



employee engagement and collaboration

IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19
MARCH 2020

why are we talking about this?



- These are trying times for all of us in micro-credit business. Majority are away from their core work and others are forced to work-from-home with uncertainty and changing priorities.
- There are plenty of reasons for fear, anxiety and stress – safety of family and friends, illness, insecurity of job, lack of work, stock of food supplies, less movement, locked-down, precious fresh air, loneliness, and so on. We know that this would end, but don't know when. And no one is prepared for this sudden upheaval.
- But as the saying goes 'never waste a crisis'. This time should be used for a good - with imagination and collaboration.
- This note attempts to share some directions, thoughts and ideas on employee engagement and collaboration. Use it inventively to enrich work environment forever.

first things first

Before we get to specifics, it is important to agree on the foundations.

- One - underlying principles for 'engagement and collaboration' are transparency, support, empowerment, empathy and togetherness. We all need strong belief that we're all in this together.
- Two - communications and technology are only way to connect in the times of 'social distancing'.
- Third - being community minded is important. Connect and support communities you are in, whatever way you possibly can. This is critical.



wellbeing

- In thinking about employee wellbeing – framework of wellness offers a useful guide to what individuals may need at this time.
- In the current context, physical health is the foremost priority. But it is important to that employees are engaged in holistic way keeping in mind their physical, psychological, financial, occupational and intellectual needs.
- In the next few parts, we would focus on some of these elements and useful tips around it.



stay healthy

- It's time to drive home the message of good-health – hygiene, nutrition, exercise and rest.
- Simple snippets in the form of health-tips could be shared . However, only use credible and scientific sources.
- Prevention of Covid-19 and its symptoms should be repeated – doesn't matter if all of us are flooded with such information. Again only use information from credible sources.
- Tie-up with experts (doctor, hospital) to provide on-line counselling and awareness on Covid-19, where possible.
- Check about essential food supplies and medicines and help as required.
- High-risk category employees such as pregnant women, less-young and those with underlying medical conditions should be particularly cared for.
- Keep track of labs and hospitals identified for Covid-19, if any necessity arises.



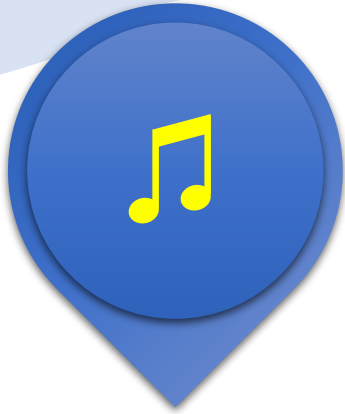
keep calm



**KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON**

- Engage proactively on things that bother and matter – continuity of job, implications on salary, uncertainty about normalcy, reaching hometown, paying bills, illness of near-ones. Try to gather what is on the minds by through short surveys, if possible
- Teams to take responsibility to talk together everyday.
- Lockdown period is long – so be creative in your interactions.
- Encourage every team member to take lead in turn - conversation and choosing a topic. They can be about work but other things as well – Covid-19, health, knowing each other – their hobbies, families, sharing how customers are coping, what is happening in your areas and communities, sharing some good books, music, movies.
- Encourage sharing hidden talents and creativity – writing, painting, cooking, sketching, bird-watching, singing, dancing, comedy, acting, performances, coding, gaming, photography, cycling whatever it is. Each day can be assigned a hobby and people can participate.
- Respect individual choices. If someone is shy and does not want to speak or share., it is okay. Don't get them stressed to be creative and speak.
- Tie-up with experts to provide on-line counselling and awareness issues around mental and emotional health.

use stress busters



music



movies



games



social media



books



new skills



connect to near-ones

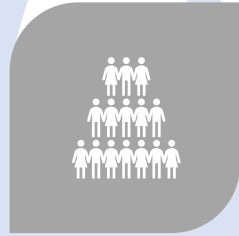


good food

keep working



There is a lot which can be done at work. Learning, undertaking new projects, doing things which were ignored earlier (like organizing your files, reports and data).



Empower teams and individuals to identify tasks for themselves and implement them.



It's an excellent time to cross know and learn. HR can learn about Risk and vice versa. Let people learn new things.



Send learning tools (readings, videos, quiz, tests, games) using learning platforms or other tools.



Run competitions and promote new and interesting projects by rewarding through on-line certification courses and other means. This about customer experience stories by loan officers? Or nicer and more user-friendly loan card?

working from home



Allow people time and flexibility to respond to emails, participate in on-line discussions and deliver to timelines. This is important considering challenges of home environment.

- It is a completely new situation for many to manage 'work-for-home. Home is home – with family around, chores to do, children seeking attention with no boundaries for personal and professional space.
- Support employee for more effective and productive work by giving them some well-tested tips such as:
 - > Set goals for yourself.
 - > Try and plan about what all you need to do after this crisis and get started on them right away.
 - > Get in touch with colleagues, do a team project, plan at least a ten-minute update call with your supervisor everyday.
 - > Keep away from distractions like TV, music etc. Treat it like a workday but remember to take little breaks just like you would have in office.
 - > If you already don't have assigned place where you usually work at home, create one. Doing this gives structure to your day and makes you work better and maintain productivity.
 - > Take bath and get formally dressed. Treat it like a real job

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200312-coronavirus-covid-19-update-work-from-home-in-a-pandemic>

communications



Transparent, clear,
simple and balanced
and just right.
Don't over do



Make it two way –
listen and talk



Use creative tools
(images, videos,
songs, stories,
quotes, posters,
letters, daily blogs)
to put across the
message



Where possible – do
more face-speak-
time, using on-lines
tools



What about teams
doing things
together virtually.
All singing and
listening ? It helps.

