



Contacts: Navisha Bechan-Sewkuran
+27 71 462 3295
Navisha.BechanSewkuran@mdlz.com

How company culture can fuel your business in these trying times

- 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 – 4 May 2020: Now firmly planted in stage four of lockdown, more than 1.5-million South African workers have returned to work. However, there are still several industries that remain home for a somewhat indefinite timeframe. This poses a difficult question for many business leaders: How do I keep company culture alive and staff morale high at this time when remote working can often leave employees feeling out of touch.

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. It's no secret that empowered employees that feel valued, inspired and capable perform better. 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.

Understanding each other on a human level

"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," says Cebile Xulu, People Lead: Sub Sahara Africa, Mondelēz International.

Xulu adds that the importance of human engagement is paramount and that 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.

"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,"

A true test of the fourth industrial revolution

The Coronavirus has fast-tracked us to the fourth industrial revolution that we've been talking about for quite a while now. However Xulu believes that between the lack of infrastructure, skills or resources, there is a disconnect that needs to be addressed.

“We need to empower and upskill our workforce. Through technology, there are various learning activities that can be done remotely. As organisations we can use this time to refresh staff on company policies, people management skills, and health and safety, among others,” concludes Xulu.

With the path to full recovery, long and uncharted - what’s clear is that businesses who focus on culture, collaboration and understanding as a guiding light will have a stronger chance at survival in the end.

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