

-- Speaker 0 00:00:04 Make It Right. The manufacturing podcast,

Speaker 1 00:00:10 According to John Hopkins, Coronavirus Resource Center COVID-19 has reached 34 million cases and 1 million deaths for a death rate of 3% worldwide as of October 1st, 2020. However, these numbers are all lower than actual because of the inability to test and report in some countries, as countries open up and necessary employees return to work. Business leaders have a new significant health and safety challenge to address welcome to the makeup right podcast on Janet Eastman. And this week on the show, we're looking at the role of leadership in the workplace in light of COVID-19. And I'm really pleased to be joined by health and safety consultant, Andrew Morris, who was our guest way back in June of 2019 on episodes 56 and 57. So welcome to the show again, Andrew.

Speaker 0 00:00:57 Thank you very much. Indeed. Janet

Speaker 1 00:00:59 Also joining us as leadership advisor. Kevin Snook. Hi Kevin.

Speaker 0 00:01:03 Hi, Janet and I Andrew. Hi. Hi Kevin.

Speaker 1 00:01:07 So both of you are based in Bangkok, Thailand, and you've been feeling the impact of COVID-19 for a lot longer than we have in North America. So how are things there now? And I'll, I'll, I'll go with you first. Andrew, how are you seeing things in Thailand right now?

Speaker 0 00:01:23 Um, from the standpoint of, of Thailand, uh, we have no tourists and we are just beginning to look at perhaps letting in, um, long stay people. We have very, very low, um, incidents rate of coronavirus infections, um, and, uh, everything, um, is pretty much, um, stable at the moment.

Speaker 1 00:01:56 Yeah. I remember Kevin you saying that, um, you know, Thailand had really locked things down and had been very, very, very careful and, uh, I guess we're seeing the result of that aren't we.

Speaker 0 00:02:07 Well, there was, um, there's a great level of applying, uh, playing the right PPE in the right circumstances. And so, uh, Thai people very much kind of follow, um, what they're supposed to do or what they're guided to do. And so everybody's wearing masks in public and they have been right from the very beginning. Um, there are separations in restaurants that the restaurants that are open again now. And so there's been a lot of, uh, a lot of precautions put in place and people generally here are very receptive to following the guidelines from the government.

Speaker 1 00:02:42 So the impact of COVID-19 economically, physically and socially, it's been well-documented worldwide. And I'm thinking just on a global level now, uh, Andrew, you've done a lot of research on this. What has the mental impact been? How are people's stress and anxiety and sadness and depression level?

Speaker 2 00:03:01 It looks like second or third wave, uh, is coming through of coronavirus. Um, this gives rise to people's, uh, uh, mental health state being, um, raised to a level that, uh, they feel, um, very, very, um, happy about the future. Um, and they, uh, have the concerns of their parents, their children, and looking after them. And obviously, um, in many cases, the loss of a second income because, uh, uh, one of the, uh, parent's house to stay at home to look after the children and the children are going to school online. Um, and additionally of those, the potential of other children who are at university are coming home to do their studies from, from home. So overall, uh, it's a very high pressure situation for many, many families.

Speaker 1 00:04:06 And how are companies actually coping with this side of the pandemic, because for those onsite, um, they've got people coming into an environment where they're actually, um, not in their standard bubble, they're actually mixing with other people. And then of course there are those working remotely. Can you give me an idea of what both sides of that looks like? What about the people that are actually coming back to factories and working? How are they feeling?

Speaker 2 00:04:31 The plain fact of the matter is that people will only come back to work if it is safe to come back to work. So many companies recognize the issues on site. Um, they have sympathetic, uh, supervisors, managers, and employees who are working to cope with the situation. They understand the pandemic guidelines, um, and they by and large are following them. But that doesn't mean that you don't h --

-- ave stress and exhaustion and anxiety any less, uh, with your employees. So, um, the, the stress level, uh, continues to be out there because of the concern, uh, whether you are having a successful business, whether you could lose your business. Uh, so people are very preoccupied with that. Um, so the people who are in the plants, um, where there is a good guidance are feeling, uh, better than those, where there is not a pandemic plan in place that, uh, how, um, how to deal with, uh, an employee who is sick, is there a procedure? And in many cases in these companies that don't have pandemic procedures, there's no

Speaker 0 00:05:58 Plan and the company is not coping well. So that that's the situation in the plants at home. Uh, uh, the challenge very much depends upon how many people are in the home, how many people are trying to do a job and how many people are online for education. So, um, whether there is space to do this, or whether you have to schedule by shifts, whether you're going to work or whether the children are studying, um, is one of the problems. And obviously, uh, the stress of studying silence, uh, in the home because somebody is online, um, or not going in certain rooms is obviously a major problem. So people at home, uh, you know, very concerned about what people are saying, uh, online, uh, the family may be listening to, uh, what is being said and can be equally stressed by what their parent is saying about work and the chances of retaining their job. They may be, um, very concerned about what is, what is happening,

Speaker 1 00:07:18 Kevin? What are you seeing out there? What, I mean, you deal with leaders all the time. How are they dealing with this?

