

THE CIVIL SERVICE REPORTER

GAWING LIM *ANG BAWAT KAWANI*

Volume 61 No.2

2nd Quarter 2020 Issue

CSC sets **alternative work arrangements**

The Virtual Civil Servant:
Building Your Professional Online Brand

Public Service Delivery and Innovations

If COVID-19 is Contagious, **so is Courage**

Spotlight on **COVID-19 Frontliners**

COVID-19 and **our mental health**

COURAGE AND ACTION AMID COVID-19

The Man Behind the **Pinoy-made COVID-19 Testing Kit**

Dr. Raul V. Destura

Director of the National Training Center for Biosafety and Biosecurity, National Institutes of Health; Deputy Executive Director of the Philippine Genome Center, University of the Philippines - Manila





ADVISORY TO CLIENTS:

Please refer to the list of services below and the corresponding contact information for online transactions.

Office Concerned	Services/ Transactions
Integrated Records Management Office (IRMO)	<p>Requests for the following may be sent to irmo.cmd@csc.gov.ph:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Certification and Authentication of Civil Service eligibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Service (Professional and Subprofessional) Examinations Civil Service Examinations (CSE) conducted in collaboration with other agencies (e.g. Foreign Officer Examination, Fire Officer Examination, Penology Officer Examination, Basic Competency on Local Treasury Examination) Civil Service Eligibility granted under Special Laws and CSC Issuances CSC Issuances (Memo Circular, Resolutions, Decision) Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Networth (SALN) for CY 2009 to CY2018) Employee Records (Appointment Paper and Leave Records for those who were assigned in agencies under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Region and Regional Office No. IV from CY1980 to CY1989) Service Card in various agencies from CY1930 to CY1989 Statement of Service Record of former CSC employees <p>Those who have earlier made appointments through the CSC's Online Registration, Appointment, and Scheduling System (ORAS) will be advised of the new appointment schedule via email in due time. For questions and clarifications, please email at irmo.rcad@csc.gov.ph.</p> <p>During this period of closure, NO documents or printed communications, including mail deliveries from couriers and postal services, shall be received at the CSC IRMO. However, clients with urgent concerns/ requests for different Offices in the Central Office may email irmo.cmd@csc.gov.ph.</p>
Office for Legal Affairs (OLA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Certificate of No Pending Administrative Case/ CSC Clearance, email to cscclearance@csc.gov.ph Request for Certified True Copy of Records/ Documents, email to olarecordscsc12@gmail.com Request for Legal Opinion and Legal Assistance on CSC Laws, Rules and Regulations through the Online Forum platform found at the CSC website, www.csc.gov.ph <p>Forms may be downloaded from the CSC website, www.csc.gov.ph. Clients will be advised of the date of pick up and corresponding legal fees.</p>
Civil Service Institute (CSI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Training calendar Online Registration of CSI and L & D Programs/ Courses The following may be viewed online and downloaded (as online resources): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> List of accredited Learning and Development Institutions (ALDI) Policy Guidelines for ALDI L & D Plan
Human Resource Relations Office (HRRO)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Petition for Accreditation of Employees' Organization Application for Registration of Collective Negotiation Agreement <p>The request may be sent to hrrro@csc.gov.ph.</p>

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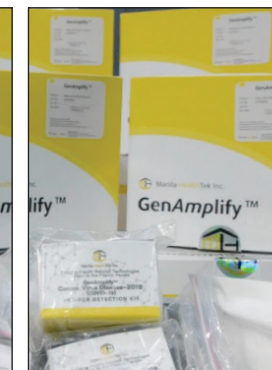
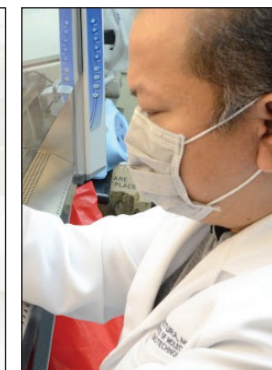
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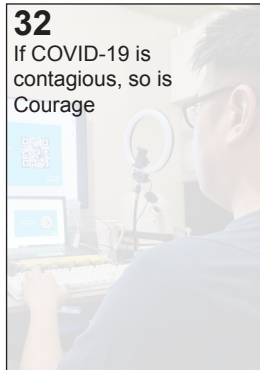


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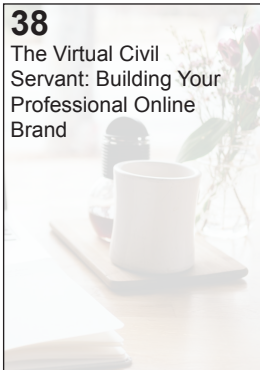
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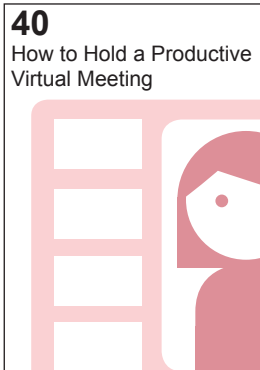
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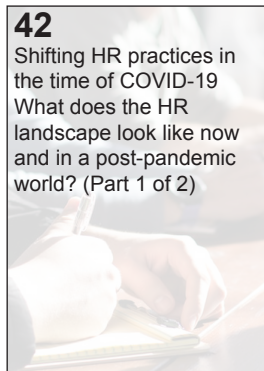

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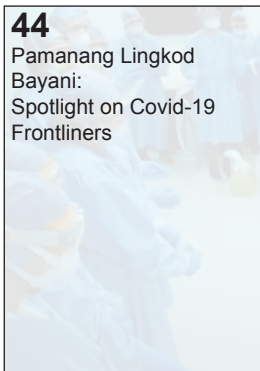


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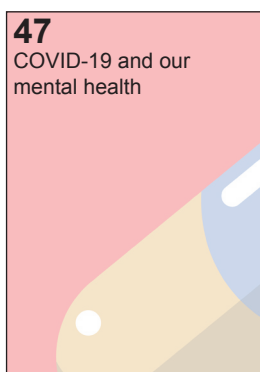
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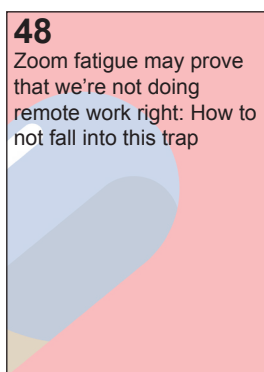


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Tell us what you think about the Civil Service Reporter and get a chance to win a treat from the Civil Service Commission

Your comments and suggestions are valuable to us. We hope you could take time to answer this short questionnaire to help us improve our upcoming issues. If you wish to continue receiving the CS Reporter, please update our mailing list as well. After answering the questionnaire, snap a photo of the accomplished survey and email to csc.pmr@gmail.com.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address where you wish the CS Reporter to be mailed to: _____

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- Online (csc.gov.ph)
- Others: _____

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- Throw in a bin
- Add to the piles of old magazines & newspapers and sell to recycling centers/junk shops
- Give old copies to friends
- Recycle or reuse
- Donate
- Others: _____

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- Gender: Female Male

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- Less than a year
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- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

Articles which I find most useful:

- New CSC issuances
- Civil Service Examinations
- Special eligibilities
- Legal opinions
- Public sector unionism
- Training programs
- Human interest
- Exemplary public servants
- HR issuances and policies
- Others: _____

You may take a photo of the accomplished survey form and email to csc.pmr@gmail.com. Don't forget to send your survey responses by the end of December 2020 to get a chance to win a treat from us. Thank you!

Government employee? : If a government employee:

- Yes
 - No
- Years of service in government:
- 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 10-15
 - 16-20
 - 21-25
 - 26-30
 - 31-40
 - 41 years and above

Sector:

- National Government
- Local Government Unit
- State College or University
- Government Owned and Controlled Corporation
- Government Financial Institution
- Others: _____

Level:

- First level
- Second level
- Third level

CS Reporter should feature more articles on:

- Civil Service Examinations
- Special eligibilities
- Legal opinions
- Public sector unionism
- Training programs
- Honor Awards Program
- HR issuances and policies
- Others: _____

Will you recommend CS Reporter to your colleagues/friends?

- Yes
- No

Why/Why not?

Other comments:

FROM THE CHAIRPERSON'S DESK



This year's second quarter has been very difficult for all of us. One day we were working and chatting with our colleagues within our office's premises; the next day, we were instructed to stay at home due to the danger posed by COVID-19 transmission. Organizations were forced to implement alternative work arrangements. While our frontliners—medical and social workers, and law enforcers—risk their lives to faithfully perform their duties outside their homes, the rest of us navigate through unfamiliar circumstances to shape our new normal in and outside our workplaces, prioritizing as well our personal and family members' health and safety.

All of these were not easy things to deal with. People encountered varying levels of stress and anxiety. It is with this understanding and empathy that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) offers you its 2nd Quarter Issue of the *CS Reporter* magazine. As the central human resource institution of the Philippine government, we believe that now is a most opportune time to highlight public service heroism and human resource (HR) innovations.

We highlight in the News section the CSC's response to the COVID-19 workplace challenges through issuances that we released. These include CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020 or the Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements

and Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, and CSC-DOH-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020 or the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Standards for the Public Sector (see page 50).

We gathered stories of COVID-19 frontliners, placing in the limelight the man behind the Filipino-made COVID-19 detection kit—Dr. Raul V. Destura (story on page 22). In the Citizen's Guide and HR Spotlight sections, we recognize organizations that introduced digital innovations in public service delivery (see page 17) and HR best practices in the new normal (see page 32).

Spotlight is also on people's mental health these days as many of us try to cope with feeling of isolation, the blurring of work and family time, and the stress and anxiety for our own safety. See our Health and Wellness at Work section to regain some clarity on how to look after one's wellbeing in these trying times (see page 47).

You are not alone. The CSC is here to help in any way it can as an institution—whether it is through crafting policies, holding webinars, or any other platforms where we can inspire government workers, especially leaders, to step up in this crisis. In my keynote message delivered during the Chief Information Officer Forum last 25 June 2020, I emphasized that

“the future belongs to the most agile individuals and organizations who are willing to accelerate and embrace new possibilities presented by technology and paradigm shifts. This will signal the emergence of public sector leaders who do not shy away from the challenges brought by Fourth Industrial Revolution but gravitate toward it; who do not see digital advancement as threatening but welcome it as something creative, exciting, inspiring, and enriching.” If you wish to see the full transcript of this keynote message, see the Executive Letter on page 28.

We dedicate this issue to all our valued stakeholders in the hope that through the stories that we feature, we can inspire hope, courage, and action despite this seemingly paralyzing pandemic. While we feature individuals and organizations who are courageously braving the odds, this issue also invites everyone to introspect, look from within, and listen to that voice inside each of us that says 'You can do it. You can still make a difference despite these circumstances. This too shall pass. Be brave.'

Mabuhay ka, lingkod bayani!


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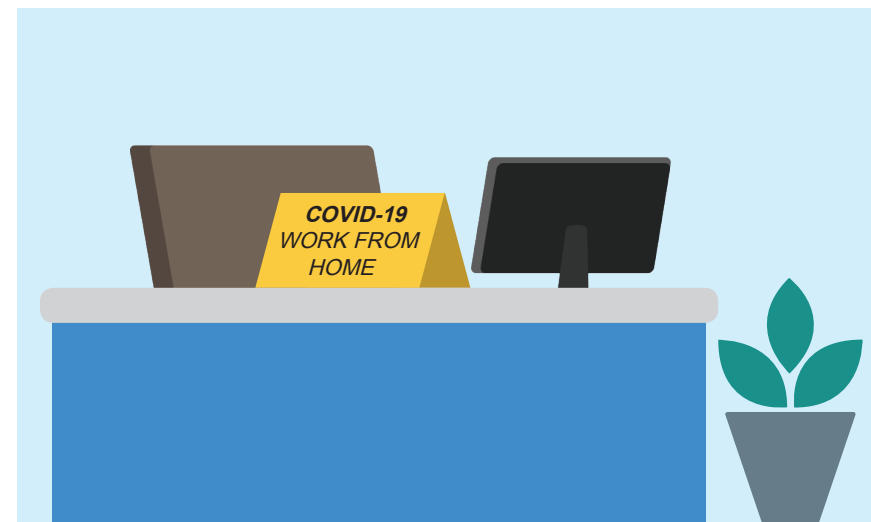
Comments and suggestions on the magazine as well as articles and other manuscripts for consideration in future publications are welcome.

Contributions must be submitted to the *CS Reporter*, Civil Service Commission, Constitution Hills, Diliman, Quezon City, with telephone number (02) 8931-4180, and email address csc.pmr@gmail.com.

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NEWS

CSC sets alternative work arrangements



The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has made available multiple alternative work arrangements (AWA) that government agencies can adopt while the entire country is placed under a State of Public Health Emergency due to the coronavirus disease-2019 or COVID-19 pandemic.

These are work-from-home arrangement, skeleton workforce, four-day or compressed workweek, and staggered working hours. An agency may also adopt work arrangements consisting of a combination of these, or other work arrangements appropriate and applicable to the agency considering the prevailing community quarantine in the area where it is located and the nature of work performed by its employees.

"These may be difficult times, but it is during these times that our citizens need our government to be effective and remain responsive to their needs. These interim guidelines would ensure that government agencies continue to fulfill their mandate amid the pandemic, while protecting the health and safety of their workers," CSC Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala said.

CSC Resolution No. 2000540 (Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements and Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic), promulgated on 7 May 2020 and circularized via CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020, contains the complete set of guidelines for implementing the said AWA.

Work-from-home (WFH) refers to an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the worker to produce outputs or results and accomplishments outside of the office. This shall be adopted in areas placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) by the President. For agencies in areas placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ), where public transportation is limited and physical/social distancing in the workplace is required, WFH is an option.

For areas placed under GCQ, employees aged below 21 and those who are 60 years old and above, as well as those with immunodeficiency, co-morbidities or other health risk, pregnant women, including those who reside with the aforementioned, shall be under WFH arrangement, except when their services are indispensable under the circumstances or when office work is permitted.

Skeleton (Skeletal) Workforce pertains to a work arrangement where a minimum number of employees is required to provide service at the office when full staffing is not possible. Agencies in GCQ areas shall adopt skeleton workforce as one of its AWA. During ECQ, on the other hand, skeleton workforce may be allowed unless a different operational capacity is provided in agencies providing health and emergency frontline services, border control, and other critical services as identified in the IATF Omnibus Guidelines on Community Quarantine.

Employees designated as skeletal workforce shall be entitled to Hazard Pay during ECQ and MECQ on top of the Compensatory Time Off or Overtime Pay granted for authorized services rendered outside of the employee's regular work hours.

In a Four-day (Compressed) Workweek arrangement, the employees' workweek is compressed to four days each week. This may be adopted by agencies in areas placed under GCQ.

Agencies may also adopt Staggered Working Hours, which is applicable to offices or agencies that observe work shifting or flexible working time. For this purpose, staggered working hours refers to the existing 24/7 shifting schedule and the flexible working time schedule. This may be implemented as a means to limit the number of employees present at the workplace at any given time.

Agencies may use a combination of two or more aforementioned AWA, including any other type of work arrangement it has adopted. They shall formulate their internal rules and regulations to effectively implement the AWA they adopted. These guidelines must include the appropriate AWA for employees who travel to and from areas placed under different quarantine levels, e.g., from ECQ area to GCQ area and vice-versa or from quarantine-free area to ECQ or GCQ area.

To ensure that public service delivery is not prejudiced during the implementation of AWA, a monitoring mechanism, such as submission of daily or weekly accomplishment reports, must be implemented.

To protect government workers' health and safety, the CSC requires agencies to implement precautionary measures prior to resumption of normal operations, such as disinfection and decontamination activities, conduct of health status check among employees, and modification of workplace layout to ensure observance of physical distancing requirements.

Agencies are also mandated to enforce health standard protocol at all times such as wearing of face masks, taking of body temperature, and setting up of sanitation stations.

Moreover, support mechanisms, such as health/psychosocial interventions, provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to employees, and reasonable transportation facilities and housing quarters, should be made available to government workers.

These revised interim guidelines shall take effect retroactively on 16 March 2020 and shall remain in force until the State of National Emergency has been lifted by the President of the Philippines.

The complete text of CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020 may be accessed from the CSC website at www.csc.gov.ph.

Agencies now required to have OSH Program

Government workers can be assured of their health and safety in their workplaces after the Civil Service Commission (CSC), Department of Health (DOH), and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) jointly issued guidelines on occupational safety and health standards.

CSC-DOH-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020 aims to institutionalize occupational safety and health (OSH) in government workplaces to protect government workers from the dangers of injury, sickness, or death and to prevent loss or damage of properties through the adoption of safe and healthy working conditions.

The Guidelines on OSH Standards requires government agencies to establish their own OSH Program, create a Safety and Health Committee and/or a Special Investigation Committee, and appoint or designate a Safety Health Officer, to ensure their compliance with OSH Standards and the promotion and effective implementation of OSH in their workplaces.

The guidelines provide a long list of reasonable working conditions. Workplace standards that agencies must comply with include installation of adequate fire, emergency, or danger signs, facilities for persons with disabilities, and health clinic or treatment room; regular practice of good housekeeping such as eradication of stagnant water and proper waste disposal; OSH Standard-compliant building construction and maintenance, space requirement, walkway surface, floor and wall openings, among others; provision of OSH Standard-compliant personal protective equipment (PPE) and devices; proper handling, use, and storage of hazardous materials; and implementation of an indoor air quality management program.

