



**MINORITIES &**

**SUCCESS**

**Life in Workplace, Post COVID**

**Five Tips for Home schooling  
During COVID**

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<http://minoritysuccess.us>

Publisher.....MSPG, Inc.  
Web Design.....Avrin Design  
Editorial.....Michelle Rad  
Lay out Design.....Farimah Farahpour

Free Subscription for Colleges, Libraries and Minority  
Employment Organizations. \$29 all others

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Vol. XXX No. 1 ISSN# 1058-6318

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# Life in the Workplace, Post-Covid

By J Blair Brown

Following the COVID pandemic, as many states navigate from red zone to yellow zone, many will re-assimilate to their previous office space, warehouse, restaurant, etc. While some will return (thankfully) with a new attitude and positive outlook on life, there will be others who will bring their same-old negative traits. What to do?

NOW is a great time to ‘nip those issues in the bud,’ as the saying goes. Face them head-on, without hesitation. To be sure, it would be kind to give folks an opportunity to, once again, become members of your

team. But keep in mind that it’s also a disservice (to those who are the opposite of negativity) when you don’t exercise your right to properly discipline those who cause friction in the workplace. In fact, it’s an affront to all who abide by the rules.

This puts the responsibility squarely on those in leadership positions. It is management’s duty to make certain that the workplace is both safe and tolerable; otherwise, the workplace suffers, good employees leave - and you’ll be stuck with what’s left. Ask yourself: is that the workplace I want to be a part of?

So let’s say (for argument’s sake) that you’re ready to speak up, take charge and assure the workplace IS a safe and tolerable space for you and your staff members. Where should you start, and how? Below are four recommendations that The Cohesive Workplace suggest you implement immediately. These will serve as reminders to your staff as to why they decided to work with you in the first place:

1. Welcome back your staff members OFFICIALLY. Use your ‘welcome’ to acknowledge that we’ve all gone through a challenging time and

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you're looking forward to overcoming those challenges together... as a team. To not address 'the pink elephant in the room' would be insensitive, particularly if any of your staff members were affected in any way during the pandemic.

2. Begin on a positive note. Let's not rehash any negative incidences of the workplace prior to COVID. Make it official: we're starting with a clean slate! While major infractions cannot (and should not) be ignored, let your staff know you're 'not sweating the small stuff.' Life's too short to be undone by minor irritants. Your business, as well as your employees, are worth more.

3. Keep an open door policy (to a degree). Trust us: your staff members are still afraid... of COVID, their future with the company, and other issues they might be facing at home. Remind them that you're in their corner. While you may not be able to solve all their problems, you're a trustworthy advocate and a listening ear who can offer, perhaps, a positive word (or two) of advice. Your door is open, should they need to vent.

4. Create opportunities for advancement. To be sure, next to salary, the opportunity for advancement within your company is top priority! It sends a clear signal where one stands within the company when that company looks outside of its own ranks for a candidate - especially when its own employees are qualified! That 'signal' is a negative one. It screams, "We do not value you as an employee!" Once that message permeates the air, it's difficult to reel it back in. Often protests follow (however silent) and eventually everyone in the workplace is miserable. If you haven't already implemented a program for in-house promotions, NOW is a great time to start.

These are just FOUR benchmarks to consider - if you haven't already done so - which, in turn, will create a positive and lasting effect on your employees while also increasing productivity. (Can you say "win-win"?)

There are more topics to follow, such as: the need for autonomy in the workplace; revisiting your pay scale; offering a healthy dietary lifestyle in the workplace; and many others. And we're looking forward to covering each and more.

Be sure to subscribe to our website at [thecohesiveworkplace.com](http://thecohesiveworkplace.com) so you don't miss a thing.

Here's to your success!

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# Who Will Be the Winners When the Pandemic Ends?

By Sam Obitz

If you are looking for financial investment advice, you are in the wrong place. If you are looking for some key attributes of those most likely to thrive, ones that may help you attain more solid footing than most once the pandemic ends, please read on.