Speaker 0 00:07:25 Well, there's a, there's a wide range, Janet. And I think there's Andrew alluded to this perfectly. There's such different living conditions for different people around the world that you know, where you may have two working professionals in a house in North America. Uh, maybe now with a couple of kids in there as well versus, you know, a house in Asia, there's got eight or nine people in there. Um, you know, there's different stresses, certainly depending on the number of people and what each person in that household is trying to do in the factories. Um, I've also seen a wide range of ways that people are dealing with it. And what I, what I see is that the issue is magnifying the current capabilities of that organization. So if there's an organization that's very good at taking care of the mental wellbeing of people, um, then they have magnified that, and they've got even better.

Speaker 0 00:08:19 The ones that really hadn't thought about it before, or didn't have a plan in place I think are really struggling. And, um, you know, Andrew said, there's also that people like certainty and they want to know, uh, they want to know that the company is guiding them in the right way. And the companies that are doing best are the ones that are playing a pretty hard line on this and saying, look, we don't know whether this is exactly right, but this is what we're going to do. Um, so follow these guidelines, the ones that are leaving it more open for people to choose, I think, are the ones that are struggling more. So

Speaker 1 00:08:52 What is a company's obligation to those suffering mentally? Andrew,

Speaker 2 00:08:58 The obligation, um, in, in most cases is, uh, very similar to a person who is sick in most developed countries. Uh, people do recognize, um, that there are mental health issues, uh, but elsewhere it is problematic because stress, depression and anxiety are not recognized as work related illnesses. Um, and sometimes they are seen as weaknesses that you are not strong enough to, uh, control or deal with these issues. So obviously from a mental health standpoint, uh, you have all shades of, uh, control, uh, treatment and, uh, whether people can help one another, um, deal with the whole mental health aspect.

Speaker 1 00:09:54 So you, you, um, mentioned to me earlier, something about, uh, PFA, psychological first aid. Can you explain what that is and how it works?

Speaker 2 00:10:05 There are many different types of PFA on that we're familiar with is the world health organizations, um, approach. Um, and basically, uh, that is best described as helping people bring down their stress and anxiety levels to an acceptable level, uh, for the individual helping in some ca --

-- ses, um, bringing down blood pressure, stopping, raised voice levels, uh, and, uh, obviously, uh, people who are irritable, um, have irrational outbursts and conflicts, um, um, making behavior of the employee in the eyes of other employees seem unstable. So obviously, uh, to go through the psychological first aid is a very worthwhile exercise because in this time of pandemic, uh, people are hurting that, uh, people are stressed out. They are shouting at one another small things that would normally be a waived by, um, or not. And, uh, this, uh, psychological first aid, uh, Janet, so can, can help people ground themselves and, uh, be, um, much more, uh, how shall I say, capable of dealing with, with the daily daily tasks. But the most important thing is to listen to what people are telling you, empathize with them. Um, perhaps help them give them guidance, but above all, listen to them and see if you can help them in some way

Speaker 0 00:11:54 This, um, who, um, psychological first aid can be found. Um, uh, the world health organization's site, um, is on, um,

Speaker 1 00:12:10 I can actually post that so that people can get to the link directly.

Speaker 0 00:12:14 Good, good. So, so, uh, in closing, uh, PFA gives you eight worthwhile steps to take with people. Um, you can have all kinds of, very variations on it, but one of the most important things is the communication and helping people, uh, talk about their problems and how, uh, they can go forward in a better frame of mind.

Speaker 1 00:12:43 I think it's really interesting that, um, for all of its faults, covert, as sort of, it seems to be bringing back some humanity to us all, like we're more concerned about our coworkers and our neighbors and we're checking in with them and we're, we're reaching out to them. And I think that, you know, if anything, that will be one of the positives, um, of this whole thing, as long as we can maintain that humanity as we go forward, Kevin, I'm really interested to see if you've noticed an impact of additional stress on leaders because of COVID-19 and how they're coping.

