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Getting Back to Business; UNH Experts Comment on Restarting Economy

Monday, May 4, 2020

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DURHAM, N.H.— Slowly, and cautiously, states are loosening stay-at-home orders because of COVID-19 and phasing in plans to reopen businesses and restart the economy. Both employers and employees are anxious to get back to work, but in the brave new world of operating during a pandemic, offices, factories, retailers and other businesses are not only focused on getting things up and running but also on safety, social distancing and government guidelines. Michelline Dufort, director of the Center For Family Enterprise and Daniel Innis, professor of marketing and hospitality management, both at the University of New Hampshire, can discuss some of the adjustments businesses will need to make and what the public can expect.



Dufort works closely with family owned, managed and controlled businesses of all sizes and industries. The goal of UNH’s Center For Family Enterprise is to help family businesses not just optimize their enterprises, but to do so while navigating complex family dynamics. Being on the frontlines of this most recent economic challenge, she and her team have seen how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted these businesses and strives to offer ways for them to prepare for their new normal.

“Reopening is what most businesses have been waiting for but it brings with it a lot of unknowns and new logistics to create a safe and productive work environment,” said Dufort. “Many of the companies we consult with were able to shift to working remotely and use technology to conduct business differently, like Zoom meetings, but now they have to shift again and the hurdles become more about adjusting workflow patterns and operations – possibly reconfiguring office layouts, investing in PPEs, and implementing new policies.”

Dufort can be reached at 603-305-6040 or Michelline.Dufort@unh.edu (mailto:Michelline.Dufort@unh.edu).

Innis is an expert in marketing, management and strategic planning for the hospitality industry including restaurants and hotels, and a former owner of two inns and a hotel. He says most hotels have already increased their cleaning regimens and restaurants who are offering take-out have learned a lot about social distancing, but their strategy will need to be altered once they open their doors to sit down dining.

“Whether restaurants are allowed to open to just outdoor dining, or indoor dining, social distancing implies six feet between tables which could change the economic equation for restaurants in a way that could make it very challenging to succeed financially,” said Innis. “This is also true for the airline industry and other modes of transportation. Planes and trains survive by being full, just like restaurants and hotels. Projections suggest a slow recovery over the next year and if

there is another COVID-19 outbreak that results in more stay-at-home orders, things could get even more difficult for these businesses, no matter what precautions they may take. But, recovery will come and good decisions now will help businesses to be prepared for the coming months.”

Innis can be reached at 603-828-6284 or Dan.Innis@unh.edu (mailto:Dan.Innis@unh.edu).

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The stories are written by the staff of UNH Communications and Public Affairs. (https://www.unh.edu/cpa)

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