Government agencies must also establish a Risk Reduction Management System and a Crisis Management Plan and Contingency Program, as well as ensure adequate emergency supplies such as fire extinguishers, medical first aid kits, among others. They must also

partner with the nearest government health facility that can respond to accidents and injuries in case of emergencies.

Support facilities such as recreation areas, training rooms, and daycare facility, as well as lactation stations for lactating mothers, must be provided. Moreover, the special needs of pregnant women, older employees, the differently-abled, and those with limited working abilities must be considered in determining reasonable work assignments and a good working atmosphere.

The guidelines further mandate agency heads to ensure adequate working breaks to minimize or prevent employees' exposure to illness due to prolonged sitting, as well as to allow and adopt flexible work arrangements. The agency's internal rules on working hours, break, and leave privileges must still observe appropriate civil service rules and regulations.

Workplace policies and programs on smoking, prohibited drugs, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, Hepatitis B, and medical assistance and benefits must also be implemented.

CSC-DOH-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020 was published 7 May 2020 in a newspaper of general circulation and took effect on 22 May 2020. The complete text of the policy can be accessed on the CSC website at www.csc.gov.ph.

shall be reset in 2021. A separate issuance pertaining to the said rescheduled exam will be released by the CSC.

SALN deadline extended anew

All public officials and employees are given until 31 August 2020 to file their Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Networth (SALN) with their respective departments, offices, or agencies.

CSC has extended the deadline of filing of the SALN through Resolution No. 2000603 dated 22 June 2020 in response to the state of public health emergency.

In the same resolution, the CSC has allowed the online oath taking and use of electronic or digital signature on the SALN, as well as the online filing or transmission of a duly executed SALN.

Meanwhile, departments, agencies, and offices are given until 31 October 2020 to submit their respective employees' SALN to the appropriate repository agency.

Turn to page 20 for the complete guide on filing and submission of the SALN Form for the year 2020.

CSC clients urged to book appointment

The Civil Service Commission Central Office (CSC CO) based in Batasan Hills, Quezon City has launched a web-based application that allows its clients to schedule an appointment for its records management services.

Effective 6 July 2020, CSC CO clients can book an appointment through the Online Registration, Appointment, and Scheduling System (ORAS) to request for certification and/or authentication, or certified true copy, of the following records on file at the CSC CO:

- Career Service (Professional and Subprofessional) Eligibility
- Civil Service Eligibility Granted under Special Laws and CSC Issuance
- CSC Issuance (e.g. Memorandum Circular, Resolution, Decision)

- Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) (for CY 2010 to CY 2018)
- Employee Record (e.g. Appointment Paper for those who were assigned in agencies under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Region and Regional Office No. IV (Southern Tagalog) from CY 1980 to CY 1989, Statement of Service Record of former Civil Service Commission employees, Service Card in various agencies from CY 1930 to CY 1989).

It emphasized that transactions for the above-mentioned services must go through ORAS; thus, no walk-in clients shall be entertained.

To use ORAS, a client must follow these steps:

1. Register or sign up at <https://services.csc.gov.ph> using any web-connected device such as a computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet.

2. Log-in to your account and click the link provided for the instructions on how to use the system; and
3. Select and confirm your appointment date and time.

The CSC said the launch of ORAS is in line with measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease-2019 or COVID-19, specifically by managing the flow of clients and reducing their waiting time.

A number of CSC Regional Offices are also using online scheduling applications as part of public health standards against the COVID-19 pandemic. In an earlier announcement, the CSC has advised its clients to coordinate first with the CSC Regional/Field/Central Office offering the service they wish to avail, to know the possible modes of transaction as well as the health protocols being implemented in the office.

The directory of CSC offices nationwide is available at www.csc.gov.ph/cscrod.

CSC holds webinar on alternative work arrangements

Thousands of government workers tuned in to the free webinar on Alternative Work Arrangements and Support Mechanisms for Government Workers conducted by the Civil Service Commission's Civil Service Institute (CSI) on 30 June 2020 at 10 a.m.

CSC Human Resource Policies Director IV Rodolfo B. Encajonado discussed the salient provisions of CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020 or the Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements and Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic. He expounded on work-from-home arrangement, skeleton workforce, and other AWAs that agencies may implement in order to balance effective public service with government workers' health and safety.

Afterwards, CSC Public Assistance and Information Office Director IV Maria Luisa Salonga Agamata featured leadership perspectives and best practices related to implementing AWA. She talked about the need for empathy in the workplace, common management challenges with implementing AWA, the role of learning and development and innovation during times of crisis, among others.

The webinar was followed at 1:30 p.m. by a LunChat with CSC episode featuring a Question-and-Answer (Q&A) session.

Viewers who tuned in live via the CSC Facebook Page reached more than 2,500, and the video continues to rake in views as it is still available online. To watch the webinar, go to www.facebook.com/civilservicegovph.

Civil service exams cancelled, SALN deadline extended due to COVID-19

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) will not be conducting any written civil service examinations for the rest of the year.

The CSC said that the implementation of public health standards during the pandemic, such as physical distancing, reduced capacity of public transportation, and restriction on mass gatherings, has led it to cancel the following civil service examinations via the pen-and-paper test (PPT) mode:

- Fire Officer Examination, Penology Officer Examination, Basic Competency on Local Treasury Examination scheduled on 21 June 2020;
- Career Service Examination (CSE) PPT (Professional and Subprofessional Levels) scheduled on 9 August 2020;
- Intermediate Competency on Local Treasury Examination, Pre-Employment Test, Promotional Test, Ethics-Oriented Personality Test scheduled on 11 October 2020.

Moreover, the conduct of the 15 March 2020 Professional and Subprofessional CSE-PPT

Webinar on CSC Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA)

June 30, 2020 10:00 AM-12:00 NN

CSC
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
Republic of the Philippines

zoom

Civil service anniversary highlights technology, *malasakit*

Government gears up for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

For the 120th Philippine Civil Service Anniversary in September, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) will highlight the role of technology in the evolution of public service in the country, especially as the nation copes with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Thus, the theme of the anniversary celebration is Philippine Civil Service @120: Public Sector in the Age of Digital Transformation.

CSC Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala said that, in the age of technology, public service has to remain competitive and responsive enough to meet the evolving needs of its clientele. "Human resource (HR) management and development are also evolving as technology introduces new ways of interaction and alternative work arrangements. This was further highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, which brought about changes to work, government-client transactions, and other processes," she said.

The CSC also encourages government agencies to learn from the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. "This includes reassessing the ways government has been doing business, setting goals and targets, managing people, and evaluating work performance. CSC recognizes that innovation has now become a crucial ingredient not only to meet organizational objectives but also to keep employees safe, healthy, productive, and motivated," stressed Chairperson Bala.

The anniversary activities set for September 2020 will be mostly online, in accordance with the national government's directives on minimum health standards such as social distancing. To mark the start of the anniversary month, a virtual press conference will be held on 1 September. Jobseekers



may participate in the 2020 Government Online Career Fair on 14-18 September. Photography enthusiasts may show off their best work by joining the 120th PCSA Photography Contest.

Government workers may also participate in eLearning courses and health and wellness webinars. For the whole month of September, special treats will be provided to government employees as a gesture of appreciation for their hard work and dedication.

For more information on the PCSA theme and activities, refer to CSC Memorandum Circular No. 12, s. 2020 posted on the CSC website, www.csc.gov.ph. Updates and additional information may also be accessed via the PCSA webpage at www.csc.gov.ph/pcsa2020 and the CSC's official Facebook Page, www.facebook.com/civilservicegovph.

Gov't agencies invited to virtual job fair

All government agencies, including local government units, state universities and colleges, and government-owned and

controlled corporations, are invited to participate in the 2020 Government Online Career Fair (GOCF) slated on 14-18 September 2020.

Participating agencies must have a maximum of 10 urgent and/or critical or hard-to-fill positions requiring immediate hiring, an internet connection, and hotline number for immediate response.

They may register from 1 July to 14 August 2020. The complete registration procedure may be accessed at <http://www.csc.gov.ph/slider/1972-2020gocf.html>

On the other hand, information on how jobseekers can apply for a job through the GOCF will be made available closer to the date of the event.

Jointly organized by the CSC and JobStreet.com, the GOCF seeks to promote easy access to employment opportunities in the public sector by bringing jobseekers and hiring government agencies together in a "virtual job fair".

CSC Regional Office V champions innovation amid COVID-19

Disruption (*noun*) - a situation in which it is difficult for something to continue in the normal way; the act of stopping something from continuing in the normal way (*Oxford Learner's Dictionary*)

There's no doubt that COVID-19 has disrupted lives. People experience it at home, in workplaces, and social spaces. But disruption need not be destructive. In fact, if taken with optimism, disruption can stimulate the mind to be creative and innovative for one to function in new ways. Today, everyone is trying to shape the new normal with tech innovations, as well as new HR practices.

This news story features how CSC Regional Office V champions innovation in public service and in learning and development despite COVID-19 disruptions.

Online appointment system

A lounge full of clients waiting in a queue, some even hail from the island provinces of Bicol Region like Catanduanes and Masbate; others tend to arrive at the Office even before its opening just to make sure to be accommodated first. This setup is susceptible to customer dissatisfaction and complaints. Thus, as an office that continuously strives for excellence, the CSC RO V explores ways on how to deliver quality and efficient services. This paved the way for the creation of an Online Appointment System called Online Scheduler or OnSched.

The CSC RO V Examination Services Division (ESD), the unit that handles some of the most sought-after services, conceptualized the OnSched. ESD's Human

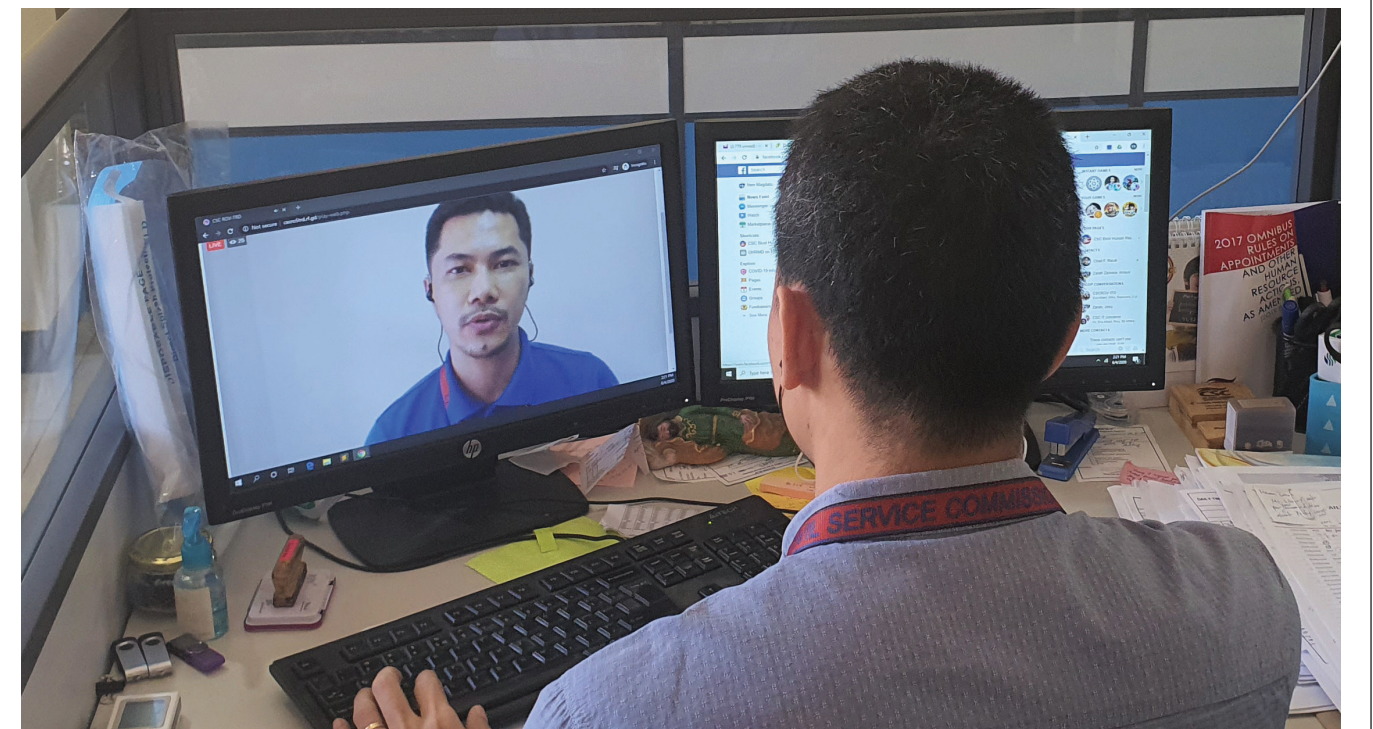
Resource Specialist II, Michael Karlo Perlor, developed the program using the free online scheduling software and a booking management system called Picktime. Consequently, clients with impending transactions like Issuance of Certification of Eligibility (COE), Authentication of COE, and Application for Special Eligibilities (SPELS) should book an appointment using the link tinyurl.com/onsched before going to the CSC RO V.

The CSC RO V observes a first-book, first-served basis. Through the OnSched, clients are given the freedom to select their preferred schedule of appointment. When the date and time can no longer be accessed, it only means that the date is fully-booked. On the page, all the documentary requirements for each transaction are already available. Even the prescribed forms can be downloaded from the platform. Certain reminders are also included to ensure fast and easy transaction when appointment day of the customer comes. This scheme provides no reason for clients to not be able to secure and prepare pertinent documents for their transaction.

To book an appointment, clients may use a computer, laptop, cellphone, tablet or other devices capable of connecting to the internet. It must have an up-to-date web browser installed like Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. A stable internet connection is also needed. The actual appointment page does not require account creation and log-in. However, clients are required to

(continued on page 14)

The CSC RO V holds the Tech Innovation Webinar to help other government frontliners cope with the changing demands in public service.





provide personal information for the ESD to determine the identity of the eligible such as full name, title of eligibility/examination, date and place of examination, as well as the name of the authorized representative if there is any.

With the implementation of the OnSched, the ESD can provide a one-day transaction to applicants for the Special Eligibilities (SPELS). Previously, SPELS applicants who personally appeared to the Office to submit the requirements had to check the status of their application through the link tinyurl.com/spelstat. In the said information system, clients can determine whether their application had been approved, declined, or still pending. Once the application had been approved, the client must return to the Office to request for a copy of COE. But with the OnSched, SPELS applicants can submit the requirements and request for the COE within the same day.

With this latest innovation of the CSC ROV, smooth transaction is guaranteed thereby fostering two-way satisfaction for clients and for frontliners.

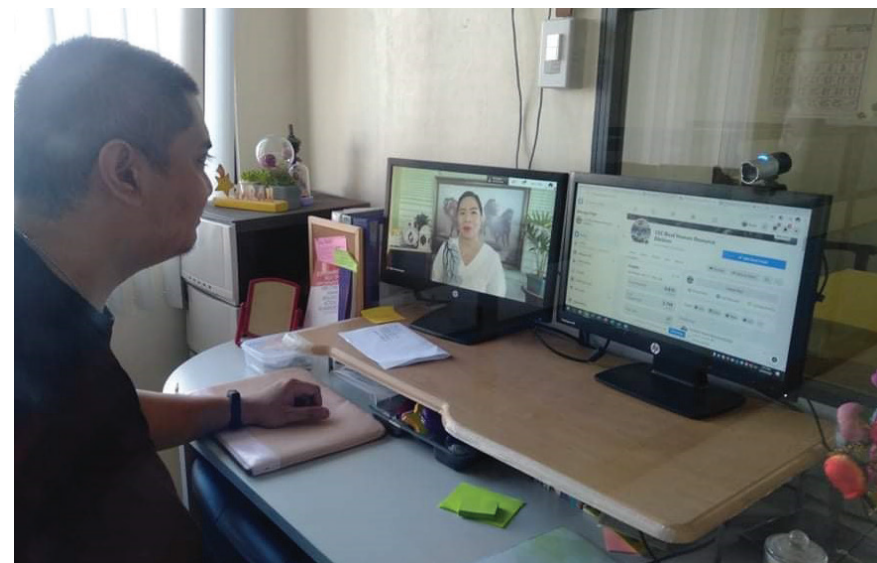
Virtual PACD

To comply with physical and social distancing measures, government frontline offices must protect their frontliners and clients at the Public Assistance and Complaints Desk (PACD) by providing them with face masks and face shields. CSC RO V went over and beyond that. Committed to provide excellent public service, the CSC RO V, through its Information Technology Group (ITG) introduced digital solutions to emerging concerns affecting delivery of services amidst the pandemic.

One of these is the setting up a Virtual PACD or VPACD. Through this innovation, the Officer-of-the-Day (OD) and other CSC RO V personnel are able to communicate

with the clients, sans the traditional face-to-face encounter. This has become feasible with the technology which uses local area network (LAN); appropriate devices like computer, microphone, webcam, and speaker; along with the suited software for the activity.

In the webinar titled “Going Tech Savvy in the New Normal (Applying Information Technology for Safe Public Service Delivery),” Eric Albert M. Arroyo, CSC RO V’s ITG Focal Person, shared their experience toward making VPACD into a reality. The group scouted for applicable softwares and tried its functionality until such time that they were able to choose which software will work best for the VPACD. After series of trials, they decided to use the video conferencing tool called TrueConf. According to Arroyo, TrueConf is easy to configure, it has simple interface but has many features, its customer support is top-notch, and above all, it is free.



To get it running the server software was installed on a dedicated machine. TrueConf can be downloaded from www.trueconf.com. Afterwards, configure server details, setup user accounts, then login and start a conference. At the CSC RO V, the ITG set up the said software in every division which take turns in acting as Officer-of-the-Day (OD). If the client’s query or concern is out of the OD’s expertise, then the client can be easily referred to the appropriate division. The TrueConf has a chat feature that allows its participants to communicate with one another without necessarily involving video.