Speaker 0 00:13:19 Yeah, I have absolutely. And, you know, leaders, uh, humans as well. Sometimes we forget about that. You know, we think about the workforce, uh, or the employees, and we forget about some of the leaders, but, um, clearly the leaders are under a huge amount of stress. If you look at company owners, um, now they're worried about the health of their business and the hundreds of employees that work with them. So, you know, there's, there's two sides to it. And, uh, you know, I hadn't heard of PFA or the psychological first day before, but I thought that was really interesting. Right. I did read a great article that, um, kind of drew a comparison between what happened in the eighties with, uh, with the AIDS epidemic that happened and how that brought, um, the whole idea of public health became a lot more, uh, a lot more talked about and a lot more open.

Speaker 0 00:14:09 And we're this COVID, I'm hoping that the whole idea of mental health in the workplace, you know, get significantly raised as an awareness issue. There's been mental health issues in, in manufacturing and in the workplace for a long time. And they've kind of been put underneath a cover and now it's become, you know, what, when you get something happening around the globe all at once, um, then everybody is, you know, it's really put in our faces. And, uh, so that raising the awareness and using this as a way to really help people with the mental health issues that were underlying before and are coming out a lot more now as well. Um, I had often said that people wake up with a different head on their shoulders each day. So even in, in regular situations, you never really know what's triggering somebody, but now, um, everybody's on such a shorter fuse because a lot of those challenges that Andrew was mentioning that, um, really there is, you know, everything's being boiling to the surface and what I've found that the best companies are doing is being able to talk about it.

Speaker 0 00:15:18 And, uh, Andrew mentioned connection and communication. I think those two are absolutely critical. The companies that have more transparency around being able to talk about these things and it not being seen as a weakness and be able to not sweep it under the covers, but really bring it out and have that listening. And in depth conversations --

-- , they are the ones who seem to be working best. And there's some, there's some great opportunities for leaders in that as well. Leaders across companies can be using this as a time to reapply best practices, but in order to do that, you need to be having these conversations about best practices. Um, so calling up other leaders and whether they're in the same industry or they're in a similar industry, it doesn't really matter, um, having that chance to talk and listen to other leaders as well. And then reapply, I think is a, is a great opportunity for us.

Speaker 1 00:16:10 Andrew, you mentioned in the, um, the psychological first date, you talked about a lot of things that people can watch for it to see if their coworkers, um, are under any stress. Um, you know, it's, it's like they're being quiet or they're not participating, or they're raising their voices. Those are the keys to be watching for, are they

Speaker 0 00:16:32 Absolutely, um, they feel irritation, anger, and sometimes they're overly nervous, anxious. Um, they'll have a lack of motivation. Obviously some of these things are like, COVID-19, I mean, feeling tired, overwhelmed, um, or the trouble sleeping, obviously trouble concentrating. These are the things that, um, is being brought out as mental health associated with COVID-19. So, uh, it's, it's not really surprising that we're, we're having these difficulties. And, um, we, we have concerns all the time of obviously, uh, whether we might be, um, canceling the virus, um, what happens to the family, um, working with the different workload and, uh, all of these things that, uh, people are concerned about that they haven't done before, or have only heard about. So just even connecting on zoom or teams or collaborate, uh, for many people is quite stressful, especially if it work first time. So especially if your job depends upon it, and that's the boss is on the other end waiting for you to actually connect.

Speaker 0 00:18:00 So if your wifi isn't working at home, or you have a problem, uh, with having more than one device online at your home, then obviously all kinds of stresses begin to build in people. And the person becomes very excited, especially at home as well. So these are all the challenges that, uh, uh, are, are out there. And as I say, say, if you go to the center for disease control and prevention, uh, you can see on their website, all of these things relating to COVID stress and identifying the issues and how you might be able to help people, including PFA.

Speaker 1 00:18:46 We're almost out of time, but I did want to ask you about some of the coming challenges leaders should be thinking about, like, when people start coming back to work in a post COVID world, some people will have had COVID et cetera. What are the things that we're going to have to be concerned about?