How you view the pandemic will likely be determinative. Some people dwell on all that has been lost and all that continues to be unavailable. Some merely accept that “it is what it is” and go about their lives. Many take their foot off the proverbial gas

and chill like it’s an extended vacation, until it looks like it will be over. A select few however, also accept that “it is what it is,” but also look at it as an opportunity to improve their lot in life.

Guess which ones are most likely to be the winners once this Pandemic ends? The select few who look at this as a challenge to be overcome have a distinct advantage over all the rest. They are using their ingenuity to come up with new ways of doing things, many that they would not have had the time, desire or need to come up with had the Pandemic never occurred.

One example of this is a client of mine who was previously resistant to the use of mental reps and skeptical of their value. Now he is using them regularly and already seeing some benefits, which include increased confidence and less wear and tear on his body. He has already told me that mental reps will be a part of his workout regimen going forward.

Additionally, several of my young basketball clients are working on areas of their game that they had not previously put as much focus on. Some are working on ball handling

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and others on strength and conditioning. While my players are focused on getting better, many of the players they are competing against are using their extra free time to boost their social media accounts. As a result, the ones focused on their social media accounts will likely be passed up on the court when play resumes. We have already seen more drastic shifts in the rankings of high school football players than in years past, and I expect to see a similar results for all the high school basketball players who are taking advantage of this situation as well.

I have always said that the real gains players make are in the off-season and the pandemic is causing us to be in a perpetual off-season. Those who took the time to develop a process orientation prior to the pandemic will reap many rewards that others will miss. Those who were in the habit of working even harder during the off-season will also benefit.

As the great Muhammad Ali said, “The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses - behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights.” Are you putting in all the effort you can when no one is watching? If you aren’t, you can be sure the people that end up taking your spot have been.

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# The Effects of COVID-19 on Small Retail Businesses

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has seen a widespread closing of businesses. Overall, businesses of all sizes were hit and the United States has seen a drastic decline in the number of active business owners.

The future of small business is uncertain. Downward demand shifts, health concerns, and enforced policies have forced many to shut down their business operations since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

For instance, a [report from the](#)

[NCBI](#) states that between February and April 2020, over 3.3 million businesses were inactive, indicating a slump of 22 percent. This drop-in active businesses is the largest ever recorded in the U.S., with a loss in business activity spreading across almost all industries. Yet, against all odds, some small businesses have shown that there is a way to thrive even during these uncertain times.

In this article, we take a look at how some retail businesses have revamped their approach to prosper during the pandemic.

[Data from the NPD Group](#) suggests that the COVID-19 outbreak has accelerated digital adoption in retail: in 2018 digital foodservice accounted for only 5 percent of the retail food business, compared to 20 percent in 2020. Additionally, new users currently make up 48 percent of third-party foodservice delivery app users. Yet, according to a [survey](#) conducted in the fall of 2020, about the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses, only 12.2 percent of small business owners reported that their operations were profitable and growing. This shows a

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decline of almost 20 percent when compared to the previous year. To stay in the game, some small retail businesses have completely turned the tide around by shifting their trade towards products with increased demand. For example, Tokki, a reusable gift wrap company based in Seattle, has completely shifted its cloth inventory towards the production of face masks. Moreover, in an interview with CNBC, Josh Silverman, CEO of Etsy, has revealed that over 20,000 shops on his platform were now crafting and selling face masks. This number shows that many small entrepreneurs are ready to pivot their business operations towards products in demand. For instance, the demand for cleaning supplies has skyrocketed since the outbreak of the coronavirus. Households, medical

facilities, offices, and businesses are all in need of sanitizers and cleaners to stay on the safe side. The hand-sanitizing business alone is expected to reach \$1.96 billion by 2026, up from \$1.22 billion in 2018.

### *4 Common traits of businesses that thrived during the pandemic*

#### *Flexibility*

When the pandemic started spreading and major regulatory procedures were set for businesses, retailers that were able to accommodate these changes successfully kept their doors open. For instance, contact-free pickup, home-shopping, and delivery options enabled many retailers to stay in the game.

Additionally, some businesses have reviewed their staffing policies by

making their staff work alternate hours and shifts to reduce the risk of exposure to the pandemic. Changing your whole business model requires some gut, but flexibility is essential if you want to thrive during times of uncertainty.

