

Bula,

On the 11 March the World Health Organization (the WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

It is the first pandemic to be caused by a coronavirus (a large variety of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases).

As of Thursday 26 March, there are 462,684 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, resulting in 20,834 deaths to date. [These number will continue to rise.](#)

Fiji's Prime Minister has announced a number of safety measures to try and isolate and contain COVID-19 after the first cases in the country were confirmed.

At Pacific People, we believe people come first. They are our greatest asset and therefore, their safety and wellbeing must always be our highest priority.

That is why we have compiled this document containing information on how you can best prepare for an outbreak of COVID-19 and help contain its spread, while also ensuring business continuity and high-quality care for your staff.

If there is any way we can be of service to help ensure your workspace is safe, productive and supportive during this time, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Be prepared. Be responsible. Be safe.

Kind regards,

Thelma Taria-Savua

**General Manager
Pacific People**

Maintain good workplace hygiene

Maintaining a hygienic office is critical to curbing the spread of any virus. Are all staff aware of handwashing techniques, coughing etiquette and distancing from others? Is your workplace safe?

Through good personal hygiene measures, the spread of a pandemic through the community can be slowed. This helps protect the most vulnerable members of the community and reduces the impact of the pandemic on essential, life-saving health services.

Below are some easy ways to ensure your office remains a clean environment.

- Putting notices up in the office reminding employees of good workplace hygiene;
- Providing regular verbal updates about good hygiene;
- Providing hand sanitiser at entry points and around the office;
- Ensuring meeting rooms have tissues and rubbish bins;
- Checking your building is being cleaned properly and frequently;
- Providing employees with cleaning materials to clean their desks more frequently;
- Ensuring contractors receive communications on workplace hygiene.
- Having a deep cleaning plan in place should an employee or visitor have visited the space while contagious before developing symptoms.

Tips to help staff work from home effectively

There may come a time when asking staff to work from home is the safest course of action. Staying productive and connected while working from home can be a challenge for some.

Here are some tips to make sure you remain productive and maintain a sense of connectedness while working from home.

- Keep the same routine and hours you would if you were at the office;
- Set up your office and remember your ergonomics;
- Maintain your regular work routine;
- Get up at the same time;
- Dress for work as you would normally – it helps make things feel ‘normal’;
- Minimise your disruptions the best you can. If possible, choose a separate room as your dedicated workspace.
- Log in and be ready to start work at your usual times;
- Go through your work priorities & check your calendar at the start of the day;
- Work with your manager to develop a work plan to help you stay focused;
- Attend all team and work meetings virtually;
- Stay in touch with your team and work Colleagues;
- Establish a morning and/or afternoon group meeting to help stay focused and connected;
- If you are going to be temporarily unavailable during work hours, let your manager know;
- Take part in any virtual social activities that might be scheduled;
- Stay connected. Let your colleagues know how you are going.

Successfully managing a remote team

With an increasingly dispersed workforce and flexible work arrangements on the rise, team members can often find themselves collaborating remotely.

For a leader, managing remote teams can present unique challenges around connectivity, engagement, productivity and care of members of a group. Here are some tips to make sure your team are equipped to work effectively from home and you remain connected.

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- Ensure the appropriate technology is in place to support staff workflow;
 - Help your team stay on track by running regular virtual huddle meetings;
 - Encourage members of the team to interact with each other using existing technological capabilities for chat and video (i.e. FaceTime, WhatsApp);
 - Place trust in your team to achieve their work goals from home and demonstrate your confidence through words and actions;
 - Reiterate it's "business as usual", and make sure team members are aware of the work that is ongoing by other team members;
 - Have regular conversations with your team about their experience working remotely, recognising some may feel isolated and frustrated;
 - Encourage them to seek support if they are struggling;
 - Try to be extra clear on goals and responsibilities, including related timeframes and check-ins;
 - Ensure you have the right support in place, both technical and emotional - and that employees are aware this support is available;
 - Consider any additional resources, training or support required to enable your employees to work from home successfully;
 - Ensure that you have consulted and met HR policies, procedures and requirements.

