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Case Study on Vaccine Requirements

Company: Meteorite

Interviewee: Stephen Massey, Co-Founder

Number of Employees: 14

Interview Date: March 22, 2022

This case study reflects information obtained at the time of interview.

Background

The National Safety Council knows vaccines are the safest, most effective way to slow COVID-19 transmission and prevent hospitalization and death. To provide the safest possible workplace, thousands of private employers implemented policies requiring their workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19. These requirements largely remained in place even after the Supreme Court blocked an OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard that would have obligated all employers of 100 or more workers to ensure those workers are vaccinated against COVID-19 or present a negative test at least weekly.

The National Safety Council (NSC) spoke with Meteorite, the social-impact communications firm that powers the Health Action Alliance (HAA), to discuss the planning, processes and results of the company's vaccine requirement. This case study reviews best practices to share with other employers for use during the COVID-19 pandemic or in future public health crises when implementing a worker vaccine requirement.

Planning and processes

SAFER Vaccine Requirement Spectrum



According to the Council’s [Vaccine Requirement Spectrum](#), various levels of vaccine requirements exist for companies to put in place depending on their workforce’s risk. Meteorite implemented a hard requirement for all full-time and part-time employees as well as consultants and contractors who come into physical contact with any company employees, contractors or clients no matter the duration. Meteorite defined full vaccination status as two weeks after the two-dose regimen of Pfizer and Moderna, or two weeks after the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Staff were required to provide official documentation of vaccine status.

From the time vaccines became available in early 2021, Meteorite shared vaccine information, encouraged workers to get vaccinated and provided paid time off (PTO) for staff to get themselves or eligible children vaccinated. In this way, Meteorite led by example, taking the actions it recommended to other employers via Health Action Alliance resources and events.

Prior to implementing its vaccine requirement policy, Meteorite received input from workers to gauge how people were feeling about vaccines and a requirement policy. The company held space for open conversations about vaccine requirements during staff meetings and reached out to its workers about any issues they might have related to access in getting the vaccine.

Putting the requirement into effect

In late October 2021, when it became best practice for companies to have these requirements in place, Meteorite drafted a sample vaccine requirement policy for use by employers in the HAA network. This template, which received input from former Obama Administration Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, David Michaels, became the basis for Meteorite's vaccine requirement policy.

Meteorite's policy was drafted by its Director of Communications, Dan Pasquini, and Co-Founders, Stephen Massey and Steven Levine, as well as its Chief of Staff, Kate Azar. It was implemented in November 2021, as Meteorite monitored the progress of OSHA's Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS). Meteorite wanted to make sure that, even as a small business, it met or exceeded the requirements the ETS set for larger employers.

Overall, Meteorite workers were not surprised by the vaccination policy as the company had held open discussions during staff meetings and maintained an open-door policy so staff could connect with the co-founders or the Chief of Staff about vaccinations. Also, its team members who work on HAA had advised other businesses to implement vaccine requirements.

The policy was communicated in mid-November during a staff meeting. Company leadership made sure to be inclusive of all staff and their feedback.

Separately, Meteorite also made the decision in January 2022 to temporarily cancel in-person gatherings, after surveying its team.

Stephen Massey said, "We have a large percentage of staff members who have kids below the age of five, who are ineligible to get vaccinated, so we are really mindful of their concerns about making sure they don't bring the virus home to their families."

Results, impact and lessons learned

Most, if not all, Meteorite staff were already vaccinated before the vaccine requirement policy was implemented, so the company quickly and easily achieved 100% vaccination. Meteorite has had no COVID-19 transmissions in the workplace and no employee deaths.

Meteorite has also been mindful of other issues related to COVID-19 and has taken steps to assist workers in areas like mental health, maintaining a safe and ergonomically supportive home work environment and more.

"We're an organization that shifted from having a bunch of consultants to one that hired full-time employees in July of 2021. That shift meant trying to set up a benefits plan and employee handbook. It was an interesting time for us to be doing all that in the midst of the pandemic, while also trying to meet the unique needs of our team," said Massey.

As Meteorite shifted to formalize its processes, it's been mindful to strengthen its workplace mental health support to meet the challenges posed by burnout, stress and fatigue, which the pandemic has amplified. Meteorite holds open conversations about mental health and creates space for team members to check in with their managers, and vice versa, to see how they are doing emotionally in addition to checking in about the progress of work.

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“We’ve been very deliberate about ensuring our health benefits programs are consistent with the Mental Health Parity Act. So making sure the physical health benefits are on par with the mental health benefits, as well as providing a psychologically safe workplace, has been a priority,” Massey said.

Meteorite also provides a robust employee assistance program (EAP) for any employee wanting to take advantage of mental health care, and it offers unlimited sick days, which can also be used for mental health.

“It’s important we provide the kind of time our folks need to be their healthiest selves – physically and mentally – so that’s just baked into our policy. I think it’s really important when you think about where we are in the pandemic and the future of work,” said Massey.

One of Meteorite’s biggest lessons learned from vaccine requirements and the pandemic in general has been the clarity of how business is a vital part of the public health system. The federal government relies on the private sector to be part of the emergency response by creating workplace safety protocols, providing PTO for vaccinations and improving indoor air quality to limit the spread of the virus. Businesses should continue to keep an open line of communication with public health officials to protect their workers and the communities in which they live and work.

“For myself as a small business owner, I’m really much more mindful now of the role I play as a CEO of a small business in the public health system and the critical role I play in providing benefits and support to our people. I think I’ve learned a lot about what we need to do to create a supportive and inclusive workplace environment,” said Massey.

NSC and HAA will continue to produce case studies on organizations and their vaccine policies. As new COVID-19 cases emerge, NSC is committed to bringing employers resources on how to best keep their workers safe during the pandemic. A variety of helpful resources can be found on the NSC [SAFER website](#), including information on vaccine requirements, how to talk to employees about vaccines, managing a mixed vaccinated workforce and more. NSC also contributed to an [Employer Decision Tool](#) with HAA offering the latest health, legal and other considerations to inform companies’ decision-making to safely reopen workplaces.

About

National Safety Council: The [National Safety Council](#) is America’s leading nonprofit safety advocate – and has been for over 100 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace, roadway and impairment. We create a culture of safety to not only keep people safer at work, but also beyond the workplace so they can live their fullest lives.

Health Action Alliance: The Health Action Alliance is a joint initiative of the Ad Council, the CDC Foundation, the de Beaumont Foundation, the National Safety Council and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—in partnership with Meteorite. Together, we work to promote COVID-19 prevention and vaccination, advance health equity, strengthen business resilience for future pandemics, and support employee mental health.