In the time of COVID-19, dealing with people has become very challenging. Everyone should observe minimum health standard protocols at all times and contribute in whatever way they can to avoid the spread of the virus. Consequently, the VPACD is one of the CSC RO V’s ways to adapt to the new normal. This innovation has garnered positive feedback both from internal and external clients. It makes transactions smoother and safer—something that is worthy of emulation.

Digital Learning and Development

Among the major office activities that have been disrupted by COVID-19 is the Learning and Development (L&D). The physical distancing measures restrict mass gathering, including face-to-face classroom set up, which has been the usual mode of L&D delivery in the public sector.

Hence, the CSC RO V resorted to cancelling all scheduled L & D interventions or trainings for the rest of the year. Nonetheless, CSC RO V believes that learning and sharing of knowledge in this rapidly changing environment, especially in this period of uncertainty and distress, are much needed and must not be put into a halt.

Though challenging, the CSC RO V’s Human Resource Division (HRD) continuously explores ways on how to reach out to the learners in the public sector, creatively and viably. Its focus has now shifted into putting a premium on the immense benefits that technology and the internet can offer to enhance the learning community’s competencies. Indeed, the current landscape has opened possibilities for digital innovation. New training designs came to fruition, converting some previously offered programs to online versions or what is now popularly known as webinars. Webinars may have been introduced in the world several decades ago at the advent of the internet, but it has undeniably risen to fame when people were confined to their homes due to lockdown measures. A webinar is an efficient avenue for interaction and active engagement among the speaker, facilitators, and participants. It makes learning feasible despite unprecedented circumstances.

The CSC RO V HRD was quick to respond to the needs of the learning community and adapted relevant innovation which resulted in its first ever webinar on 28 May 2020. With the assistance of the CSC RO V’s ITG, the said webinar was launched using the video conferencing application Google Meet. The Subject Matter Specialist, CSC RO V’s Assistant Regional Director, Atty. Daisy P. Bragais, discussed the Alternative Work Arrangements as indicated in CSC Resolution No. 2000540, promulgated on May 7, 2020 and circularized via CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020.

Meanwhile, on 4 June 2020, the CSC RO V ran another free webinar, discussing how technology and available software could aid in adapting to the new normal. It was titled “Going Tech Savvy in the New Normal (Applying Information Technology for Safe



Public Service Delivery)”, with presenter Mr. Eric Albert M. Arroyo, Focal Person of the CSC RO V IT Group. Arroyo shared the significant innovations being implemented at the CSC RO V to continuously deliver efficient services even during pandemic. These include AnyDesk software that allows an employee to have a remote access on his or her computer in the office; the free online scheduling software and a booking management system called Picktime; and the video conferencing app named TrueConf that is being used for CSC RO V’s Virtual PACD.

Venturing in a digital training is not a walk in the park, as online learning can be associated with security risks inherent to the use of the internet. Hence, to address this concern, the CSC RO V HRD and ITG incorporated a Risk Management Plan which identifies risks and determines potential solutions. Accordingly, the

safety in terms of health and data of each participant is guaranteed.

According to the CSC RO V HRD, combining learning and technology to deliver innovative digital learning solutions amidst the pandemic is one of the strategies that they adopt to achieve their commitment. The webinar conducted is part of the Training Online Program (TOP) that puts learners on top of priorities in coming up with instructional designs which are aimed to be highly appealing and motivating. Upcoming webinars will be posted on the link <http://cscro5trd.rf.gd/>, as well as on the CSC RO V HRD (Events) FB Page (<https://www.facebook.com/cscro5hrd>) and CSC RO V Official FB Page (<https://www.facebook.com/cscrov>).

Indeed, change is constant and inevitable. Yet learning, under any circumstance, must always continue.



Strengthening Health Protocols for a Safe & Healthy CSC RO XII

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis on health. It is said that this pandemic moves "like a wave—one that may yet crash on those least able to cope".

It is for this reason that health standards and protocols are established in each office like CSC Regional Office XII with the aim to protect all our workers from hazards, sickness or death.

Rehiyon Dose has adopted a safe and healthy working conditions to assure the protection of human life. Safety measures for both employees and clients were standardized to contain the spread of the virus.

Sad to note that such an outbreak is affecting every person. Therefore, the top management has led its staff to adopt simple health practices during this virus outbreak.

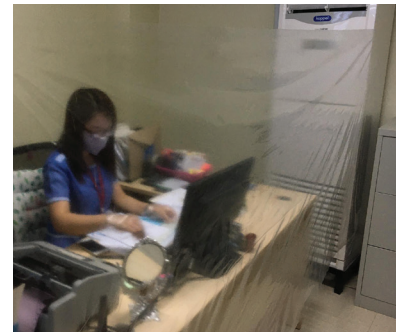
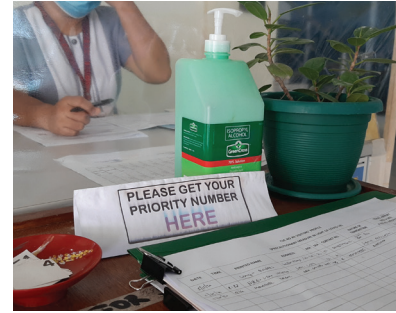
Rehiyon Dose has adopted AWA (Alternative Work Arrangement) like the skeleton workforce, 2-day Work From Home divided into two (2) teams for every division/field office. This is to make sure that delivery of public service continues amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

The practice of physical distancing is also one of the many things people can do to protect themselves against the novel Coronavirus. People avoid contact with the sick or "suspect", and try to stay away from somebody who's coughing and might be sick.

With these precautionary measures and faithful observance of health protocols, COVID-19 can be defeated.

Rehiyon Dose can.

Let us protect each other. CSC Regional Office XII adopts health and safety protocols to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the office.



Citizen's

In this section, the CS Reporter gives readers information and updates on public service delivery aligned with the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery. Readers can also get tips and advice on availing various government services in accordance with each government agency's Citizen's Charter.

Public service delivery innovations in the time of COVID-19

Guide

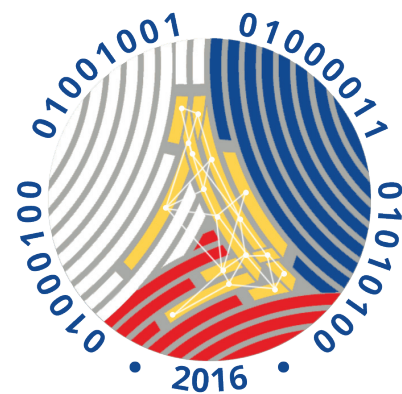
“We have to bridge the digital divide, come up with pioneering initiatives for a digital-ready economy so we can finally move in sync with how the rest of the world use new technologies for cross border trade and faster electronic transactions.”

This was the message of Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala to newly-appointed employees of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) after she administered their oath of office last June.

Chair Bala could have sounded the same call to government agencies nationwide who have begun to explore electronic transactions not only due to the pandemic but also in compliance with a law that promises changes in government processes and transactions.

Two years into the implementation of Republic Act No. 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery (EODB-EGSD) Act of 2018, the government is earnestly pursuing digital transformation to realize the vision to change the analogue, paper-based, legacy systems to interact with citizens and make public services open, accessible, simple and citizen-centric.

Public service delivery innovations in the time of COVID-19



R.A. No. 11032 now serves as the anchor for digital technology and service delivery reforms. One such reform is the E-Government Master Plan 2.0 (2016-2022) of the Department of Information and Communications Technology, which aims to enable government agencies to provide efficient and cost-effective services to citizens and businesses.

The EGMP is a blueprint for the harmonization and integration of information and communications technology (ICT) efforts of the government. The general objective of e-government is to improve public service by building the infrastructure and shared services, automating processes, and providing online services to citizens and businesses.

One of the initiatives under the EGMP is the establishment of a National Government Portal that will allow interoperability between and among government agencies; data and information will be stored in a common repository, ready to be accessed, shared and used by participating government agencies.

Once the National Government Portal is completed, the next step is to target the

bandwidth allocation for high speed internet connection, which is being addressed by the National Broadband Program (NBP).

The government's push toward digitization holds much promise. Even before the onset of COVID-19, a number of government agencies are already offering ICT solutions that the transacting public may use to access public services and avoid long lines.

Another digital solution is the Cauayan Smart City app recognized by the DICT and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) during the 2019 Digital Governance Awards as among the Best in eGov-Digital Finance Empowerment. Cited for promoting e-commerce and e-payment facilities and systems, the Smart City app paved the way for convenient electronic transactions of citizens with the local government. Aside from being fast and efficient, the app allows residents to go cashless when transacting with the city hall, including paying taxes or getting licenses and permits. The system also provides small enterprise owners with better financial and bookkeeping methods. It is currently available in Play Store, and will soon be launched in App Store.

Meanwhile, the City Government of Makati introduced the Makatizen Card, a valid government-issued ID. The Makatizen Card comes with a Near-Field Communication (NFC) feature that allows city offices equipped with iBayad machine readers to verify the identity of residents and Makati City employees in a single tap. It stores information to easily identify the card holder availing of various city government services thus citizens need not present additional documents.

For its part, the Bureau of Immigration now issues the ACR I-card, a microchip based, credit card-sized, identification to all registered aliens who stay in the Philippines. The ACR I-card has an embedded computer chip with biometric security features capable of data management and can be updated electronically. The ACR I-card has replaced the paper documentation previously required to register foreigners and has automated the registration process.

Better normal in public service delivery

The implementation of social distancing and other health protocols across the country has spurred government agencies

to look for alternative ways to render public services and digitize operations. There too is a specific provision of R. A. No. 11032, Section 7 or the Zero Contact Policy which requires limited interaction with an applicant or requesting party except during preliminary assessment and evaluation.

The CSC has developed a web-based Online Registration, Appointment, and Scheduling System (ORAS) to support the physical distancing rule. Clients need not proceed outright to the CSC main office in Batasan Hills, Diliman. They should book appointments through ORAS, to avail of such services as requests for certification/ authentication of civil service records such as career service (professional and subprofessional) eligibility, civil service eligibility granted under special laws and CSC issuance (e.g. memorandum circular, resolution, decision), statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN) for CY2010 to CY 2018.

The system can track employee's records such as appointment paper for those who were assigned in agencies under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Region (NCR) and Regional Office No. 4

(Southern Tagalog) from CY 1980 to CY 1989, statement of service record of former Civil Service Commission employees, service card in various agencies from CY 1930 to CY 1989), can also be done with the ORAS.

For its part, the Department of Agrarian Reform uses the Visitor's Access Portal System (VAPS), a system where representatives from the DAR Public Assistance and Information Center (PAIC) interact with clients about agrarian reform-related cases through voice or video call. The Access Portal System (APS), on the other hand, supplements landline phones at any DAR central office (CO), including DARRO 4-A and 4-B, where certain offices may communicate with other offices using the Office 365 Teams applications in the DARCO compound to maintain social distancing in the workplace.

As the lead agency in the fight against COVID-19, the Department of Health has launched the COVID KAYA app which automates the data collection system used by frontliners in submitting COVID-19 case data reports. It helps collect data and addresses information gaps relating to the pandemic.

The revamped tracker features additional information on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in the country, COVID-19 testing, health facilities, and availability of personal protective equipment (PPEs) as well as data on the laboratory testing capacities of the DOH accredited laboratories including the total number of tests and unique individuals tested. Likewise, the public can view a snapshot of the health system's capacity in responding to the pandemic based on data collected from the DOH DataCollect application.

On the part of the judiciary, the Supreme Court partnered with Microsoft to improve the efficiency and productivity of the country's legal proceedings through video-conferencing hearings. The conduct of hearings via video-conference ensure continued hearing of cases even during the pandemic and compliance with the government's social distancing and remote work guidelines.

All these initiatives indicate that many government agencies have transitioned to the digital realm. Nonetheless, CSC reiterates its call to go digital as it is the fastest and most efficient way of serving citizens, with or without a pandemic.



Guide to Online Filing and Submission of SALN

If you are a government official or employee, submitting the Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Network or SALN is and should be part of your annual routine. One of the basic requirements for public officials and employees is the submission of the SALN. It is filed within 30 days after assumption of office, on or before April 30 of every year thereafter, and within 30 days after separation from the service, all of which are mandated under Republic Act No. 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

The risks brought by the COVID-19 pandemic has moved a lot of the things we do online. This is why, for 2020, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), through Memorandum Circular No. 13, s. 2020, has allowed the electronic filing of the SALN as an option, apart from the traditional way of filing of the physical or paper SALN. This will only apply to the 2020 filing of the 2019 SALN. As a condition, though, the department, office, or agency should put in place processes and mechanisms to enable or allow online oath taking and electronic filing of the SALN, and to ensure that the SALN electronically filed are verifiable and authentic.

Moreover, the conditions set in the said Circular is subject to change in case of any further issuances by the appropriate authorities during the period of National State of Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19.

For those who cannot perform the traditional way of filing the SALN and are interested to take the online route, the Civil Service Reporter features this handy guide on online filing and submission of the SALN Form based on the provisions of CSC Memorandum Circular No. 13, s. 2020.

Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters on Unsplash

GUIDE TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES

FILLING OUT THE SALN FORM

1. Download a blank SALN Form from the CSC website at www.csc.gov.ph. Make sure it is the version labeled "Revised as of January 2015".
2. Fill out the electronic form using an electronic device such as a computer, or print the blank form and fill it out manually.
3. Leave the portion below "Relatives in Government Service" blank.
4. Make sure all disclosed entries are true and correct.

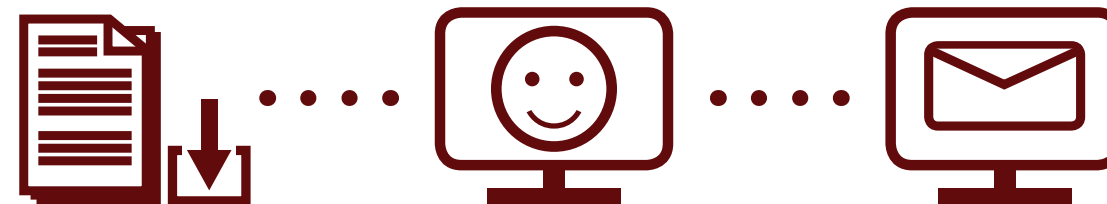
ONLINE OATH TAKING

1. Arrange a virtual meeting with your agency's Administering Officer via a communication technology such as Zoom or Skype. The Administering Officer (AO) should make sure that the Declarant (you) on the SALN is the same person appearing in the video. You may present evidence of your identity, such as an ID bearing your name and photo.
2. Execute the SALN by affixing your electronic/digital signature to the electronic SALN, or wet ink signature to the physical SALN. By affixing your signature, you affirm that doing so is your free act and deed, and that the contents of your SALN are true and correct. Remember that the placing of the signature on the SALN must be seen by the AO.
3. On the same day, transmit a copy of the SALN to the AO via fax or other electronic means. Upon receipt, the AO may use electronic or wet ink signature in acknowledging the SALN. After signing, the AO transmits the SALN back to you.

Note: As an alternative, the Declarant may opt to personally sign the SALN under oath before a notary public.

ONLINE FILING OR TRANSMISSION

1. At this point, the SALN should already have your signature and that of the AO. Make sure that the SALN to be submitted online is in Portable Document Format (PDF).
2. Submit the duly executed SALN to the concerned department, office, or agency (e.g., Human Resource Department/Office) via online transmission such as email. A duly executed SALN refers to a SALN that is personally signed under oath before an AO or notary public, or that is executed through online oath taking.
3. The electronic SALN, which refers to the one submitted online, shall be considered the ORIGINAL for purposes of SALN compliance for the year 2020. A printout of the Original shall be considered a DUPLICATE ORIGINAL.



Remember, the last day of submission of SALN Forms to the appropriate repository agencies is on 31 October 2020.

GUIDE FOR DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES, AND AGENCIES

All heads of departments, offices, or agencies must establish their own Review and Compliance Procedure for reviewing SALNs to determine whether these have been submitted on time, are complete, and are in proper form.

After the department, office, or agency collates the submitted SALNs of their respective officials and employees, the following guidelines must be observed:

1. The department, office, or agency must submit/transmit the SALNs with the appropriate repository agency either physically or electronically. Choose only either physical submission or electronic submission.

a. For physical submission – Comply with the existing guidelines on the filing and submission of SALN. Physical submission includes paper SALNs filed and printed copies of electronic SALNs.

b. For electronic submission – Submit/transmit the electronic SALNs to the proper repository agency either using a USB flash drive or disc storage together with the required summary as provided under the rules. This option includes SALNs electronically submitted as well as scanned copies of paper SALNs filed.

In either instance, the department, office, or agency is required to submit a list of SALNs both electronically and physically filed.

2. A repository agency may establish its own rules in allowing the receipt of electronic copies of the SALNs, provided it adheres to either physical submission or electronic submission but not a combination of the two.

For the CSC, the submission of electronic SALNs may be made by transmitting the flash drive or CD with the CSC Regional or Field Office having jurisdiction over them.

3. Submission of electronic SALNs shall be deemed substantial compliance for the year 2020.

Remember, the last day of filing of the SALN with your respective departments, offices, or agencies is on 31 August 2020.



THE MAN BEHIND THE PINOY-MADE COVID-19 TESTING KIT

When one sees dark days ahead, the seemingly only choice is to cave in and think of one's survival. But with this circumstance also comes a great opportunity to step up, think beyond oneself, and help others survive.

