

FOCUS ON CORONAVIRUS

CX Leaders: You're on the Precipice of Innovation

The onset of coronavirus has required us all to become crisis management experts overnight.

We know, from personal and professional experience, that the societal impact of COVID-19 has heightened anxieties. Our research showed consumer concerns more than doubling within weeks, from 16% feeling highly anxious at the beginning of March to 39% at the end of the month.

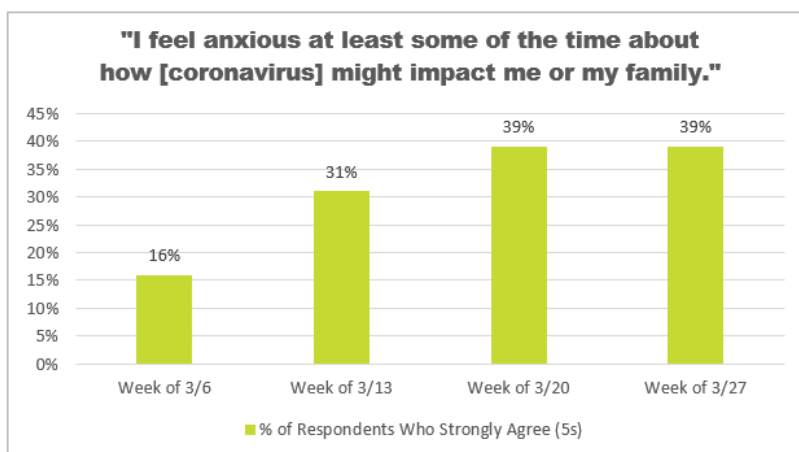
The companies who provide customers with peace of mind alongside their products and services will emerge well-positioned to retain and grow their customer bases. There is a clear relationship between compassion and customer experience: companies who have been bold in their strategies to help customers have seen, on average, a 4-point lift in Net Promoter® scores over the last several weeks.

Delivering a sense of tranquility amid turbulence, however, is easier said than done. It demands courageous ideas, new support models, and different ways to embody empathy. And without question, the key to living out these principles lies in the hands of employees.

But employees are coping with this new reality too. In order for them to help you innovate to better support customers, you must first support your teams.

In a recent survey within our own organization, we asked employees to articulate the emotions they were feeling related to their work. We discovered nervousness is the employee emotion being expressed to the highest degree. This wasn't a surprise. The economic impacts of coronavirus coupled with the personal anxiety surrounding exposure has led to near-universal anxiety at some level.

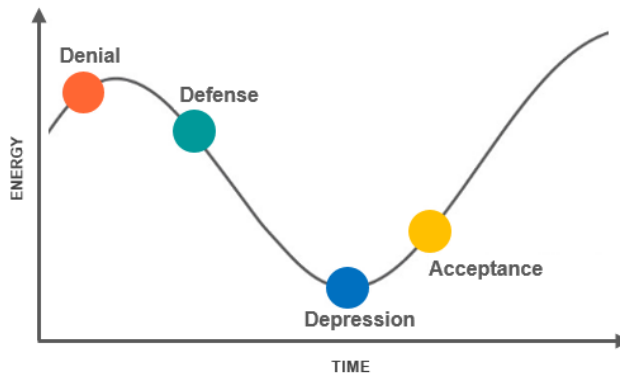
The question then becomes: how do we acknowledge that, and create an environment in which employees can feel and perform their best? We need to know how are they feeling, how are they adapting, and what they need.



Source: Concentrix employee research study, 2020

Employee Response to Change

The Kübler-Ross Change Curve is a model that outlines how employees typically process big changes in their work environment. The high degree of nervousness being felt right now tends to align to the Kubler-Ross stage of *Depression*. Shortly after *Depression* comes *Acceptance*. *Acceptance* is a pivotal milestone for employees, their experience at work, and their ability to help you innovate.



At this point, they've accepted the new normal and are appreciative of different ways of working. The takeaway? Your employees, like ours, are likely between *Depression* and *Acceptance*, which means you're on the precipice of CX innovation.

How do you tap into this opportunity? Try this short and achievable four-point plan.

1

Understand employee emotions.

Employee research, especially now, will help you determine when the time is right to leverage your employees for CX innovation. In the employee survey referenced before, teammates were asked the Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ).

The DEQ emotions can be aligned to the Kübler-Ross Change Curve, giving leadership insight into how employees are moving through the stages of change and when they are on the verge of *Acceptance*—the optimal stage for sourcing ideas.

2

Remove barriers to basic tasks.

Beyond quantifying emotions, research will help you uncover challenges that employees currently face when doing their work. Asking employees to support both your customers and contribute to CX innovation before caring for their basic work challenges will result in increased frustration and a longer period of time until the *Acceptance* stage is reached.

For example, VPN connectivity, communication channels, and changes to physical workspaces are the most common roadblocks to effective remote work. These roadblocks will vary dramatically from one company to the next—based on industry and infrastructure. Identifying the immediate barriers, then removing them, is an important step towards better serving your employees and preparing them to support CX innovation. Once these hurdles are eliminated, teammates will be equipped to contribute to the CX improvement mission—even in the midst of a crisis.

3

Give employees a renewed sense of purpose.

Movement along the Kübler-Ross Change Curve is impossible without energy. To accelerate the shift through the emotions towards *Acceptance*, employees must be motivated. But motivation in turbulent times can be easy to lose—especially as it pertains to work.

How do you keep motivation high? When we talked to team members who found it easy to stay motivated these days, we found their biggest motivator is having a renewed sense of purpose and understanding the critical impact of their work. They've witnessed successes amid all of the trials, and find that to be inspiring. After learning this, our leadership began circulating the highlights and wins experienced as of late to strengthen motivation among all employees. Rekindling fires in the hearts of a team will, in turn, drive engagement.

4

Embrace ideas and creativity systematically.

Once your employees' emotions are aligned to the *Acceptance* phase, you've removed roadblocks they commonly encounter, and communicated a new sense of purpose throughout the team, it's time to harness all of the newfound energy to fuel positive change and innovation. Interacting with customers, who today are anxious and likely experiencing hardships, should lead to learnings and lessons. Thoughts on how to improve their situations should surface. Employees, with their refreshed outlook, will feel inspired to share ideas.

It's important, though, that these creative suggestions are captured in a systematic way for swift action to be taken. Without some parameters in place, leadership will spend more time sorting through and making sense of ideas instead of enabling process improvements.

In addition to employee surveys, companies should establish an employee elevations program. This allows employees to submit innovative ideas on an ongoing basis, whenever they come to mind. An elevations case management system will bring concepts to fruition, and further motivate teammates to contribute ideas.

Albert Einstein famously said, "In the midst of every great crisis lies great opportunity." The time for innovation is now, and your people can help.

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+1 800 747-0583 | analytics@concentrix.com

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