Responding to a pandemic

Frontiers' employee confidence during COVID-19
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Foreword

COVID-19 has posed an unprecedented and ever-changing challenge to the international scientific community. Much like the rest of the world, Frontiers was also forced into operating from home and the challenges posed by a sudden global lockdown was new and uncharted territory.

The health and well-being of our 700 employees in offices across Switzerland, the UK, Spain, China, India, and the USA, was our number 1 priority. From having to support COVID-19 cases to experiencing uncertainty and anxiety, lack of testing capacity, caring for children and dealing with isolation, we had to pull together and support each other through this new reality.

We have been truly inspired with the way the Frontiers community has mobilized to work together. Our employee survey was conducted to ensure we are supporting our team members, both personally and professionally, to the very best of our ability during this exceptional time.

Kamila Markram
CEO and co-founder, Frontiers

90% agree Frontiers is supporting its employees during the pandemic.

88% are confident in Frontiers’ ability to navigate through the pandemic.

89% believe Frontiers is taking the right steps to minimize business disruption.

91% strongly agree the Frontiers team is staying connected.
Ahead of national mandates, Frontiers asked all their staff to work at home from 16 March 2020. Those in Beijing had already been working at home from 3 February 2020.

A weekly zoominar was set up for all staff, chaired by CEO Kamila Markram, covering the latest COVID-19 updates, company news and developments and a live Q&A session.

Flexible working was introduced on a ‘what works for you, works for us’ basis, as well as virtual team-bonding activities, including choir practice, yoga, quiz nights, cocktail hours and coffee mornings.

Dedicated intranet pages were created with all relevant information and work policy updates.

An internal taskforce was created to check-in with employees and to offer practical assistance, from delivering groceries to dropping off home office equipment.

Frontiers launched the external Coronavirus Knowledge Hub, collating the latest COVID-19 related research and expert opinion from the research community.

Article Processing Charges were waived for research submitted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic until 1 August 2020.

A priority peer-review process for COVID-19 research was set up to ensure time-sensitive scientific developments became openly available as soon as possible.
Survey design

In April 2020, Frontiers surveyed its staff to better understand their ability to care for their employees in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the time of this survey, the pandemic response was ongoing, therefore, the results are limited by the date indicated below. The survey was open to all staff for one week. Responses were voluntary and anonymous. The only identifiers were department, office location, and role (managerial, independent operator).

This report only describes the survey results. It does not offer any evaluation of Frontiers’ performance and is designed to be removed and independent of the business to maintain impartiality.

Survey information

Date: 8th – 15th April 2020
Total sample size: 341
Response rate: 63%

The survey was conducted in English using Qualtrics.

Questionnaire design

16 quantitative questions:
• On a scale of 1-10, how much would you agree with the following statements?

Two multiple choice questions:
• Select the response that applies

Two qualitative questions:
• Open responses
Summary of quantitative results

Throughout the quantitative element of the survey, respondents were asked to return a score on a scale between one and 10, one indicating they strongly disagree, 10 indicating they strongly agree.

Summary of quantitative survey results. These results have been broken down into four distinct categories, each of which was designed to provide insight into specific areas of Frontiers’ response.

Average scores by category are as follows:

Frontiers’ response: 8.96
Communication and awareness: 8.97
Business continuity: 8.81
Wellbeing while working from home: 9.04

Total survey average 8.95
Frontiers' response

Questions 1 - 4
Q1
Frontiers is supporting employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic

90% agree that Frontiers is supporting its employees during the pandemic.
Q2

I have confidence in Frontiers’ ability to navigate through the COVID-19 Pandemic

88% are confident in Frontiers’ ability to navigate through the pandemic
Q3

The leaders at Frontiers are appropriately visible / accessible during the COVID-19 Pandemic

90% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10

1 strongly disagree

10 strongly agree
Q4

I believe the leaders at Frontiers have made effective decisions regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic

87% agree Frontiers’ leaders have made effective decisions
Communication and awareness

Questions 5 - 7
Q5

We are receiving timely communications from Frontiers about the COVID-19 Pandemic

93%

more than nine in 10 agree they're receiving timely communications
Q6

There is open and honest two-way communication at Frontiers concerning the COVID-19 Pandemic

86% agree there is open and honest communication at Frontiers
Q7

I know where to find Frontiers most up-to-date COVID-19 Pandemic policy

87%

agree they know where to find the most up to date policy
Business continuity
Q8

I am confident in Frontiers ability to support our customers throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic

78% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10

1 strongly disagree

10 strongly agree
Q9

I believe Frontiers is taking appropriate steps to minimize disruption to our business during this time.

89% believe Frontiers is taking the right steps to minimize business disruption.
Q10

I believe Frontiers is adequately prepared for its employees to work remotely

87% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Q11

I have what I need (i.e. tools, space set-up, internet connection) to effectively work remote

79% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Wellbeing while working from home

Questions 12 - 16
Q12

I have the flexibility in my work schedule to enable me to look after family/dependents should I need to

81% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Q13

My manager is regularly checking in with how I am doing (not just work-related)

78% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Q14

I know what I need to do to keep safe and healthy during the COVID-19 Pandemic

97% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Q15
We are staying connected as a team/colleagues during the COVID-19 Pandemic

91% strongly agree the Frontiers team is staying connected
Q16
I know where to raise concerns or queries I have concerning the COVID-19 Pandemic

89% scored Frontiers between 8 and 10
Returning to the office after lockdown
Q17

Where do you prefer to work?

- 76% prefer to stay working from home
- 13% prefer working at the office
- 11% am indifferent to my working location
Q18
What are your main concerns about coming back into the workplace?

43% expressed concerns about their commute or returning to the office too soon.
Open comments
Q19
What is one thing Frontiers could do right now to better support you during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive appraisal of Frontiers’ response</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working life and support during pandemic</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking to the Future</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons learned along the way</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

126 responses

Thank you for the webcasts and overall support - it’s a great boost mentally and makes me happy to be part of a business that takes care of its employees' wellbeing.
Q20

Any other comments you would like to share with the leadership team?

128 responses

84 Responses
66%
Positive appraisal of Frontiers’ response

15 Responses
12%
Working life and support during pandemic

21 Responses
16%
Looking to the Future

7 Responses
6%
Lessons learned along the way

The weekly phone calls have been immensely informative and positive, and there’s a real sense of team spirit. I couldn’t be more proud to work for Frontiers.
Participant information
Participant information

Office location

- Lausanne: 54.3%
- London: 33.7%
- Madrid: 8.8%
- Beijing: 1.8%
- Seattle: 1.5%

Department

- Publishing: 66.3%
- Technology: 22.6%
- Communications, Business & Administration: 10.9%

Role

- Individual contributor: 71.0%
- Manager: 29.0%
We are in this together