Since the announcement of COVID-19 local transmission in the Philippines, Filipinos have been in a state of anxiety, panic and terror, fearful for their very own and their family members' lives. There are certain individuals however who do not have the time nor energy to take these all in because they prioritize the call of duty, especially if its fulfillment is critical to the country's survival in the midst of pandemic. One of those people is the man behind the Pinoy-made low-cost COVID-19 testing kit—Dr. Raul V. Destura, Director of the National Training Center for Biosafety and Biosecurity, National Institutes of Health, and the Deputy Executive Director of the Philippine Genome Center, University of the Philippines - Manila.

Through a virtual interview, CS Reporter was able to capture his story of optimism, selflessness, and faithfulness to his call of duty amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE CALL OF DUTY

As a practicing infectious disease doctor, Dr. Raul V. Destura understood the magnitude or impact of identifying COVID-19 cases through a diagnostic kit.

“Even before COVID-19 came into the country, I knew that one of the major challenges we had to prepare for was the identification of cases which requires a diagnostic kit. This will enable us to be precise with quarantine measures and prevent the transmission of the virus to other people,” said Dr. Destura.

As people may recall, the Philippines struggled with limited stock of COVID-19 testing kits during the first few weeks or month since the local transmission was announced. On 9 March 2020 Senate hearing, the Department of Health admitted that the number of testing kits was down to 2,000, from the original stock of 4,500. This has raised a major public concern as the cases of COVID-19 continued to rise.

“Our organization, the National Institutes of Health, is one of those groups that are really focused on developing diagnostic kits. We took it upon ourselves to respond to the country's need, to play our role as scientists

Lab hours. Dr. Raul Destura works on the GenAmplify COVID-19 testing kit.

in putting together a diagnostic kit that can help the country increase its capacity to do mass testing,” Dr. Destura said.

MISSION POSSIBLE: GENAMPLIFY™ CORONA VIRUS DISEASE-2019 (COVID-19) RRT-PCR TEST KIT

Pressed for time, Dr. Destura and a team of scientists from the University of the Philippines-Manila started designing a diagnostic kit for the country. The P53.2M-project was done in collaboration with the Philippine Genome Center and the UP-National Institutes of Health, with support from the Department of Science and Technology - Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD).

“It started off with our initial designs following the ones that were posted as pre-validated primers. Primers are like probes that identify viruses from the World Health Organization website. Based on that, we redesigned it to make it quicker from the original design,” Dr. Destura explained.

Other testing kits would take about six (6) hours as the test has to be done thrice. Add to that is the long wait for the release of results as targets' swab samples would have to be sent abroad. Dr. Destura's invention—the GenAmplify™ Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) rRT-PCR test kit—employs a multiplex real-time PCR technology (shortened version) which can simultaneously detect several targets in one run. Each kit can run 25 tests at once and can provide results within two (2) hours.

Dr. Destura explained, “Before, there were no commercialized kits that is why we were using the longer version [of the testing]. All biotechnology developers around the world considered that as significant challenge because of the turnaround time. Therefore, many biotechnologists like me tried to design a multiplex or a shortened version. This type of platform was made possible and widely available because of biotechnology.”



We took it upon ourselves to respond to the country's need, to play our role as scientists in putting together a diagnostic kit that can help the country increase its capacity to do mass testing.





I really hope to inculcate into young scientists' hearts and minds that the work of a scientist is not just about discovering fundamental findings that enhances scientific knowledge, but also translating them into something that can help the country, the economy, and most especially, the most vulnerable populations and the marginalized sectors.

The quicker turnaround time is not the only advantage of GenAmplify™ COVID-19 test kit over other testing kits. It is also almost four times cheaper than the kits from abroad. Per DOST, the complete package of this test kit, including VAT costs, is only PHP1,828.40; other kits in the international market is priced at around PHP8,000 or even higher.

"The reason why it is cheaper is because it is developed locally. If we are advocating low-cost technology, it will provide some form of incentive to our country. We can ask foreign countries to also lower the cost of their technologies from a price competitive advantage standpoint. In the end, it will be the country that will benefit. Our team is here to contribute so we can lessen the burden of access to the diagnostic testing technology. Hopefully, it creates some impact on how we control the Coronavirus problem here in the Philippines," said Dr. Destura.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the GenAmplify COVID-19 test kit for commercial use last 3 April 2020 through the FDA Advisory No. 2020-513, three days after the completed validation study which covered 26,000 tests.

THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

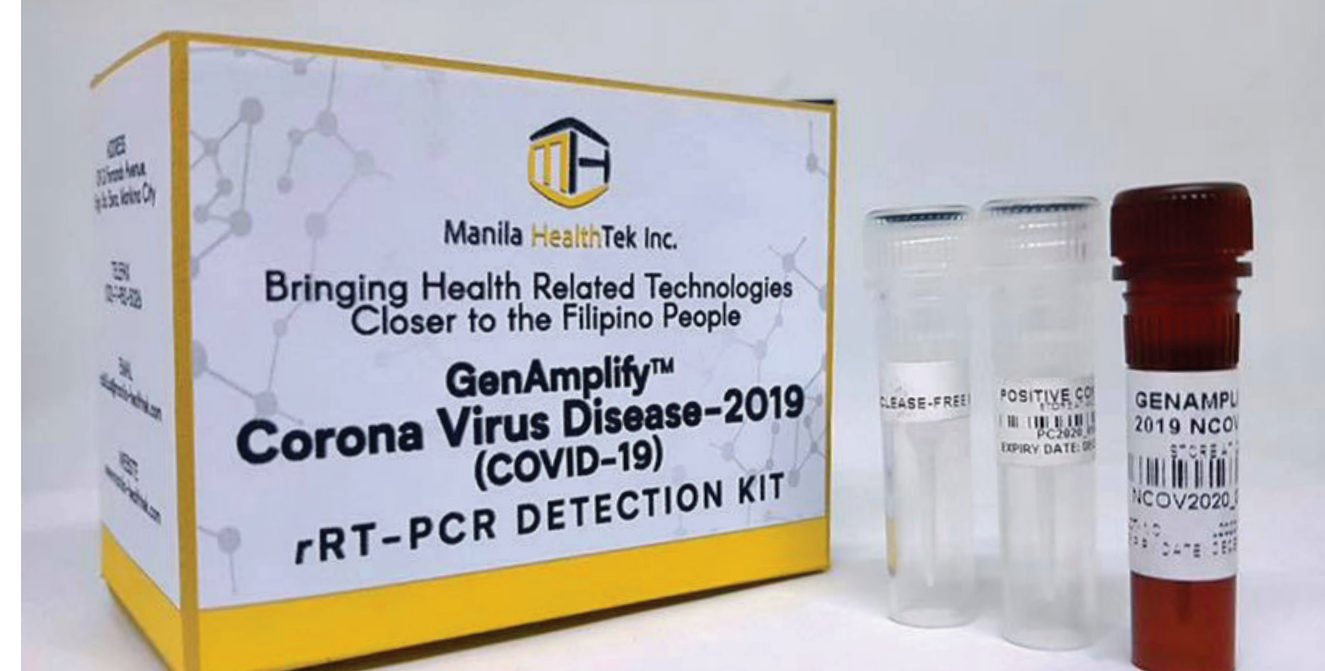
One can only imagine the pressure on Dr. Destura and his team while working on the diagnostic kit. While they might have been able to work on it fast as if it was a no-brainer task, unknown to many were the challenges these scientists had to face along the way.

"We went through a lot of challenges. To start off, we had a problem with the original design because of the raw materials coming in from other countries. It takes time. The most challenging part was when shipping

companies had to bring [the raw materials] to the Philippines, and then you fall in line in Customs, take it all out...all of these things took so much time. That's why when samples would arrive, we were left with very short time to work on them," explained Dr. Destura.

The entire process was described as a "very tedious and exhausting" task. In an interview with another media outfit, Dr. Destura said that one simple test clearly was not enough; they had to keep repeating it every step of the way, 40 to 60 times, to prove the technology's sensitivity and specificity. He also said that they had to redesign a version 2.0 of the kit which needed to undergo another analytical performance testing, laboratory performance testing, and clinical performance testing before they got the second FDA approval.

"It was very exhausting. There was no time to waste. We had to make use of the entire



24 hours in a day to complete the whole process. We had to work with several people because of the tight timeline. People had to work in shifts. People can take over half of the work while the other half goes to sleep. But despite all those very exhausting and challenging and emotionally heightening activities, serving the country is worth it," said Dr. Destura.

Another challenge the team encountered was finances, particularly on the business operation and production of the GenAmplify™ COVID-19 test kits through the Manila HealthTek Inc.

"We (Manila HealthTek Inc.) are just a small start-up, a spin-off company from the University of the Philippines through the Tech Transfer Act of 2009. The waiting time and all the other problems we encountered had us bleeding dry in terms of resources as we had to spend for operations and personnel. We sought help from colleagues and friends, from banks, and other institutions just to be able to make sure that we can provide the needs

of the country. That's on the financial side of things. We are pretty much trained on the science side, so it's the business and operations side that we really needed help with. Good thing that we have other colleagues who are experts in this area," said Dr. Destura.

Per DOST, the Manila HealthTek Inc has targeted to produce 16,000 kits per day from its original capacity of 8000 per day in April.

HOPE FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS

Dr. Destura acknowledged that the low-cost COVID-19 testing kit was made possible not only by his own experience and expertise in biotechnology and diagnostics, but also by a team of dedicated scientists and students from UP-Manila.

He said, "I am very honored to be working with young scientists who are eager to learn and master the ability to develop the technologies for diagnosis. I am working with fifteen (15) people—young ones—who

are Master's and PhD students who helped put together the technology that we designed, validated and tested."

According to Dr. Destura, the most important thing that he can share with them is the experience of serving the country by doing the thing that they do best—scientific research.

"If I succeed in making that experience very meaningful to these young scientists, I really hope to inculcate into their hearts and minds that the work of a scientist is not just about discovering fundamental findings that enhances scientific knowledge, but also translating them into something that can help the country, the economy, and most especially, the most vulnerable populations and the marginalized sectors," said Dr. Destura.

He emphasized the role of scientists in providing the marginalized sector access to technologies that the global community has been enjoying for years but are made limited due to the cost of purchasing these technologies from outside the country.

Dr. Raul Destura helps in packing a GenAmplify COVID-19 rRT-PCR Detection Kit for distribution.



Human encroachments and industrialization make us more vulnerable to these viruses that are usually hidden in the deeper areas of caves and jungles where we're not exposed to. If these viruses have never touched humans before, then we don't have the immunity for it, which makes the entire world vulnerable to a pandemic.



Photo credits:
<http://www.pchrd.dost.gov.ph/index.php/news/6537-up-nih-spinoff-begins-mass-distribution-of-dost-pinoy-made-covid-19-test-kits>
 GenAmplify testing kit: <https://www.facebook.com/mteklabs/>



If we use health as our universal compass, we can perhaps stir toward a direction that would make our countries safer from future pandemics.

"I know there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. But if we hold steadfast to our vision and dreams for the country, and with the support of our government and the private sector, we just might be able to help move our country forward through technology. I'm sure there are other scientists who are big-hearted as well and who love this country and will step up so that there will be more of us helping build the biotechnology ecosystem here in the Philippines."

**LESSONS LEARNED: BIO-
PREPAREDNESS AND HEALTH**

CS Reporter asked Dr. Destura about his personal thoughts, feelings, and reflections about the COVID-19 pandemic. His statements reflect that of informed observations as a scientist, as a concerned Filipino, and as a responsible global citizen.

"On a global perspective, this crisis gives us the impression that the global community is still not prepared for epidemics like this. The issue here is what we call bio-preparedness—the ability to prepare for epidemics and pandemics. We thought we are ready, but based on what we are seeing now, even in the case of the advanced countries, we are not. Bio-preparedness is something that the global community must aspire for."

To further prove his point on bio-preparedness, Dr. Destura explained his foresight that the pandemic will not end with the Coronavirus. He considers it a part of the cycle of emerging infections globally because of the way that we humans rapidly utilize our world.

"Human encroachments and industrialization make us more vulnerable to these viruses that are usually hidden in the deeper areas of

caves and jungles where we're not exposed to. If these viruses have never touched humans before, then we don't have the immunity for it, which makes the entire world vulnerable to a pandemic. How do we protect ourselves from viruses? The only way we develop our immunity is if we expose ourselves to the virus and develop immunity memory for that. Unfortunately, we do not have the immunity memory yet for these novel ones like the COVID-19, hence everybody is vulnerable. So biological preparedness is really something that I feel is very important for all of us."

Dr. Destura also shared his reflections on how we can work more collaboratively as a nation to fight pandemic such as COVID-19.

"On the national level, one of my reflections is that for pandemics such as COVID-19, no single agency can actually handle it effectively. It needs the collective effort of both government agencies and private sector, and our fellow Filipinos—all of us. We need to have a comprehensive multi-agency network that allows us to rapidly access everything that we need from Day Zero. All of us must be able to work together and provide solutions rather than fight each other. These are the ones that I feel are very crucial for our survival as a community."

Dr. Destura also highlighted the importance of prioritizing health and making it a universal compass for global growth and development.

"We have to work together, to find a common goal. For me, the universal compass is health. No one wants to be sick. Regardless of borders, of political

affiliations, institutional walls, or regions, everybody prefers to be healthy. If we use health as our universal compass, we can perhaps stir toward a direction that would make our countries safer from future pandemics. We must think and take seriously the impact of the Coronavirus to us as a county, as an institution, as a government, as a family, as individuals. Common to everybody is the value of our health. If we value our health, the effect will trickle down even to our country's economy," Dr. Destura explained.

**LOVE OF COUNTRY FUELS
SERVICE AND SELFLESSNESS**

To end the interview, CS Reporter asked Dr. Destura for his message of inspiration for his fellow government workers and for the Filipinos. And like many other public servants, Dr. Destura zoomed in on "love of country" as his drive for exemplary public service. Now a very influential scientist, he also wishes to inspire others to love the country and do the best that each person can to help the society survive this crisis.

He said, "The most important thing is for us to set aside our personal agendas. Rather, let us put the country's needs at the center of everything that we do. Who knows, by doing so, we might just be able to mitigate the further potential harms related to COVID-19. It is an appeal to everybody to look into their hearts and see how they can best serve our country and fellow Filipino. At the end of the day, we only have one Philippines, thus let us preserve it for our children, and for the next generations to come. I know it's not easy to love a country, but it is certainly worth it."

DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Destura's proven track record in research and innovation



Proven track record. Dr. Destura receives 2019 Presidential Lingkod Bayani Award from President Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the 2019 Awards Rites for Outstanding Government Workers in Malacañang.

Dr. Raul V. Destura was conferred the 2019 Presidential Lingkod Bayan Award for his innovation and breakthroughs in the field of biotechnology. Most notable of which is the Biotek-MTM Dengue Aquakit, an affordable tool that can diagnose dengue infection in 40 minutes. With his discovery, the country received a PHP64M grant from the United Kingdom for the conduct of further research and was awarded a gold medal in the 46th International Exhibition of Inventions Geneva in Switzerland.

With his combined roles as physician, inventor, and institution-builder, his career is colored by collaboration, mentorship, and leadership excellence. He dabbled in different research fields but likewise excelled in all, having contributed to global knowledge in biosafety, epidemiology, pathobiology, biotechnology, and diagnostics. He also transformed the University of the Philippines Manila's Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology from a human resource and finance-deprived office into a world class research institute and laboratory.

An infectious diseases physician, his work is driven by his advocacy on maintaining

safe working environment for health researchers. He believes that scientific advances in the country should not be at the expense of its researchers' health and well-being. In 2018, he established the National Training Center for Biosafety and Biosecurity at the UP Manila's National Institutes of Health.

He also dedicated his research on diseases such as dengue and tuberculosis. This led to the creation of the University of the Philippines' first spin-off company, the Manila HealthTek Inc., which aims to produce molecular diagnostic platforms that are readily available to Filipinos. It has since pioneered the production of the Biotek-MTM Dengue aqua kit, an affordable and locally developed rapid test kit for accurate detection of dengue infection within an hour at a fraction of the cost of foreign commercial counterparts. Its pilot implementation in Regions I, VI, and IX has proven that research outputs can be translated into innovations that benefit communities. For tuberculosis (TB), Dr. Destura pushed for advancing molecular epidemiology of multi-drug resistant (MDR) extensively drug-resistant

(XDR) TB to deepen understanding of the disease and improve medical approaches to the disease.

Dr. Destura's groundbreaking decade of research significantly contributed to the field of science in many ways. Through the years he was able to secure highly coveted international research grants with his outstanding proposals, gain partnerships with prestigious institutions, and churn out studies that contributed to public health and safety.

His colleagues and superiors also attest to his achievements. "Dr. Destura deserves to be recognized and emulated for his commitment as a civil servant, for being relentless in providing solutions and innovations that are within reach of the Filipino people," said UP President Danilo L. Concepcion. Meanwhile, UP Manila Professor and Chancellor Carmencita D. Padilla said, "Excellence and compassionate service to the Filipino people are just two of the superior qualities of Dr. Destura that makes him worthy of his award."

Truly, Dr. Destura has modeled research excellence and paved the way for scientific advancement in the Philippines.

**keynote message of CSC Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala for the Chief Information Officer Forum, Inc.'s 1st Online General Membership Meeting and Conference, 25 June 2020*

I am honored to join this timely and relevant gathering of government information officers advocating the strategic use of information and communications technology or ICT in good governance.

