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## **Reflecting on the workplace climate during COVID-19 - by Rachel Fish**

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Rachel Fish  
Resource Options

How are we navigating leadership through COVID-19? While we are all living through this uncertain journey of the COVID-19 public health crisis, effective leadership requires solid communication skills, and a well-informed team to keep their employees on track, up to date, and focused.

One thing that is clear is that employees look to leadership to provide direction around how employees can contribute to an overall path forward. If leaders choose to give a clear course of action, then employees will respond well and commit to the challenge. For example, here at Resource Options we pride ourselves on our “in office” culture so transitioning our entire internal team to work remotely has been an adjustment for all of us. Luckily, we have an excellent team of leaders who vigorously collaborated together, gave a direct course of action, and moved our entire company remote within a matter of days. This gave our employees the compassion, stability, and belief that the company is there for them and that they are part of the solution.

Let us outline what we mean by clear direction and support. As companies changeover to a remote setting it is critically important to have a clearly defined work plan so that their employees know and fully understand any new expectations and timelines that are being put into place. But how do we really do this? We implement daily structure, micro goals, and routine check-ins. At Resource Options we have added virtual morning and afternoon meetings with our teams to connect both professionally and personally. In between those meetings it is important to trust your team and know that they are doing the right things to be productive or move a task forward. We cannot rely on simply walking over to their desk to check in anymore. Furthermore, this new remote work setting has provided the opportunity for additional direct contact company wide and will encourage more creativity and provide more resources. We are all working outside of our normal environment and this calls for broader thinking about the way we work and communicate. It also allows for us to talk about things other than work and to check in on how everyone is doing both physically and emotionally. For example, companies could create a virtual happy hour or a check in with each other at the beginning of a business meeting. In this current work environment, it is important for company leaders to encourage flexibility and good self-care so that employees stay revitalized, motivated, and feel safe and supported.

So what can we learn from the current climate? Instead of asking “How do we survive?” let us ask “What will move our companies forward?” With strong leadership in place this crisis allows companies to redefine their thinking and understand how to evolve versus focusing solely on damage control. This is an opportunity to proactively think about how we can be prepared in the future for the unexpected. Now we absolutely know that something like this can happen. Companies should take the time to re-evaluate and put forth best practices now. They will then be better situated for the long term.

Rachel Fish is an account manager with Resource Options, a member of the Construction Institute, in Wethersfield, Conn.