about for quite a while now. Now that it is crunch time, what this ordeal has shown me is that there is a large amount of us that are not ready. Be it a lack of infrastructure, skills or resources, there is a disconnect that needs to be addressed. This is why I truly feel that we need to take this time to empower and upskill our workforce.

Through technology, there are various learning activities that can be done remotely. Let's use this time to build ourselves up as organisations, to refresh staff on company policies, people management skills, and health and safety, among others. Let's have the conversations and do the training to learn and develop ourselves and our workforces – so that when this all finally passes, we will be better for it.

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## **About Mondelēz South Africa**

Mondelēz South Africa is the largest confectionery business in South Africa, enjoying market leadership in the chocolate, chewing gum and bubble-gum categories. We are custodian of iconic and well-loved local brands such as Chappies bubble gum, Chomp, Lunch Bar and Dentyne chewing gum.

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