How have you been doing since we were all put on community quarantine roughly 100 days ago? The coronavirus (COVID-19) rapidly moved past containment and caused economic, social, political, and religious disruption worldwide. We witnessed the cancellation of major world events, shutdown of public, commercial, and educational establishments, and stoppage of industries as part of aggressive measures to manage the spread of the infection. We departed from the usual way of doing things. COVID-19 spelled the adoption of a new norm. How are you personally managing, coping, and adjusting to this situation, given that you have to adapt to alternative working conditions?

On the part of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), we needed to urgently address the concerns of the 1.7 million government workers as events unfolded and continued to unravel. We, your CSC, must think and act quickly since the Philippine government's efficiency and responsiveness must remain inviolable in dealing with the pandemic. However, the need to provide quality services must also be balanced with the need to protect the safety and health of the public sector workforce.

A number of critical policies were promulgated to address the safety and health of government workers. The CSC reiterated its call for government agencies and their employees to take necessary precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus in the workplace. This was done through the issuance of interim guidelines on the use of leave credits for absences due to self-quarantine and/or treatment was issued.

Guidelines on Covid-19 Leave

CSC Memorandum Circular No. 8, series of 2020, provided guidelines for the availment of leave for public sector employees as well as ensured adoption of precautionary measures in government offices to avoid the spread of the disease and infection.

GOVERNMENT WORKERS IN THE NEW NORMAL*



CSC needed to urgently address the concerns of the 1.7 million government workers as events unfolded and continued to unravel.

M.C. No. 8 prescribed a 14-day self-quarantine for government officials and employees with history of travel to COVID-19 restricted countries as well as for frontline service providers such as public health workers, immigration officers, and consular officers. The 14 days will not be deducted from the earned leave credits.

Guidelines on AWA

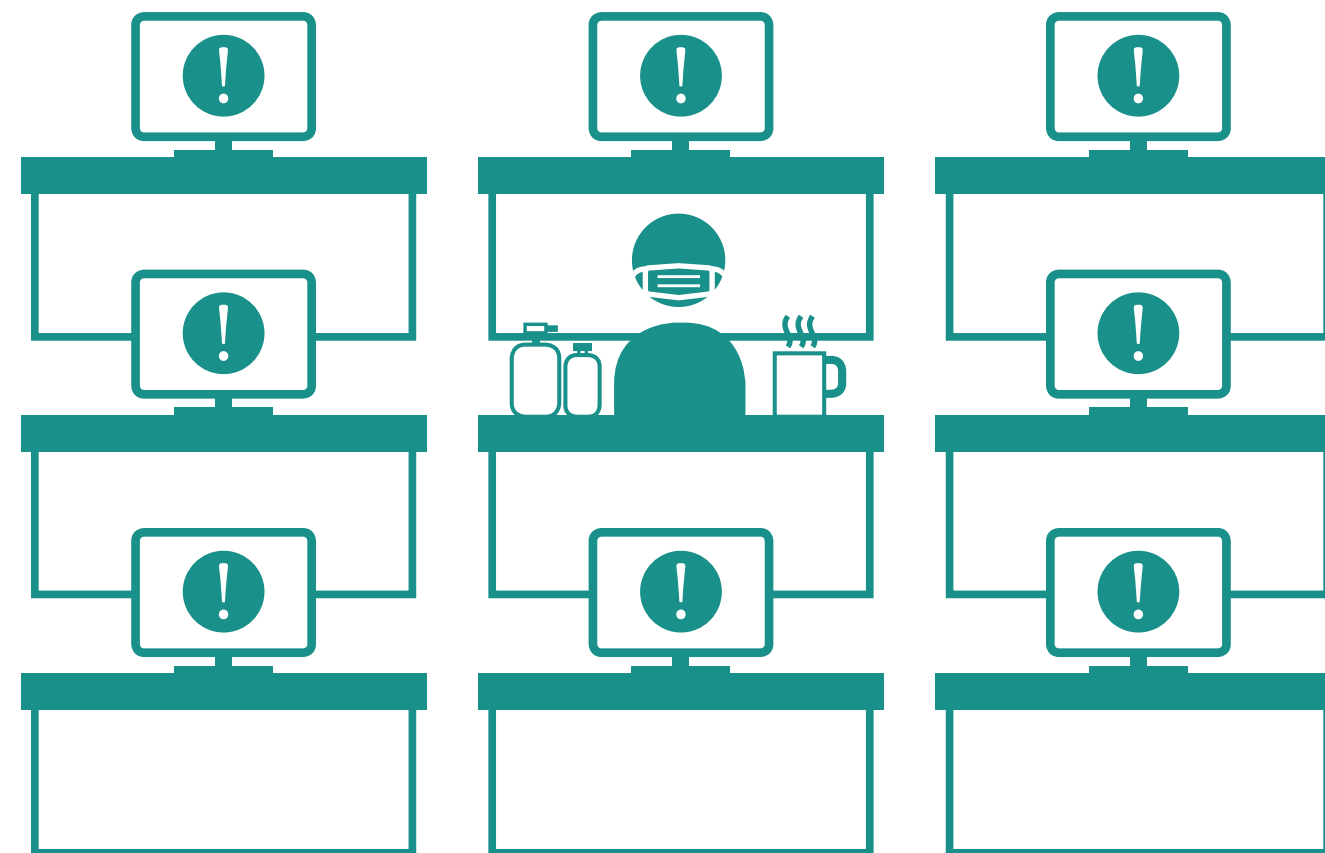
Meanwhile, CSC M.C. No. 10 or the Revised Interim Guidelines on Alternative Work Arrangements or RIGAWA prescribed work-from-home arrangements, skeleton workforce, four-day or compressed workweek, and staggered working hours as alternatives.

Work-from-home (WFH) refers to an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the worker to produce outputs

or results and accomplishments outside of the office. This shall be adopted in areas placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) by the President. For agencies in areas placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ), where public transportation is limited and physical/social distancing in the workplace is required, WFH is an option.

To facilitate the implementation of the work-from-home arrangement, the agency head shall ensure that employees are given tasks to be performed to the full extent possible in terms of man-days per work week. In this arrangement, employees shall make themselves available during the work hours that they are working from home.

For areas placed under GCQ, employees aged below 21 and those who are 60 years old and above, as well as those with



immunodeficiency, comorbidities or other health risk, pregnant women, including those who reside with the aforementioned, shall be under WFH arrangement, except when their services are indispensable under the circumstances or when office work is permitted.

Skeleton (skeletal) workforce pertains to a work arrangement where a minimum number of employees is required to man the office to render service when full staffing is not possible. Agencies in GCQ areas shall adopt skeleton workforce as one of its AWA. During ECQ, on the other hand, skeleton workforce may be allowed unless a different operational capacity is provided in agencies providing health and emergency frontline services, border control, and other critical services as identified in the IATF Omnibus Guidelines on Community Quarantine.

In a four-day (compressed) workweek arrangement, the employees' workweek is compressed to four days each week. This may be adopted by agencies in areas placed under GCQ.

Agencies may also adopt staggered working hours, which is applicable to offices or agencies that observe work shifting or flexible working time. For this purpose, staggered working hours refers to the existing 24/7 shifting schedule and the flexible working time schedule. This may be implemented as a means to limit the number of employees present at the workplace at any given time.

An agency may also adopt work arrangements consisting of a combination of these, or other work arrangements appropriate and applicable to the agency, taking into account prevailing community quarantine conditions in

the area where it is located and the nature of work performed by its employees.

To ensure that public service delivery is not prejudiced during the implementation of AWA, a monitoring mechanism, such as submission of daily or weekly accomplishment reports, must be implemented.

As we ensure that the Philippine government's efficiency and responsiveness remain inviolable in dealing with the pandemic, the need to provide quality services must also be balanced with the need to protect the safety and health of the public sector workforce, thus support mechanisms are also specified in M.C. No. 10. The agency head shall ensure that all workers are afforded with the following adequate support mechanisms:

- health/psychosocial interventions like stress debriefing;



As we ensure that the Philippine government's efficiency and responsiveness remain inviolable in dealing with the pandemic, the need to provide quality services must also be balanced with the need to protect the safety and health of the public sector workforce.

Now more than ever, employees yearn for sincere concern from their managers. If we fail to empathize and show sincere concern for their health and wellbeing, we lose their trust, their commitment, their loyalty, and their productivity.



- provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline service providers and employees;
- reduced working hours, as authorized by the President;
- reasonable transportation facilities and housing quarters shall be provided to employees assigned as skeleton workforce, whenever practicable, and subject to accounting and auditing rules and regulations;
- reasonable expenses incurred during the work-from-home may be defrayed by the agency subject to accounting and auditing rules and regulations; and
- other monetary and forms of incentives as may be allowed by the Office of the President or other authorized agencies or upon approval of the heads of agencies subject to accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

- Majority of respondents perceived themselves to be still productive while on alternative work arrangements;
- While majority are reportedly productive, better internet connectivity remains a leading concern to effectively perform given tasks; and
- Organizational culture, particularly high levels of trust and support, good communication system, and collaboration within the organization play a pivotal role in ensuring employee productivity.

In your case, as experts in the field of ICT, have you thought of ways to effectively shepherd government workers to a "better normal"?

Government Workers toward a Better Normal

There are a few points that my team and I have put together and wish to share with you. These are insights gained from research studies and some webinars on management, workforce engagement, and learning and development attended during quarantine. I want to highlight important points on putting people first, relevance of learning and development curation, and display of agility in time of disruption.

Now more than ever, employees yearn for sincere concern from their managers. It is safe to assume that all of us experienced something we never imagined possible. People's physical and mental health were at great risk and those are among our basic needs as humans. If we fail to empathize and show sincere concern for their health and wellbeing, we lose their trust, their commitment, their loyalty, and their productivity.

I am certain that you have realized by now that without the employees, organizations are paralyzed. Not prioritizing our people's

safety and wellbeing will come at a high cost for organizations. I know that we have learned over time that people are the source of new or better solutions. People also determine the success or failure of any innovation project. As Steve Jobs said, "Innovation has nothing to do with how many dollars you have... It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get from it."

Let us not treat our employees as mere commodities, but as strategic partners in overcoming this crisis. Let us put them first.

As you know, CSC is the premier provider of learning and development interventions to the public sector workforce. One essential role of leaders and managers is to make sure that employees are continuously provided with learning and development opportunities, even or most especially in the midst of crisis.

Let us look into how you as Chief Information Officers can effectively perform your task of providing learning and development opportunities during times of crisis, and why inspiring innovation is critical. First, how many free online sessions have you attended since March? One positive outcome of the prohibition on mass gatherings is the surge of free webinars and online courses that anyone can participate in and take advantage of.

Leaders have to provide the enabling environment for employee engagement, for meeting learners where they currently are, and for allowing them to continue to grow and develop. This is quite a challenge for all, particularly for L&D leaders, trainers, and facilitators. One of the panelists in the webinar, Milalin Javellana of Australia Awards Philippines, emphasized that public sector should lead the way. But how do we do it? This leads me to the next point.

We can either be the L&D providers ourselves, or we can promote to our employees a list of other available

webinars. To prevent employees from drowning in a sea of content, we can give them the freedom to curate their own learning, encouraging them to look after their own growth not to wait for formal L&D interventions. Content curation is a trending buzzword in human resource management.

According to the High-Impact Learning Organization study by top talent management adviser Josh Bersin, content curation is both an art and a science. It deals with identifying the most relevant information for a specific group of target audience, and contextualizing and organizing it before presenting it to them.

The same study revealed that employees find it most difficult to learn not because there isn't enough content, but because there is too much. The struggle is in sifting what is valuable.

As what we have gleaned, content curation delivers our learners from the hassle, pain, and frustration of trying to wade through a sea of content to find what they need and what is relevant to improve competence. With customized content, the learning journey becomes smooth, and learners are more motivated to absorb learning like sponges, leading to improved competence.

The CIOC's First Online General Membership Meeting and Conference theme, "Accelerating Digital Transformation in the New Normal" is an apt reminder that the disruption brought by Industry 4.0 or the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIRE) must be embraced, especially in coping with COVID-19. FIRE is defined by technological breakthroughs that are mostly unpredictable in their development and effects. Some of these advances include artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics, and big data, which have all, in the last five years, collectively disrupted our status

quo. These disruptions have altered the way we live, socialize, work and interact, rearranging value pools and leading to the introduction of entirely new products and services.

Speaking of products and services, I know that while in quarantine, most of us depended on Grab, Lalamove, Foodpanda, Lazada and Shopee—today's popular online delivery and shopping platforms. These apps are collectively brought to us by the Internet of Things (IoR). Through IoR, which is simply defined as the interconnection via the Internet of computing devices embedded in everyday objects, we have experienced breakthroughs in the way we live to cope with the "better normal".

Now is the time to take full advantage of the possibilities brought by FIRE and other frontier technologies. These hold numerous prospects for improving the way we deliver services to the public. For instance, there is the shift to made-for-me service delivery in compliance with Republic Act No. 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018. Under this law, government agencies are required to simplify, streamline, re-engineer, automate, and revolutionize services delivered both in business and non-business transactions. It requires drastic transformation in the delivery of public services. How drastic? Until people can do business with government via smartphones and register online anytime, anywhere. We have to go full speed in going mobile and delivering in-person services to constituents.

To the CIOF, we encourage you to be the CSC's partners in encouraging government agencies and the public sector workforce to embrace the technological breakthroughs brought by FIRE. I understand that for some government

workers, the FIRE has deepened the digital divide with the acceleration of technology adoption. According to data released by Rappler, it took decades for telephones to reach 50% of Filipino households, but less than a decade for 89% of Filipinos to own mobile phones, 53% to own smartphones, 14% to have tablets, 39% to use desktops, and 37% to have access to laptops.

The CSC recognizes that government workers with weak foundational digital literacy skills could be vulnerable in the acceleration of technology. At this juncture of transitioning to automation, use of data analytics, and higher intensity of non-routine, developmental, and cognitive tasks, we intend to come up with competence development or retraining of government workers to enable them to face the hurdles of going not necessarily high-tech, but appropriate tech.

The future belongs to the most agile organizations which are willing to accelerate and embrace new possibilities presented by technology and paradigm shifts. These will eventually force the public sector to strive for improved productivity. It will also signal the emergence of public sector leaders who do not shy away from the challenges brought by FIRE but gravitate toward it, who do not see digital advancement as threatening; but welcome it as something creative, exciting, inspiring, and enriching.

On behalf of the CSC, allow me to extend our appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to all our government workers for your invaluable contributions to the bureaucracy and for your service to the Filipino people. Also, congratulations to the officials and members of the CIOC for successfully organizing its first online General Membership Meeting. *Maraming salamat. Mabuhay kayo at mabuhay ang serbisyo sibil!*

This section will be your new favorite spot in the CS Reporter if you are a person interested in all things HR, organization development, and leadership and management. Aside from CSC-native content, we invite guest contributors who are experts in the field of HR and OD to give you fresh insights on the latest trend, or provide an in-depth look into a certain HR and OD concept.

John Reily Baluyot
President
Philippine Society for Talent Development



If COVID-19 is contagious, so is Courage

How PSTD proved that courage is key to fighting the COVID-19 impact on the Filipino L & D community

“I was so scared. I was paralyzed for two weeks... I didn’t know what to do.”

These were words from the man who currently leads the Philippine Society for Talent Development (PSTD), a not-for-profit organization that is now blazing the trail in e-Learning and Development amid COVID-19. How did he and the PSTD jump from point A to point B? Here is its story.

An untimely crisis for dreamers

John Reily Baluyot, PSTD President, just arrived from his studies in Melbourne, Australia last December 2019. He finished Master of Leadership in Organizational Learning at Monash University under the Australia Awards Scholarships. Ambitious and competitive as he is, he was full of hope and dreams upon returning to his homeland and was excited to take on new roles and challenges to help the Philippine learning community—a tribe that he values very well. The perfect opportunity came.

“We had an election at the PSTD last February 2020, and I got elected as the President. I was happy because I really aimed for it,” said John.

Overwhelmed with excitement and determination, John met with his fellow volunteer officers and the Board of Trustees at once to strategize for PSTD’s future.

He said, “We had so many plans. We wanted to double our membership by 2020. We aimed to offer free learning programs, and prepare for the National Convention for October 2020 as early as February. For my full-time work, my friend Nikki and I even put up a startup consultancy firm, Positive Workplaces, and we were on momentum to kickstart our joint venture, deal with our first few clients...Then COVID19 and ECQ happened!”

On March 16, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte placed the entire Luzon under an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) which restricted among others, mass gatherings including seminars and other face-to-face learning sessions. This situation gravely affected PSTD and those in the learning and development field of practice. John, who thought he had crystal clear plans ready for implementation, was not spared from the shock of the nationwide announcement.

“I was so scared. I was away from my family. I was paralyzed for two weeks because I literally did not know what to do. I was just playing video games. I wanted to wallow in despair. *Lahat ng pinag-planuhan namin, paano na?*” John quivered as he faced the early days of ECQ.

