



COWORKING

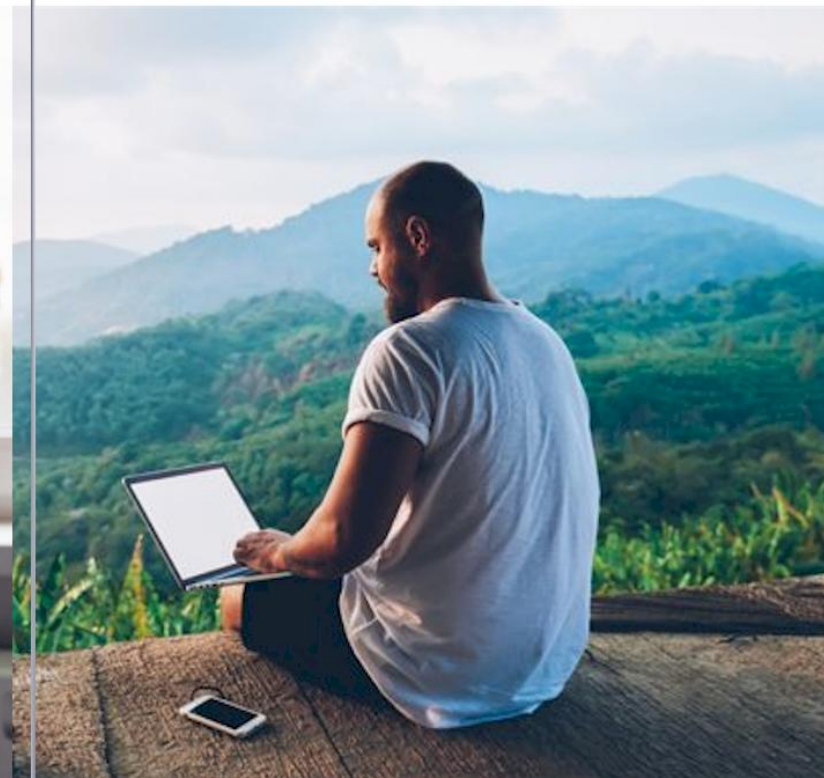
by Corro

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.



Practical Approaches to Enhance the Well-Being of Employees

Best Practices for Designing an Effective Remote Work Program



Remote work is a hot topic for organizations of all sizes.

The workplace is changing! Over the years, we have seen a shift towards more flexible work environments as organizations integrated people, technology and alternative workforces, along with new ways of working.



Then, Covid 19 caught the world by surprise and the workplace pivoted with unprecedented speed as tens of millions of people were forced to work from home. Amid the widespread fear and uncertainty, this posed significant challenges for the well-being of employees, many of whom have never worked from home for a significant amount of time. Organizations, unprepared to face such unique challenges, had little time to execute a plan or adjust through the learning curve of having employees and managers distance working.

Forced to quickly react to the changes, businesses improvised. They struggled with IT, human resource management (HRM), and getting things done. Many organizations may still be adjusting to the changes brought about by remote employee engagement and the well-being of the people that fuel their success.

What's Next?

1. How should we switch to a distributed team culture?
2. How should we support the health and well-being of employees who are working from home?

Remote work is a hot topic for organizations of all sizes. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis will be with us for a long time. There has likely never been a more important time to immerse ourselves in “what’s next” and to support each during these turbulent times. One thing is clear; it serves as a wake-up call for all organizations that they must have plans in place for unanticipated work-from-home mandates.

Introduction

As community minded researchers in the field of human resource management, we have studied the ability of organizations to embrace and encourage practices that enhance the well-being of their employees. While there is no single playbook for ensuring the health and well-being of your employees, we offer four practical approaches that focus on how organizations can create meaningful employee experiences while advocating for their overall well-being, and thus enable them to do their best work even in difficult times.

Here you will also find our CORRO Quick Guide to Getting Started in a Work@Home Emergency and our more in depth collection of the Best Practices for Designing an Effective Remote Work Program. Anyone looking to improve remote work processes may uncover new ideas in this guide.

Through these turbulent times, we are certainly finding more meaning in our company mission. Primarily, concerns about supporting remote workers to have better lives. Our team is working around the clock to develop or access new resources, and we will continue to share. In the meantime, our thoughts continue to be with our clients and community during this challenging time.

Sincerely,
Gwynne Turner
Coworking by Corro

In this guide:

The Workplace Pivoted with Unprecedented Speed

Practical Approaches to Enhance the Well-Being of Employees

- Provide more Flexibility
- Train for Online Collaboration
- Encourage and Host Virtual Social Time
- Foster Positive Coping

[Corro Quick Guide to Getting Started in a Work@Home Emergency](#)

Remote Work as a Strategy

Characterizing Remote Work?

