

Treena Meyers

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Introduction: You're listening to workplace perspective and employment law podcast presented by saffire legal. Workplace perspective is a regular podcast series for employers and employees focusing on education, training, and the law to help organizations of all sizes develop and maintain successful workplace relationships. The opinions expressed by guests on workplace perspective do not necessarily reflect those of saffire legal or its attorneys and should not be considered legal advice. And now, here's your host, founder and principal attorney at saffire legal Teresa McQueen.

Host: Thank you, James, and welcome everyone to workplace perspective where we are striving to raise the bar at workplaces everywhere. Today, we're taking some time out of our regular schedule to bring you one of a series of COVID-19 related shows. We know that everyone is on information overload at this point. And we don't want to add to that. But we have in mind is to share some real stories from real people who are like you are listeners, dealing with this novel and ever-changing environment. Where I show today, we're talking to Treena Myers, director of human resources and training at the fleet science center of San Diego. We'll be talking about her experiences in dealing with COVID-19 issues in the nonprofit world. I'm really excited to hear thoughts and insights. It's going to be a great show. Don't go away. We'll be right back.

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Host: Welcome back to our listeners. And welcome to workplace perspective, Treena Myers.

Guest: Hi, Teresa. Thanks for having me today.

Host: We are super excited. But before we get started, can you tell our listeners a little bit about you and what you do? Sure. I've been in the human resources field for a little over 28 years and I've worked in both federal and nonprofit sectors for my entire career mostly in nonprofit, some large nonprofits, and then other small nonprofits, and I really, I really enjoy the field. It's ever changing. There's always something to learn. And to be quite honest, I just love people.

Host: Well, that's a good job to be. And when you love people, I got to tell you.

Guest: That's right. You gotta love them.

Host: You gotta love them. Well, I'm really excited to get your perspective on all of this. And I know that we're sort of well into a few weeks into this craziness. I'm hearing a lot of both positive and negative things from my clients, Friends, family, and I mentioned this on one of our other COVID-19 shows. But some of the most positive things that I'm hearing about is this sort of growing sense of community as we all kind of pull closer to home but finding out still new and innovative ways to reach out and interact one another. And I think seems like despite all the challenges that it's really something to be navigating all of this change in this environment. And so I wanted to know from your perspective in the HR field, what are some of the initial challenges that impacted the fleet when all this started to happen?

Guest: Initial challenges, you know, we're open to the public where a science center and when all of this started happening, the first thing I think we really noticed was a drop in our attendance and people

starting to cancel events. They would have with us kind of pulling back, not sure what was going on in the world in the United States. We're sure and in California. From there, the information was changing rapidly in daily. And every day there just seemed to be more information coming out. People weren't certain whether they should come to work or not come to work. We had a lot of phone calls related to what we're doing from our employees. It was very hectic in the very beginning. To be honest, it still is to some degree. Every day, there's new information coming out, not just about the virus itself, but what are some best practices that are coming out of this, I read a lot every morning when I first get up just to see what the news is and what laws have passed or what things are going to be put into place to help our people through this season. However long it might last.

Host: It's amazing. Everybody kind of saying the same thing. It's changing. So fast, it's moving so rapidly. And every time I went to write a memo on something, I'd finish the memo and then a new law came out or something changed, started up to start I was doing amendments to memos before I ever sent them out.

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Host: So it's incredible with how quick information was coming out and how quickly things were changing. How did you guys, how did the fleet handle communications with employees? Can you share, I think organizations really want to know, how did you handle it? Did you guys form any tasks force? Did you, how did you tackle these initial challenges?

Guest: We have already in place a safety team. And the safety team was talking almost daily about what we need to do to keep complete center open, how many people can be in the center of what kind of cleaning we needed to do to make sure that at least while we were

open, right? Days few days that those patrons that were coming and even our staff had a level of safety and security knowing that we were upping our measures in cleaning. I will say that most crazy thing that happened during that time was we went to order more like anybody else hand sanitizer with our patients as people said keep their hands clean and the backlog on that was crazy. So it did put some of our gas in a little bit of a not a panic, but trying to figure out how they were going to communicate those things to our guesses that come in. We also are directors level came at three times a week in the initial first, maybe week or two. To try and get our hands around what's going on and kind of seeing and trying to see a head a little bit, like if we have to close what does this look like? What happens if we can't work from here? How do we move remotely? There was a series of things that we talked about. But it was changing so fast that every time it seemed like we made a decision, something came up right behind it. So in a lot of respects, we were just trying to keep up with what was going on. And keeping community staff educated as we were learning. So I think that was a challenge, but also rewarding in a lot of respect. Being able to help ease the fears of some and really being an opportunity for us to listen to their concerns so that we could make the right decisions moving forward.

Host: I think that's great. I really believe that this has presented the challenges that you're talking about and they're very serious. And they're really impacting people's lives in different ways. But I think it was an NPR had mentioned that in the midst of all the misinformation that was coming out when it first started everything started happening. People were actually turning to their employers as a trusted source of information. And I thought that was awesome, right? Our show is all about relationships and building those relationships between employers and employees. And I was just so heartened to hear that. I

thought it was just great. And I also think it's been such a great opportunity for employers to really show their employees that there is a relationship there that they do really they do really care. And I think all of this communication that you've got going on is really important and is probably gone a long way towards improving. I don't know if you needed improving your employee relations. But I think every organization can improve their employee relations, but you've gotten a sense of that.

