



HOLIDAY EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE GUIDE

Working from ho-ho-home

5 tips to help WFH employees excel
during the 2020-21 holiday season

Introduction

Managing employees during the holiday season is never easy, whether they're workers with company for years or those hired for a short-term stint. The 2020-2021 cycle is expected to be more complicated than any one prior. A top reason is the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Another is a by-product of that health crisis. The challenge to remotely manage your working from home (WFH) employees at this time of year.

The next few months will be busy – even hectic. All the more reason to sharpen your focus on what needs to be done to ensure your WFH employees – as well as those now operating in a hybrid model that has them in the office part of the time and at home the remainder.

And that's the purpose of this eBook. It's to serve as a guide on the five factors any manager must understand fully and take appropriate action to ensure employees deliver exceptional performance as they work from ho-ho-home this holiday season – with the benefit of Central's employee engagement and performance management platform.



It's a digital sales snowstorm



Even in the midst of a pandemic, the Friday after Thanksgiving this year looks like it will still be the start of the 2020-2021 holiday selling season. However, because of COVID-19, consumers have stepped up their online shopping in advance.

According to Salesforce, the upcoming holiday is an unprecedented one, and digital activity is expected to be even bigger than it has been. The company projects **online sales will represent more than 30% of all holiday sales, or about \$221 billion**. Deloitte anticipates **growth of this sales form to increase 35% this season** – a significant expansion over last year's 14% growth rate.

That doesn't mean brick-and-mortar stores are heading for obsolescence or the need for selling floor personnel evaporates. Their roles change. Stores become more like fulfillment centers and salespeople become more like customer service or support agents. Salesforce predicts **buy-online-pickup-in-store (BOPIS) will grow 90% year-over-year**. Reflective of that is a survey finding by the National Retail Federation. **More than 90% of respondents who tried curbside pickup said it was convenient**. That explains a lot.

Behind all of that are your customers, who are increasingly digital-savvy, smarter about your product or service than you might want to admit. And, given what they've been through the last several months, disinclined to accept anything less than a first-rate customer experience.

tip #1

Be sure your frontline employees – those who interact with customers everyday – know what's expected of them and the steps they can take to be fully prepared.

Consider communicating with them frequently - individually, at the team level, across your entire organization. By making sure team members understand their targets, processes, and more, managers can keep things under control and moving forward. For those showing knowledge or skills gaps, employ training at the point of need with short, fast training activities like simulations or quizzes. And if you're updating employees' knowledge and goals frequently, why not use real-time data to do it. Read more on managing employee performance in real-time [here](#).

A season of contradictions



Many see the holiday season as the make-or-break period for a year's worth of selling. Even if your company doesn't contend with such seasonality, it's a time when everything, somehow, becomes more intense.

You want your employees to be laser-focused on their assignments. But that might be difficult to have happen. A Harris Poll found 69% of employees admit to online shopping at work. Last year 32 minutes was spent visiting shopping sites each work day per employee.

Nonetheless, at this time of year - when attention needs to be paid to the work at hand - it's all too **common to find employees less than fully engaged** in their tasks. Shopping for that perfect present for grandma might be handled before a customer's query on a shipping status.

tip #2

Step up your employee engagement efforts. The potential for disconnecting from work – even for top-performing employees – is high during the holiday season.

Try something like running a competition or gamified activity that allows for some gift shopping during work – if certain goals are reached. It will improve employees' motivation, set a time to shop, and show them that you understand. If you do that, don't focus on just points, badges, and leaderboards. It's better to make use of all the mechanisms and strategies of game mechanics to sustainably drive employee engagement and performance. To learn more about gamification ideas, mechanisms, and how to implement it with frontline workers, read this [article](#).

Training can't take a holiday



The flow of work is quick and, to a certain degree, unrelenting. In a word, it's busy. On top of that, your employees are distracted by the approaching holidays. Yet new products come on sale. New promotional programs are being put in place. And with the ebb and flow of inventory, prices change. Throw in a few regulatory or policies changes and there's lots that employees need to know. Now.

Since a high percentage of your team continues to working from home (WFH), bringing them together for a quick huddle – on the sales floor or in the contact center – is unlikely. But you still need to get them advised, informed, and able to explain the new program, price or product when dealing customers.