Remote Work - the Next Level

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- Putting People First
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Streamlining with Collaboration Tools and Platforms

Avoid the Pitfalls

How to Avoid Isolation in Remote Teams

How to Evaluate and Hire Remote Workers

What's all the Buzz [Around Coworking Spaces](#)

**Engaged employees
make an organization
more successful.**

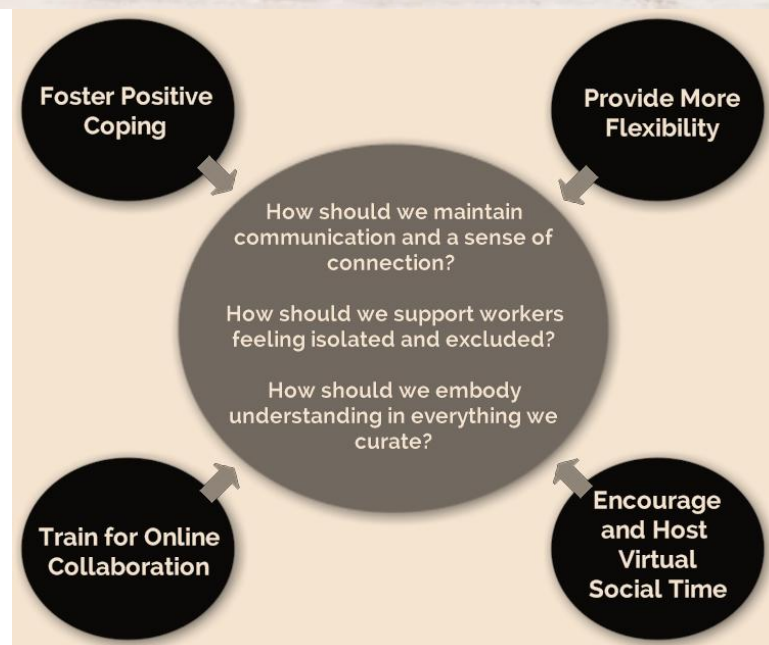
There are many approaches to success. All of them hinge on people. People bring an organization's strategy to life—they plan, execute, communicate, and innovate. Increasingly, organizations win or lose on the strength of their people.

**Supporting employees' mental health,
physical health, and how they show up
for their families.**

Putting People First



Employee engagement is an employee's mental, emotional, and behavioral commitment to their work. Even if they are working from home, we presume you want your people to bring their best self to work. Well-being intertwines physical and mental health, liking the work we do, people we work with, being financially secure, and enjoying a healthy social life. For remote workers work-life balance has a whole new meaning.



Provide More Flexibility

Working from home affects employees differently, depending on individual responsibilities and living situations. With school and childcare closures, and life partners or roommates at home, many workers may be experiencing a blurring of the boundary between work and private life. Employees need to balance family needs with keeping up with the responsibilities of work.

Organizations should put extra emphasis on supporting how employees show up for their families. That starts with embodying that understanding in everything you decide.

The best managers have always individualized their coaching to the worker, but doing so at a distance requires greater intention. Managers need to ask each team member to describe the conditions under which they perform best, their concerns about their workflow, and their emotional response to the situation.

Let's start with the basics:

- Open the conversation between managers and employees to determine how and when work can be accomplished.
- Do not leave anyone out of the conversation.
- Encourage employees to let their managers know what kinds of flexibility they need to balance work and their home lives. Not everyone will voice their concerns to a room full of people so it is may be necessary to confer privately.
- It is crucial that your flexibility should match specific employee needs. Your organization may be required to adjust project timelines, work schedules, the number of hours worked per day or per week, or arrange a leave of absence.
- Do not assume that everyone has access to an optimal workplace or the quality tools and resources they need to work from home and facilitate business. This may include a ergonomic chair, laptop, headphones, reliable high speed internet, wifi, tech support, security, video cameras and the apps that facilitate collaboration at a distance. Consider allowing employees to take their office technology home or reimbursing team members for purchases to construct a home office.

Key Considerations:

- Be careful not to intrude on anyone's privacy.
- Work with managers to accommodate the flexibility in positive ways. Managers used to rigid micro-monitoring of daily activities may need to learn new ways to be flexible and accepting of employees' needs.
- Ensure that directives come from senior leadership to ensure all managers and team leaders are onboard.
- Prepare to make adjustments as situations evolve.
- Seek regular feedback and insights from employees to inform high-quality conversations about needs, priorities, and performance.
- Be patient as employees adjust to a new routine.