Speaker 0 00:19:01 Um, first of all, Janet, I would like to say his post COVID world is at least 18 months away. Because even if we get a vaccine, we have to have it widely in place. And as you rightfully say, those who come back, it is important that those people who have had it, uh, it is reported, uh, so that you know, who the people are, who have had it, uh, those who have tested, um, and the people who are asymptomatic. In other words, they may not feel anything, but they can certainly pass, uh, the, uh, virus along. So, uh, these are the things that the workplace needs to know, obviously it's confidential. Um, but certainly, um, that situation post, post COVID is, is a challenge. And, um, people need to know that and understand that.

Speaker 1 00:20:04 What do you see for a post COVID world?

Speaker 0 00:20:08 Yeah, that's a great question. I think, um, a lot of it is unknown and it's that unknown that adds to additional stress. Um, uh, I don't think we've seen half of the challenges that are going to be coming. You know, we, we talked initially about, uh, the health challenges and then people started to talk about and recognize the, um, economic challenges and certainly the economic challenges on individuals. And now there's got this whole idea around, you know, psychological challenges, um, and the levels of stress and depression and anxiety. Um, I don't, I'm, I'm not sure a little bit, like Andrew said, I'm not sure there is a post COVID world. And when, when we're working with companies, um, and doing culture change with companies, typically we start to see th --

-- e new culture really taking off after about 18 months. Now, by the time a virus comes by, a vaccine comes in for the virus that we would have been in COVID for a lot more than 18 months.

Speaker 0 00:21:14 And that's it enough time to change cultures. And that's what I see. I, I think the, the postcode world, if you like, once we, once we accepted Kobe, we have a back seat and we accept that it's just a normal part of life. I think things will have changed forever. And, um, and not only, uh, in normal public life, but in manufacturing life and in business life, I think people's habits will have changed and people are going to be a lot more wary around who they hang around with. Uh, how will they spend their time, both at work and in social environment. Um, so I don't think we know half of what what's actually coming. I'm no psychologist, but if I see what I'm seeing with behaviors right now continue for another, let's say another 12 months, I think he's going to make significant longterm changes for people.

Speaker 1 00:22:03 One of the things that I actually had not even thought about is what do you do with the covert waste in the work environment? Like presumably people are wearing gloves and they're wearing masks, and sometimes they have to wear a full on body suits and things like that. Andrew, what are the risks with all of this stuff and how should businesses be getting rid of it and how are they getting rid of it?

Speaker 0 00:22:27 Well, I mean, basically the current coronavirus can survive between two hours and nine days. So if it's on the surface, so if it's on your gloves, on your suit, on your protective suit or protective shoes, or, uh, in your mask, uh, this becomes a waste, uh, where is this waste going? As you rightfully say, Janet, uh, if it's collected on site, um, some of the waste, uh, will have had a flammable, uh, 70% alcohol, uh, um, sanitizer on it. So it is at that point, uh, flammable waste. Um, is there a possibility that there could be a far yes. Um, particularly in hot countries or where you have some, um, utility area where there is a boiler or something that could cause ignition and people just put the waste in an area that's convenient to them. That sounded the way. Um, so obviously, uh, waste, uh, from, um, clothing, masks, gloves, et cetera, et cetera, needs to be put in a controlled area. It needs to be locked. It needs to signage,

Speaker 2 00:23:46 And it mean needs to meet the requirements of the country that you're in the next stage is how do you dispose of it? So do you have somebody who is a licensed, uh, disposer of waste, um, or if it is clinical waste, do you have somebody who has the certificates and the capability to transport it safely? So if it's not done in the proper way, then it's entirely possible that this waste is going to somebody who is selling it on to somebody who will salt. It, um, many cases have been found where all the waste from a plant is being taken to somebody's shop. They are going through the waste in the shop, uh, sometimes with, um, uh, migrant labor and, uh, no masks, um, and no hand washing facilities. They're sorting the masks out and they're getting them washed and, uh, the coveralls and whatever else there is, uh, is also being washed, whether in fact that washing is having any effect upon the virus. Um, don't know. So the, the challenge out there is what is your waste? Where is it going? How are you controlling it? And if it's flammable, are you getting rid of it, uh, regularly, um, in, in a, um, proper, proper manner. And then of course, um, who is taking it and how are they handling it? So you need to audit it, check, uh, how it's being got rid of. So those are the challenges of personal protective wastes from Kobe. Kevin, have you seen,

Speaker 0 00:25:34 Do you know the businesses that you're working with? Are they doing this controlled waste disposal? Um, I have not seen that. It doesn't mean that they're not, but it's something that, um, that I'm becoming aware of as we go through this podcast as well. So, um, I certainly know that again, in each of the different types of countries, um, there are different levels of regulation and there's certainly different levels of behavior. Uh, as we work in quite a lot of developing countries, we certainly see in many, many things are being sorted and reworked and reuse in one way or another. And, and so I would imagine that the risks associated with that are --

