

We Miss Greeting Each Other

A Warehouse Worker Tries to Keep a Positive Mood

Svetlana Bitkova

BEFORE YOU READ: How do you greet co-workers? How has that changed since the pandemic?

I work at a clothing warehouse. Even though we are not an essential business, our company stayed open during the pandemic, which helped 200 people keep their jobs.

The company has made some changes during the pandemic to make work less dangerous. For example, we are required to wear a mask at work. If we forget to bring a mask, we don't have to worry because there is a box of masks at the

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front door. Wearing a mask is not easy because it is more difficult to breathe when we are constantly doing physical labor. Sometimes it is difficult to understand co-workers

because the mask distorts their voice. It's frustrating to have to ask them to repeat directions.

Another thing that has changed is the schedule. Different small groups start their shifts every two hours. The effect is people have different start times, break times, and end times. For this reason, we have less contact with each other. I miss greeting my coworkers at the entrance or in the lunchroom.

The Human Resources (HR) department tries to provide a positive work environment. On holidays and birthdays, we receive small gifts such as a t-shirt. We celebrate birthdays each month by holding a drawing for gift cards that we can use to purchase items from our company. HR provides sweet snacks for all workers. My favorite is a chocolate cupcake. We also have a festive Christ-

mas and Thanksgiving dinner. HR orders food from a restaurant that delivers throughout the day. A few restaurant staff stay with us all day because we have different lunchtimes. They serve the food in small batches to keep it hot.

Despite the fact that we are grateful to HR for these practices, everybody wants to return to normal life. We want to be able to greet each other at the entrance, eat together during lunch, and talk without wearing a mask. The pandemic has changed work, but we didn't give up and we have tried to keep a positive mood in our company.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What changed at Svetlana's job?
2. Interview your classmates to find out what changed at their jobs.
3. Read about the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL) career pathway on p. 19.

Svetlana Bitkova is a student at SouthWest Metro ABE in Shakopee, MN. She is originally from Russia and has lived in the U.S. for five years. Svetlana lives with her husband and stepson. One of her favorite hobbies is reading books, and her favorite author is Stephen King. She now reads his books in English but finds the slang difficult to understand. She also enjoys gardening and knitting toys, which she donates to a children's cancer hospital.

