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## XL Construction gets creative to build teamwork at a distance

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Milpitas-based general contractor XL Construction has had to ask its employees to work from home for the time being due to the statewide "stay at home" order and a Bay Area-wide temporary moratorium on most non-essential construction.

To keep XL's employees updated on the state of the company, XL president and COO Robert Walker and CEO Eric Raff have been holding weekly virtual "coffee chats" with its employees to discuss the company's COVID-19 response, the status of its operations and how people can address the feelings they have in dealing with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

These "coffee chats," as Autumn Martin, vice president of human resources at XL, calls them, are part of a larger pandemic response plan that the company began putting together in early March. The plan laid out new guidelines employees needed to follow in the office and on construction sites and how the company would continue performing work during this time.

Aspects of those guidelines have also been incorporated into XL's lineup of programs that include medical and retirement benefits and access to a financial adviser.

"On the financial adviser side, we've kind of ramped up the number of webinar courses that we have," said Katie Hahn, a manager in XL's human resources department. "People are kind of in a panic with the volatile economy and asking how is this affecting them? So we got that on the calendar right away."

"We're doing our best to be open and transparent and ease some of that angst," Martin said.

One of the biggest challenges facing XL right now is general communication, Raff said; the company is encouraging employees to use the video conferencing feature on Cisco WebEx for meetings and is pushing all of its divisions to "huddle," virtually, at least a couple of times a week.

Employee health and wellness underscore XL's mission of "building to improve lives," and the company is encouraging its employees to go outside and take a walk for 20 to 30 minutes a day. Raff, who loves the outdoors, said even a 10-minute walk around the block can drive a huge improvement to his psyche.

The company is also working on giving workers access to new programs to help them adjust to working from home, such as an online pass to virtual yoga, meditation or cardio classes. Since the firm's Bay Area employees can no longer use the gym at its Milpitas headquarters or meet with the company's on-site free personal trainer, it's uploaded online "boot camp" videos and health information from its employee assistance program to its employee intranet.

As part of its effort to contribute to the fight against the coronavirus, XL is working with organizations that use parking lots or vacant facilities as space for hospital beds "to help get those up and moving as soon as possible," Hahn said, and it is taking stock of its supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) to see what it can donate to hospitals while ensuring it has enough PPE for employees.



TOMAS OVALLE

Autumn Martin, VP HR, XL Construction, works from her residence as part of the coronavirus shelter in place.

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