Setting up an Ergonomic work station at home

Computer work can cause injuries, pain and loss of productivity if you use poor work practices or the workstation is not set-up and used correctly. Key risk factors in computer-related injuries are:

- Poor working posture;
- Poor chair set-up;
- Poor desk/workstation set-up;
- High workload;
- Poor techniques (e.g. keying/mousing);
- Lack of exercise/fitness;
- Lack of regular breaks or lack of variety of tasks.

To help prevent neck and back injuries when using your computer, here are ten useful tips:

1. Adjust your seat height so your hips and knees are roughly at 90 degrees and your forearms are parallel to, or sloping down toward the desktop. Your feet should rest flat on the floor – use a sturdy footrest to achieve this if necessary.
2. Adjust the backrest of your chair to support the curve in your lower back and sit back, slightly reclined between 90°-110°; find a comfortable angle for your back & neck. Now sit your bottom into the back of the seat and relax back and up tall against the backrest.
3. Position your computer screen at a comfortable viewing distance - generally an arm's length away will be okay. Adjust the screen distance slightly forward or back to suit your eye focus if necessary. The top of the screen should be no higher than eye level and directly in front of you. Do not use your screen positioned to one side. If you use bifocal/multifocal glasses you probably need the screen lower to avoid head-nodding.

4. Pull your chair close into the front edge of the desk – this is critical.
5. Keep the mouse next to the keyboard at all times – don't stretch your arms forward or slump your neck and shoulders forward to reach the mouse or keyboard.
6. Limit continuous computer use and take a break every 30 minutes to do some neck, wrist, shoulder stretches and long-distance focussing. Get up and move or walk around every 30 - 40minutes. Change your tasks to alter the load on your body.
7. Learn to touch type if you can so you don't have to bend your neck forward searching for keys. Vary your inputting task to include keyboard and mouse work. Learn the keyboard short-cuts and function keys to reduce the amount of mouse use.
8. Set your document holder close to the screen at the same distance from your eyes (adjust as necessary). If you do not have a document holder, prop your work on a folder between the keyboard and screen. Do not keep your copy on the desk beside the keyboard.
9. Do not use a laptop for extended periods. If this is unavoidable, elevate the screen or plug in a monitor and plug in a mouse and a normal size keyboard.
10. Maintain your general fitness. Keep yourself strong, flexible and manage the stresses of work with a balance of exercise, relaxation or other stress management approaches. Take notice of early warnings! If you feel an ache or discomfort in any part of your body, check and re-set your posture.

Managing uncertainty and anxiety in the workplace

The outbreak of a pandemic such as COVID 19 can create a sense of uncertainty which can then lead to fear and anxiety in many people. This is particularly the case where there so many stories being released via social media, on the news and the internet. People can become overwhelmed and experience symptoms of anxiety and stress.

Signs and symptoms of stress to look out for in your teams:

- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Anger
- Feeling low
- Tiredness
- Sweating
- Getting sick
- Hyperactivity
- Memory issues
- Changes in usual personality
- Conflict with others
- Low motivation
- Withdrawing
- Reduced performance

Tips to manage and respond to stress in your teams:

- Keep yourself up to date with official requirements;
- Have a plan for different scenarios, including working from home and office closures;
- Communicate with your teams and focus on the facts and positive steps you are taking as a team and organisation;
- Know when to stop communicating. It is easy to overload staff with information. Make sure you communicate just enough to keep staff up to date with organisational developments without contributing to a sense of overwhelm;
- Follow official advice and practice good hygiene in the office;
- Ensure those in leadership position stay calm and demonstrate positive behaviours;

- Talk to staff individually who appear to be demonstrating signs of anxiety. Listen to their concerns and assist them in problem solving;
- Refer your staff to medical assistance and/or counselling services where available;
- Help keep things in perspective and balance. Encourage staff to take care of their health and practice good self-care as this helps maintain a strong immune system