If the pandemic had one positive impact it was to accelerate the development and deployment of digital training for remote workers. With classrooms shut in corporate learning centers, a combination of digital learning tools are being used to ensure employees know what they need to perform their jobs well.

A change of consequence was noted by Erika Moree, Synchrony's VP of Learning Solutions: "Before COVID-19, learning was an event...you attended a classroom or digital environment...where you had to leave your job to do it." The discontinuity caused by the pandemic prompted a wider use of microlearning – which **changed training from being an "event" to something that occurs in short-bursts throughout the day.**

tip #3

Despite the pressure of the season, continue to train employees. Find ways for them to easily absorb, adopt, and apply learning – all in the flow of work.

Maintaining learning activities during this season lets you address training needs quickly, to prevent knowledge gaps from forming when you can least afford them. It also ensures your employees stay up-to-date on the latest products and promotions, and can maximize their value during this crucial time. And, to be sure, time is limited during the holiday rush. Instead of long and demanding training modules, try focusing on bite-sized learning activities, such as microlearning that can be delivered in the flow of work throughout the day. Read more about creating and optimizing microlearning [here](#).

Goals are like gifts

When all teams were in an office, assigning tasks with specific performance goals was relatively easy. Once set, you observed each employee's performance. When you could, you gave employees one-on-one feedback to help them get to the next level.

With many WFH or operating in the field, it's not so simple. You need to make an extra effort to stay connected with them as they operate from their homes or other off-site locations. A key reason for that is employees have been dealing with an endless stream of change. And that causes stress. Managers being vague about expectations intensifies that stress. Employees pointed to **"unclear expectations from supervisors"** as the biggest cause for stress amidst change*. This relates directly to goal-setting. During a high velocity period like the holidays, priorities, goals, and more will change often and quickly.

By encouraging frequent, bi-directional communications, managers are able to make sure their teams are working toward their goals and are aligned with priorities.

When employees know what's expected of them, doubt, even confusion is avoided. And managers get what they want. Desired behaviors and performance.