#### *Excellent Communication*

Communication can be the difference between a struggling business and a flourishing one. Being transparent about what is happening and what your intentions are is vital. Keeping up with contact tracing and routinely communicating to your workers and consumer base maintains that much-needed trust factor.

Even if face-to-face interactions are limited during the pandemic, do not hesitate to use other communication channels to reach out to all

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stakeholders of your business. Social media, newsletters, and podcasts can help you get your message across. Choose what works best for your business and go for it.

### *Social Responsibility*

Do not forget your social responsibility as a business owner. As a refresher, social responsibility simply means working towards the best interest of the whole society, while managing your business. Ensuring your business is socially responsible can have a significant impact on the way your brand is perceived and directly impact your business reputation.

Being socially responsible as a business can be achieved in a number of ways. For instance, following proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures during a pandemic or enforcing hygiene protocols in your business are good starting points. If you are in a state with mask mandates, you should also consider refusing entry to customers who are not wearing face masks. Yes, this leaves money on the table, but at the same time, it shows to your workforce and clients that you go the extra mile to ensure their safety.

### *Creativity*

While all businesses need a little creativity to shine, the pandemic has given the opportunity to many business owners to rethink their whole approach. The coronavirus may just be the chance you were looking for to test your latest idea. Being forward-thinking and finding new ways to solve your customers' problems can give you the edge for fighting the pandemic.

Think out-of-the-box to find solutions for your customers and while you are at it, why not think of alternative ways to enhance your supply chain. Also, if you run a brick-and-mortar business, consider the different ways you can integrate technology to your physical store to enhance your customer experience.

### *Overcome Obstacles with Technology*

Running a small business during a global pandemic is a daunting task, especially if you are in the retail space. Yet, as discussed in this article, there are businesses flourishing even during the COVID-19 outbreak. Adapting to the situation is the key to overcoming it, and technology may just be the piece of the puzzle that gives you the edge.

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# Five Tips For Home Schooling During Covid-19

By Jackie Tay

Due to Covid-19, all children received home education because the schools were closed. The primary schools in certain countries will open (in part) on May. Not all children will go to full school immediately. For example, primary schools halve the group size in the classroom. About 50 percent Children go to school at all time. The other half of the time they attend home education. Schools are now deciding on how to get it best organized, and parents will be informed about this after that.

## Tip 1. Keep it achievable

Learning at home should also be fun, so that it can be sustained for the children, but especially for you as a parent. You do this by keeping it relaxed and not increasing their pressure.

### Fixed rhythm

A steady rhythm helps to keep it fun for everyone. You can divide school work over the day and alternate it with relaxation, eating or drinking moments and playing outside. Do not handle the

schedule too tightly. When children wander, or become restless, it can be good to start doing another activity.

The relationship between parent and child - as a teacher and student - can create tension.

Be aware of the changed relationship. As a parent you are not trained as a home teacher and you have to combine this with work. If it doesn't work in the beginning, try to seek relaxation in other activities together.

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### Tip 2. Alternate work and exercise

It is important for all children to exercise during the day. Some children have a great need for exercise and sports. It is good to stimulate movement.

Fortunately, many sports clubs are open where you can exercise outside. This means that many children will regain rhythm in their weekly (sports) activities.

There are all kinds of fitness videos on YouTube for children and young people. In ten minutes, these videos offer a small workout. Of course, running or cycling is also an option.

### Tip 3. Use teaching materials from school and beyond

A lot of digital teaching material is now available. Primary and secondary school teachers usually give assignments online. The work that children have to do is ready for them. That provides support and structure.

Teachers, of course, make sure that the material matches the level of the child. If you also use teaching material from outside school, it is important to be careful about this.

### Tip 4. Talk to others about how things are going

Make sure there is room for everyone to tell how things are going and to ask questions. Everyone is doing their best and trying things out to find out what works. Sometimes it goes well and sometimes it does not. It helps to share these experiences with others. Seek advice if things are not going well.

It is nice for children to talk after a few hours of work. For example, ask what they have learned. Not to check them, but to show that you take the school work seriously and to finish it well together.

