

Beyond the Mask

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Michael Cintani, product manager for Mapes Panels, says the work to ensure employee safety and well-being started in early March. That's when the company began putting precautionary measures in place for all employees, including social distancing directives, hand sanitizing stations, and increased signage around the building.

Mapes Panels

Lincoln, Neb.

says Cintani. "If there was a confirmed case, we would only have to quarantine part of the crew and would still be left with enough of our essential employees to continue production operations."

"It was a scramble, but we managed to get the vast majority of our office employees set up for remote working by mid-March. It ended up being very successful and actually led to an evolution of how we manage our quote and order data," he says.

With many employees now working remotely, and travel restricted in many areas, it was also important to find ways to maintain a sense of community, not only with employees, but also customers and suppliers. Cintani says his company stayed in contact with its customer base of more than 4,000 glazing contractors by sending emails letting them know the company was open and operating.

"We also put a notice on the landing page of our website indicating the same. Our customers rely on us to be here and to deliver on our promises. We needed them all to know that wasn't changing," he adds.

In order to continue operating safely and efficiently, companies also found they needed to review and modify certain policies, practices and procedures for both the essential employees still coming into work, as well as those working remotely.

"Social distancing and mandatory masking was implemented for anyone physically at our facility. No chances were taken. If they had a fever or any of the COVID symp-

toms, we asked our employees to stay home, but continued to pay them as they worked through the testing/quarantine process," says Cintani. "Fortunately, there were only a couple instances of this and none involved a positive COVID case. We also gave our hourly employees additional sick days to use as needed in the event that they or their families were directly or indirectly affected by coronavirus. We also increased the flexibility of our PTO program for salaried employees to adapt to the changing needs."

He adds that Mapes also stepped up to make sure employees were comfortable and had what they needed.

"We listened to our employees and adapted our practices to ensure that everyone felt as safe as possible. Remote working was implemented wherever possible and we never asked anyone to do anything they weren't comfortable doing," he says. "When there were any concerns [i.e. having children at home or needing to care for an elderly relative], they were immediately addressed as we recognized that we couldn't continue operating without our essential team. Their safety and comfort was priority number one during the quarantine period. Once all employees physically returned to the facility, we contracted a local health system to test every employee for COVID-19 onsite in order to ensure that we were safely re-opening and that our employees felt comfortable. There were no positive test results among any of our employees. We attribute this to a collective awareness and vigilance amongst our team. They understood how important it was to stay as safe as possible."

He adds that social distancing is still in force and N95 masks are available for employees at no cost and will be for the foreseeable future.

The company also found ways to aid not only its employees, but to give back to its community.

"Mapes gave every employee a \$200 Visa gift card to be used at a locally owned business in order to support our community and the businesses/employees that were most adversely affected by the lack of physical traffic," adds Cintani.



Mapes requires everyone to wear a mask and maintain 6 feet of distance from others.