# From CFO Daily News:



The most current information on how financial professionals can increase cash flow & control costs

### May 12, 2020

#### **KEY FINANCE FIGURES** Curr\* Lst Mo Lst Yr ■ Leading Rates % Prime Rate 3 25 3.25 5.50 Fed Funds Rate 0.25 0.25 2.50 ■ Money Market Rates % London Interbank (LIBOR) 1 month 0.62 0.92 2.48 3 months 1.04 1.23 2.58 6 months 1.02 0.98 2.62 Stock & Bond Indexes DJIA 24,134 21,637 26,554 S&P 500 2,878 2,541 2,943 8,730 7,502 8,162 **NASDAQ** 5-Yr T-Bill 0.36 0.41 2.21 2.59 10-Yr T-Bill 0.60 0.72 ■ NACM Credit Managers' Index 39.5 64.0 58.2 Sales New 57.8 44.0 62.2 credit apps Dollar collections 49.3 58.8 56.6 \*As of 4/27/20

# The Cumulative Effect of CFO & Controller Alert

With the pace of change accelerating and the competition tougher, what's the best chance to keep up performance and get two steps ahead of the competition? A reliable source of continuous information.

It's the **cumulative effect** that helps, not any one reading. Our unique function is to deliver solid, focused information in your area of responsibility in a fast-read format twice a month to help performance.

# Why the risk for this costly fraud is greater than ever

# Crooks exploiting 'new normal' to sneak BEC through

As CFO, you know that today things are far from "business as usual."

You know who else knows that? Criminals – which is why they're exploiting this unprecedented time to defraud companies.

And they're doing it using the toughest adversary your finance team has been up against in recent years: business email compromise (BEC).

Of course no company can afford a costly loss from fraud right about now.

Here's what you need to know and how to protect your company and

its cash from fraudsters looking to capitalize on the global pandemic.

### Why we're more vulnerable than ever

You know that for a BEC scam to work, a criminal must gain access to your company system to be able to study your org chart, how emails sound, payment patterns, etc.

The main way to do that? A phishing attack.

There's been an explosion in phishing attempts in recent weeks, all using the coronavirus as the hook to get people clicking. It's gotten so

(Please see Greater ... on Page 2)

# 19 states offering coronavirus sales tax relief

### They won't likely be the last either

Y our Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable departments need to know: IRS isn't the only one offering tax relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

States are cutting companies a break on the sales tax front, too.

So far 19 states and Washington DC are offering some degree of sales tax relief.

Here's what you need to know.

## 4 types of relief - grab some, grab all

You have four main types of relief at the moment. Depending on where

your sales tax responsibilities lie, some states will grant you all four, while others only provide some:

- filing extensions
- payment extensions
- waived penalties, and
- waived interest.

Note: Certain states, like Washington, offer you different relief based on the type of sales tax filer your company is (monthly vs. quarterly).

No doubt additional states will follow suit. Keep checking your department of revenue websites.

# Greater ...

(continued from Page 1)

bad that both IRS (irs.gov/newsroom/irs-issues-warning-about-coronavirus-related-scams-watch-out-for-schemes-tied-to-economic-impact-payments) and the Department of Justice (justice. gov/opa/pr/department-justice-announces-disruption-hundreds-online-covid-19-related-scams) have issued warnings.

The trouble is, this pandemic has people so panicked that they're more willing to open emails and click links from unverified sources to get promised information. Especially when it allegedly comes from the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

All you need is one employee to click on a link from a phony company purporting to sell masks or a text telling them someone they've come into contact with has COVID-19 and

From **CFO** Daily News:



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the door has opened for a BEC scam.

Which is why now's the time to be launching an educational blitz on all the different types of coronavirus scams out there.

Have IT lead the charge – and be specific. You want them to push out

# Attacks are evolving every day.

examples of specific attacks: what they look like, the language they use.

And because the attacks are evolving every day, this should be an ongoing campaign.

You also want managers and even you and your CEO to push things out to explain exactly what kind of information or action you'd *never* ask for in an email.