Train for Online Collaboration

In the wide spectrum of what teamwork and partnerships can look like, collaborating at a distance involves encouraging people to work together towards a shared mission while they are not even in the same building. For that to happen there must be compromise and consensus on how employees will communicate and use collaboration technology.

Research has found that even in a normal work environment people can be at odds over the different ways people prefer to communicate and use technology. One prefers email, another responds quickly with chat apps; some like to confer face-to-face or by phone. Working remotely, particularly in times of stress, can exacerbate communication and collaboration difficulties.

What can an organization do to support, encourage, and develop a collaborative work environment for remote workers?

- Allow each team the opportunity to share ideas, brainstorm foreseeable barriers, prioritize, resolve conflict, discuss rules of engagement, and agree on the best course of action for their effective collaboration.
- Ensure that remote workers feel comfortable and competent to use the resources and technology. More than just having the technology available, employees and managers may need training and on-going support to use collaboration technology effectively. Offer web-based sessions on effective ways to collaborate online. Engage corporate training specialists to teach new skills and techniques. Employees may want to enhance their interpersonal skills as well.
- Introduce a buddy system. For employees that are forced to dive head-first into remote work and use new collaborations tools, it can be a daunting. Pairing seasoned individuals with the less experienced allows for timely consultation, so questions and concerns may be resolved as they arise. Different from mentors or managers, in the less formal peer-to-peer buddy system, individuals may feel less hesitant to raise concerns. For individuals new to their roles or even new to your organization, the buddy system can help them transition into the culture of a new team, learn business processes, and get comfortable.
- Apart from its effectiveness in day to day operations, video conferencing is an avenue for personal, face-to-face connection and helping people feel less isolated.
- Use video calls as opposed to chat or email as a means of relaying important information, constructive feedback, or accolades. Keep in mind that there is a human being with feelings and reactions on the other end of the communication. Chat and email can mask your intentions or humanity. Whereas, the verbal and emotional cues of video calls will be better perceived.

Key Considerations:

Define rules of engagement on how your team will interact. That way, your team does not have to think about, debate, or rehash what is appropriate in each situation. Clarify expectations, collaboration etiquette, and how team decisions will be determined. Rules of engagement make conduct more predictable and rein in behavior so managers are not playing “cop” as often. Your organization might propose policies such as:

- We asking people to speak their mind during meetings, not after
- We accept and encourage constructive disagreement (nothing personal) to yield the best decisions for our team, or
- When voicing a problem, we ask you to also present a solution.



Encourage and Host Virtual Social Time

Social distancing does not mean being disconnected from your colleagues at work. It is more important than ever to proactively check in as a team and with each individual. In fact, this could be a time to get to know our colleagues in a new, more personal way.

Social isolation can be a concern for employees who have never worked from home. For many people, coworkers are their main source of daily human interaction, and that connection is important. Research shows that worker well-being is linked to supportive interactions with coworkers. Research also indicates that people have a higher desire to connect when they are locked into a particular situation such as being isolated with their families.

Collaboration tools and platforms that facilitate business should also be used to help employees navigate new ways of connecting with the colleagues they no longer see in-person every day.

Here are just a few ways you can create a sense of community among employees:

- Mindfully schedule unstructured time before and/or after a video conference meeting to allow opportunities for casual interactions, time to catch up, share office gossip, or have a little fun.
- Use video conferencing technology to create virtual events that mirror what it is like to get coffee in the office, share lunch breaks, or enjoy happy hour.
- Schedule weekly updates so everyone feels informed.
- Organizing a “Weekly Dose of Happy” where people can share team stories or find out about upcoming events.
- Not everything needs to be scheduled. Allow teams to decide on impromptu virtual socializing.
- Ask people how they want to socialize virtually.
- Host virtual events. Be creative. Keep it light.
- Spark conversation and encourage engagement by asking them to do something fun for a video conferencing call – something like everyone wears something on their head.
- Include gestures and events that involve stay-at-home families. Organizing a virtual talent show, show and tell, or an hour of story-telling. Imagine a virtual camp-fire, complete with ghost stories, but no mosquitoes.
- Celebrate successes, milestones. Invite everyone to share in these celebrations.
- Employees who are certified in various fitness instructions might offer to teach virtual classes to colleagues: yoga, meditation, stretch time. Anyone who has an interesting hobby might be keen to showcase that. Musicians or improv enthusiasts might entertain their co-workers.
- Sponsor group games to encourage remote workers to enjoy downtime with their team or other colleagues from work. There are apps specifically created for this purpose.

