



Nudge

Playbook: Building agile teams

A 3-step plan for supporting your deskless workforce through uncertain times

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Introduction

Times of uncertainty are a huge risk to any business, but deskless and frontline industries like retail, foodservice, hospitality, manufacturing, and others have a unique set of challenges. New protocols and ever-changing safety measures are frustrating workers. Sudden closures and reopenings are devastating morale and retention. Unprecedented consumer behaviors are impacting sales and profitability across various industries. Never before has it been more crucial for organizations to stay agile and adaptive to the changing world.

Your workforce is a critical part of that process. But to lift your organization up through times of uncertainty, your workforce needs leadership. And, unfortunately, it might not be getting it.



Your employees want communication

Gallup research on [what employees need from leadership](#), specifically as it relates to the impact of COVID-19, reveals that only:

39%

of employees feel
their employer has
communicated a clear plan
of action

48%

strongly agree their
immediate supervisor keeps
them informed about what is
going on in the organization

54%

feel well-prepared to do
their work

You can't control the changing world. But you can control how you invest in your workforce to keep them engaged and agile. Throughout the pandemic, the team at Nudge has had hundreds of conversations with organizations around navigating the challenges and rapid changes facing their industries. We've developed this playbook based on the best practices we used to help our amazing customers build agile teams – and now we're passing our learnings on to you.

So let's get started.

PHASE 1:

Cultivate engagement

Employee engagement is at the foundation of so much that we do at Nudge. It's the secret sauce that leads to motivated, high-performance teams. During unprecedented times of crisis, it's more important than ever to foster engagement, as your workforce battles issues with morale, turnover, anxiety, and policy changes.

[According to Gallup](#), it's engaged employees that “drive high performance and innovation, and move the organization forward.” But it's also more than that; your employees need to feel connected to the organization and the mission to feel driven to be part of the team during this challenging time.



How to cultivate engagement

Cultivating engagement with your deskless workforce isn't always easy; many locations and regions can lead to a fragmented workforce without a central driving force. Here are a few tips to unite your deskless workforce to drive engagement.

Communicate with structure and clarity

Crises by very nature can cause panic and uncertainty. This can be counteracted with a communication approach that is clear and concise. Giving people direction on where and how they should proceed has been the hallmark of many health and government organizations. There can be no room for ambiguity or misinterpretation, so being direct is of utmost importance.

Use your brand to connect them to your mission

Great brands embody and express the company's overarching purpose. It's a fundamental factor that connects employees to your mission and helps them derive meaning from their work. Remind your employees why your organization exists and make sure they understand how their work contributes. The shared overarching purpose will be a source of much-needed stability through uncertain times.

Establish psychological safety

Everyone needs to know that they will be taken care of and are supported. Without this basic framework, employees can't perform in their roles. Establishing the bedrock of safety is paramount; executives and management all need to actively listen with empathy, allowing all organizational members to be heard if they have concerns or feedback. Being supportive allows people to feel secure, safeguarding them to progress toward agility.





Highlight and celebrate the impact

Performing during uncertain times is stressful and taxing. Organizations should take the time to highlight and recognize the unsung heroes and contributors. The ability to showcase these unique moments will have a lasting positive for employees within it. For an organization, having a digital and/or physical community of peers that are seeing and feeling the impacts in near-real-time provides an incredible bonding experience, one that will endure as businesses rebuild.

Encourage upward feedback

As you highlight these connections, it's important to keep in mind that engagement is, by definition, two-way. Provide opportunities for employees to submit questions, ideas, and feedback, and then remind them that they've been heard, through bi-directional dialogue.

Nudge tip:

Bring the conversation to where they already are - their phones!

Have fun

During times of uncertainty, it can sometimes feel like communication needs to match the seriousness and severity of the situation. But adding a certain lighthearted feel to your communications can actually do wonders for increasing engagement and knowledge retention, let alone giving morale a much-needed boost. Try getting playful with employee content like a #DayInTheLife Takeover, or do some knowledge testing questions in a game show format (we've got more ideas [here!](#)). A little playfulness goes a long way.

We want everyone to co-create with us; it's one of the reasons why we rolled out Nudge. The biggest change is how empowered our frontline feels to provide ideas and best practices, and it's been a game-changer for us.