### Changing times = changing defenses

Of course that list might look different than it did just a month or two ago, which is exactly why crooks are jumping on this so aggressively.

After all, you likely are making "a flurry of unusual financial transactions" during COVID-19, reminds the National Association for Credit Management, including:

- expedited orders
- · canceled deals, and
- refunds.

Any of these could be chances for a fraudster to impersonate you or another member of the management team and request a quick payment.

Now add that your A/P or A/R staffers can't just walk down the hall and verify whether that transaction was really originated by that person, putting your company at greater risk.

Urge your team to stay in close contact, pick up the phone and tap tech safeguards like a virtual private network or single login systems on company laptops only for all transactions.

# Sharpen your JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

# ■ Did she take sick leave for PTSD before accruing it?

"Just to be clear," CFO Bill Keeper said to Payroll Manager Kerry Peterson, "Jill Dawson didn't have enough sick time available when she missed all those days from work for her PTSD?"

"Correct," Kerry responded.
"She hadn't accrued enough time, so she was terminated for her attendance issues."

### 'Should've been available'

"Well, Jill's lawsuit tells a different story," Bill replied. "She's saying we kept her from taking leave she'd already accrued and we made mistakes when calculating the amount of sick time she'd accrued. Any hours accrued should've been available at the beginning of the new pay period."

"That's not our policy," Kerry said.
"All available hours of sick leave
appear on employees' pay stubs.
Once a pay period starts, more sick
time does start being accrued, but it's
not yet available."

"Our policy is: Sick time cannot be used until after the hours appear on the pay stub. Even though an employee's accruing hours once the new pay period begins, they're not to be used until they appear on the pay stub. My worry is that we didn't make our policy clear enough to Jill," said Bill.

Bill decided the company should try to fight this lawsuit. Did it win?

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 6 for the court's ruling.

# Idle facilities could come back to bite you as operations resume

FOR MORE ...

For a list of

Spring-specific facility

cfoandcontrolleralert.com/

keep-your-facility-from-

becoming-a-money-pit

vulnerabilities, go to

You don't want to return to some expensive surprises

All businesses hope the comeback is bigger than the setback as they look ahead to post-lockdown life.

As long as another disaster doesn't strike in the middle of this one!

Spring flood season has arrived. And your peers are seeing instances of theft and fire ... losses that could've been either prevented or caught earlier if buildings weren't left vacant.

That's the warning from FM Global, one of the largest U.S. commercial property insurers.

#### 4 must-make moves

So how can you keep your very building from turning into an expensive liability at this time?

See if your building's maintenance team can be deemed "essential" – even on a reduced schedule – to:

 verify that all sprinkler valves are locked open and there's no

flammable debris laying around

- elevate anything that could be damaged by flood waters
- step up security checks around your perimeter, make sure motionsensored lights work, etc., and
- perform routine maintenance tasks that often get back-burnered when things get busy.

Adapted in part from "Neglecting idle facilities amid COVID-19 will cost companies dearly, warns commercial property insurer FM Global," at fmglobal.com

# COBRA subsidies for layoffs, furloughs, leaves

■ Some firms are paying coverage during time off, as feds consider it in new bill

As many firms consider or have already made staff cuts during this pandemic, some are paying the cost of COBRA coverage for their laid off or furloughed employees.

Subsidizing COBRA may be more "financially prudent" than continuing coverage for your furloughed employees for a short period, says Lockton Companies attorney John Price. But you need to be careful not to be discriminatory, for example, only subsidizing highly-compensated employees, which could result in tax penalties, and even lawsuits.

Firms also have other options to assist employees. Prior to the layoff, they can either ask an employee to consent to a pre-tax deduction equal to the premiums, or provide an advance equal to the cost of the premiums with an understanding they'll repay the advance upon return.

### Federal COBRA subsidies coming?

The CARES Act, the coronavirus relief package, failed to provide COBRA subsidies, as the feds had done after the 2008 financial crisis. However, another relief bill is in the works that would subsidize 100% COBRA payments for six months for those out of work. Stay tuned.

