

HR Insights

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Supporting Employees Affected by International Crises

Supporting employee well-being is a critical responsibility of HR teams. Unfortunately, this worthwhile endeavor isn't always straightforward. It can be particularly challenging when it comes to factors stemming from outside the workplace, such as international crises.

Amid these difficult circumstances, employees may be affected in a number of unique ways. It's important for HR teams to be able to respond with supportive solutions to help ward off employee distress.

This article outlines methods HR teams can use to help support employees during times of international crisis.

Consider Different Employees' Backgrounds

Employees have unique histories, relationships and personal experiences. Some may have relatives stuck in the middle of an active crisis; others may have served in the military, experienced past trauma or moved from a crisis area. During international crises, employees' unique backgrounds can trigger feelings of depression and anxiety, even if they aren't directly involved in the event.

With that in mind, it's safe to assume at least some employees will be directly or indirectly affected when an international crisis happens. This means employers should be prepared to respond to employee well-being issues whenever international crises emerge, even if the potential effects on a workforce aren't immediately apparent.

Learn to Spot Emotional Cues

While employee reactions to an international crisis will vary, there are still common emotional signs employers can watch out for. **For instance, employers can prepare for upticks in anxiety, stress, depression, irritability and reduced productivity. Managers should be trained to look out for these signals and start dialogues with employees when issues occur.** Proactive conversations about well-being can help address employee issues before they worsen.

However, while proactive conversations can help in some cases, they do present potential privacy concerns. In other words, if a manager notices an employee acting out of character during times of crisis, it may not be prudent to pressure the employee into revealing their emotional triggers. Instead, managers can emphasize the confidentiality of available resources, such as professional counseling.

Express a Commitment to Compassion

When an international crisis strikes, it's important for organizational leadership to respond to the moment. Generally, this involves a CEO or president sending a message about a workplace's commitment to its employees during these troubling times. More specifically, messaging could elaborate on how the organization intends to support affected employees, such as through mental health counseling sessions.

Provide Safe Discussion Spaces

Employees who are experiencing distress from an international conflict may need to talk about it. Hosting an employer-sponsored meeting space for employees to discuss their feelings can be a meaningful way to help process emotions. These groups might even be

led by crisis counselors or similar professionals.

Alternatively, it can be just as important for employers to provide a space where the international crisis is not discussed at all. Such a space can offer valuable relief to employees who have been inundated with news about the event.

Offer Worthwhile Support Resources

Tangible resources can sometimes make the most difference to employees dealing with the effects of an international crisis. **HR teams should communicate all available resources to employees.** Potential options include employer-sponsored counseling appointments, scheduling flexibility and mental health-related informational materials.

Conclusion

International crises may not seem directly related to U.S. workplaces, but their effects can compromise employees in unique and unexpected ways. Therefore, it's critical for HR teams to be able to support employees during these tumultuous periods.

Reach out to Foundation Benefits for additional workplace guidance.

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