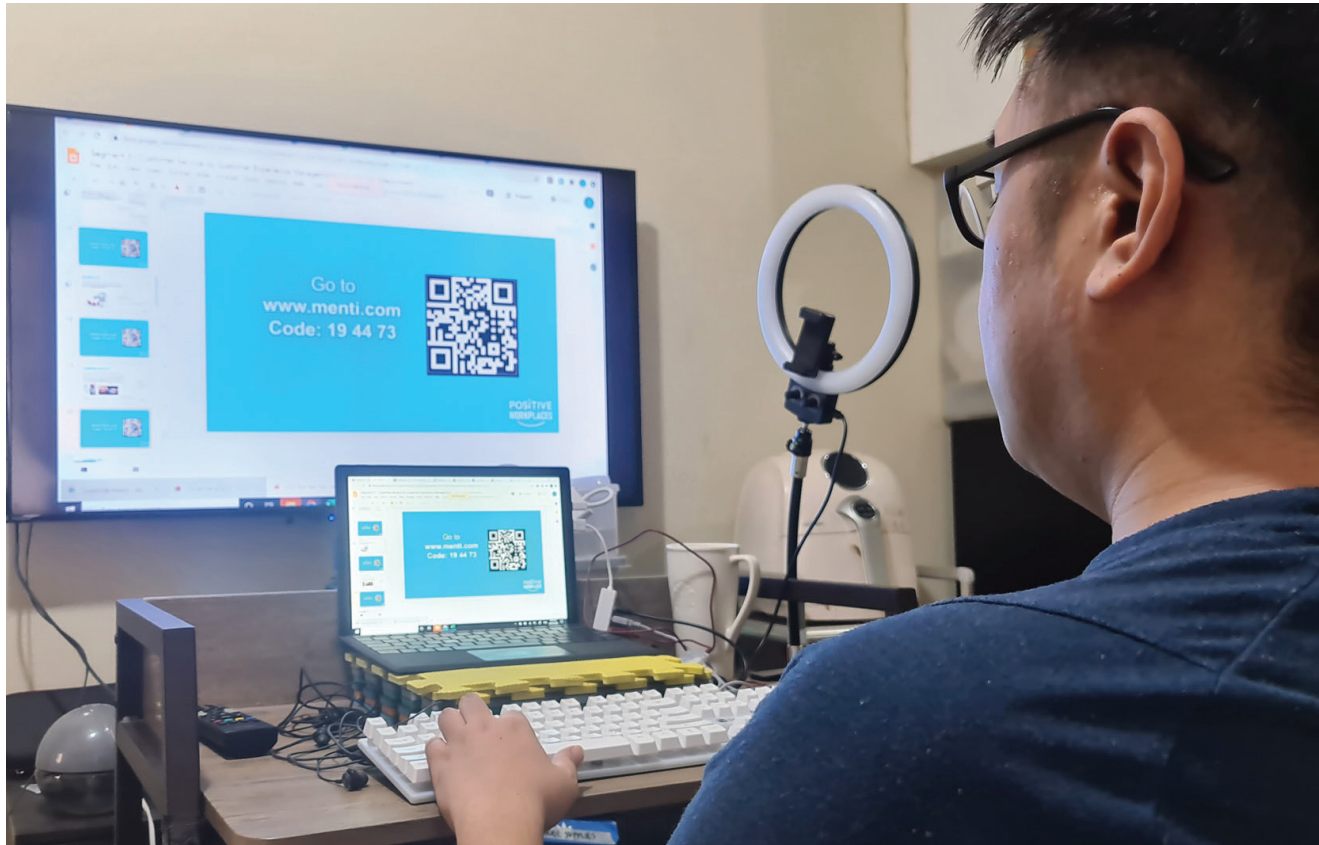
A timely crisis to shine

Just like how almost everyone has a friend to run to for advice, John decided to talk to her friend and co-founder of Positive Workplaces, Maria Veronica “Nikki” Vergara. John said that talking with Nikki was one of the most important decisions he made during the quarantine.

“I remember Nikki telling me ‘We can do something if you want. Crisis is when great leaders are formed.’ Those words poured out on me like ice-cold water, and I came to my senses. Suddenly it was clear to me that we’re definitely going to do something,” said John.

Edgar Schein, John’s favorite Organizational Culture and Leadership author, once said, “Culture is a pattern of shared learnings by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration”. This adage has now become John’s anchor. He said, “We have in front of us one of the biggest problems that humanity has ever faced. If there is a good time to re-introduce more positive cultures by leaders, this is it”.

Nikki was right. Many good leaders have been exposed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Locally, citizens lauded leaders like Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto for his innovative thinking, strategic planning



All set up. John Reily Baluyot sets his home workspace and equipment for a Learn-from-Home series webinar by PSTD.

acumen, and fast actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission in Pasig while ensuring that citizens are provided with necessary aid. In science, Deputy Executive Director of the Philippine Genome Center Dr. Raul Destura also caught the attention of Filipinos when he and his team invented GENAMPLIFY, the Pinoy-made COVID-19 testing kit. This feat was a shared success of a team of scientists from the University of the Philippines National Institutes of Health, the Philippine Genome Center, and The Manila HealthTek Inc.

As for John, he wanted PSTD to also rise above the challenges posed by COVID-19 and be seen as a beacon of hope among the Filipino learning community.

He said, “True to PSTD’s mission, ‘We Learn. We Grow. We Transform.’, we want to transform learners into global game-changers. These include not only L&D facilitators but also educators, trainers, mentors, coaches, and other people developers. This COVID-19 crisis has exposed a big capability gap in all people and organizations. With that gap comes our opportunity to integrate our competence in facilitating learning”.

H.O.P.E. conquers fear

PSTD treated the disruption as both a challenge and opportunity to innovate and better serve the learning community. Hence, the birth of PSTD’s Oplan H.O.P.E. (Hang on People Enablers). Oplan H.O.P.E. is PSTD’s task force built with the objective to provide support to the learning community amid COVID-19 crisis. More specifically, it aims to create e-Learning materials that can help the learning community cope such as: (1) Well-being During Times of Crisis, (2) How to best facilitate Online Meetings and Learning Sessions, (3) Capacity and Capability building for the New Normal, (4) Enhancing Digital Competence, etc.

The concept of ‘task force’ was apparently inspired by the creation of the government’s Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emergency Infectious Diseases.

“I remember watching IATF’s spokesperson Karlo Nograles on TV. I was inspired. I knew that a task force was what we also needed in PSTD to plan, decide, and move quickly given this situation. This was perhaps one of the major shifts we had to do that time,” John said.

He called people in the PSTD, including some from its Board of Trustees to head each committee forming the Oplan H.O.P.E. task force. The committees are as follows:

Research and publications – Committee Chair: Jose Decolongon, Adjunct Faculty with the Asian Institute of Management | Australia Awards Scholar who studied Master of Supply Chain Innovation at Swinburne University, Melbourne, Victoria

Programs – Committee Chair: Jun Roy, former Asst. Vice President at PetNet, Inc. an Aboitiz Company, now the HR Consulting Head of Nomura Research Institute

Marketing – Committee Chair: Rex Tuozo, “The Six Sigma Guy”, President of SixSigmaPH

E-Learning Technology – Committee Chair: Marby Tabungar, People and Culture - Learning and Organizational Development Manager at Amaysim Philippines | Australia Awards Scholar who studied Master of Human Resource Management at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales

Membership – Committee Chair: Rowell Mariano, former Talent Development and Marketing Head of Mitsukoshi Motors Philippines Inc. | Australia Awards Scholar who studied Master of Human Resource Management at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales

“These people make a perfect combination for the task force. I needed the most agile, divergent thinkers because the crisis is quite unprecedented. The immediate solutions won’t be found from tradition, but from the diamonds harvested from failing fast and failing smart,” said John.

The idea behind the taskforce was backed up by the wisdom of the PSTD’s Board of Trustees led by its Chairperson Jesse Rebutillo, the operating spirit of PSTD, and its professional team led by Executive Director Maricel Benitez.

When asked if he had difficulty pitching Oplan H.O.P.E.’s mission to them, there was no hint of hesitation in John’s voice saying, “I never had to convince everyone to say ‘yes’. Our leaders knew it was time to move. They were all ‘Yes’.”

John also knew the challenge of getting more people on the boat for Oplan H.O.P.E. Surely, six (6) people cannot do all the tasks entailed in the mission. What was more challenging is that PSTD is a not-for-profit organization—meaning, it cannot simply offer incentives to people for them to join the efforts. The committee heads also understood right at the start that they would be working on this for free. The best option was to gather volunteers for each committee.

“No profit. No money. This is all volunteer work. While we didn’t have any trouble calling for volunteers—which surprised us all—it was a challenge to convince them to stay engaged. These people have their full-time jobs or other more important matters to attend to. It was a challenge because PSTD has no legitimate power over volunteers because we’re not their employers; we had very little reward power because we’re a not-for-profit organization; and no coercive power since these are not their official jobs,” John explained.

If PSTD did not have enough source of power to mobilize volunteers for Oplan H.O.P.E., what did? One might suppose that it was human’s natural tendency to help in times of crisis. As Bill Taylor said in his Harvard Business Review article, “worst situations tend to bring out the best in people and the organizations to which they belong.” PSTD’s Oplan H.O.P.E. has created such a compelling mission and opportunity for volunteers to take a stand and help out. While there emerged plenty of ways to help during the COVID-19 crisis—volunteer frontline service, donations in cash or in kind, benefit gigs, etc.—Oplan H.O.P.E. was effective in offering volunteers a unique way to be brave and become COVID-19 heroes by helping the Filipino learning community in this meaningful transition.

Ripples of courage

A couple of days after establishing Oplan H.O.P.E.’s task force, the Programs Committee came up with the Learn-from-Home webinar series. Among the first speakers and organizations to jump in were

Kanika Singh and Angie Santa Maria of Gallup, Vanessa Trower of the Australian Institute of Training and Development, Ash Mandhyan of Facebook Philippines, Diana Khaitova of Center for Creative Leadership, Singapore.

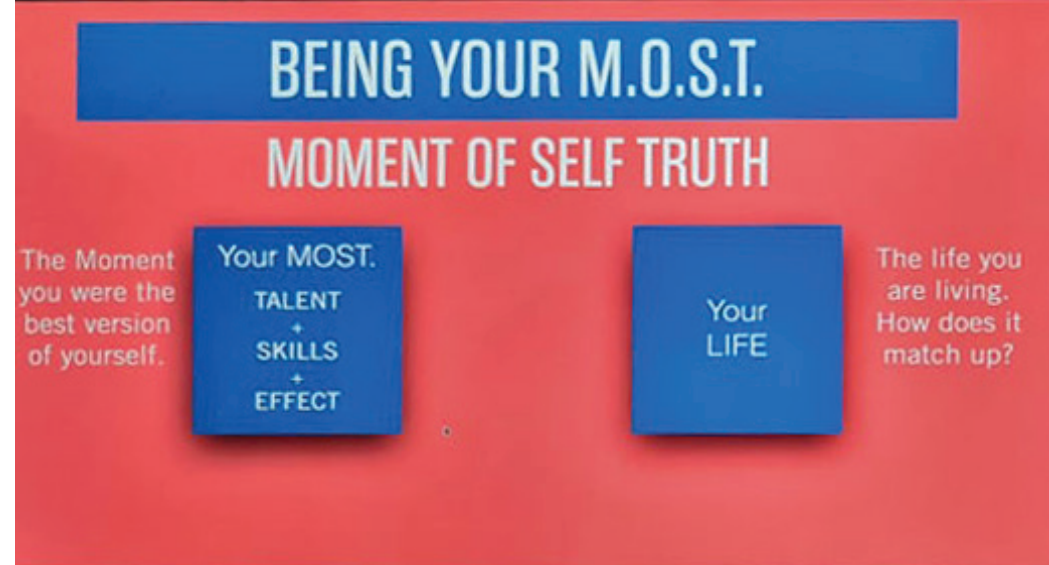
“The exciting part in this webinar series is that it has become a shared learning experience for all of us—for PSTD, for the speakers, and the learners. I remember Vanessa telling me that it was her first time to speak to 500 people in a [virtual] room. She was also shocked,” said John.

Because of the initial success of the first couple of webinars, other local and international speakers agreed to volunteer for the next sessions.

“Jun Roy, the head of Programs Committee, connected us to Ms. Luz Mercurio who used to be the Regional L&D Manager for ASEAN of General Electric. Things just snowballed from there. Luz knows a big network of experts and resource speakers and six of them were top tier Learning Leaders and Managers of G.E. from four different continents. Luz told me, ‘When I was with G.E., our global learning team called Crotonville provided free seminars and webinars to our customers and government institutions in various parts of the world. When I volunteered to help PSTD as an advocacy, it was easy to invite my former colleagues to share their talent and knowledge to people in need. Their hearts were ready for this.’ Simple acts of compassion led more volunteer speakers from all over the world to speak for us,” John said.

Globe Telecom’s Employee Experience Manager Mark Dimaisip joins the PSTD Learn-from-Home series’ roster of speakers to talk about “Employee Experience in the Time of COVID-19”.





Simon Hammond, Founder and CEO of 50 Crates, talks about “Personal Branding Beyond the Pandemic: Using Your Truth to Win in a World of Lies”.

The spike of demand for digital learning was not so imminent before, ‘foreshadowing’ if we may call it. What COVID-19 did was to bring that imminent change to here and now—that fast. And you can’t afford to miss out, or you’ll be left behind.

“Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards; they simply unveil them to our eyes. Silently and imperceptibly, as we wake or sleep, we grow strong or weak; and at last some crisis shows what we have become.”

- Brooke Foss Westcott

Among other themes and topics included were “How to Digitize Learning”, “Capacity and Capability Building for the New Normal”, and the “Basics of Teacher Well-being”, launched in July.

“I was also surprised with the turnout of these e-Learning sessions. Not all of us in the PSTD were tech-savvy. At some point, we also had to experience the learning curve of going digital, like using Zoom for learning facilitation and moderation,” said John.

The culture of digital transformation now sweeps through different organizations. What was once being resisted by employees, leaders, and managers, has now become a necessity, and people are left with no choice but to adapt. In John’s words, “Adapt to digital culture or perish.” For some people however, especially the digital immigrants (Gen X and Baby Boomers), it must be daunting to download that Zoom app or other video conferencing platforms and hit that “Join Meeting” button

not knowing if you framed yourself right in the camera, if you look good to your audience, if you had your microphone and speaker sorted out correctly. It might be just too much an adjustment for those who were used to face-to-face conversations and learning facilitation. Hence, it indeed takes courage for one to embrace this sudden shift to e-learning.

“I am really proud of what we have become. We took that leap of faith to make this happen. We convinced other PSTD members to moderate some webinars. To some, it was their first time to do it on Zoom platform, but they did really well,” said John.

Asked what he thinks about the shift to e-learning, John said, “The spike of demand for digital learning was not so imminent before, ‘foreshadowing’ if we may call it. What COVID-19 did was to bring that imminent change to here and now—that fast. And you can’t afford to miss out, or you’ll be left behind.”

As of June 2020, PSTD’s Learn-from-Home series has reached 41 learning episodes, 11,600+ live Zoom learners with a total of around 200k video views on Facebook. Its social media followers also rocketed from 11,872 to 21,249 in just 2 months.

“I think, more than these digits, what is more heartwarming for us to see are learners’ stories about how PSTD has helped them during the crisis:

Fleri De Leon, National Water Resources Board

“The succeeding webinars literally and figuratively brought me back to my feet giving me a sense of structure as it is always something to look forward to everyday. I always resonate with what the speakers were discussing and it felt very personal that the words struck right through me. They evoke that self-reassurance stemming from the awareness and mindfulness empowering us to do our part. How I was initially paralyzed in the early weeks were all overturned by PSTD. I’ll never be this

dauntless as before if not for PSTD and everyone behind the screen. Now, I’m back eagerly and passionately working.”

Daryl Cid Samonte, Sitel Philippines

“I am very grateful to both local and international speakers who rose to the occasion and shared their expertise in their own individual and unique ways. My mindset was sturdier than ever and I made a lot of realization especially on what to prioritize in life during a crisis. Moreover, I would like to give my snappiest salute to PSTD for their generosity and more importantly, guiding us leaders through digital learning and its effective and efficient impact to risk management.”

Romil De Leon, Supreme Court of the Philippines

“I gained my confidence incredibly from attending the sessions with PSTD. Since we will now be transitioning to the digital platform in the Philippine Judicial Academy-Supreme Court, I was tasked to introduce to the newly-appointed judges a webinar

entitled “Participants Decorum During Live Webinars” in preparation for their 2-week program. Said precursor was attended by 160 participants! Prior to that, we have been having meetings since the lockdown, for the Judges’ Orientation Program which we are forced to do now in the new platform. We cannot delay it because the judges will not be able to assume their judicial functions, if not for those online meetings.”

On courage and COVID-19

In the midst of uncertainty and dark days, sometimes all it takes is for one to be brave enough to jump into the void and learn quickly for everyone else. Oplan H.O.P.E. gladly took that plunge. These stories are proof that learning is a great source of inspiration and bravery, not just for PSTD or its leaders, but also the community that it has vowed to serve.

John also hopes for the Philippine government and public servants to be courageous in providing the hope and

service that the Filipino community needs in this COVID-19 pandemic. It is now a “make or break” moment for all leaders and *lingkod bayani*. The public servants’ zeal for excellent service delivery, empathy, and compassion to Filipinos are now put to test. We have heard of inspiring stories in the frontline service, but the PSTD story reminds us that even if we are not in the frontline, we can as well inspire courage by taking actions on what we think needs to be done at this very moment.

Theologian Brooke Foss Westcott once said, “Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards; they simply unveil them to our eyes. Silently and imperceptibly, as we wake or sleep, we grow strong or weak; and at last some crisis shows what we have become.”

We hope that this feature story helps you unveil the courage within yourself to make a difference.

Be a PSTD member. Visit their website to know more: pstd.org.

The Virtual Civil Servant: Building Your Professional Online Brand

So you find yourself in the middle of a pandemic where the world has seemingly gone fully virtual. Instead of preparing to go out, you are clicking away on your smartphone to order food and to shop. You depend on apps for productivity, entertainment, and recreation. Whether at the office or at home, you are suddenly taking crash courses on attending webinars, teleconferencing with colleagues, and collaborating on shared files.

You're now a virtual professional operating your own virtual office.

