



Article: Are Your Addicted Employees Mentally Ready to Go Back in the Office?

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The idea of what it means to be an employee and part of company culture has truly shifted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the past 12 months, I have been working out my basement, secluded from what it means to be in an “office” setting. The days when I could get up from my cubicle, walk over to my boss’s office, and ask a quick question were immediately replaced by increased physical isolation and scheduled Zoom meetings.

Speaking as an addict this type of change was very difficult to get adjusted to and remain engaged. Not only did my interaction and connection with co-workers decrease, but the 12 step in-person meetings that I relied upon to stay sober faced disruption and moved online, thereby significantly increasing isolation and risking my recovery.

However, going back in office brings about a entirely new set of concerns. According to a [Bloomberg](#) publication, some workers reported quitting their jobs rather than going back in office due to the current pandemic, and a May survey of 1,000 adults revealed that 39% would consider quitting if remote work was not an option. With the Delta variant posing a strong threat to society and current debates over mask mandates as an addict *Am I safer staying at home or being in the office?* The stress and anxiety surrounding the idea of returning to work in office does nothing but decrease employee engagement and productivity & increase the need for me to work my program.

So that begs the question Is there anything leaders can do about it?

Vaccines. In a recent article, also posted by [Bloomberg](#), 21% of employers are mandating their employees be vaccinated to remain hired and that number is expected to surge. While this strong effort can protect employees from the physical harm that COVID-19 brings, the hope is that it also brings some relief to mental health and wellness.

Remain Connected. Everyone is feeling the effects of COVID-19. The [CDC](#) offers practical steps that employers can take to manage stress and build resiliency during pandemic, such as communicating vulnerably with your employees about how the stress is affecting your life as

well and work together towards solutions. By relating to the stress your employees are under, you can build a connection and gain their trust. In my own research, the 10 leaders I interviewed revealed that by building connection through vulnerability, employee engagement and productivity increased in their firms as substance abuse relapse rates decreased.

If you're leading a company that is requiring employees to return in office, identifying and employing economical leadership strategies for your addicted employee's transition back into the office is critical now more than ever. With the ongoing pandemic and physical & mental wellness becoming a growing concern, the question I have for you is: ***How are you meeting your employees where they are mentally during this transition back to in office?***

About the Author:

Dr. John Narine received his Doctorate of Business Administration from California Intercontinental University, specializing in Global Business and Leadership. John completed a qualitative research study, and is the author of *Leading Workplace Addiction*. He is wholeheartedly committed to serving the community by educating the leaders of this world to help addicts in the workplace, being a recovering professional himself. Specifics about his career and work can be found on his website: www.drjnarine.wordpress.com