-- very high. Um, I think as any business owner, if you think of the way the business is going to feel, it's like, Oh my God, all of a sudden my normal waste is now being, um, considered to be a special type of waste. And whenever you hear that, you're immediately going to think that there's a special type of cost associated with that. So yes, you have the environmental and the personal protective factors, um, you know, that the public safety, public health factors, but you've also got this new, huge cost as well. Um, because, you know, Andrew will be aware of this, getting rid of any kind of toxic or special waste is, uh, many, many times more expensive than disposing of normal waste.

Speaker 1 00:26:57 Um, I'm wondering about some key takeaways that you might both leave us with. Andrew. What would be your suggestions for business owners and business leaders at this point in time?

Speaker 0 00:27:08 My, my, my takeaways are really very simple. I definitely think that, uh, psychological first aid, uh, should be trained in each company, uh, to deal with stress and depressed personnel. Um, I think what we have learned in the last six months about the pandemic and pandemic awareness, um, must be retained as it's possible that we will need it again. Um, particularly if this virus mutates, which so far, it hasn't, uh, we, we learned about, um, the virus and demic situation 16 years ago. And what is going on today is just an extension of what we learned 16 years ago. So I think that we need to put this in place, be prepared, um, and, uh, we, we may, um, continue to use it and develop it. So that, that's my, my basic message.

Speaker 1 00:28:15 What about for you, Kevin?

Speaker 0 00:28:17 Yeah, for me, I, I think, um, as we talking directly to the leaders, first of all, we don't know all the answers with this. And so the idea of being in a learning mindset, a growth mindset, I think, is very important and don't feel like you do need to know all the answers. I think it's really around, um, listening to the employees and then having those conversations. And as we do that, listening and conversing with them, I think the idea of, uh, all that it's necessary to be compassionate. Um, the, the level of stress that everybody is under at the moment is highly elevated and it comes at us in all different directions. And so showing that level of compassion and earning on the side of caution when you're, when you're communicating with people, I think, um, they're the three things that I would say,

Speaker 1 00:29:08 I guess, um, use your compassion, keep an eye on your employees and, and the people at home and, you know, in your management team and help them when the help is necessary. And as Andrew, you did say, you know, we probably have another 18 months to go with this, which I think may shock some people, and this is not going to be a one off. I mean, this is probably going to happen again. So whatever you put into place now is probably going to be used again. I really appreciate, sorry, go ahead. They, the last thing

Speaker 2 00:29:42 To talk about obviously is that the longer it goes on the greater exposure, one has to sanitizers and later on many different sanitizers being used out there. Uh, there are some that have been used for a very long time, uh, such as 70% alcohol and hypochlorous foggers, which have been, um, being used, but no previous testing has been done and some quaternary aiming compounds are being used. Uh, so, um, the exposure levels for many people, uh, needs to be monitored. And if there are any cases of acute or chronic exposure found, then obviously we will have to take steps to ensure that only approved sanitizers are used. So one of the things that we will see has we continue with COVID-19

Speaker 1 00:30:42 And I guess that leads us into, um, you know, the, your immune system and, uh, all this hand sanitizer and whatever that we're using, is it impacting our immune system and making it weaker. And that is probably a whole other podcast, right? That's correct. Yeah. I really appreciate your expertise and insights. Um, this week, Andrew, you've brought some really important things to light for us. I really appreciate that. And to you, Kevin, as well for your, your side, from the leadership perspective and some of the challenges and things that they really have to face, um, it's a tough time for everybody. So thank you very much for sharing your insight --

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Speaker 2 00:31:25 Thank you. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you. Thank you, Kevin.

Speaker 1 00:31:32 Andrew Morris is a health and safety consultant. He's based in Bangkok, Thailand, and Kevin Snook is a leadership advisor to manufacturing CEOs. He is also based in Thailand and working globally for more important information on how you can help move your manufacturing business forward and help your teams. One of the things you can check out is Kevin's book, it's called Make It Right: Five Steps to Align Your Manufacturing Business from the Frontline to the Bottom Line. That's our show this week, please check out our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds that are on our podcast page. And you can subscribe and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues through iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube. I'm Janet Eastman. Thanks very much for listening to Make It Right.

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