



Fueling Conversations

August 5, 2020

In early February, with the threat of a pandemic – once believed to be contained to China – looming over the U.S., National Fuel formed its Pandemic Response Team (or the PRT) to ensure the safety of all of our customers, employees, and communities as well as guarantee the continued safe, reliable, and critical flow of natural gas to customers.

On Feb. 29, the U.S. reported its first coronavirus death. In the days following, the federal government issued international travel warnings and approved widespread testing. By March 10, National Fuel's PRT had moved quickly to establish protocols, procedures, and logistics to safeguard its workforce and customers. Although the Company did not have a formal work-from-home policy, by March 17, as many employees as possible were working from home with more to follow in the coming weeks. On March 20, New York state and Pennsylvania shut down non-essential businesses, kicking off nation-wide protocols to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Every day seems to bring new developments in the COVID-19 crisis. As businesses continue to adapt and optimize, steady leadership is essential for decisive action that can chart a course forward. The PRT knows that first-hand. In this week's Fueling Conversations, you'll meet the PRT and learn about how they're working through this uncertain time both personally and professionally with more to come next week in part two.

Meet the Team



Lee Hartz
Assistant Vice
President,
Consumer
Business
& Risk
Management



Kevin House
Vice President,
Infrastructure
&
Occupational
Safety



Karen Merkel
General
Manager,
Corporate
Communicat-
ions



Mike Reville
Senior Vice
President
& General
Counsel, HR,
Legal, Labor
Relations,
Government
Affairs,
Land & Risk
Management



Amy Shiley
Assistant Vice
President,
Human
Resources &
Payroll



**Jim
Smyczynski**
General
Manager,
Finance



Fueling Conversations

Under regular circumstances, our jobs can be stressful and time-consuming. Now, you've added, "managing a pandemic" to your to-do list. How has this impacted your "normal" job responsibilities?

Kevin: My top priority has been making sure that the Company has the necessary safety protocols, personal protective equipment, and supplies in place to protect our employees and customers so that we can continue to provide our life-sustaining services. Another major focus is to ensure compliance with the ever-changing CDC guidelines and state orders and guidance. As a result, I have relied more on the managers and supervisors in my group to take care of business in my areas of responsibility. Everyone has really stepped up and filled in to help each other out under some pretty difficult circumstances.



Amy: I am continuing with all my normal responsibilities with HR and Payroll with new COVID responsibilities added to my plate. March changed everything about how I now plan and spend my days. I am grateful for the opportunity to make a real difference.

Lee: Really, I think they keep me around for a bit of levity!

So much of what people are dealing with is invisible. It might be their parents or themselves being at risk, childcare getting canceled, or a spouse/partner dealing with a loss of income. I imagine this means that your awareness and empathy have to be in overdrive to keep up. Have you found yourself adjusting the way you lead? What lessons will you take away from this crisis and carry through once the world has overcome COVID-19?

Lee: I always try to remember that regardless of the circumstances, everyone's personal impacts, concerns, and situations are different. It's important to understand and appreciate all points of view and treat people the way they would want to be treated.

Karen: Flexibility is key. Be willing to find new ways of doing things as not everyone thinks, acts, or lives the way you do. Some employees are early risers and get their work done in the morning. Others are more productive the later it gets in the day. The constraints of the pandemic have people working in ways, parenting in ways, and living in ways that have never been done before.

Amy: I have been reminded about how important it is to really connect with my team, checking in on a lot more than just work progress. In some ways, I know my team even better than before COVID. We are sharing pieces of ourselves we would have been unlikely to have disclosed in "normal times." I will really try



Fueling Conversations

not to take the small normal things for granted going forward. I am also gratified that communications with our employee group each week has connected me to a large number of NFG employees in an unexpected and wonderful way. Rapid decision making, being authentic, and staying connected to my gut will be with me long past the COVID-19 situation.

Communication can make or break. How can you be sure to communicate effectively at times like these?

Karen: I think having routine communication is very helpful. Amy Shiley's weekly "Keep Calm & Wash Your Hands" is lighthearted with resources for working parents, health tips and videos, hilarious social media mentions, memes, community news, and more. We have all gotten to know Amy better as she has shared her life, her challenges, her frustrations, and her highs and lows. The amount of responses she gets each week is incredible and shows us what we are doing is resonating with employees.

Amy: Transparency, authenticity, and regular, timely communications have been critical to share important information and stay connected to our whole NFG team during this pandemic.

Kevin: Pick up the phone and talk. Too much of our day is consumed by email and Zoom meetings. A little one-on-one communication goes a long way.



Kevin consumed by a Zoom meeting.

It feels like there's a balance to find. In some ways, it's important to maintain business as usual and maintain a routine and to live our lives, but there's also this elephant in the room at every meeting, at every call, at every moment. What have been the biggest challenges during this time for the company but also for you on a personal or professional level?

Jim: The biggest challenge on all levels has been rapid and continually changing guidance regarding COVID-19. Personally, the challenge has been being sure my family is safe and helping them deal with the impacts on their lives.

Amy: I find that it is so important to not give in to the fear. With so many unknowns and missing our normal social supports, I have found it really important to research, learn, study the facts, and then disconnect from news and social media when it feels too heavy.



Fueling Conversations

Kevin: For me, our biggest challenge has been trying to stay ahead of a constantly changing situation. You need to take care of the now, but you also need to be thinking two steps ahead so that you don't find yourself constantly putting out fires. I think everyone has done a good job of riding the crest of the wave.

Karen: I miss being in meetings with my colleagues as Zoom is not the same. The collegiality is just not the same and the creativity is limited. As an extrovert, I miss people. I miss community meetings and events as that is a big part of my job. I am very concerned with how we as an organization continue a culture from a distance. National Fuel's employees love to help other organizations, and that is so limited right now. Volunteering is next to impossible, and I feel bad for all those organizations that have depended on us to help them serve others and meet their missions.

Lee: Trying to keep up with the constantly changing situation and the various governmental responses has been a challenge. Personally, with three school-age children (14, 10, 7), trying to help them understand, adapt, and prepare for whatever is next is important.

Mike: The biggest challenge is trying to understand why some people don't take this virus seriously. Most of us, maybe all of us, know someone who has been infected with the virus. Usually, the symptoms are mild, but in many cases, they are not. The consequences, of course, can be devastating. And the science is constantly changing as more data is produced, so we really don't know the full pathology of COVID, or the full capabilities of the COVID virus. We need to be vigilant and follow the advice of health professionals not only for our own protection, but for the protection of family, friends, acquaintances, and, in a pandemic, even strangers. The only way to beat the virus and get things back to normal is through our joint, cooperative efforts in service of each other. Thankfully, that's exactly what our employees are delivering every time they don a face mask, observe proper social distancing, and take other sensible precautions. And for that, we're thankful.



Next week, we'll continue our conversation with the PRT and learn how the Company quickly shifted to remote work while ensuring those still reporting to office locations could do so safely. If you have questions or comments for the PRT, please email corpcomm@natfuel.com.