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Leading During Challenging Times — How to Build Trust, Care, Transparency

We are all too well aware of what happened in March 2020: offices closed, workers were [sent home](#), and businesses across the country were forced into [lay-offs](#). Quest Defense was not immune, and we had to make the hard decision to lay off workers to survive. However, by the spring of 2021, we could bring back the majority of those we had had to lay off in 2020.

So how did we do this?

When we were forced to lay off employees, we expressed our hope that we'd bring them back in the future. We also transparently communicated with the employees who stayed to ensure they understood why our actions were necessary. We then kept a roster of every employee we had to lay off, and when the time came to re-hire their position, we stuck to our promise and made them our first call. By the spring of 2021, we had reached out to every employee we had laid off to check in or offer their job back. More than half of those employees came back.

We have no business without our employees. Whether there is a worldwide pandemic or worldwide peace, leadership needs to prioritize building trust, care, and transparency with our employees every day.

Trust isn't built overnight.

To understand how our team was able to weather the pandemic, let's rewind to 2008, the year ASE Technologies was acquired by Quest. At the time, many employees were worried — [acquisitions](#) have often led to massive layoffs and plummeting stock prices. However, we actively worked to ensure we did not lose employees during our acquisition, and we still have seven, including our founders. These employees have grown into leadership positions, providing an example to the rest of our team of the kind of care and consideration we prioritize with our employees. This history of loyalty has since built a foundation of trust that helped see us through the pandemic and will continue to bring us forward as we forge ahead into the future.

Keep channels of communication open.

With the prevalence of [remote work](#), it has become much harder to connect with our employees on a day-to-day basis. However, we will not build trust if no one ever hears from us.

We hold frequent all-hands meetings and touch base with employees via weekly newsletters. These newsletters come from leaders within our organization and might discuss anything from

business performance to social events to employee recognitions. The all-hands meetings and our newsletter show employees that our leaders are not mere figureheads but engaged with their day-to-day.

We also connect out of the office by planning monthly happy hours and other social events. When employees are allowed to connect in a pressure-free environment, they are much more likely to forge genuine connections with their co-workers. These connections form a web throughout the company, creating resilient teams and, thus, a more resilient business.

Listen to your employees.

That said, no newsletter or monthly happy hour will do much good if leaders don't listen to (and take to heart) employee [feedback](#). The most fundamental aspect of building care and trust with our employees is simple: [listen](#) to them.

Quest Global conducts an employee satisfaction survey every new year, and we have an employee satisfaction council that meets every other week. The council works to understand the collective feedback and create tangible action steps in response. We then update our employees at all-hands meetings on the status of the initiatives that were born out of their feedback. It's not enough to conduct a survey; we need to take action and follow through on our promises. When this happens, employees understand that their needs will be heard and respected by leadership, and they begin to trust the company has their best interest at heart.

Trust is the foundation.

Trust is the foundation of any business — it is what keeps our house standing upright even when there is a hurricane raging outside. And while we can't predict the future, we can build a team that can withstand even the most challenging of times. When you have the trust of your team, they will not feel scared to follow you forward into the murky and uncertain future. Instead, they will pick up their flashlights, pack some snacks, and get ready to walk alongside you.