*: Source: ComPsych Corporation

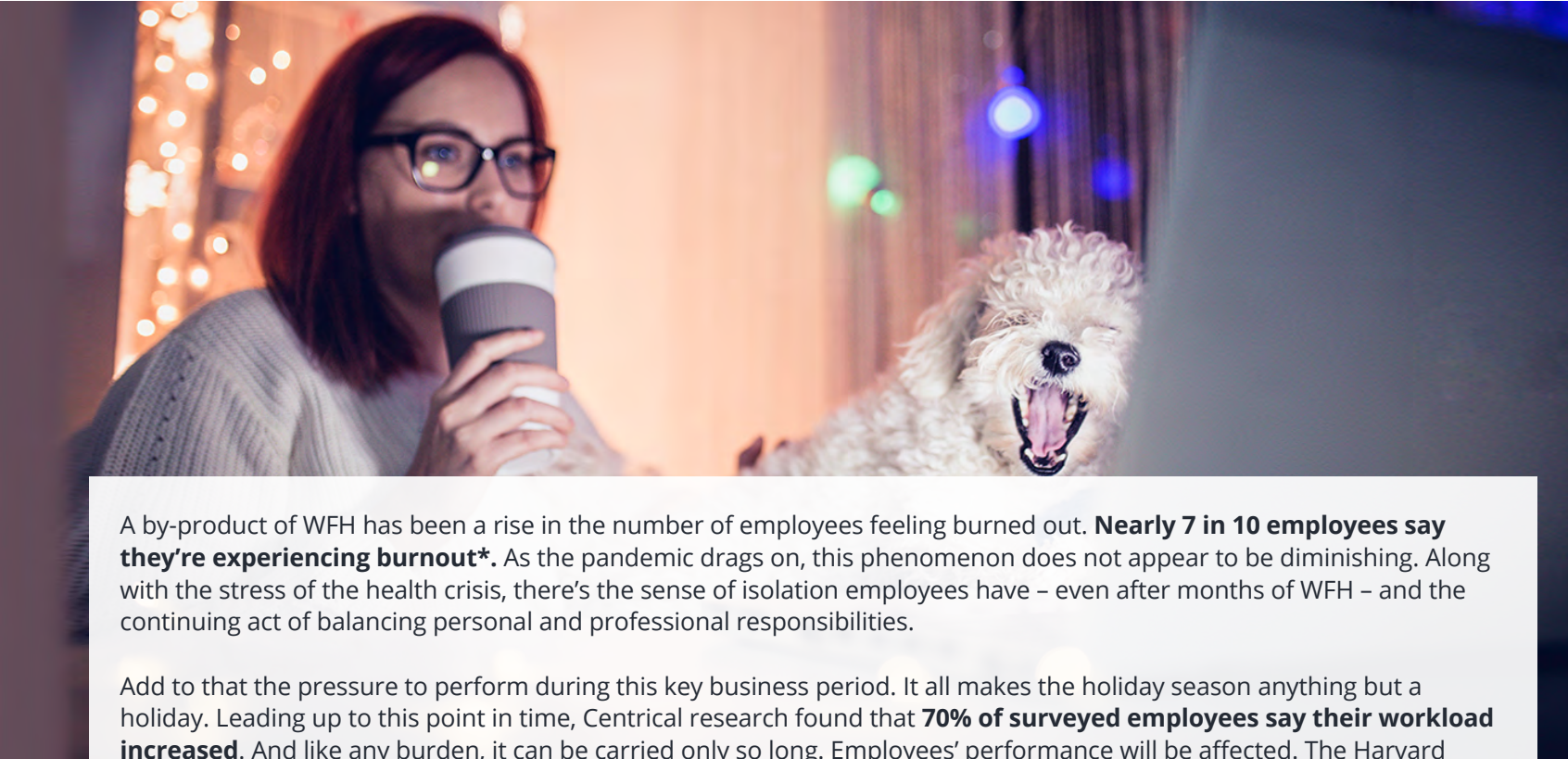


tip #4

Objectives and the plans to achieve them need to be developed by employees and their managers together.

For goal-setting to work in the WFH and hybrid workplace models, you need to make it a collaborative process. By helping to define their targets, employees will take greater ownership of them. They become more responsible and more accountable. To learn more about adapting the process of goal-setting and performance management during the pandemic read this [article](#).

Don't be a scrooge



A by-product of WFH has been a rise in the number of employees feeling burned out. **Nearly 7 in 10 employees say they're experiencing burnout***. As the pandemic drags on, this phenomenon does not appear to be diminishing. Along with the stress of the health crisis, there's the sense of isolation employees have – even after months of WFH – and the continuing act of balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

Add to that the pressure to perform during this key business period. It all makes the holiday season anything but a holiday. Leading up to this point in time, Central research found that **70% of surveyed employees say their workload increased**. And like any burden, it can be carried only so long. Employees' performance will be affected. The Harvard Business Review reported that this sort of ongoing pressure will raise attrition as well as absenteeism. During the holiday selling season, neither can be seen as helpers to productivity or profitability.

At any time of the year, managers need to be cognizant of how employees are doing and how they feel. One impacts the other. Knowing most activities will be at a higher level – sales, support, service – employees stress levels will be pushed higher. And lower performance – at the individual, team, and organizational level – has a higher potential to be experienced.

*: Source: Human Resource Executive

tip #5

Help employees handle their workload by assisting them to properly prioritize the work that needs to be done. And don't overlook their managers. They're feeling as much, if not more, stress.

By setting reasonable deadlines, employee buy-in will be quick and certain. And they'll feel more confident about being able to tackle their assignments. Further, by making progress on those tasks visible to employees, they'll be motivated to drive to completion and will likely appreciate their managers more. Remember to check-in with employees and managers to ensure they're not having difficulties or burning out. Sounds complex? Read how AI can help you streamline the process of setting goals, tracking performance, and turning managers into coaches [here](#).

About Central

The Central platform combines real-time performance management with personalized microlearning and advanced gamification, along with adaptive coaching tools, to help align employees with company goals and facilitates conversations with managers about targets and performance. It's designed to help Fortune 500-type companies drive engagement with existing systems and processes or help build a performance-driven culture centered on achievement for their employees in the office, at home or in the field.

central.com

To learn more and see if employee engagement and real-time performance management is right for you

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