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From the Jacksonville Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/2020/03/26/how-florida-blue-transitioned-thousands-of.html>

How Florida Blue transitioned thousands of employees to remote work

Mar 26, 2020, 2:08pm EDT Updated: Mar 27, 2020, 5:45pm EDT

For Florida Blue, dealing with COVID-19 meant making it easier for its customers to get care and ramping up mental health services.

It also meant transitioned roughly 7,000 employees to remote work.

The health insurance company began the process last week, said Chief Human Resources Office [Amy Ruth](#) said — but the work isn't done once employees are safe and sound at home: Florida Blue is still working with employees to establish routines, adjust schedules for those with kids at home and even help provide internet access for those without.

Ruth said they began by transitioning employees who already had all the equipment they would need to work from home. Then, employees who had personal health concerns or concerns about an immediate family member were transitioned.

Caring for customers and caring for team members were top priorities, she said.

"Then we looked more broadly at the rest of organization and tried to make sure that we went through a very systemic process over a period of five days," she said.

The insurance company moved employees home piece by piece, Ruth said. The incremental approach prevented Florida Blue from losing too much of its capacity at one time and ensured that they would still be able to care for members.

During that process, they took care to spread employees who were still in the office throughout the work space to employ social distancing throughout the transition.

"I think it was incredibly effective," Ruth said of the process overall. "Because we did it in stages, we were able to manage the technology, we were able to care for the needs of our workforce and monitor their production environment to make sure that customers weren't waiting and that key provider partners weren't waiting more than the normal time."

While Ruth said that the transition was an effective one, it's not something they've ever had to do on this scale before.

Florida Blue normally maintains a relatively flexible work environment; allowing roughly 20 percent of their workforce work from home on a regular basis. However, not everyone has that capability, Ruth said. It was a much bigger shift to transition the entire workforce and it required Florida Blue to implement infrastructure where it didn't exist.

"We helped meet employees where they were to help them navigate this change," Ruth said. "There was a couple handfuls of employees that didn't have access to internet at home and we were able to help them obtain that."

Ruth said that while it was an investment for Florida Blue to make, it's entirely necessary in order for them to be there for members during a public health crisis.

Now that employees have all adjusted to their remote work environment, Ruth and members of Florida Blue's senior leadership team are working to ensure that they aren't just as effective in those environments.



FLORIDA BLUE
Chief Human Resources Officer at Florida Blue.

While that includes regular conference calls and check ins, CEO Pat Geraghty spent an hour on a conference call blog with all employees, addressing their questions and concerns.

"It was a chance for employees to be able to hear him and other key leaders address their questions and make sure that we can understand what their concerns are and how we can help them," she said.

Ruth had several tips for companies that were transitioning into remote work after Mayor Lenny Curry's mandate this week. She said employees should make sure they have a dedicated workspace, set ground rules with their spouse or family and make goals for each day.

She also encouraged employers to loosen rules for those with children that are home from school.

"Maybe you can allow some of your employees to work a non-traditional shift in order to help them manage," Ruth said.

She also encouraged people to reach out to coworkers and check in with them. It's good to hear peoples voices and stay connected during social isolation, Ruth said.

"Because socially distance doesn't need to mean everybody's an island and nobody sees or talks to anybody," Ruth said.

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