### Tip 5. Organize help on time

If giving or receiving home education is not going well, it is important to get help. Sometimes distance education is not successful, because there are tensions at home, or because there are no resources, such as a computer or the internet.

Even now that education is partly starting up again, it can be complicated to organize the activities during the week. Younger children may already be able to go to school and older children may not yet. It is possible that some of the children receive education at school and some still need home education. Contact the teacher or someone else from school if there are difficulties.



# Employment Struggles for Older Workers

By Bill Ryan

It's happening again. One of the perverse hallmarks of the Great Recession ten years ago was the expulsion of many older workers from the workforce. A significant amount of experienced employees found themselves forced into sudden unemployment or premature retirement. Many never fully recovered financially or emotionally and their careers were left scarred and lacking in dignified closure. The current Covid-induced recession is again presenting similar employment hardship for mature workers. Since

March the labor market has shed many senior-aged men and women, who possess both high and low skill levels. In other words, this elder layoff is widespread.

Unfortunately, this is not turning out to be simply a temporary furlough for these workers, but rather a longer-termed separation marked by an acceleration of egregious trends. Again, as during the last recession, newly trending labor shifts are weakening older workers' employment security. Previous examples included labor-saving technologies and increased work loads for younger and

less expensive staff, which combined to lessen the management need to restore previous personnel levels. Once again, mature employees find their bargaining power diminished when facing dismissal and rehiring. Weak or non-existent unions, the rise of the gig economy, and continued lenient enforcement of age-discrimination laws, not to mention the harmful economic disruption from Covid, leave senior workers feeling increasingly insecure and inadequate.

The New School's Retirement Equity Lab studies the factors impacting the

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quality of retirement, which necessitates an examination of when a retreat from work is chosen or forced. Their assessment of the plight of older workers is sobering. Even for those older workers who haven't yet been laid off there is considerable uncertainty about their futures. This cohort more and more knows they are less employable than younger workers. Those over age 55 often realize that if they were to quit their current jobs the chances of transitioning to one that is comparable or better is doubtful. For many, it becomes prudent to stick with a less than satisfying job, then to risk unemployment.

Relatively robust earnings have traditionally been an expectation for long-term commitment to a profession and/or an employer. Seems fair, right? However, these days when an older worker is rehired after a job loss hourly wages are typically lower than with the former job. Workers aged 50-61 receive 20% less pay with their new job while workers 62 and older see a decrease of 27%. In addition, once a worker hits their fifties periods of unemployment after a lay off are longer than for workers aged less than 50.

The growth in uncertainty and low confidence older workers face add to the weakness of their bargaining power. Employers know in most cases that they have the upper hand with older workers, except for those situations in which the worker possesses a unique or hard to find skill. This is unfortunate. A lifetime of work deserves value and respect. Retirement in the modern era should be a reward for the toil, dedication, and achievement for decades of work, not an imposed isolation or banishment due to the vicissitudes of employment economics.

As the Retirement Equity Lab points out, policy makers may need to intervene with schemes designed to lessen the hardships for prematurely laid off older workers. For example, employers could offer rainy day or emergency savings plans through payroll deductions, which become available when needed to augment unemployment benefits or the federal government could step in with a guaranteed retirement account savings option to supplement what retirees receive from Social Security. Of course, more stringent enforcement of The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 would help immensely.

Careers are a vocation and a calling to develop mastery and contribute to society. For others, work is simply a means to a paycheck. Either way, growing old should not be viewed as a liability or a deficiency to take advantage of.

# COVID-19 Offers Surprising Opportunities for Successful Projects

By Tom Staskiewicz

At the end of this article executives, business and project owners will, hopefully, realize, because they are looking at **COVID-19** and seeing only the negatives, they may be missing opportunities.

## Never Ending Change: the COVID-19 Opportunity

One thing you can count on is the need for change. **COVID-19** has made truer than any time in history. Whether it's a change in behaviors, worker and customer protections, operating hours, cleaning and

disinfecting procedures, the number of employees working or customers being served at any one time; regardless there is one common theme: the need for change.

**COVID-19** created new challenges for multi-state organizations accustomed to organizational standards. The pandemic challenges this goal, as businesses receive new local and state government and health requirements. Establishing policies that span the organization, however desirable, may not be practical. There must be flexibility to localize the response.

