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Are Health And Safety Plans Obsolete Now That There Are Vaccines?

Risk mitigation solutions help organizations address the inevitability of more health crises

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Vault Workforce Screening

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Many employment and human resources blogs are churning out stories about employee concerns surrounding the coronavirus vaccine.

But we recently conducted a social media poll and found the exact opposite: an average of **67% of respondents say they have no vaccine concerns**.

What does this tell us?

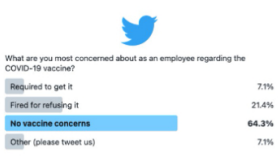
That businesses may be better off focusing on implementing workplace health and safety solutions, rather than wasting valuable time and money overthinking vaccine guidelines.

Here are the vital risk mitigation steps for employers to take while vaccines are still in the distribution phase.

Costly Coronavirus

Our two polls, run concurrently on LinkedIn and Twitter during the second week of January, show similar results.





Nearly 70% of respondents average no vaccine concerns. Combined, all three additional answers tied for second place with 21%: people who fear they'll be fired for refusing a vaccine, people who fear their employers will require them to take it, and other.

Knowing that most employees don't have concerns about the Covid-19 vaccine frees employers up to tackle an even bigger, more pressing issue - how to reopen workplaces safely, confidently, and with enough long-term solutions to stem any new health crises.

Consider this: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation reported in 2015 **the average cost of influenza for businesses averaged $87 billion annually**. Now add what is potentially an annual seasonal outbreak of coronavirus to that number, and you are looking at a very real, very large problem businesses must solve. It's imperative organizations make a similar investment to stave off Covid-19 and whatever pandemic will come next while their employees continue to work remotely.

Time is on Your Side

A recent survey of 3.6 million verified business professionals found that 33 percent of companies are postponing their return-to-work plans until the first quarter of 2021. Some major players like Google, Microsoft, Target, and Ford Motor have announced plans to delay until summer 2021. These decisions, while not ideal for all, give employers the time they need to implement a comprehensive return-to-work solution that mitigates risk to employees' personal health and safety, communicate those plans and procedures, and install the new technology needed to protect its daily operations.



As of January 11, people have used the CDCs online coronavirus checker more than 40.4 million times. This indicates employees are willing to take some individual responsibility to ensure they stay healthy and aren't a risk to others. Employees want to be assured they will be returning to safe and healthy workspaces, and that responsibility is falling heavily to human resources professionals.

HR's New Reality

In the past year, human resources has arguably seen more change than it has in the past 20 years combined. Navigating the impact of the pandemic has involved extraordinary effort on everyone's part, but perhaps mostly for HR leadership and team members.

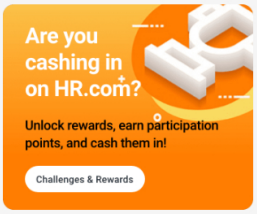
Human resources manages the very foundation your business is built upon. Throughout the past year, it has been HR trying to maintain your company's culture, even if all your employees have been working remotely. It has been HR delivering much of the bad news to staff. Most importantly, however, HR is key to rebuilding your staff's confidence in the "new normal," whatever that may be for your business. In many cases, HR is the new link between department leaders, finding innovative solutions to bridge corporate culture and company policy with information technology and new safety solutions.

Reopen for the Long Term

A centralized integrated platform that has a range of scanning, tracking, and communication tools can help

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ensure everyone's safety, regardless if they've been vaccinated or not. There are numerous tools you can add to your health and safety suite, but these are the most common and proven business methods for prevention of illness. A comprehensive platform that includes the following components also acts as a risk mitigation plan for future health crises:

- Thermal entrance scanning
- Distance monitoring and contact tracing
- Analytics dashboard
- Mobile app

How you choose to screen your staff is entirely up to you. While managers can rely on security cameras and spot checks to ensure mask wearing and proper social distancing, distance monitoring and contact tracing enables leadership to detect potential and existing risks more effectively and quickly to reduce the likelihood of exposing other employees. Contact tracing not only informs you who may be at risk based on location but identifies the location and duration of any exposures.

A combination of wearable devices for employees and fixed devices across the facility is the ideal risk mitigation approach to contact tracing. Wearable devices continually track employees' movements, recording the distance and duration of interactions – and alert individuals in real-time when they are at increased risk. Fixed devices capture a critical distance monitoring point of view for employers and leadership can use that tracing information to analyze foot traffic density and change space configurations, if needed. If an outbreak does occur, these recorded encounters are highly valuable for notifying those who may need to quarantine or be tested.

A truly effective workplace contact tracing program will also have an automated alert and communication system that immediately informs employees of a potential exposure while also protecting employees' identities. An employee mobile app that sends out secure notifications as well as information regarding testing or quarantining, while protecting any affected employees' identity, is a key piece to any risk mitigation platform. The entire process is automated and immediately allows you to trace possible chains of infection. The goal is to stop the spread as quickly as possible while allowing you to keep your business running.

Stay Safe. Stay Open

While the distribution of vaccines will surely impact infection rates, employees, customers, and visitors now expect companies to do something else to ensure their health and safety are being put first. Just as influenza did, Covid-19 has now done. Businesses will need a comprehensive, scalable solution that can evolve as fast as necessary to meet any health and safety need, while providing critical data insights to help make business decisions as rapidly and confidently as possible.

Author Bio



RJ Frasca is Vice President of Marketing and Product of EBI, a leading background screening provider, and EBI Workplace Health & Safety, its comprehensive monitoring, tracing and data insights platform. Frasca brings over 20 years of marketing and product experience to his responsibilities at EBI, which include marketing initiatives, product development, and strategic digital oversight of all products.
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