Guest: Yeah, I'm with you. Every opportunity has to communicate and listen, listening, being the big case to your staff is important. And it does increase your employee engagement. It does increase your morale to some degree. When they feel like they're being heard and they're concerned that are real to them are being listened to and then if we can meet those concerns, the communication piece over the last few weeks, I think, has really helped our community, getting more regularly with good information as we have it. And then scheduling another appointed time that they will receive more information. Here's one communication piece and not letting them know when they're going to hear from us again. And giving them an opportunity to reach out to human resources or their supervisors or directors to get more information if they're concerned beyond the communication pieces that we're putting out.

Host: I love it. Well, we're going to take a quick break. I want to follow up on that. We come back. We're going to hear more from Treena about navigating this new normal as we work through the workplace impacts of COVID-19. Stay with us, we'll be right back.

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Send us your perspective. We're hosting a series of COVID-19 related podcasts. We'd love to hear from you. Share your perspective on how you or your workplace has handled the COVID-19 pandemic. Email us your thoughts at perspective@saffirelegal.com. All of the communications we receive will remain confidential and will be edited for privacy. And now, back to the show.

Host: So Treena, you kind of touched on it a little bit. But I think people are really interested right now about what other organizations are doing to stay connected and engaged with their employees. And then you have an added aspect to your business in that you're an education center. Are you doing anything to engage with the public as well?

Guest: Yes. One thing that is sort of a hidden blessing in all of this has really strict how we think about our programming and how we reach out to communities. Within San Diego. You know, I've always believed that when there's a challenge in life that good things come out of it. And I think one of the good things that we're seeing at the Fleet is the creativity of our educational staff, our marketing team and countless others, staff that are pulling together and creating educational videos. We have something now called sweet TV that will be launching soon so that people can still stay engaged with science or even talking about creating educational kits that we take to the local schools that are feeding kids during at least the next three weeks through spring break. Some educational materials that they can pick up with their lunch or

their breakfast. Take it home and have something to work on. So we're looking at different ways and innovative ways that we can meet some of the needs of the community. Obviously, look at me from all, but in some small way, maybe we can help bring some sunshine some happiness and joy and what seems pretty bleak right now.

Host: Yeah, absolutely. I think we're kind of in what is probably the first really full week of remote working for me. Everybody working from home. And I think everybody does need that bit of sunshine. And I think it's an awesome project. You've got going. I love the way you guys are communicating with your employees and reaching out to the community. I want to know on a more personal note, if we can. How are you handling it? You and your household. What's happening with you?

Guest: Well, I have four sons. And thank goodness they're all a little bit older. Two of them work. One of them works at a restaurant and has not technically been laid off, but certainly not on the schedule right now. And the other one worked in the coffee shop and they've kept him gainfully employed over the last few weeks. My two younger ones went to high school once in middle school and quite honestly, they're happy for the break. I mean, I've got boys. What can I say? If we can get out of school, we're going to work on do it. They look at me crazy and like, you should probably read a book or something. Video games tell a lot more fun. We're doing pretty well. My husband worked for a government contract company and they actually still working. So it really has an impact with him too much. The biggest impact I think is learning to juggle the noise in the house with the workload going on. At least for me.

Host: I'm going through the same thing. It's amazing.

Guest: I've worked remotely off and on throughout my career and I love it, but usually the house is quiet is a little bit different when I'm on a video conference and my son comes home from working out with his friends and his house. He pops and it's like, hey, mom, and it's like, oh, my samosa. You know. So my new coworkers are a little noisy.

Host: My new coworker is as well. So we're just a two person household, but we're sort of having our adjustment period as well. Occasionally working from home together is one thing, but doing it on a consistent basis, we've had to drop a few lines. It's been sort of interesting.

Guest: It's definitely different. I enjoy the time with my family. I am kind of sad that it's under these circumstances. But at the same time, you know, I try and always find the positive in where we're at, help the kids stay focused on things that are positive too.

Host: Yeah, I think that's really important. I think it's great. We were talking about, I hope people realize that it is trying and all of that. But really, at least from a married couple perspective people wait their entire lifetimes to spend as much time together as we've been spending.

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Host: And I think that's really important. And I think it's a great bright spot. We're looking on the bright side of it as well, because I think it's a great opportunity. And I love it. We're running out of time, which I hate because I could go on and on, talk to you about this. But as we wrap up today's show, can you sort of give us maybe your top three tips or some cautionary tales? Words of wisdom, maybe some thoughts for the future, organizations out there going through what you're going through.

Guest: About three things that keep me going. One is the fact that there's hope in all of it. This isn't forever. While it may feel like it at the moment, we certainly see in the news, a lot of Zoom and gloom, unfortunately, and quite honestly, it is a little bit scary. Positive side of that is we're going to get through this. And we're going to come out the other side. And I believe we're going to come out stronger. The other piece is find your joy in your day. You know, something that brings you joy. I keep a thankful journal. And I try and write in it every night, sometimes I'm thankful for or made me happy through the day. That seems to help in times that are kind of dark, looking at those positive things. And I think the third thing is, count your blessings, what are the things that you can still do to impact somebody to the better? And how can you impact that community that you work with?

Host: I got to tell you, my joy today has been talking with you. I really appreciate you coming on the show. And sharing your thoughts and experiences with our listeners. It's a really important message that you've given us.

Guest: Well, thanks for having me. I enjoyed it and I look forward to a day that we can talk about things that are super positive.

Host: Me too. Thank you so much. If you want to learn more about Treena or the Fleet Science Center, you can find them on the web at www.rhfleet.org. You can also connect with Treena via our website at Saffirelegal.com/podcast. I want to also thank our listeners, my radio angels, James and the name at night and workplace perspectives, team extraordinaire, our engineer producer Paul Roberts, our associate producer Melissa DeLacey, with music provided by the very talented Steven Verceloni. Thank you all for joining us on workplace perspective and until next time, keep raising the bar.