With all this said you cannot let these challenges get you down. Resilience is the answer. You must be looking for opportunities.

## Look for Opportunities

Where do you find opportunities?

Banks, stores and other customer facing businesses have innovated by installing Plexiglas shields, creating a safer environment, reducing the chance for employees or customers to transmit airborne contaminants, not just the **COVID-19** virus but also those for

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the flu and common cold.

For companies making shields, this was an opportunity. Were they making shields previously, maybe not. The shields may now be a new product line or maybe the material was scrap from larger jobs that would have been recycled or discarded. Regardless, it was an unexpected opportunity; are you searching for your opportunities?

If your business has an outdated showroom, remodeling can be a challenge because of the disruption to the sales floor, however, now because of the **COVID-19** reduced traffic, this may be the ideal time to remodel.

Gyms and similar facilities are rearranging equipment to allow social distancing. This makes sense but is it all they can do? Are there other enhancements or changes that could

be accomplished while participation is down?

Have you considered whether your organization has a product line that is not producing and the source of the problem? Is it a lack of product knowledge by the sales force? Now is the time to update the training program that can be delivered virtually or in small groups. While the sales force is not as actively engaged, are you using this opportunity for training events? Do you have a piece of equipment, a software application, a system causing an inordinate amount of downtime or just not operating efficiently? Several years ago, I was contracted to solve a technology issue with the remote sales force. The problem had been looked at by several technicians, but they couldn't spend the necessary time investigating. It took three days to resolve, do you have similar challenges?

Take time now or bring in someone to

help you find your opportunities!

### **COVID-19 Success Story**

Read this article about the completion of the [Salt Lake City Airport](#). Salt Lake found the benefit in the pandemic when the reduced airport traffic enabled construction in passenger areas to progress at a faster clip and saved \$300 Million dollars and took years off the project!

### **Virtual Project Meetings**

Successfully completing projects on time and at or under budget, is a challenge in the best of times. All projects are subject to distractions, modifications, scope creep, interference, special requests, and personal agendas, which, if allowed, will throw a project off schedule and destroy the budget. Business managers must exercise control over project managers, team members and stakeholders to prevent or at least mitigate distractions.

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According to the PMBOK, Project Management Book of Knowledge, project control is to be exercised through face-to-face individual and team meetings. These are the times when the executive or project owner can examine the current status and, if necessary, reset focus to ensure the project stays on or gets back on track. This is also the point where control is frequently lost because individual agendas can change the focus.

**COVID-19** makes face-to-face meetings difficult, if not impossible! However, today's technology can overcome those limitations. Even better this is an opportunity to rethink the process. Instead of being tied to the physical presence of a face-to-face meeting use virtual meetings. Face-to-face meetings can be difficult to arrange because of travel schedules or other issues. Virtual meetings overcome these issues because they are just that "virtual". They can happen anywhere and at any time. Excuses for not meeting become more difficult to justify.

#### **Virtual Meetings Provide More Control**

Virtual meetings are easier for the project owner to control. Ground rules can be set requiring participants to be muted and the organizer can control this. Those wishing to speak can be required to signal that desire and, if the input goes off topic, the organizer can respectfully put an end to it.

#### **Mitigating Project Scope Creep**

Physical meetings can drag on, virtual meetings should not be endless. They should be arranged for a set amount of time (30 - 60 minutes) with a specific, previously shared agenda and when the time is up, the meeting ends. Topics, that are not part of the project should be addressed separately to manage and mitigate scope creep.

#### **Social Distancing in Project Meetings**

Today, face-to-face meetings lose much of their value as we practice social distancing and wear masks. We have lost the "close up" benefits where we can "read" the other side and see important facial expressions. These are key to really understanding the other person.

Virtual meetings do not require masks or social distancing: expressions are still "out in the open". You sit at a normal distance from your computer and, as long as you have a decent screen size, you can read the facial expressions.

#### **Summary**

After reading this article you, business executives and owners, should be asking what are your COVID-19 opportunities? What projects have you put off? Don't waste any more time: **THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!**

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