Key Considerations:

- Organizations should not assume virtual socializing will just happen. As a leader, you have to encourage it, plan events, and let it evolve.
- In the beginning, you might arrange for a daily check-in to allow team members to touch base with one another. This helps to make the transition from the office to being “sheltered in” a bit smoother.
- A weekly team meeting can help everyone share successes and stay in the loop.
- Managers should mark birthdays or other milestones with video conference calls or other methods where casual interaction is the focus.
- You may need to adjust the remote work program based on what you learn through the early days.

Foster Positive Coping

The pandemic of Covid-19 increased fear and stress levels. Some employees also experienced its fatal consequences. Our research has shown that calls to counseling and suicide prevention hotlines increased, as did access to online counseling apps. People use a wide variety of coping strategies in new and stressful situations, and some are not very healthy.

In normal times, organizations can offer a variety of ways to support employee mental and physical health, from social activities to gym memberships. However, with workers at home and the fitness centers closed, companies need to redirect their efforts to foster employee well-being.

The most crucial directive of an organization is to **communicate well, communicate often, and communicate to serve** individuals. Sometimes it might mean waving hello to a child near mom or dad or reaching out to an employee to ask, “Hey, how are you today?”

A title card for "Coping Strategies". It features a piece of white paper with the title "Coping Strategies" in bold black font, placed on a brown, textured background that looks like cardboard. The paper has a torn edge on the left, and a small, cylindrical piece of cardboard is attached to the right side of the paper.

Coping Strategies

Organizations should also consider the following ideas:

- Provide consistent and clear communication about health risks, preventative measures, and available resources that help keep employees safe and foster individual well-being.
- Bring professionals in to care for the needs of your employees. It is important for people to discuss how they are feeling.
- Create a website that provides free and company-paid resources for self-care. Resources could include family activities, mental and physical health, community outreach, personal growth, and guidance for employees to host their own virtual events.

- Investigate online or distance resources. Make employees aware of what you vetted, and offer financial support for accessing online tutorials on mindfulness, webinars on resilience, or whatever else health care professionals might be offering that focuses on the mental and emotional health of remote workers. Be mindful that employees may have to adjust a work schedule to access such resources.
- Facilitating proactive conversations that encourage a company-wide exchange to educate employees on how COVID-19 is affecting the people and world around them, but also to provoke thoughts about what they can do to promote inclusion during this time.
- It is important for people to discuss how they are feeling. It okay for them to know it is OK to not feel OK. Allow time for wellness sessions so that remote workers can touch base with each other, discuss the issues they are facing, share ways of adjusting to a new way of living and working, and provide support for each other. Working parents might share tips on homeschooling and activities to keep children engaged.
- When times are stressful, laughter is the best antidote. Make sure your organization can have fun.
- To encourage people to take time for self-care, host workshops presented by health and fitness experts.
- Encourage workers to take company time to go for a walk.
- Encourage employees to take breaks during their work schedule day to exercise, meditate, practice mindfulness, play a musical instrument, or just be with loved ones who are also feeling isolated and stressed due to new circumstances in their life.
- Be aware that the comfort of an individual in their own home is different than at the office. Background music or the sounds of living at home, unless they interfere with customer experience or a team video conference, are not necessarily deterrents to a person getting work done.

Key Considerations:

- Expedite an employee's request for assistance.
- Remind employees of available resources.
- When concerns about well-being are brought to you, acknowledge the problem, collaborate on a plan of action and implement one step toward improving the situation.
- One of the most beneficial and important things leaders and managers can do is also take time to attend to their own well-being.
- Try new things or new ways to do things that help people feel included and engaged.

Quick Guide to Getting Started in a Work@Home Emergency

These are not normal times and we want to help organizations that have been thrust into remote work and may be struggling. This is our guide to getting things done in a Work@Home emergency.

First, recognize businesses can do amazing work while working remotely. We know firsthand the incredible outcomes that remote workers and distributed teams can deliver.