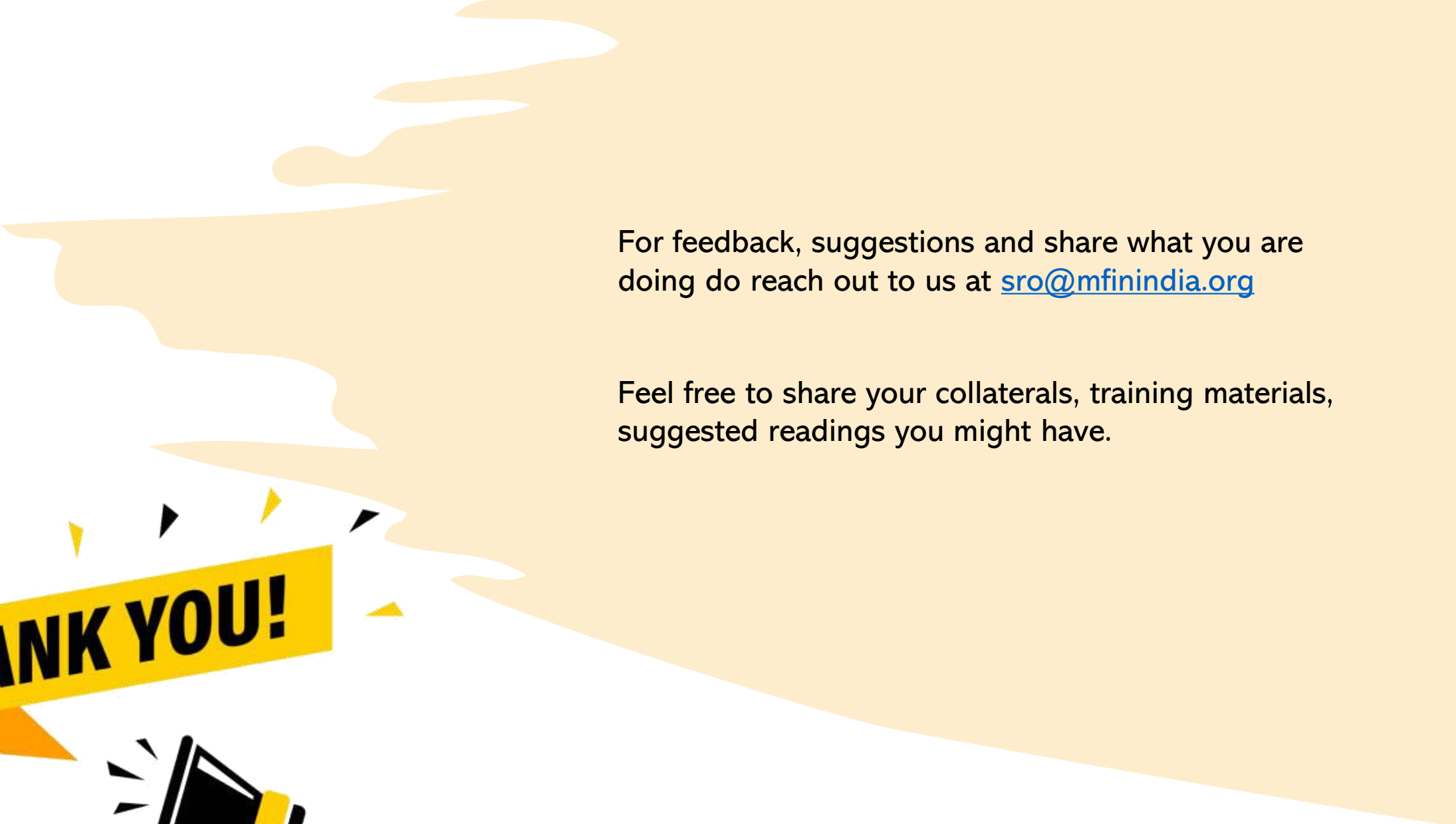
embrace technology

- We may be overwhelmed by technology but in these times, it is our lifeline. It helps us to access information, stay in touch and do work.
- Use it in every possible way. There are many online things available – to connect, learn, seek information and enjoy.
- Go online and just look for them. Some popular ones are
 - > zoom: [link](#)
 - > skype: [link](#)
 - > gotomeeting: [link](#)
 - > webex: all employees are not required to have a account to join a meeting. [link](#)
 - > google hangouts: [link](#)
 - > bluejeans: [link](#)
 - > trello: [link](#)
 - > dropbox: [link](#)
 - > microsoft teams: [link](#)
 - > slack: [link](#)
 - > whatsapp: [link](#)



For feedback, suggestions and share what you are doing do reach out to us at sro@mfinindia.org

Feel free to share your collaterals, training materials, suggested readings you might have.



THANK YOU!

