

“Social Distancing” and “Social Isolation.” With the focus on human to human interactions we are looking at the difference between the two. There is potentially a massive shift to a majoritively short term, remote workforce on the horizon. With that comes a slew of HR concerns, outside of just the operational HR.

Italy took dramatic steps last week to ‘lock down’ the country. The prime minister issued a request for the country to practice “Social Distancing” and a 2m rule was put in place. Additionally he requested all citizens restrict all movement to only work, and family emergencies. A ban was placed on all public gatherings (inc. cinemas, gyms, weddings, funerals, sports events) and schools & universities were closed.

What Social Distancing is:

The U.S. Centres for Disease Control (CDC) [defines it](#) as “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.”

On a large scale it can mean the self isolation or quarantine of an individual/family. On a personal scale it can mean a reduction in human to human contact.

Stop shaking hands, be a toe tapper!

Heard of the toe tap? It’s the new thing you hot stepper! The elbow tap? Perhaps some good ole eye contact, or a little head bow. All are really good solid options instead of shaking

hands.

That goes for hugging too. Are you a huggy workplace? Just stop. But perhaps don't go cold turkey on people. You hugged them yesterday but now you won't stand within 2ms of them. We don't want them to read into anything. So politely explain that, for now, you're a toe tapper!

Make those meetings matter!

Make those meetings small, virtual and intentional. Have you been one of those workplaces that MUST include everyone in all meetings. Is the complaint "I have so many meetings!" something you hear commonly in your workplace. Well guess what, now's your chance to create an intentional meeting program. Who needs to be there? Why are they there? How will you communicate what was discussed with the wider group?

Does your sales team have a meeting quota? If so, what does that look like? Can they do them via phone or online video conferencing? Must they be in person?

What is the 2020 version of "can we grab a coffee?". Upside, perhaps you will finally get a hold of your caffeine addiction and your expense budget might go down!

What Social Distancing isn't.

Social Distancing is not Social Isolation and on a very serious note, the latter can feel very real and has some major implications. There is a difference between Social Distancing and Social Isolation. Humans, by nature, are social creatures. When we are isolated we don't do well. (Check out our blog on how to reduce [loneliness in the workforce](#).) Isolation can massively impact mental wellness, productivity and effectiveness. Additionally you don't have to be alone to feel Isolated. Social distancing is NOT cutting yourself off from everyone and everything.

There are a few ways you can combat social isolation for the workforce:

If you must hug someone, hug your family not your co workers. Or maybe the office dog! (Remember to get permission first.)

Set up a team communication channel dedicated to silliness, jokes, and random stuff that makes you laugh. Whatsapp, slack, whatever you prefer!

Arrange a long distance movie night by hosting a [Netflix Party](#)

Share what's happening in your lives with thoughtful content on social media. (Remember you are responsible for your own content and think twice before you post anything that isn't based in fact. Basically don't retweet Trump and claim it's true.)

Create a social media campaign that brings your employees together. Perhaps each employee takes over the company instagram stories each day and shows where they are and what they are doing?

#GHENCOVYCHALLENGE.... it's a thing. - Maybe take the TIKTOK challenge and have some fun with the Vietnamese public safety announcement. ([click here for more](#))

And most importantly;

Remember to include everyone! Now is not a time to exclude people - your office clique and private jokes can be hurtful IF someone is intentionally excluded. (It's also considered bullying and harassment FYI.) Be kind. Be the bigger person. Include everyone. Now more than ever we need a sense of community - and while 'community' might look different at the moment, the sentiment remains the same. No one wants to feel alone and it hits worse when you are intentionally excluded.

One more time for the people in the back...

WASH YOUR HANDS!

Tim Hortons and Starbucks announced that they are, in the short term, no longer accepting reusable cups. Why? Probably because they can't be sure you washed your hands before you passed it to one of their employees.

Just wash your hands. It's simple friends - wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, frequently! If you can't wash them, use hand sanitizer.