Adapted from "Employment as the COVID-19 pandemic continues," by John Price, at dbusiness.com

### **ECONOMIC OUTLOOK**

# ■ How long will it take to bounce back? CFOs predict

Granted we're far from back to normal right now ... or whatever that's going to look like going forward.

But that doesn't mean your fellow CFOs aren't already anticipating what's to come.

Many of them shared where their heads are at in PwC's latest COVID-19 CFO Pulse Survey, taken in early-April.

As you start looking ahead to your own company's positioning for recovery, see how it compares with your peers' plans.

After all, some of them may be your key customers, suppliers or competitors.

## Your peers' timetables

PwC recently asked your fellow finance chiefs how long it would take them to return to "business as usual" if COVID-19 ended today.

And here's what they said:

- less than a month (22%)
- one to three months (39%)
- three to six months (22%)
- six to 12 months (13%), and
- more than 12 months (5%)

That's important intel when it comes to your key trading partners.

Not only that, but it seems many of your peers are planning some supply chain shifts, whether that's to different vendors, facilities or markets.

More than a third (39%) said they'll make supply chain changes due to COVID-19. And another 18% simply aren't sure yet. Stay tuned.

(For complete survey results, go to pwc.com/us/en/library/covid-19/pwc-covid-19-cfo-pulse-survey.html)

Page 3

# COVID forcing firms to revisit every process (and that's a good thing)

■ CFOs can recapture much of the 20%-30% of revenue lost to inefficiencies

As CFO, you know how inefficiency cuts revenue growth.

In fact, most firms lose 20%-30% of potential revenue to operational inefficiencies, according to IDC.

The great news is that Finance is in perfect position to drive efficiency improvements – if you can get buy in.

And that may be the silver lining to the disruption caused by the coronavirus epidemic.

### Mapping your process

Every business operation eventually connects with Finance, giving you unequaled visibility into your organization's workflows and outputs.

That gives you the ability to trace and analyze how well your processes fulfill their intended roles and provide tough, honest feedback to department heads and company leadership.

This is a great time to map out

ways to improve efficiencies and begin making the necessary changes.

While that might involve reorganizing your workforce, the quickest way to improve efficiency – and keep benefiting over the long term – is to improve how you use technology.

## Seeking: Opportunities to simplify

Good candidates for improving efficiency can be found where systems overlap or where automated processes still involve lots of manual effort.

Once you've identified those areas, you can decide whether to look for a tech fix or consider if you'd be better off outsourcing to a partner.

Either way, you'll free your people up to improve customers' experiences – and boost revenue.

Adapted from "How to handle inefficiency," at tinyurl.com/inefficiency580

# Your new marketing platform: TikTok?

■ It's not just for teenagers – companies are tapping this option, too

ne of Quarantine's favorite pastimes could prove to be a valuable marketing and advertising strategy: TikTok.

It's not all for dancing teenagers (just 41% of users are ages 16-24).

Two numbers alone make the case:

- 800 million the number of active monthly users worldwide
- 0 the dollars required to use it.

That makes it worth considering as a supplement to your existing marketing strategy.

TikTok can be a fantastic way to engage customers during these uncertain times – a quick video to reassure customers or show them how you're still serving them during this crisis. Even a push for electronic payments could play well now.

#### A terrific in-house tool too

Not *quite* ready to start sending videos to current and prospective customers? Tap TikTok internally. Let Payroll make a 60-second video touting direct deposit for May's National Direct Deposit Month.

They'll have fun with a new creative outlet. And this new way to engage employees may see some new success.

Info: 4 Ways to Use TikTok for Business: Social Media Examiner

### MANAGING FOR RESULTS

# ■ 3 ways to embrace the new work-from-home normal

Having a remote finance team certainly isn't ideal, but managers need to plan accordingly should the pandemic last longer than anticipated.