— Sarah Jordan, CEO, Mastermind Toys

PHASE 2:

Prioritize preparedness

Be prepared. The Scout motto has never been more relevant. Once your workforce is engaged and motivated, the next step in building agile teams is to prioritize preparedness. One of your greatest lines of defence against the volatile market is to keep your workforce prepared and ready for the rapid (and sometimes unexpected) changes that lie ahead.

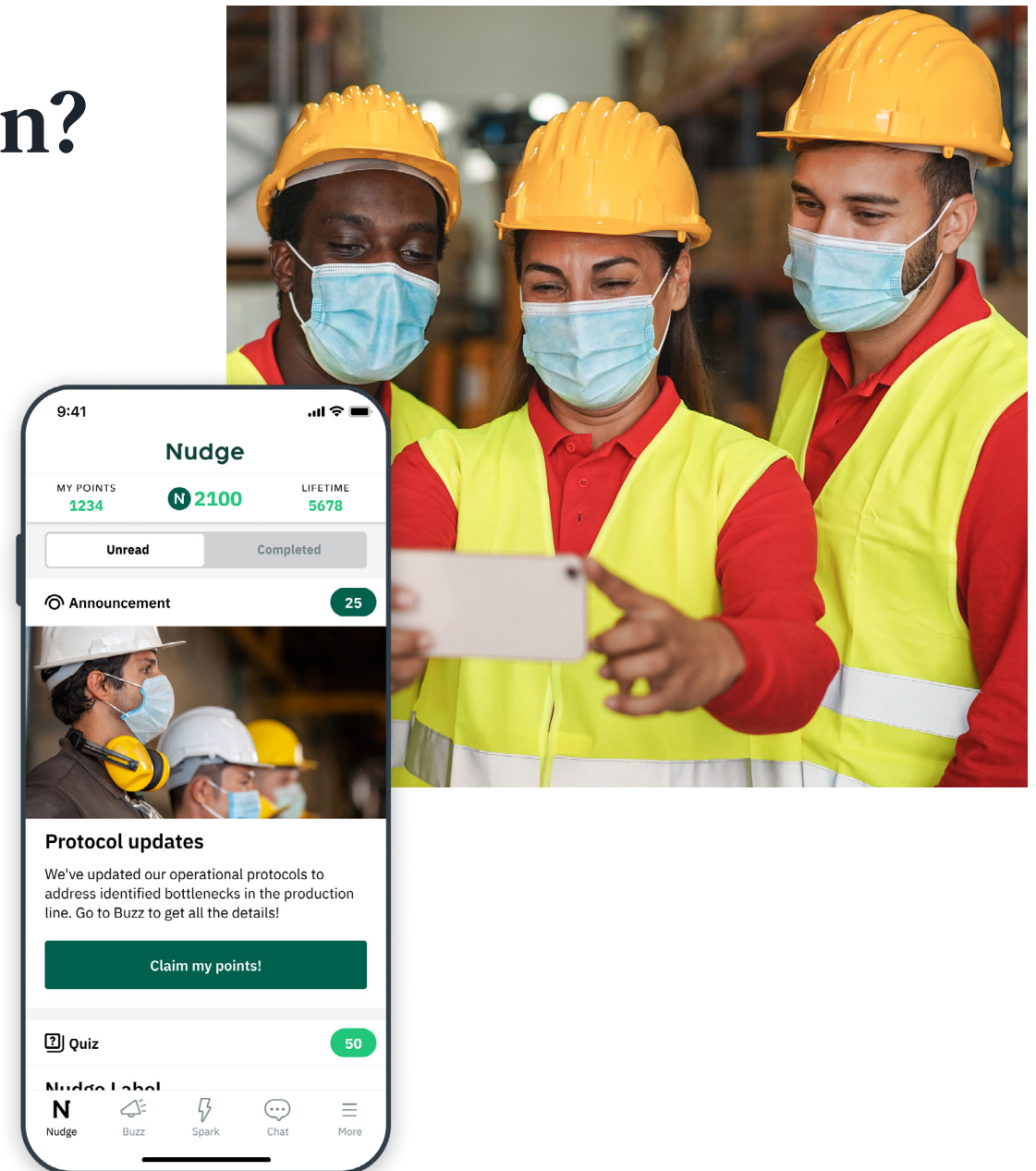


What does preparedness mean?