- Talk to people or organizations who already successfully working from home or remotely. Enlist their help in determining what is working and what is not.
- Determine who can work from home, who has the tools or space to get things done?
- Establish guidelines for working hours and employee availability.
- Be flexible to accommodate employee needs in balancing work with family needs. This may include adjusting priorities.
- Determine how your organization's data will be protected. Prioritize and categorize information by security level: sensitive, confidential, private, proprietary, or public.
- Choose a web-based teleconference and video-conference platform and make sure everyone in your organization knows how to use it. Choose tools that are easy-to-access and reliable with a minimal learning curve.
- Make sure your people know how to access files remotely.
- Make sure access permissions are given to everyone who needs it.
- Have employees test whether they are able to log into your system from their home computer, and that they have adequate bandwidth to do the work.
- Establish a policy regarding who pays for broadband and cell phone expenses to keep your employees connected.
- Consider allowing employees to take their office technology and ergonomic chair home.
- Provide necessary software and hardware to employees and ensure it is installed and working properly.
- Set up an IT helpline for those working from home.
- Consider offering a home-office stipend. It is a goodwill investment considering your operations will not be suspended or cease entirely.
- Establish protocols for communication and decision making between managers and those working from home or coworking spaces.
- Establish security protocols and ensure everyone understands what needs to occur.
- Take steps to ensure remote workplace safety and security of your proprietary information.

- Establish a buddy-system, pairing experienced remote workers with those who are new to it.
- Source remote work training programs to assist employees through the transition.
- Ensure you have secure tools for signing documents remotely, processing payments from clients.
- Expect a bit of chaos at first, but things will settle in quickly if you and your managers do some advance planning now.
- Evaluate your current and future space needs in light of remote work. Explore opportunities to optimize space usage or change existing leases.
- As your emergency remote program evolves, look for a better understanding of which jobs benefit from being in the office and which jobs work better remotely. You may not be able to return to the way things were for a long time. Consider coworking space as an alternative.
- Evaluate which technologies deliver the results and benefits your organization needs.
- Remote teams require more structure, better communication, and a high level of proactive transparency from you.

Remote teams are looking for leaders to demonstrate leadership

Work@Home Best Practices - Remote Work as a Strategy

Organizations of all sizes should be examining the possibilities of reshaping their future by exploring the options and benefits of deploying staff to work from home or coworking spaces on a more permanent basis rather than maintain expensive offices with exorbitant overhead. Consideration should be given to prioritizing investments in the technology and infrastructure that make remote work possible.

Rather than perceiving remote work as an uncertainty, disruption or threat, be the business that views remote work as an opportunity. The concept is certainly not new. Due to increasing pressure from a generation that values flexible work options, thousands of organizations have already implemented facets of a remote work program. Many forward-thinking companies have no physical office; they operate through completely distributed employees, working from all corners of the world.

Remote work is not a trend and not just implemented for emergencies – it is our new reality

This might be the best time for organizations to position themselves to take decisive action. Remote work is a decisive way to empower people to work productively and expand their capacity. It is a way for businesses to expand their reach or labor force and broaden their repertoires.

Admittedly, it can be complex. Here is our collection of the best practices for designing an effective remote work program while empower a happy, high-performing team that is able to turn the challenges of distributed collaboration into a competitive advantage.

Let's cover the basics.

Characterizing Remote Work

Remote work is simply defined as any work that is not location dependent; work that can be completed by an individual in any location (often home), provided the person has access to the needed tools and resources. Sometimes that means that remote workers effectively and efficiently complete the job even though they are spread out across different locations or in different time zones from their colleagues or clients. Remote work may be called telework, telecommuting, distributed work, distance work, or agile work.

The power of digital technology and a whole range of streamlining tools can give your people the flexibility to connect, communicate and collaborate from anywhere, making it unnecessary to attend the traditional, centralized workplace on a day-to-day basis. For many of your employees this means avoiding the commute into an office.

Dedicated Work@Home – employee who works at home all the time and does not require office space at a central location

Flexible Work@Home – employee who splits work responsibilities between home and a central office location.

Your employees do not need to be in the same location to produce their best work together. Other organizations have seen the truth of that every day among people whose jobs mainly require interactions with clients (salespersons, consultants, estimators, contractors, call-centers, interpreters). Remote work has been the norm for freelancers, entrepreneurs who have created online businesses, or people that require long periods of uninterrupted time for their creation process. For writers, computer programmers, and web developers the office has little to offer other than distraction from the tasks at hand.

In many industries, the ability to remain competitive and innovative requires a shift to remote and flexible work programs, making it the new norm. Companies looking to attract and retain the best talent have developed remote work programs. Organizations across the world are expanding their talent pool, using the power of the internet to bring people together: professionals and clients, teachers and students, buyers and sellers.

According to a recent Deloitte survey of more than 10,000 business and HR leaders from 140 countries, the organization of the future is a “network of teams.” Teams are becoming much more dynamic, and work is more distributed. Are you ready to go there?

Remote Work – the Next Level

Think about it. Even when they are physically located in the same office, your employees practice remote collaboration when they send a coworker an instant message instead of walking over to their desk; update a project’s status in a spreadsheet; provide feedback in a comment; or put their ideas on virtual sticky notes for you to read at your convenience.