Everything seems different now. The way you work (or look for work), coordinate with superiors and subordinates, and converse with individuals and groups are all done over WiFi.

But have the rules of professional engagement changed? Even if everything is now done online, the same etiquette and values should govern our conversations and transactions. We as civil servants should be conscious of how we are putting ourselves out there. Are we being consistent with the principles of public service excellence? Are we observing basic considerations when appearing, speaking, or transacting online?

Here are a few reminders and good practices on how to conduct ourselves online, build our professional brand, and be ready for work as a public servant in the age of digital transformation:

Code 6713

Ah, yes. The bible of public servants. Republic Act No. 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees is, of course, still in effect. It has not changed no matter how many times the community quarantine level has changed. Thus, we are still called to observe the eight norms of conduct: commitment to public interest, professionalism, justness and sincerity, political neutrality, responsiveness to the public, nationalism and patriotism, commitment to democracy, and simple living.

It might be easy to overlook these norms when we are online and the workplace has become more fluid. However, it is because of the nature of the Internet that we should be even more careful—a little mistake and a quick screenshot can hurt our brand and even that of our organization's. Use the eight norms of conduct as the standard for any online activity you conduct, anticipating the digital footprints you will leave behind.

Decoding decorum

Observing good taste and propriety is always a wise thing to do, both onsite and online. We have office rules to maintain order and create a pleasant environment. In the physical office, we strive not to disrupt workflow and productivity through distractions and noise. We also endeavor to become inclusive as we think of ways on how initiatives and activities would benefit more people.

The same should be observed in our online office counterparts such as chat groups, online communities, and virtual meeting rooms. Are we contributing to productive online conversations, or are we igniting gossip or circulating fake news? Are we encouraging colleagues to participate and contribute, or are we alienating individuals and groups?

These are just some ways on how we could apply decorum in virtual spaces.

Rise of the wise

Nobody can claim to know everything. In fact, it is counted as wisdom to a person who thinks he or she still has a lot to learn. This is the proper place from which to approach, accept, and adapt to change. Once we think we already know everything, the road to learning is shut off.

In this rapidly changing world, choose to be wise. We can't do things the way we did it before. And we can't stop change, either.

That which cannot change becomes obsolete—and we certainly don't want that as our brand. Instead of waxing sentimental about typewriters and fax machines, overcome aversion to technology by learning all about it. Don't be afraid to admit what you don't know—instead, list them down so you know where to start and what to ask. Take time to learn something new every day. Set your learning goals and be deliberate about achieving them. Motivate yourself to learn not only out of necessity but out of curiosity and interest. You will have a smoother work experience in this era if you let technology help you instead of struggling with it.

So don't get stuck being unsure of how to use technology. Instead of letting it control or frustrate you, learn to wield it for your own purpose. Perhaps you are just starting out in your career and looking to improve your adeptness in technology. Or perhaps you have already moved past many career milestones, but you suddenly find yourself at the beginning of something new yet again. Whatever stage you are in your learning journey, don't hesitate to jump on the change train and go for the ride.

"Account"-ability

Mixing business with pleasure is tricky then, and it's still tricky now. Because we are civil servants, we have a professional and organizational reputation to protect online. As we are typing away our comments and opinions for the whole Internet to see, are we thinking of how this may affect our brand?

As you increase your professional online engagement, you might want to organize your online accounts and categorize their use. Are they for official or personal purposes only? Or you might also want to create separate social media or teleconferencing accounts specifically for work (or use the ones your organization has provided for its employees). Use your real name and official profile photo or logos that reflect your work or organizational affiliation. This is one way of maintaining corporate branding while keeping your personal accounts personal.

It's all about projection.

First impressions last, so they say. In a sense, we are making a series of first impressions now as we begin participating in more and more virtual spaces. Are we wondering what impression we are creating for ourselves online? Are we lookin' good?



Photo by John Schnobrich on Unsplash

Back in the day, we took time to look our best so we could present ourselves in the best manner possible at a job interview, at the office, or at an important meeting.

There's no reason why we should stop doing it now. And this is more than just subscribing to the "fake it 'til you make it" mindset. This is about maintaining presentability and observing courtesy, even while online.

Be presentable.

Attending a meeting or doing a virtual presentation? Do simple pre-production work. Take a quick survey of how your virtual presence would look. Stage your video area—ensure good lighting and acoustics, position your camera for proper framing, curate your background, or use a virtual background altogether. You might even want to invest on a good cloth or chroma key backdrop to help you create the perfect virtual environment. This would be especially helpful for those who will be doing online meetings or classes most of the time. You can also dress for the screen—pick the right colors for your outfit and skin tone, or experiment with your hairstyle to see which works best for you. Check your visuals and audio before the actual meeting or presentation to ensure everything's OK.

Be on time.

It is still important to be on time, especially when working with technology-based applications. Give yourself enough prep time. Get household chores and other tasks out of the way. Test your Internet connection beforehand so you have time to troubleshoot in case something's wrong, or at least know what to do when you get disconnected. Otherwise, you might let your colleagues wait for you—and you're not even stuck in traffic.

Be confident.

Lastly, build that confidence! This is closely tied to #4—learn to wield your technology so you can confidently use it. Nothing is more stressful than fumbling around the buttons and controls while a meeting is about to start. Or worse—sending a message to the wrong chat group. It can all be overwhelming; that's why it's important to know your tech so you can have the confidence to manage your virtual space. Then, you can be a confident civil servant ready to face your colleagues and serve the public.

For more tips on hosting or joining online meetings and webinars, check out the CSC eNewsletter June 2020 issue at www.csc.gov.ph.



Photo by Nick Morrison on Unsplash

How to Hold a Productive Virtual Meeting

The COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly changed the way public sector work. The concept of work-from-home was a farfetched idea before the pandemic. However, due to the community quarantine implemented in different areas in the Philippines, government agencies were required to shift from onsite to offsite work arrangement for their employees and other alternative work schemes.

To ensure continuous public service delivery despite the pandemic, many leaders are employing different strategies to manage their teams outside of the normal office setting. One strategy is the conduct of virtual meetings or videoconferencing. This strategy allows agencies to sustain communication among their workforce in the comforts of their homes. Many online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Office Teams, Google Meet, Slack, Skype, etc. easily connect people in a virtual environment. While each platform has its advantages, it is important to choose the right platform that fits the purpose of the meeting as well as the needs of your team.

As the demand for virtual meetings increases due to economy and convenience, it should be noted that there is a big difference between conducting and participating in a face-to-face meeting compared to videoconferencing. To better equip managers as well as employees in holding productive virtual meetings, here are some useful tips, basic rules and etiquette to observe in the conduct of virtual meetings:

Pre-meeting

Send meeting details – Make sure to send the meeting details such as URL or link, access codes, ID, or passwords, at least a day before the actual meeting.

Create a clear agenda – Just like in any meeting, be it face-to-face or virtual, an agenda is vital to have a structured meeting. The facilitator should send the agenda to all participants before the online meeting and seek confirmation. It should also indicate the expected roles of the participants in the meeting for them to prepare ahead. With a clear agenda, the meeting will be focused and the participants will not go off track, thus no time will be wasted.

Check and test platform and equipment – Make sure that your computer/laptop, microphone, camera, and headset, as well as the meeting platform, are properly working. It is better to use headphones with mic instead of the laptop's built-in mic to ensure clear audio.

Designate a workspace – Choose a quiet space with a neutral or clear background and has proper lighting as much as possible. This eliminates distractions for other participants.

Make a simple presentation – Since there is limited interaction with your virtual audience, your presentation should be short and simple.

Wear proper attire – Avoid stripes or busy patterns as it does not transmit well to the monitor/screen.

During Meeting

Begin and end at the exact time as planned – Respect each other's time by being in the video conference 5 to 10 minutes ahead of schedule. Also, end the meeting at the time indicated in the invitation.

Introduce and have a small talk – Before officially starting the meeting, have everyone introduce themselves and chit-chat for a bit to help people feel connected.

Check audio and video – Ask participants if they can hear and see you clearly.

Share presentation – Ask participants if they can see your presentation.

Position yourself – Make sure that you are in the center view of the camera at all times.

Mute yourself – To avoid background noise, mute your microphone when you are just listening. Also remind people who are not speaking to mute their mic too to avoid interference.

Observe body language – Seat properly and avoid excessive movements. Think that you are in the same room with the other participants.

Avoid distractions – Stay attentive all throughout the meeting. Do not check your email, mobile phone, and other gadgets during the meeting.

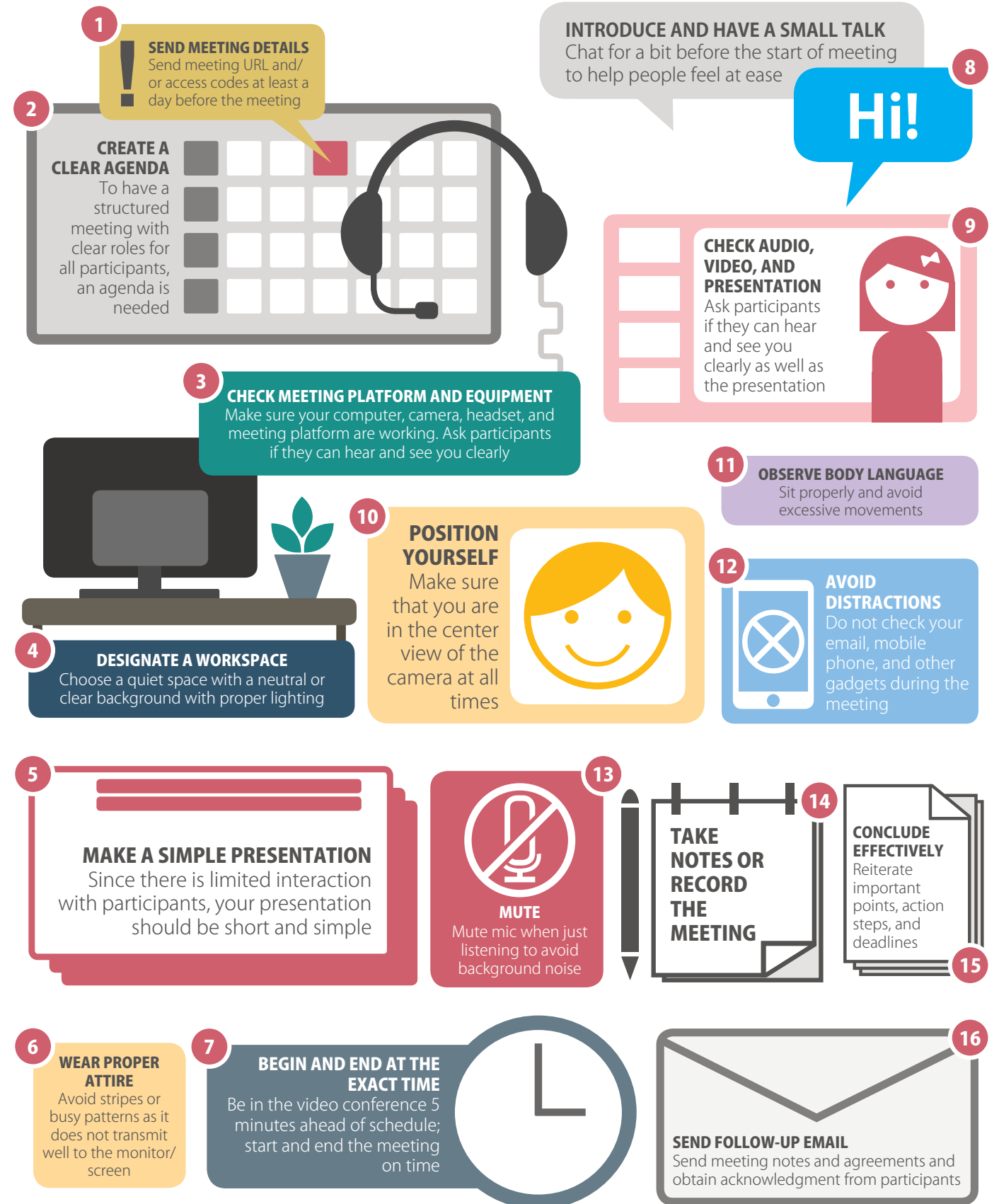
Take notes or record the meeting – Don't miss important discussion during the meeting by taking down notes or recording the meeting itself. You may designate a scribe to do this task.

Post-meeting

Conclude effectively – At the end of the meeting, reiterate important points, action steps, and deadlines. State next steps and follow-ups. Get the acknowledgment of participants to ensure accountability.

Send follow-up email – The facilitator/moderator should send the meeting notes to all participants and obtain acknowledgment and confirm understanding. It should also indicate action items with timelines and people responsible for those items.

By doing these steps, virtual meetings can be productive and collaborative. However, we should keep in mind that videoconferencing may not be ideal for every situation. It may be counter-productive when it is abused by having too many meetings, when in fact, some topics can just be discussed via email. Always remember that everyone is busy and they may find constant virtual meetings to be disruptive rather than effective. We hope this helps you and your team in your next video conference!



Shifting HR practices in the time of COVID-19

What does the HR landscape look like now and in a post-pandemic world?

(Part 1 of 2)



Photo by Dylan Gillison on Unsplash

Community quarantines have pushed organizations to abruptly shift to remote work and other alternative work arrangements to ensure the health and safety of their people. Without question, COVID-19 highlighted the importance of people in all aspects of business operations. Hence, the crisis has also put a lot of pressure on the shoulders of those primarily in charge of looking after the employees—the human resource team.

In a blink of an eye, COVID-19 has made HR's role in an organization highly indispensable. Some publishing companies have even tagged it as one of the most important jobs right now. Just when the world was only about to adapt to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) where conversations centered on artificial intelligence and automation replacing humans, and the rapid acceleration of digital innovations disrupting our lives, the pandemic is a stark reminder to focus on what truly matter. More particularly in HR, it reminds HR practitioners to bring the 'human' back in human resources while trying to survive the shock of COVID-19.

This article is the first of a two-part series in this magazine that captures various insights from local and international business articles, studies, and research that describe how HR practices are shifting and shaping the future workplace. Part 1 will focus on workforce's wellbeing safety, virtual workspace, and e-learning and development.

Prioritizing workforce's wellbeing and safety

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Work-From-Home (WFH) has been an imperative parallel to the "Stay at Home" directive from the World Health Organization and national health authorities. Remote working, once considered as a rare preference or an incentive for employees, has now become the new norm for majority of workers.

HR teams are prioritizing workforce's health and safety by developing and improving WFH policies and other alternative work arrangements. On the other hand, those who still need to report to work physically, at least on some days, are provided with necessary support like transportation and free personal protective equipment. Others went as far as offering financial assistance to workers in need. In the office, employees have to observe proper health and safety protocols. Communication materials about COVID-19 and safety tips are posted on highly visible areas. Alcohol, hand sanitizers, and handwashing soap are provided as well. Leaders have also set up COVID-19 response plans in case an employee tests positive for the virus. These are just some of the measures being taken today as part of the new normal, and are predicted to be practiced even after this pandemic.

Aside from ensuring physical safety, HR practitioners also set their eyes on ensuring people's wellbeing. According to Oxford's Dictionary of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, wellbeing is a holistic view of the health of individuals and groups of people that goes beyond a biomedical perspective and includes multiple dimensions such as physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental. This is precisely why HR teams are looking for initiatives that can address these multiple aspects of an employee's life. Before, wellness programs would usually include only physical exercises and yoga. When COVID-19 happened, these expanded to include sessions on mental health, counselling, and other psychosocial support. Some sessions are very specific like building resilience in the time of COVID-19, or mindfulness and healing during crisis. The approach to workplace wellbeing has become more purposive, making it more targeted to employees' needs.

Entering the virtual workspace

By adopting remote work as the new normal, workers had to migrate online. Majority of work activities are now done digitally and online—meetings, sorting and sharing of files, work collaboration, town hall gatherings, among others. This sudden shift from physical to virtual desks has exposed the digital divide between those who have ready access to internet and devices and those who do not; between the highly digital literate and the digital novice.

HR professionals see themselves standing in between these groups of people. They must encourage digital innovation in the workplace while simultaneously doubling efforts to capacitate and provide needed resources to those not adept in using technology. Leaders and managers also decide on which work can be done remotely and which ones cannot. In this case, work restructuring is considered, as well as reskilling and upskilling of the workforce.

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Certainly, the digital natives and early adopters of technology will experience minimal to no problem in shifting to the virtual workspace. However, the digital migrants, who are mostly the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), might find it difficult to cope with this situation. Aside from the Baby Boomers, there are also others who might experience technophobia or the fear, dislike, or avoidance of new technology and complex devices, especially computers. The idea is not to single out these people. Rather, the challenge for HR managers is to create an inclusive environment for everyone to thrive in this digital revolution.

Championing e-Learning and Development

Among the major HR activities that has been disrupted by COVID-19 is learning and development (L&D). With mass gathering prohibited, including face-to-face classroom training and seminars, organizations' L&D programs have been put to halt. Some companies were quick to migrate their L&D programs online, while others, especially those observing hierarchical tradition, lagged behind in adapting to changing demands. What are some lessons that can be learned from those who were able to quickly make L&D relevant amid crisis?

Agility is key. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, agility refers to ways of planning and doing work in which it is understood that making changes as they are needed is an important part of the job; it is the ability to move about quickly and easily; the ability to think quickly and clearly. A case in point is the Philippine Society for Talent Development (PSTD) (see full story on page 32) which saw the need to be relevant in the face of crisis. Hence, it created the Oplan H.O.P.E. taskforce to quickly plan for programs that would help its target stakeholders—the Filipino L&D community. The idea of the taskforce was to enable the team to decide and move quickly and not rely on the traditional top-down flow of instructions. In less than two weeks, PSTD was able to come up with its

Learn-from-Home series boasting of local and international speakers and thousands of attendees both on Zoom and Facebook Live.