What preparedness looks like in your organization will differ depending on your industry and region, but the common denominator is communication. Do you have the processes and tools in place to share crucial information quickly and efficiently? Here are a few core questions that can help you to identify gaps in your preparedness:

- ☐ Do you have a way to communicate with your workforce in real time to share new protocols, practices, and SOPs?
- ☐ Do you measure retention on the info you've shared?
- ☐ Do you have a way for your workforce to communicate with each other? For example, for locations or regions to share news or best practices?
- ☐ Do you gather insights and ideas from your frontline? How do you make sure great ideas don't fall through the cracks?
- ☐ Do you onboard new or returning employees?

If you find yourself answering “no” to many of these questions, you’re likely not prioritizing preparedness with your workforce. To get back on track, an internal communication strategy is needed to ensure that you have a way to communicate with your frontline workforce in real time.



Prioritizing preparedness in teams

We recommend distinct strategies for prioritizing preparedness in three different groups of your frontline workforce, which includes existing, returning, and new employees. While unity and alignment are important, each group will require a tailored approach.

Existing employees

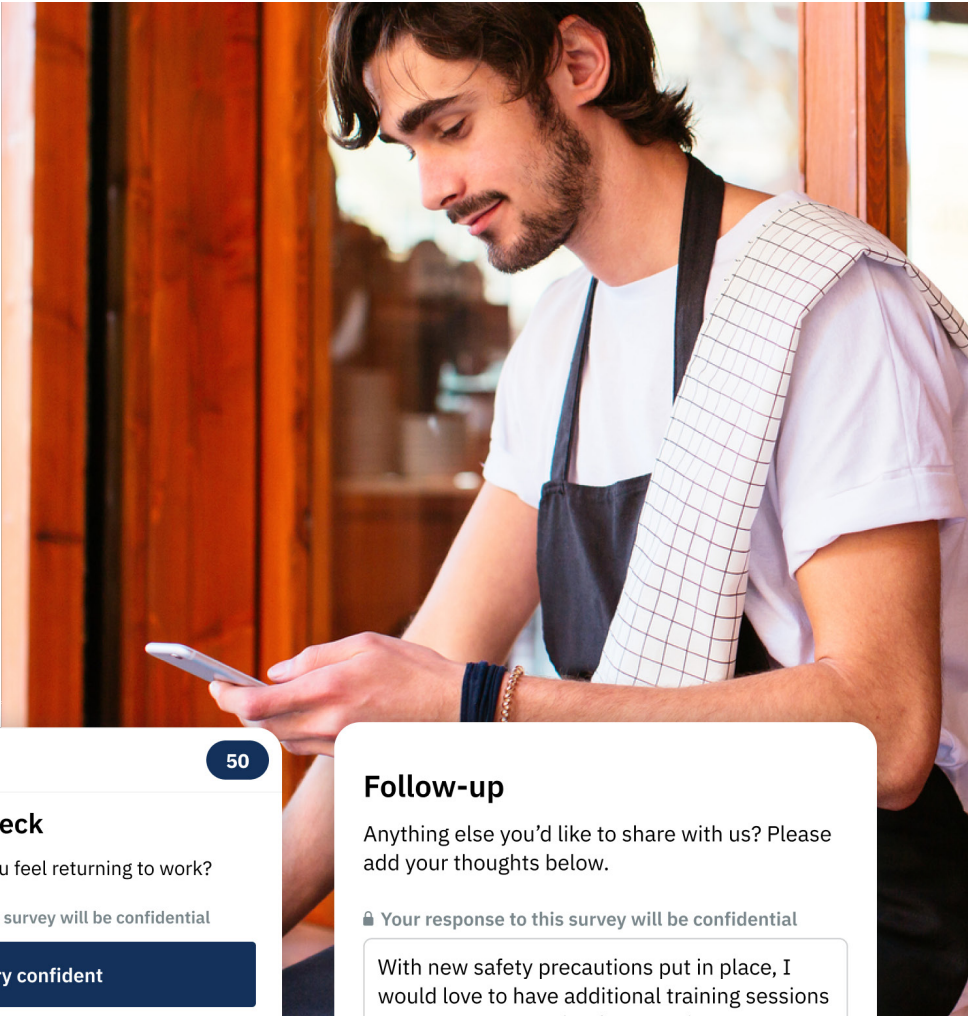
These are the staff members who have been working throughout the uncertain times, and your organization will be counting on them for stability and continuity as newcomers join and rejoin. Now, more than ever, it's important to ensure your employees understand what's expected of them—and equip and empower them to support new and returning employees. In recognition of all the work that your existing employees have done during the crisis, it may also be time to consider ramping up recognition efforts.

Returning employees

Employees who were furloughed or laid off and are able to return will require a different approach. Their previous status as an employee doesn't guarantee that they're eager and ready to jump back into work. They may have found temporary work in the meantime, or they might be hesitant to return for other reasons. If ever there was a time to incorporate empathy into a stage of the employee lifecycle, it's now. Develop a re-onboarding program that reinforces key points from the standard onboarding framework, and update content to reflect changes – like new safety measures or policies – that have been implemented. It's important to take the time to consider what kind of retraining or new skill development they will need, given the ways operations continue to unfold.

New employees

Now is the time for a thoughtful and deliberate approach to designing and managing the new employee experience. With the Great Return comes a high competition for talent, and offering a unique and engaging employee experience that takes into account different segments of the frontline can help overcome these challenges. As with returning employees, make sure your standard onboarding content is updated to reflect the necessary changes. And given the large influx of new hires you'll be dealing with, pay special attention to making newcomers feel welcome and supported by everyone, managers and employees alike.



Survey

50

Confidence check

How confident do you feel returning to work?

Your response to this survey will be confidential

Very confident

Neutral

Not confident

Follow-up

Anything else you'd like to share with us? Please add your thoughts below.

Your response to this survey will be confidential

With new safety precautions put in place, I would love to have additional training sessions to go over our new implementations.

Submit

Preparedness in practice

As you move forward with your fully-onboarded workforce, you can foster an ongoing sense of preparedness with ongoing communication:

- Standardize tasks and processes, and keep instructions in a central hub.
- Communicate regularly and consistently, sharing potential challenges that the frontline should know about.
- Celebrate milestones and wins to boost engagement and motivation.
- Keep key protocols top-of-mind with bite-sized reminders and communications (versus long memos they won't read).

Nudge tip:

Don't wait to learn about knowledge gaps when you're in crisis! Using our knowledge quizzes allows you to quickly check in on your teams' understanding of processes and protocols.

PHASE 3:

Redefine success

The metrics for success in deskless and frontline teams have changed – possibly forever. As the connection between engagement and performance becomes increasingly clear, organizations across a range of industries are prioritizing new metrics as indicators of success.



Key metrics for workforce success

When building agile deskless teams, we recommend three key metrics to evaluate success.

1. Adoption and response rates

This is the first step in a fully agile team. It answers the question, “who can I reach?” – and ideally the answer would be 100% of your teams. Now more than ever, you want to disseminate crucial information quickly and efficiently to allow your workers to pivot at a moment’s notice – but the first step in successfully facilitating that pivot is communicating with every member of your workforce.

2. Knowledge rates

Once you know who you’re communicating with, the next metric to measure is knowledge rates – which will show whether the information that has been shared has been properly retained. Whether you’re educating your teams on new cleanliness initiatives or the latest merchandising techniques, it’s crucial that you’re keeping a close eye on open/retention metrics and identifying knowledge gaps as quickly as possible.

3. Engagement

The final step in measuring success in your agile teams is to see whether the two previous metrics have worked their magic in creating engaged, motivated teams. We’ve already established in phase 1 why engagement is so important, and it’s been proven again and again that communication leads to high levels of employee engagement, so it’s no surprise that these metrics are closely linked.