### New management mindset

That's why developing a longterm remote strategy works best. You and your team can embrace the new normal, as you eagerly await for your state to open up. Here's how:

- Lock into video conferencing long term. A finance team needs a standard way to do business. Even after you transition back to the office, it won't be business as usual right away. You will still need video conferencing. While Zoom's popular, there are more robust tools, like GoToMeeting (with unlimited storage) and Zoho Meetings (more focus on security).
- Develop work-from-home contracts. Firms aren't used to remote arrangements on such a broad scale. Putting things in writing, like who's responsible for repairs to a damaged laptop, how flexible a staffer's schedule should be, etc., is no longer optional.
- Emphasize your team's mental health. Sure, remote work can be productive, but that's if it's a choice. When it's every day for months, your team's mental fitness needs to be front and center. Whether it's sending them care packages or creating a Slack channel to post pet pics, any longterm strategy needs to keep your team's mental health top of mind.

(Adapted from "How to prepare your business for long-term remote working," by John Brandon, at techradar.com)

# WHAT'S WORKING FOR CFOS & CONTROLLERS

Our subscribers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular feature, three of them share success stories you can adapt to your unique situation.

# Our payment approval switch (auditor approved)

When A/P asked business units to put their receipts in the system they got responses like, "We don't have time," or "We're too busy."

These people had their own jobs, and they didn't really see receipts as important. But we still needed supporting documentation.

We knew that no matter how much we badgered them, the problem would probably persist.

Time to take a different approach.

To create less work for other business units while avoiding holdups in A/P, we decided to start using a negative receipt notice policy.

### You say, or we pay

Essentially, it means if you don't get your goods or services, let us know. Otherwise, we're going to pay for it.

People loved it, and they were good about contacting us if we had an invoice and they didn't receive an order.

But a key part of this

was proving to our auditor that this was a sound process in terms of compliance.

So we pulled 1,000 invoices for receipt only and called each purchaser to verify that everyone got their goods and services – and they did.

We also had our auditor talk to auditors at another company that used the same process, and they helped convince him that this worked well.

> (Judy Bicking, APM, Johnson & Johnson, New Brunswick, NJ)

REAL PROBLEMS REAL SOLUTIONS

# How we help our people during COVID-19

Since the pandemic began, I started hearing about employees who were concerned about being able to find and provide food for their families while also working long hours at home and caring for their kids.

I also heard from other employees who didn't want to leave their homes to shop for groceries and risk exposure to the coronavirus.

It really resonated with me as a mom, so I contacted our management team with the idea to provide

something similar to the care packages we gave our Tampa employees after the 2017 hurricane.

#### Curbside meal service

We teamed up with a food services company to offer curbside meal services.

We launched a pilot takeout program in San Antonio that allows employees to place an order online for meals or food staples such as produce, bread, milk and eggs, and pick it up later in the day at a drive-thru in a garage at one of our campuses.

We've expanded the service to four other cities.

Meals are sold at half the usual price and grocery items are sold at cost.

So far, about 3,000 employees among our 35,000 have placed orders.

I'm gratified the program is making available some basic grocery items people weren't able to find before.

(Melinda Castaneda, Director, Bank Omnichannel, USAA, San Antonio, TX)

# The 'move' that will strengthen our brand

We had served the community for more than 40 years, but we still felt like we didn't have a unified brand.

Our range of services had grown to fit the needs of our community, and that growth resulted in splitting our services among multiple buildings.

#### A house divided ...

We had been leasing two buildings for years.

Services were divided in a way that made sense, but it would be better if they weren't divided.

If we could own and occupy one large space, our staff and board felt like it would give the community a single brand to recognize.

It would definitely grow our positive image in he community.

It would also help employee morale.

### Get the money behind the mission

We've talked over and over about getting one building, but

how would we do it?

Grants would only get us so far, other funds would be needed.

After years of debating, we're talking seriously about a capital campaign – how we would do it, what kind of response to expect, what our message to the community will be.

Now we're ready to take action! (Gerald Clark, CFO, Native Americans Community Action, Flagstaff, AZ)

# Companies seeing a surge in coronavirus-related employee expenses: Are you set up to handle them?

■ From masks to laptops to cleaning supplies – here's what folks need fast

To one could have foreseen or been completely been completely prepared for a global pandemic and the subsequent shutdowns.

