

Lessons learned from Covid-19

Listening to your team will give you a better understanding of what we're all going through right now

As a country, we have a lot of issues these days — the obvious public health challenge caused by the Covid-19 virus, but also the underlying racial, social and political issues that divide us.

When I find myself stuck, I try to learn something new by hearing new voices. This summer, I asked our nearly 1,000 employees to share their viewpoints with me on what working through Covid meant to them. As a small family of nonprofit continuing care retirement communities, our teams have been in

ever knew. We are finding that we are more resilient than we imagined.

“Control what you can, and cope with what you can’t.”

I think all of us are designed to try to maintain control, and this virus is surely teaching us that isn't always an option. We know that some things are out of our control, but many others aren't. So we control what we can — keeping our social circles small, wearing a mask, washing our hands, avoiding crowds, adjusting how we work and our reactions to situations. And we accept that some things are out of our hands — that's a fact.

“Be flexible, and operate with one common goal.”

Many employees noted that we made it through the toughest days because we let the less important things fall away. We focused on the common goal: safety for one another, our residents and our families. We refused to get caught up in the small or petty, and focused on the critical — and that united us.

“Leadership doesn't require perfection. A perfect plan for a novel virus doesn't exist.”

I couldn't have said this better myself. What is important is to be transparent with your teams, to share what you are doing, communicate as clearly as possible and adjust when things don't work out. I have learned that sometimes leading is just standing shoulder to shoulder with my team (from six feet, of course), feeling their pain and fears with them, and having them feel mine. This opportunity to lead is open to all of us every day. There was no perfect plan, and there still isn't. So we need to listen and learn from each other, work the plan and adjust when needed.

“Resilience is a muscle, and we are working it out!”

In conclusion, I encourage you all to listen to your teams, understand what they are going through right now and learn from each other. This time will improve, and meanwhile, we have learned so much, and have seen how strong we can be working together. **NHBR**

Justine Vogel is president and CEO of The River-Woods Group in Exeter.



BY JUSTINE
VOGEL

Workplace Advice

this game for a while now. The wisdom I found in their viewpoints is worth sharing, as their perspectives can help us face the future.

“This is the most meaningful work I have ever done in my career.”

Whether it is providing direct nursing care to a resident, or delivering meals or running errands so that our residents didn't have to go out in public, the virus reminded our essential workers how much they each mattered in others' lives.

“It's reminded me to be grateful for people, not things.”

When the physical presence of your people is taken from you, as we all experienced during the past six months, you remember the value of relationships versus material things. If you have set the roots of your friendships properly, they will endure, and this time of enforced isolation reminded us all that we need each other.

“Things are hard — but it's not the worst.”

The past few months have changed our perspective. This is a really difficult time, but it is teaching us to be more patient with the daily irritations of life, and teaching us that we are stronger than we