As the globe whirls out new tools and technologies which streamline remote working, many more people will embrace flexible scheduling as the new standard in work place attributes. In fact, millennials who will comprise 50 percent of the workforce in the next three years, view remote work as a criterion for them considering new employment opportunities. You likely talk to many individuals, who have recently had to experiment with remote work because of Covid-19, and have come to realize how strong an impact remote work has on their time and how it boosts their productivity. You may have several employees who may want to switch from the “9 to 5 plus commute” to working from home, at least part of the time. You can streamline the process to remote working and focus on “harnessing the power of your people”. Let's take a deeper look.

Benefits of a Remote Work Program

To help your organization in its decision making process, let's examine the benefits of a remote work program. Yes there are disadvantages which we will outline later in this guide, but the advantages of working remotely trump disadvantages.

Remote Employees are More Engaged and More Productive

This is a significant statement and not stated lightly. There is robust evidence that, on average, remote workers log more productive hours than their peers in an office. The reasons they are more likely to perform at a higher level are numerous ranging from comfort to connection to contribution.

One reason is because remote workers begin their day with a different kind of energy and attitude. On average remote workers get more sleep, eat healthier, and exercise more. Free of taxing Monday to Friday commutes, a confining cubicle and workplace distractions, he or she steps into their digital oasis feeling rested and recharged. At the end of the day, because they are not rushing for the commute home, they willingly and happily finish tasks before stopping for the day.



Another important reason is that given the trust and intrinsic responsibilities of remote work, employees enjoy a valuable sense of self-determination. They appreciate how their individual skills and diligence helps to advance goals they find meaningful. In fact, the sense of meaning derived from their work is often cited as what remote workers value most in their job.

Other factors that make your employees happy and productive when working remotely are:

- Working from home allows them to see their work in a new light.
- Working from home enables quiet reflection and contemplation, which are essential to their innovation, creativity and productivity.
- They view themselves working for an innovative, empathetic organization.
- They value the flexibility, ease and comfort of working from home, and mindful of a healthier work-life balance.
- If their needs are met, your employees who work remotely tend to have more gratitude.
- They enjoy their own private workspace, which accommodates their best work practices.
- They have a sense of individuality while fulfilling their desire to belong to a larger whole.
- While being a productive part of team, they gain experience and recognition in advancement of their career.

- They gain about two hours per day in personal time for loved ones, personal pursuits and responsibilities. Often, they conscientiously contribute some or all of that time to their work projects.
- Individuals save on the additional expenses of lunch, coffee, dry cleaning, expensive wardrobes, and transportation (car payments, gas, maintenance and insurance costs).

For employees, remote working can be challenging, but incredibly freeing at the same time. Great people embrace a challenge and actually crave an opportunity to show their stuff.

Savings on Space, Equipment and Resources

When you streamline your business practices through a remote work program you are able to maintain smaller office spaces and reduce significant overhead costs. If you can transition to fully remote and use what the experts call “intelligent space” you can eliminate all those expenses. Some business leaders call it wasteful to maintain an expensive lease and static physical space to accommodate employees that might very well work more resourcefully, constructively, economically, and happily away from the traditional office environment.

According to a Global Workplace Analytics study a typical organization can save about \$11,000 per half-time remote worker per year by leveraging a remote work program. That is a hefty return on your investment from:

- A reduction in real estate and related costs
- Increased employee productivity and engagement.
- Reduced employee turnover and related costs.
- Improved employee health reduces absenteeism.
- Reduced need for parking facilities or reimbursements
- Greater emergency preparedness as a result of mandated remote work.

If you are the head of an organization that is expanding to include a growing staff, investing in expanded facilities (new lease, additional overhead costs, more office furnishings) may not necessarily be the ideal solution. Having employees work independently from remote locations limits expenses to technology, such as an extra computer, smart phones, or a headset for a remote worker.

Better Environment

It is always good to be viewed as the “business that cares about the environment”. Having employees working from home reduces traffic pollution, the consumption of throwaway containers, as well as conserving office space and other consumptives.

Better Physical Health, Mental Health and Higher Morale.

Remote workers have lower stress levels, better mental health, less downtime due to illness, and less absenteeism than in-house workers – all factors crucial to your ability to conduct business. You will value that they also have a higher spirits and are more motivated.

Talent Management

Consider remote working as a strategic talent management initiative. Research shows it improves employee retention. Studies show that 56 percent of parents want the option to work remotely, 69 percent want a flexible work schedule.