Companies of all sizes and in all industries were sent scrambling to keep their employees safe and productive.

And that meant making some new purchases, often very quickly.

### Keep control of the process

Of course you know better than anyone how reactionary spending can lead to over-spending.

You want to make sure you've designated some COVID-19-specific expense categories to help you track where the money's going.

Some of the expenses that trended down in recent weeks, like masks and cleaning supplies, will likely start to climb again as workplaces begin to re-open in some parts of the country.



These numbers from the middle of March, when the data was last collected, have continued to grow by two and three times the amounts, with the exception of masks, which peaked in February. Though now that more states are requiring them they will likely tick up again.

### Sharpen your judgment... THE DECISION

(please see case on Page 2)

Yes, the company won. A judge said the employee misinterpreted the company's policy on sick leave accrual and was terminated for cause.

Lawyers for the employee argued she should've had enough sick time available because it had already started accruing at the beginning of the pay period when she requested leave.

However, the company said those hours weren't available to workers until the next payday, when they appeared on their pay stubs. Employees couldn't use the sick time when a new pay period started. If they tried to do so, that time would be

considered an "unexplained absence." That's why she

The judge agreed. The employer's policy was clear, and there was no evidence the company made errors tracking her accrued time.

## Analysis: Ensure employees know your policies

More states are passing their own sick time laws, with different rules and regs about how that time should be accrued and used. It's important to ensure your policies meet those guidelines for compliance, and it's also important employees understand how their sick time is accrued.

If accrued vacation/sick hours are listed on employee pay stubs, it's best to include a note that the balances are accurate as of the end of the pay period specified in the paycheck.

Cite: Lowes v. Baldwin, No. 2:18-cv-537, U.S. D.C. S.D. Ohio, Eastern Division, 12/30/19. Dramatized for effect.

# Experts give their solutions to difficult workplace problems

Finance professionals like you face new questions every day on how to deal with everything from accounting and tax regulations to management and employment law issues. In this section, experts answer those real-life questions.

# Protecting essential staff still working onsite

During this pandemic, we have a few essential employees who can't work from home. What's our responsibility as an employer to protect them so we're not in violation of any new rules?

: According to OSHA's Coronavirus Response page (tinyurl.com/OSHA-COVID-19), employers are required to provide workers "employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious injury."

What that means for you as an employer is that you'll need to provide gloves, face and eye protection, and respiratory protection. You'll also have to up the ante on cleaning and disinfecting of all surfaces.

OSHA has also made some additional recordkeeping mandates. Employers must record any cases of COVID-19 in the workplace if:

- it is a confirmed case
- it was work-related, and
- if it meets specific criteria such as medical treatment beyond first aid and days away from work.

# State-specific expense reimbursement rules

As more states impose expense reimbursement requirements, we

need to make sure our business complies with the law. What steps can we take to avoid problems down the line?

: In 2019, Illinois joined California, Massachusetts, Montana, Pennsylvania, New York, Iowa and the District of Columbia in mandating that employers reimburse all reasonable expenditures made to fulfill an employee's legitimate job duties.

Requirements differ from state to state, for example whether employees' personal cell phone use is reimbursable and whether employers can set permissible amounts.

If you do business in any of these jurisdictions, warns Peggy Emch at time and attendance software vendor Timesheets, review and update your written policies to make sure that they:

- comply with state law
- lay out exactly which expenses are and are not covered
- provide detailed rules for submitting expenses, and
- detail how you will reimburse (flat rate or percentage) and any maximum for a given expense category.

If you have a question you'd like our experts to answer, email it to Jennifer Azara at jazara@cfodailynews.com

### **COMMUNICATION KEYS**

# Making better eye contact in your virtual meetings

Eye contact seems like an inperson-only skill. But you can get the connection-building boost online, too.

And it's all in how you set up your screen for virtual meetings. Resist the urge to go full-screen; instead make the meeting app as small as possible and position the window bordering your computer's camera.

That way, when you look at the video image of the person you're talking to in your meeting, you will be looking right at them, instead of in a totally different direction.

