

JH
9/25
NFO
9/25

New Job Requirement: Being “COVID Conscious”

Employers worry that negligent employees could endanger their colleagues and customers and damage workplace trust and company reputations

BY LIAM THROPP

THERE'S SOMETHING NEW TO ADD TO YOUR RESUME.

Human resource managers and staffing professionals think being “COVID-19 conscious” should be a new norm for existing employees and future hires in any industry.

“I firmly believe that being COVID-19 conscious should become a job requirement for employers,” Judy Bishop, president of the staffing agency Bishop & Co., writes in an email interview. “For the most part it already is.”

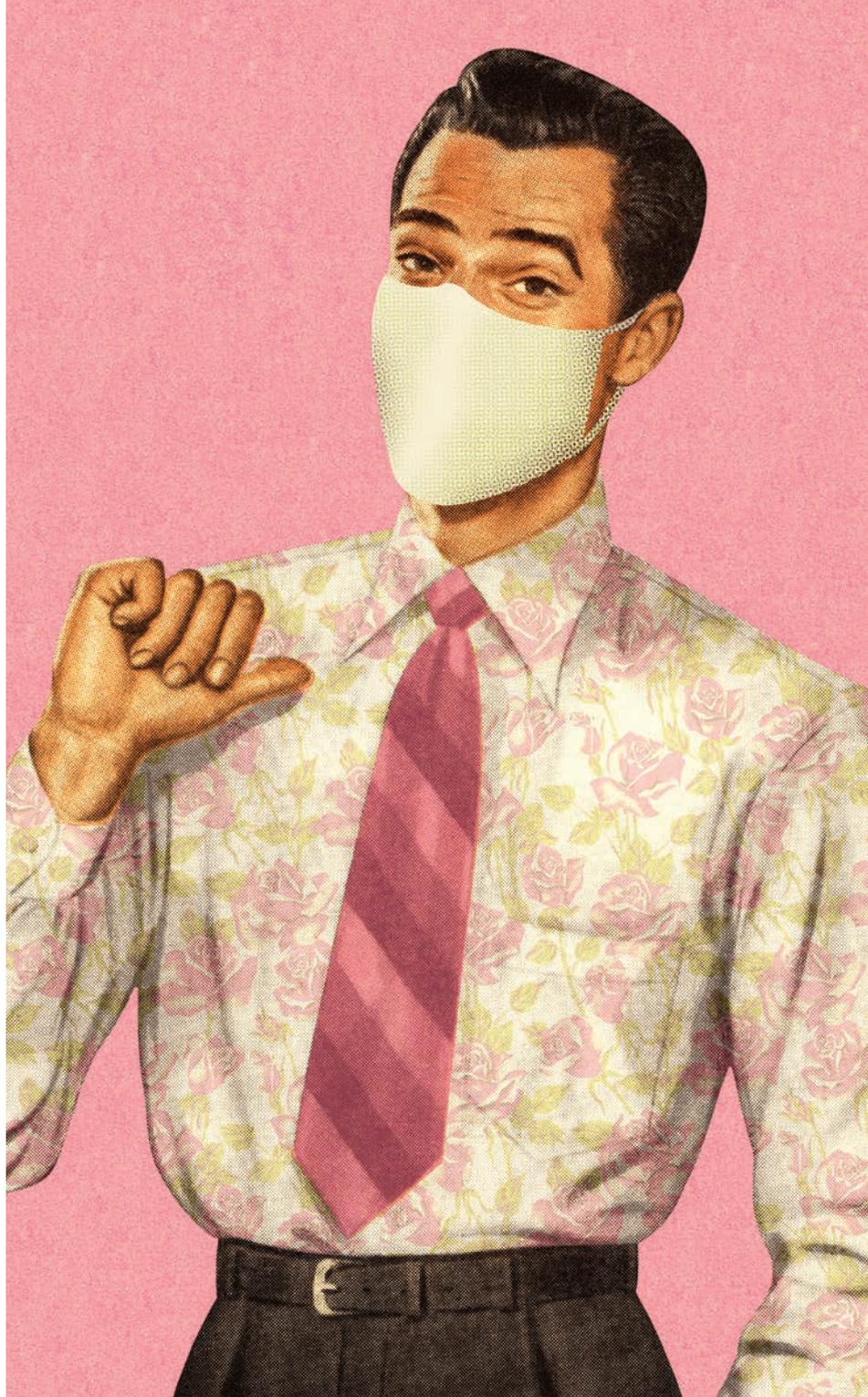
Being COVID-19 conscious means understanding your potential effect on others and acting responsibly through good hygiene on and off the job, social distancing, wearing a mask in public and avoiding large gatherings, say HR managers interviewed for this article. Employees must also understand they can spread the virus even if they have no symptoms.

“Employers want to know that prospective employees are taking care to avoid exposure to COVID going forward,” Bishop writes.

A reckless employee can sicken other employees and undermine the trust and good will that workplaces thrive on. Getting a client sick could cripple a company's reputation.

But employers want to know that employees are obeying state and county protocols and, if exposed to the virus, quarantining themselves.

Margarete Hester, Hawai'i HR manager for EAN Holdings, parent company of



Enterprise Rent-A-Car, writes in an email that the pandemic has a direct impact on employee attendance and wellbeing.

“It is our responsibility as employers to make sure we are providing a safe environment for all our employees,” she writes.

“There is more focus on protecting employees, customers and the communities we serve in our day to day interactions. It is our responsibility to make sure our employees are practicing increased social distancing efforts and limiting close contact while working with others.”

Alan Tang, CEO and chief strategist of Olomana Loomis, who also serves on the board of the Hawai'i chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management, says in an interview that almost all business practices require a new awareness from managers and employees.

“COVID-19 has really shined a light on both executive management and the worker,” Tang says. “Shining a light means things are changing, and what may have been OK in the past does not cut it anymore.”

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES