

Defining Effective Strategies for Safety and Communication During the Pandemic

By Kerry N. Jardine

Defining the most effective strategies for safety and internal and external communication during the COVID-19 pandemic was one of Burg Simpson's most pressing challenges. After implementing physical distancing measures, the firm's management team convened to determine the best ways for everyone to communicate effectively and securely while working from remote locations.

Developing a Comprehensive Strategy

Shareholders and practice group leaders from departments across seven states met virtually during the beginning stages of the pandemic and worked together to share collective perspectives about the most effective methods of communication. They collaborated to develop a communication strategy and talking points for attorneys and professional staff that was informative, responsible, and secure.

Creating a Mobile Workforce

After Colorado's governor established mandates for social distancing, the firm moved to adopt a mobile workforce strategy to ensure efficient online collaboration while protecting client confidentiality. To meet this challenge, there was an investment in technology and digital communication tools to facilitate secure communication from any location. All employees were equipped with laptop computers and the remote access necessary to enable secure and confidential communications with clients and colleagues from workstations outside the firm.

Protecting Our Employees

Burg Simpson shareholder Nick Fogel, Practice Group Leader for the Workers' Compensation Department, commented on the firm's approach to protecting employees during the COVID-19 outbreak:

"In response to the pandemic, the firm immediately implemented a series of measured approaches to safeguard employees and mitigate their exposure. For example, we have limited visitors to the office, established policies for social distancing, and provided employees with the hardware and digital tools they need to communicate effectively and securely with clients and colleagues from remote locations. To protect employees who come to the office to work, our management team has installed state-of-the-art, contactless body temperature-assessment kiosks in the lobby, provided face masks and hand sanitizer, and created workstations that keep employees a safe distance apart. To prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to reduce the potential risk of exposure to our workforce, the firm also requires that all employees who enter the building submit an online screening survey that attests to their well-being. As the pandemic evolves, we are continuing to monitor the situation and are adapting our existing safety measures as new information becomes available. Creating a safe and healthy workplace for our employees is our priority."

Staying in Contact with Clients

It is imperative for clients to have easy and reliable access to their attorneys, paralegals, and professional staff during the course of their legal matters. During the pandemic, legal teams made an extra effort to reach out and let clients know that the



client's legal matters, as well as their safety, had been prioritized. Attorneys reassured clients of the legal team's accessibility and the team's availability to discuss client legal matters and concerns by email, telephone, or video conferencing.

Addressing Client Concerns During COVID-19

To address client questions during the pandemic, the management team developed direct outreach campaigns. Monthly e-newsletters to current clients, for example, helped answer common questions about the firm's operations during COVID-19 while clearly outlining and reaffirming our attorneys' ongoing commitment to being accessible and providing the best in legal representation.

Via email and e-newsletters, the firm expressed concern for our clients and hoped that they and their loved ones were safe and doing well during these challenging times. Clients were assured that although some attorneys were working remotely to assist in the social distancing practices necessary to fight the pandemic, the firm remained fully operational and everyone was committed to working on clients' cases and assisting others who were seeking legal representation.

Addressing Public Concerns

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create fear and uncertainty across the globe. Due to the many instances of business interruption in our community, some clients have experienced a greater need for legal counsel than ever before. To address the public's concerns regarding economic instability, attorneys responded by providing interviews about legislative and regulatory developments on local TV and radio stations, writing articles for legal publications, and producing online blog posts

and videos. COVID-19-related information published online was consistently updated and distributed on various social media platforms.

Is Working Remotely the New Normal?

It has been many months since the firm arranged operations to include a mobile workforce to ensure the safety of our clients and our employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the firm has remained fully operational and is committed to serving the needs of our clients at the highest level while protecting the safety of our employees. If productivity continues to remain high and internal and external communications are just as effective via remote access and automated processes, then all employees may soon be provided with the option to work offsite. In addition to adding to employee satisfaction, allowing the staff to work from locations outside the firm may also afford significant financial advantages by lowering operating costs.

Although there is still much evaluation to be done regarding the various aspects associated with working remotely, we have found that where we work may not be as important as how we work. If we continue to experience the successful implementation of virtual workplace accessibility and effective communication methods, the safety inherent in this new work-from-anywhere approach to doing business may have a lasting impact on the firm and perhaps the entire legal industry. ●

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