From "12 Tips For Making Your Virtual Meetings More Professional," by Joseph Liu, at forbes.com

## ■ Check your tone here

No doubt you're leaning on email more than ever these days. Tone can be one of the tougher things to detect in an email – what you intend may not be what your recipient hears.

Consider running your message through a tone analyzer to sidestep misunderstandings.

Two options: one-analyzer-demo.ng. bluemix.net and grammarly.com/tone

# ■ Flip the script! Turning a negative phrase positive

Everyone could use a lift these days. As a company leader, keeping your language positive can go a long way.

Saying "sounds good" instead of "why not" or "I'm doing well" instead of "can't complain" takes negative sounding words out of your vocabulary, even when they're not meant negatively.

**Info:** happify.com/hd/11everyday-phrases-negative-to-positive

# Recent developments that can help your business stay ahead

# Beware: The COVID class action wave is coming!

Employment lawyers smell blood in the water ... and your company could get bitten.

Class-action attorney groups agree that the current pandemic will result in an "explosion" of employee-driven claims, as unemployment continues to rise.

Three particular areas to watch involve employees who say they were:

- · denied wages
- discriminated against during layoffs, or
- put in unsafe conditions. *Info:* Law360, law360.com

# Major airlines allowing free flight name change

Good news for corporate customers of Delta, American or United Airlines. Your company should be able to change at least one name on an airline ticket without the usual fee.

These major carriers have announced this shift for corporate account holders. And while American and Delta are limiting this to a single name change, United is being more generous, not imposing a limit.

Check with your firm's preferred carriers for details – each has its own dates travel must be completed by.

Info: businesstravelnews.com/ Transportation/Air/Delta-American-Allow-Free-Name-Changes-on-Corporate-Tickets

# CARES Act gives more time, money for loans

Should employees need a loan from your retirement plan to cover any expenses related to the coronavirus, they're now not only eligible for larger loans, but they'll have more

time to repay them.

Qualified individuals can request retirement plan loans of up to \$100,000 or 100% of the participant's vested plan funds, whichever is higher. That's up from \$50,000 or 50%, thanks to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

And if the loan's due date is before Dec. 31, 2020, employees automatically receive a deadline extension of one year to repay it.

# Hazard pay? No way, say most of your peers

If you're planning on offering any bonuses or incentives for the members of your workforce still working on-site during the COVID pandemic, you're in the minority.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of 1,500 employers surveyed say they have no plans to offer battle or hazard pay.

That's according to recent research by WorldatWork.

**Info:** For full survey results, go to worldatwork.org/workspan/articles/organizations-mitigating-impact-to-the-workforce-because-of-covid-19

## Lighter side: Business 'too casual' dress code

Yes, everyone's dressing a bit more casually during work from home.

But some folks may be getting a little too casual.

A local MD police department recently posted on its Facebook page to remind residents to wear pants when going to get their mail: "Please remember to put pants on before leaving the house to check your mailbox ... This is your final warning."

Seems like this may be an important policy to put in place for all your virtual meetings as well.

#### **MEASURE UP**

Companies that finance equipment, do you have modern process management technology to organize complex loans?



**Source:** A recent survey by Inovatec Systems Corp.

When you consider that 44% of execs say their business requires special conditional finance options such as six-month terms or low payments during their slow seasons, companies need a system that can manage them.

### FROM OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Over 90% of our readers say that CFO & Controller Alert, with its quick-read format, is more valuable than any other publication they read.

"FO & Controller Alert keeps us current on accounting and finance issues."

Russ Gentner CFO Signature Associates

// ove the quick read!"

Jennifer Dial Director of Accounting Hospice of East Texas

### The Purpose of CFO & Controller Alert

CFO & Controller Alert is a fast-read resource to help busy financial executives boost cash flow, control expenses, manage their resources effectively and stay in compliance with ever-changing regulations.

Each issue presents real-world examples of what worked and what didn't for CFOs and Controllers in a wide variety of industries – all in a concise format that saves you time.

Depend on this publication for the winning ideas you can put to work today to help your company manage growth.