Besides retention, think of the benefits to your organization that you can access a wider talent pool and entice the best of the best. Even when remuneration is attractive, not everyone with valuable or rare skill sets wants to uproot a family from a comfortable environment to move thousands of miles to a new city or country. However, a forward-thinking company with a remote work program can attract top professionals from around the world. More flexible work processes might even lead to less upward pressure on salaries.

Today, to succeed in a global economy, your organization can draw on the benefits of international diversity by bringing together people from many cultures with varied experience, perspectives and local knowledge on promising markets. With a geographically dispersed workforce you can expand your reach.

Get Work Done Around the Clock

One of the huge benefits of employing remote teams is that work can be done around the clock – and not just during office hours at the location where your team is based. This is great if you have an expanding customer service base that needs to be online all the time. Having correspondents in major time zones means that someone will always be prepared to answer queries and solve any problems.

Grow Without Restriction

You do not need offices to grow. By avoiding the traditional office trap – the capital tied up in property and high facility costs – you free up resources to focus on other areas of innovation and growth.

Best Practices for Designing an Effective Remote Work Program

In designing any remote work program, the first priority for your organization is getting the infrastructure right. Change is hard. It takes careful planning, flexibility, training, good technology, and optimism to get the infrastructure right for the long term.

As the leader you must reflect on the positive aspects of the culture of your organization as well as its short term and long term needs. You want to think about how remote work can improve outcomes for your team as well as the obstacles that those team members might face.

Of course, any remote work program must take into account your budgetary restraints. It is financially less complicated if you are able to transition away from expensive offices and overhead.

Key considerations:

- Look at every aspect of your business with the assumption that anyone may be remote at any time.
- Will your organization transition to 100% Dedicated Work@Home or Flexible Work@Home?
- Ensure your strategy provides controls and flexibility.
- Explore technology and security options. IT may need to deploy more forward-looking capacity management to proactively meet the needs of your operations.
- Outline an operational approach for employees and your managers.
- Engage your people in the process.
- Train your managers so they are comfortable managing employees from a distance.
- Train your employees to work remotely.
- Develop policies and practices to resolve the many questions that will surface.
- Do you require location-based licensing such as legal, medical, and other roles that require professional certification?

**Remote teams require more structure, better communication,
and a high level of proactive transparency from senior leadership.**

Co-create Solutions

Research shows that employee input is an underleveraged asset and there is no more critical challenge to your organization than engaging, developing, and retaining your best people. Think about it. Your people affect everything you do — your ability to innovate, grow, deliver value to your customers, and beat your competition. Digitizing operations for a remote program means it is even more important to humanize your approach when it comes to initializing a remote working program. Prioritizing and investing in your employees may be the key to your success.

Consult with your entire team. Set the tone early by having managers and team leaders engage in dialogue with every employee so no one feels left behind. Allow employees to state questions about remote working practices. Find out what they need to be successful. Allow the team members the autonomy to address these questions and discuss their concerns so they are better able to achieve consensus on solutions. Team leaders and managers should be prepared for questions such as:



- How will we communicate or connect with each other? Communication is first on our checklist and one of the most important elements of a great remote working program.
- Will everyone be working from home? If not, how will work@home staff be selected?
- Will we have training?
- Do team members have access to the requisite technology?
- How do we make sure we have access to the resources we need to do work?
- How will you access my work?
- Will remote working affect my performance evaluations?
- What are the procedures for coordinating team projects?
- Will remote working affect my career path?
- How will we manage customer expectations?

- Will the company provide the technology and equipment to stay connected and collaborative?
- Can we create a culture with a sense of community when we are working away from the office?
- Will the company provide coworking options?
- If employee performance standards are not met is there a plan in place to help the employee improve through in-person training, coaching?
- How might remote work impact diversity and inclusion?

While remote workers may have concerns about job safety, ergonomics, training, and expectations, your managers also have concerns that also must be addressed. Concerns such as how they will monitor progress, or that disruptions or background noise in a remote workspace cannot be allowed to interfere with the customer experience. When the potential problems are recognized and solutions are jointly accepted, the team's commitment to the strategy will be more consistent with the needs of their department and your organization.