Creativity and innovation are also prime competencies in doing e-learning and development. It is a common knowledge that L&D facilitators possess natural creativity especially when they are in a traditional classroom setup. But with the changing demands in the L&D circle right, facilitators needed to step up their game. The face-to-face creativity and innovation had to be translated into the online world. In this case, many L&D practitioners are now also learning from several training and workshops to equip themselves on online facilitation—how to design a module for online teaching and learning, how to engage virtual audience, measuring and evaluating online L&D, etc. L & D experts shared a common experience on pursuing creativity and innovation these days – that it takes courage to experiment, to fail fast, and to fail smart.

Most organizations are still on the reactive mode of doing things in this volatile time. The main focus is still on survival. However, management consulting firm McKinsey&Company suggests that organizations must start reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19. Leadership and management experts also urge executives to look beyond this pandemic to clarify directions, and adjust strategic goals if necessary. Now, more than ever, the role of HR and organization development practitioners prove to be vital in ushering people into the new normal and into the post-pandemic world.

We hope that this feature story gives you valuable HR insights and recommendations that you can use in your organization. Part of 2 of this series will focus on employee experience, recruitment and onboarding, and performance management.

We are eager to feature more success stories in the next issues of CS Reporter. If you are keen to contribute, email us at csc.pmr@gmail.com.

PAMANANG LINGKOD BAYANI

Spotlight on Covid-19 Frontliners



The Civil Service Commission and the rest of the Philippine bureaucracy continue to remember the selflessness and bravery of our fallen health workers who died in the line of duty.

Tributes continue to pour in for health workers who battled the COVID-19 pandemic. The medical community continues to urge the public to stay at home and heed the call of the authorities so that their sacrifices would not be in vain.

These are some civil servants who remained on the frontline until they contracted the virus and died in the service of our fellow Filipinos. Because of the high transmission rate of the virus, they had no relatives around to hold their hands as they breathed their last. Some had to be buried right away; others were cremated with no ceremony to remember their heroism.

Photos are taken from: Department of Tourism: #WeSmileAsOne A Tribute to our Modern-Day Heroes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RczklyAeiG0>)

DR. ISRAEL BACTOL *Philippine Heart Center*

Thirty-four year old cardiologist Israel Bactol of the Philippine Heart Center (PHC) died of COVID-19 after contracting it from a patient who did not disclose travel history. His colleagues described Israel as a selfless, caring, and humble person who was willing to risk his life to fulfill his duty in the medical profession.

A consistent honor student since elementary school, he strived through college and medical school as a scholar. He served as chief resident during his internal medicine residency training. His last achievement was being part of the select group of cardiology fellows-in-training of the PHC.

Bactol, whose parents are both public school teachers in Peñaranda town in Nueva Ecija, believes that the medical profession should be in the service of the people.

After graduating from the *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila* and passing the Physician Licensure Exam in 2012, Bactol went to Occidental Mindoro as a doctor to the barrio for two years. At that time, the province was classified as second class in terms of income, with a population of less than half a million.

His dedication was evident as Bactol, sleepless from at least a 32-hour duty, would still visit patients at home because they cannot afford to go to the hospital.

DR. MARCELO JAOCHICO *PGO-Pampanga*

A recipient of the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Memorial award, Dr. Jaochico served as a 'doctor to the barrios' in Calanasan, Apayao for about 16 years. He was obstetrician, pediatrician, and family physician for rural folks. He also worked at the Bureau of Local Health Systems and Development of the DOH before becoming provincial health officer in 2013. Dr. Jaochico, the provincial health chief of Pampanga, died on 24 March, after losing his battle with COVID-19.

A former patient recalls how Dr. Jaochico served as his doctor back when he had malaria. The good doctor would personally deliver the medicines and reassured that he would be the one to visit. The late doctor was a humble man who was very dedicated to his job. Their community was saddened when they heard the news of his passing.

He was also one of the first responders when Typhoon Yolanda struck in Tacloban City in 2013.

His latest rural health service was volunteering to attend to victims of the Taal Volcano eruption in Batangas in January 2020.

Dr. Jaochico's daughter Cielo posted how proud she is of her father as he would always think of other people's health, going to remote places to check up on people.

Dr. SALVACION GATCHALIAN *UP-Manila, College of Medicine*

Dr. Sally Gatchalian—Doc Sally to many—died on 26 March after battling the COVID-19 as assistant director of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine. She left both a void and a legacy in the medical profession.

Born into the Rodriguez clan of San Marcelino, Zambales, her family knew at an early age that Doc Sally would be an achiever. She went to the University of the Philippines for medical studies. She graduated with class 1977 and became a leading light in her field. She was a clinical associate professor and attending physician at the University of the Philippines College of Medicine and Philippine General Hospital, where she earned her M.D., completed residency in pediatrics and a fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases.

After the country was hit by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, she was involved in epidemiology and prevention efforts to help displaced children at risk of tuberculosis. As a former member of the World Health Organization Tuberculosis in Children and Adolescents Working Group, she helped create the Philippine Coalition Against Tuberculosis and led a children's tuberculosis initiative.

At the time of her passing, she was president of the Philippine Pediatrics Society, and was assistant director of RITM. Despite her stature and achievements, Doc Sally remained humble, very caring and supportive of younger colleagues.

Dr. HELEN TUdTUD

Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center, Cebu City

Dr. Helen TuDtud was a medical specialist/pathologist of the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center who passed away in 28 March or 11 days after she was admitted to the hospital for COVID-19.

In a tribute by her nephew Vincent Thomas Evangelista through a Facebook post, he said that “Mommy Helen was one of the most generous people I know. She would always think of other people. She would always be the first to help when any of us was in need. To say that she was caring was an understatement,” he added.

Four days after her passing, her husband, Dr. Dennis Ramon TuDtud also died on 31 March. As a doctor, he was known to pay for the chemotherapy sessions of some of his patients just so their families could spend more years with them. He was described as “generous beyond words”.

Despite the couple’s children’s warning, Dr. Helen and Dr. Ramon continued working even as they were aware that elderly people were more vulnerable to the disease.

JOMALYN BUHAYON and MARGIE MARIBAO

LGU-Maramag, Bukidnon

Buhayon and Maribao were barangay health workers who died on 20 March not because of the virus but because of the negligence of the driver of the 10-wheeler truck which rammed into the quarantine checkpoint they were attending to in Maramag town in Bukidnon. Police report revealed that the driver was under the influence of liquor and visibly drunk when he was chased because he attempted to escape the scene of the crime.

The accident happened a few minutes before the start of Bukidnon’s province-wide indefinite lockdown to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. The two health workers were tapped to implement strict measures against the spread of coronavirus disease at the community quarantine checkpoint when the truck rammed into it.

Buhayon and Maribao were pronounced dead on arrival (DOA) at the Bukidnon Provincial Hospital in Maramag.

DR. RONALDO MATEO

Pagamutan ng Dasmariñas, LGU-Dasmariñas Cavite

Dr. Ronaldo Mateo passed away due to COVID-19 on 5 April 5 at the age of 47. He dedicated his life to the practice of general surgery without forgetting to promote the welfare of his fellow Caviteños.

His colleagues at the Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS) fondly remembered “Dr. Onie” as someone who laid down his life for the practice of General Surgery. He was always focused on the needs of his townmates in Silang and Dasmariñas. The local government named its public hospital’s operating room, Dr. Ronaldo Mateo Operating Room Complex in recognition of Dr. Onie’s “heroism and service to the city.”

Dr. RAUL D. JARA

Philippine Heart Center

Dr. Raul Jara was a recognized pillar of cardiology in the Philippines, often described by the Philippine Heart Association as a “father, teacher, mentor, poet, author, singer, colleague, friend.” His patients remembered him as a soothing and calming healer who used music to heal the heart.

During his younger days as an activist physician, he fought dictatorship and risked his life by treating patients in the underground movement, running rings around the military by faking the names and records of the activists he treated. Later in life, he would remain steadfast and true to his oath, joining a group of doctors attending to an aging martial law figure who had been on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum.

In a statement, Dr. Ling Jara-Salva, one his five children, said she salutes her father for dedicating his whole life to constant learning and teaching and molding future doctors. Dr. Raul would ask tough questions and push them to learn and persevere. He believed in his students and would think of them as his children and the hope of the future. She added that their family would rather have her father remembered not by how he died but by how he lived.

HEALTH and WELLNESS



This section encourages readers to look after themselves physically, mentally, spiritually, and yes, financially too. Get insightful tips and advice in prioritizing your health and wellness at work.

COVID-19 and our mental health

It has been months since the start of community quarantine in different parts of the Philippines and until now the pandemic is far from over. As health concerns brought about by coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) heightened, mental health woes followed suit. The fear of contracting the virus, the stress due to limited mobility due to quarantine, the added pressure of working remotely in a less conducive environment, and the overall anxiety of being uncertain of the pandemic’s end, contribute to the increasing concern for the mental health of Filipinos.

During the first two months of enhanced community quarantine, the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) recorded more than 100% increase in calls from their crisis hotline. From a monthly average of 400 calls from May 2019 to February 2020, it doubled to a monthly average of 953 calls from March to May 2020. Anxiety-related concerns was the main reason for the spike in calls, according to NCMH Psychiatrist Bernard Argamosa. Callers revealed that they were experiencing increased levels of anxiety, while others asked for referrals to a psychologist or psychiatrist, or needed someone to talk to, or inquired for someone else’s mental health problems.

Though the numbers are alarming, health experts are not surprised. At the onset of the pandemic, the World Health Organization already urged the public to look after their mental health. The Department of Health (DOH) also asked Filipinos to take care of their mental health while doing their part in following health protocols. As a response, both public and private sectors offered support mechanisms to help address the public’s mental health concerns.

In the government, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) partnered with DOH, NCMH, Career Executive Service Compassion Project, Natasha Goulbourn Foundation, and World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation to help public servants cope with emotional crises, stress, and anxiety by availing free psychosocial first aid, assessment, and intervention

from the said institutions. The Philippine Army launched a mental health and resilience program for its soldiers, while the Department of Education offered mental health and psychosocial support services to their teachers, students, and other personnel. These initiatives are in line with the Guidelines on Mental Health Program provided by CSC Resolution No. 1901265 in accordance with the Mental Health Act of 2018, wherein agencies are mandated to develop a mental health program for their workforce.

There are also numerous webinars on mental health that government workers can take advantage of while normal training setup is not yet allowed. One of these is the webinar on The Path to Wellness, which aims to improve employee wellbeing amid the COVID-19 pandemic. “It is a two-hour synchronous workshop that will help members of your organization to take a closer look at their current life paths through reflection and sharing. The session will help them recognize current challenges and guide them to finding individual paths toward recovery,” said Mr. Lito Lupena, the webinar creator with over 25 years of experience in the field of human resource and organization development, specializing in personal mastery, leadership and strategy, as well as competency and talent development. Several agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Anti-Red Tape Authority, Commission on Population, and the CSC have already benefitted from this webinar. Online trainings like this can help us take care of our wellbeing despite the worrisome situation around the world.

Ultimately, while the pandemic is out of our control, we can still have a hand on things we can personally control such as managing our exposure from depressing news; staying virtually connected with family, friends, and colleagues; keeping ourselves busy with helpful activities; and expressing our thoughts by talking to others or writing on journal. By actively doing these, we are nurturing our mental and physical wellness, which we badly need as we fight on through this pandemic.

“The Path to Wellness is a breath of fresh air from all the big and little things that we do in everyday life. It is like a guided self-reflection and self assessment of one’s current state of mind amidst the anxiety and stress of our situation.

Atty. Janalyn Gainza-Tang
Anti-Red Tape Authority

“The Path to Wellness is a breather amidst this pandemic. Never did I imagine that a bunch of cards coupled with interaction from colleagues in the public service would help me embrace a new perspective in the current crisis.

Maria Andrea B. Banay
Department of Social Welfare and Development

Zoom fatigue may prove that we're not doing remote work right: **How to not fall into this trap**

“I can't believe I'm doing more work and virtual meetings these days... and it's draining me,” my colleague said while we're on a phone call.

When COVID-19 suddenly pushed millions of workers to work from home, people had their own ways of adjusting to the unfamiliar circumstance—majority of efforts had gone digital or virtual. Leaders and managers would meet with their teams online through videoconferencing apps such as Zoom. Some people find remote work convenient because of such flexibility.

However, as weeks and months went by, the influx of online meetings was so noticeable that “Zoom fatigue” has now become a common struggle among workers.

There are many factors causing Zoom fatigue including more intentional listening, showing up on video even if it makes you uncomfortable, long meeting hours, and background noise, among others. But more than these, it also has a psychological

impact on workers with assumptions like virtual meetings are bosses' new way to check attendance, monitor performance, and see their engagement. So even if employees think that they may have had too many meetings in a day or in a week, the fear of being penalized for not attending one makes it impossible for them to beg off.

Here are some tips to avoid Zoom fatigue before, during, and after virtual meetings:

BEFORE

1. The rule of the meeting agenda still stands. Don't simply say YES to a meeting without an agenda. Often times, we hear notice of meeting like “We need to meet ASAP. Got some important announcement to make. Please be there.” It's okay to ask for a specific rundown of agenda so you can prepare yourself beforehand, or also assess if you really need to be there in the first place. The least that you want is time wasted in a meeting that has nothing to do with you.
2. Check your schedule and priorities. It is easy to get lost in our calendar with multiple calls for meetings, webinars, and regular and intervening tasks. Before you say yes to a meeting especially to a one that conflicts with another, see if it is something that would really need your presence. Prioritize. Beg off if necessary. See if there



Photo by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash



Photo by Thomas Martinsen on Unsplash

is an alternative or easier way to get that meeting out of your way--perhaps a phone call or email will do?

DURING

3. Avoid distractions. If you committed yourself to a virtual meeting, try to eliminate distractions during the meeting if possible. It's easy to get distracted in a virtual meeting and do other tasks while on it such as cooking, answering an email, switching through different social media channels, and worse, engaging in another Zoom call simultaneously. This would drain your energy more than you think it would.
4. You can switch your video off. Some people are just camera shy and not comfortable showing their faces virtually for a long time. This could increase their level of stress while on an online meeting. If you are this

kind of person, remember that you always have that option to switch off that video and engage with audio only.

5. Keep it short if possible; if not, take breaks in between. If you have a clear agenda, keeping the meeting short should be easy. But if it is a major one like strategic planning or setting targets, make sure you let people take breaks in between.
6. Make it fun and light. If you're the one hosting it, you may insert a quick catch up at the beginning to break the ice, humor them, or close the meeting with some inspirational note. Just because we're behind our screen doesn't mean that we're less human in meetings. Employees mostly miss human connections nowadays in the virtual world that they usually experience when they are in the office with their colleagues.

AFTER

7. Take a break to take it all in. Common mistake that people make is to engage in another Zoom call right away after the previous one. This is definitely exhausting. Give yourself some time to review your notes and check what needs your action/attention. Pause and breathe. Take your eyes off the screen. Drink water or take your meal!

If you would notice, all these tips echo the same tricks we should be doing in physical meetings. Moving to a virtual space does not make you any less human. Hence, some major rules in a face-to-face meeting still apply in Zoom meetings. Let us make working from home work to our advantage by eliminating stressful practices. Don't let yourself get trapped in Zoom fatigue again.

First published by Moon Danipog on LinkedIn ([linkedin.com/moonandnipog/](https://www.linkedin.com/moonandnipog/))



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MC NO.15, S. 2020

TO :

ALL HEADS OF CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES, DEPARTMENTS, BUREAUS AND AGENCIES OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT; GOVERNMENT-OWNED OR CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS WITH ORIGINAL CHARTERS; LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS; AND STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

SUBJECT :

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 38 OF OMNIBUS RULES ON LEAVE (AMENDED BY CSC MC NO. 41, S. 1998)

Pursuant to CSC Resolution No. 1901392 promulgated on November 18, 2019, the Commission resolved to amend Section 38 of the Omnibus Rules on Leave, as amended by CSC MC No. 41, s. 1998, to read as follows:

“Section 38. Period within which to claim terminal leave pay. – Request for payment of terminal leave benefits may be brought any time after the official/employee severed his/her connection with his/her employer.”

CSC Resolution No. 1901392 took effect on March 8, 2020 or after fifteen (15) days from its publication in The Philippine Star on February 21, 2020.


ALICIA dela ROSA-BALA
Chairperson

Your direct line to efficient public service

Report the following acts under
Section 21 of Republic Act No. 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018

a.

Refusal to accept application or request with complete requirements being submitted by an applicant or requesting party without due cause;

b.

Imposition of additional requirements other than those listed in the Citizen's Charter;

c.

Imposition of additional costs not reflected in the Citizen's Charter;

d.

Failure to give applicant or requesting party a written notice on the disapproval of an application or request;

e.

Failure to render government services within the prescribed processing time on any application and/or request without due cause;

f.

Failure to attend to applicants or requesting parties who are within the premises of the office or agency concerned prior to the end of official working hours and during lunch break;

g.

Failure or refusal to issue official receipts; and

h.

Fixing and/or collusion with fixers in consideration of economic and/or other gain or advantage.

Penalties are stipulated under Section 22 (a) and (b) of the Republic Act No. 11032.

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via PLDT landlines from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday

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The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) awarded the Contact Center ng Bayan the 2014 Quill Award for Communication Management Strategies for Customer Relations



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2020