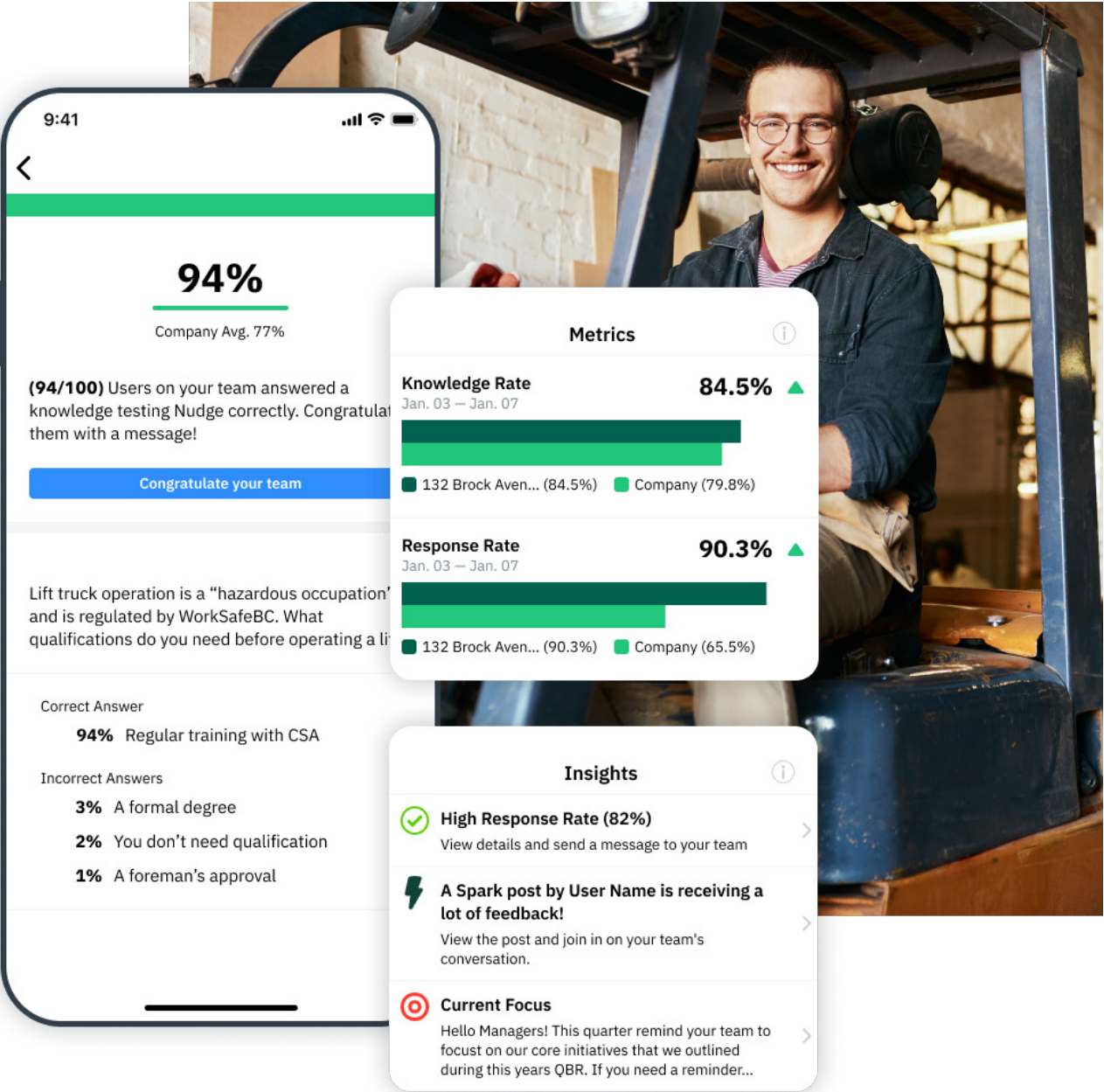


How to measure success

Traditionally, most of these metrics would have been next to impossible to measure with deskless workers, where most information is shared verbally or through signage. But now, thanks to communication technology, it's easy to deploy communications to your deskless workforce – and measure the results. With a digital communication platform, you can quickly see who is reading your communications, use knowledge quizzes to test retention rates and identify knowledge gaps, and even identify early warning signs for disengagement.

Nudge tip:

Monitor engagement through upward feedback. It's a great way to harvest ideas and ensure your workforce is being heard, but also to see which locations or regions are a little too quiet – and might need some extra attention.



How Nudge helps you build agile teams

The secret to operational agility is an engaged and knowledgeable workforce that is ready to adapt to change, quickly and easily. That’s where Nudge comes in. Nudge is a digital communications platform that enables organizations to improve workforce productivity and reach organizational goals through better communications, faster feedback, and actionable workforce insights.



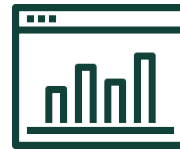
Centralized communication



Gamified, bite-sized content



Knowledge quizzes and surveys



Insightful user analytics

Loved by our customers and their employees

“In times of uncertainty and rapid change, we couldn’t have asked for a more reliable partner.”

— Mick McCormick, CEO, *Jefferson Dental & Orthodontics*

“Great reads on everything that is going on within the company. Very helpful and to-the-point easy access. I find that very refreshing”

— Patricia C., User



App Store



4.6 Stars
+5.1k Reviews



Google Play



4.6 Stars
+7.2 Reviews

Let's mobilize your workforce.

Want to see how Nudge can help your organization?
Book a demo today! Visit [our website](#) or get in touch at hello@nudgerewards.com