

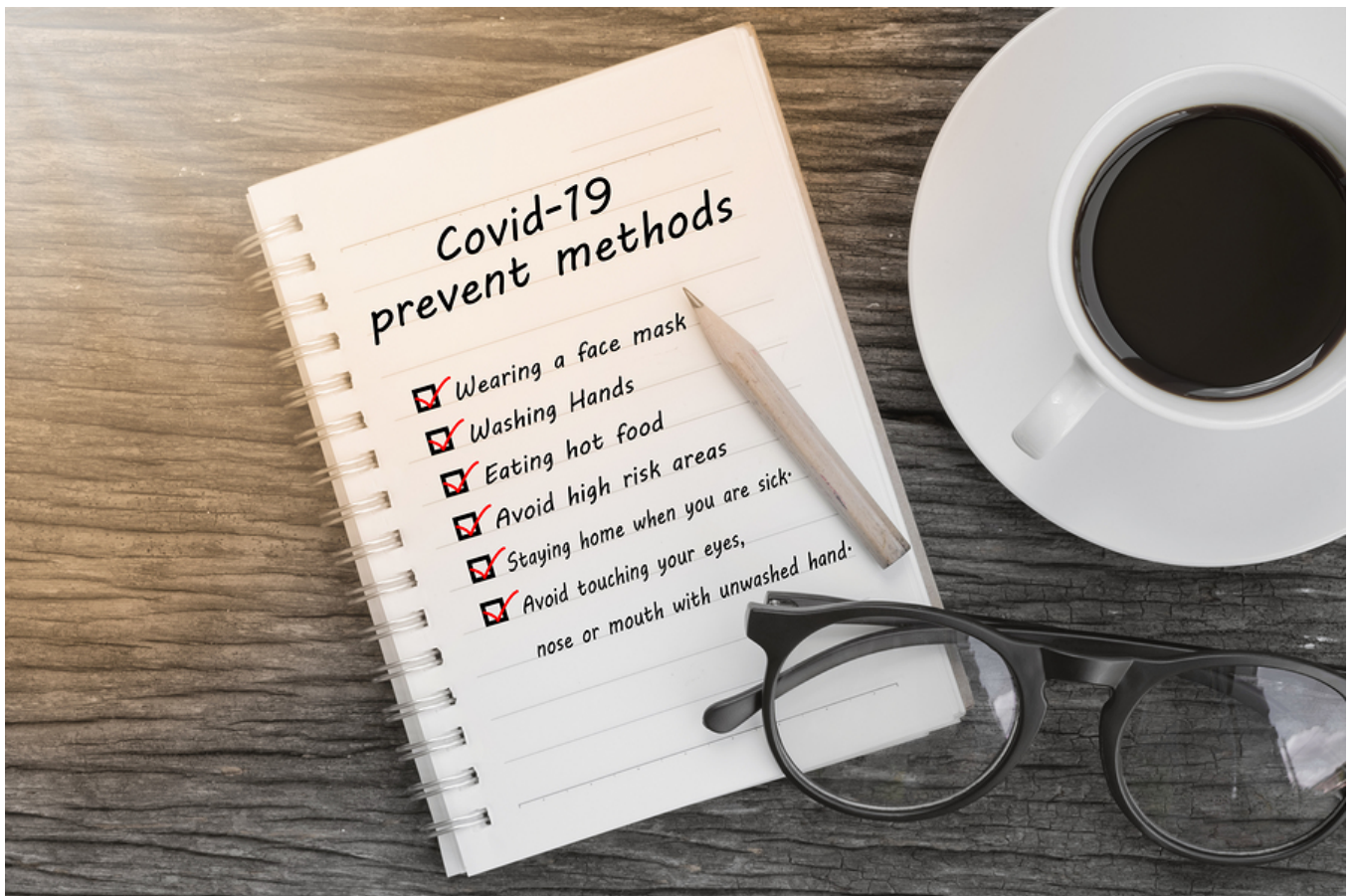
MARCH 2020

## How Are CHROs Responding to COVID-19?

---

John Doyle

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



Across the nation, HR professionals are on high alert and doubling down on efforts to protect the wellbeing of their employees and customers. Many CHROs we've talked with recently admit to never working harder in their careers than they have in the past few days and weeks. There's no denying that HR is at the forefront of the organizational response to COVID-19 and its impact on the workforce.

One of the most challenging elements of this crisis is that when it comes to HR, there's no one-size-fits-all response. While most companies have documented crisis response plans, there's no HR playbook for handling a global pandemic. Depending on their industry sector, some businesses are contracting while others are expanding. Either way, CHROs aren't standing on the sidelines watching it all take place – they're helping to write the playbook day by day.

What is clear is that HR is taking on two key roles in this time: first, protect and support their employees through this crisis; and second, continue "everyday" HR duties in an effort to prepare for the new normal ahead of us.

For many businesses, that looks like managing employee relations in a virtual environment and tweaking work-from-home policies accordingly. For companies that are ramping up their hiring efforts (think Walmart, Amazon, Instacart, CVS, GE Healthcare, and many more), HR is stepping up to figure out how to recruit and onboard new employees in a safe, socially responsible manner. This is especially true for those companies that are operating almost completely remotely. Virtual interviews are becoming the new normal, and virtual onboarding and training are forcing an extra measure of creativity.

Furthermore, many HR leaders are revising leave policies and other benefits to support their employees. Some examples of HR-led changes include employee relief funds, catastrophe pay, shorter hours, travel restrictions, flex-work, furloughs, and more. That's not to mention new federal and state requirements, including the paid sick leave provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act – HR leaders are seeing more changes come across their (virtual) desks than ever before.

Interestingly, it's becoming clear that many people are simply craving human interaction during this time of isolation. As such, HR leaders are stepping up to support their workforce in adjusting to their virtual work environment and leveraging technical solutions in new ways to connect with each other.

Ultimately, HR is moving forward in anticipation of recovery – a move that should bring hope to our workforces and fellow leaders alike.