Key considerations:

- It is inaccurate to assume that the core or only difference between in-office work and remote work is location. The principles of remote work are different. The approach to conducting work is different.
- If you have the time, experiment with working remotely yourself to familiarize yourself with the benefits and pitfalls. Who know what you might discover.
- Ensure the readiness of both managers and employees.
- Be diligent about integrating worker well-being strategies into your remote work program.
- Encourage managers to find creative solutions for their teams, such as flexible work schedules, alternate workspaces, or adjusted priorities for the quarter.
- Help managers to develop the skills and policies to support their teams and harness the power of your people. Remote managing or coaching is potentially a new experience for them. The steps are similar to in-office interactions but require more focus on communication and engagement. You may have to define expectations, provide resources, and support to make positive changes.
- Get started. The downfall of any process is spending too much time on process and never taking action. In normal situations, a pilot program may help work out the kinks.
- Measure your progress and expand. Keep evolving. Remain flexible, evaluate frequently, and adjust the arrangements as needed. Managers should view the remote work program as a continual work in progress. Teams are unlikely to get all arrangements right the first time. Projects may also force changes in the original arrangements.

Ensure IT Continuity and Support

This is crucial for a team to work together efficiently. Your organization needs to conveniently connect everyone to your business so they can communicate with each other and provide consistent customer service. Remote workers are dependent on fast reliable communication methods and internet connections that facilitate communication. A common reason for dissatisfaction with remote work has always been IT failure. In fact, in the recent Covid 19 crisis, leading the list of challenges was technology. Converting an entire office to a virtual workforce overnight is a prodigious task for any IT team, but many companies that were prepared from a technological standpoint accomplished it rather painlessly, while unprepared companies scrambled.

Considerations need to be carefully planned to ensure high productivity in a secure environment and an experienced IT staff and technical support team is key to your transition plan. Your organization may have to explore new technology or engage the services of a third party to provide IT solutions that support and ensure your teams can share data seamlessly and securely while operating consistently. The technology must be more than effective and efficient; it must also allow flexibility for your organization's scalability and growth. Be cognizant that the technology that makes remote work possible is a long-term investment that must be budgeted for.

IT should consider the following:

- Implement a videoconferencing solution to encourage face-to-face interaction.
- Secure **quality** sound and video collaboration tools and platforms for facilitating business.
- Secure dedicated virtual desktops which allow users to connect from home and function as though they are in the office.
- Determine hardware and software requirements. Decide if employees use their own equipment or the organization will mandate a particular kind. Consider how software updates will be performed.
- Whether your VPN has the capacity to support a large number of people working remotely or is able to quickly scale up or down.
- Secure reliable internet service with sufficient bandwidth to send/receive data with minimal latency.
- Decide routing of voice calls from original central office destination to the home of the employee/agent.
- Ensure employees can get access to their most important work files, documents and applications so they can maintain their productivity.
- Ensure remote file access, cloud storage capacity, and data/file back-up.

- Determine where employees will go for technical support.
- Determine how equipment repairs will be handled?

Key Considerations:

- Dealing with sensitive data. Protecting your organization and customer data is critical.
- Securing procedures for performing all necessary business processes remotely.
- Encryption and multi-factor authentication are useful technologies in enhancing remote working security, and cloud security systems and virus protection software are fundamental requirements.
- Decide who needs or has the authority/ability to remotely wipe hardware.
- Determine whether your organization wants/needs and has the right to track employee activity, location, listen to conversations, monitor social media, record video.
- Ensure technical support is available during meetings.

Remote Work Policies and Practices

While remote work is built on trust and empowering employees to be productive from home, you still need to clearly outline in detail what it means for employees to work remotely. Formalizing remote work policies are important because they specify, on the record, what is and is not acceptable. HR will have to address remote worker agreements, special onboarding needs, and whether you will feature remote work options in your talent attraction strategy.

It is a given that policies and protocols should include working hours, meeting protocols and expectations for employee availability, response times, and check-ins. Also consider:

- Criteria for decision making about who can and cannot work remotely.
- Remote work locations allowed (i.e. home, co-working, public spaces, while traveling).
- Who pays for home office equipment, services, and supplies.
- Insurance requirements and who pays for it.

Key Considerations:

- Define employee expectations to protect proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home office.
- Secure procedures for performing all necessary business processes remotely. This is especially important in the collection of automated digital payments from customers.
- Update or review policies at least once a year.

Fundamentals of Building an Exceptional Remote Team Culture

The culture of an organization can be simply described as its vibe. It is the way people feel about the work they do, the values they believe in, where they see the company going and what they are collectively doing to get it there.

Three reasons your remote team culture is important.

1. The culture of your organization is a guide to employees. A remote worker makes hundreds of decisions every day. Culture is his or her guide. When a manager or CEO is not present, culture tells employees how to respond to an unprecedented request. It tells someone whether he or she might want to risk sharing new ideas or hide problems.
2. Culture sustains employee enthusiasm. If you consider that the average Canadian spends about one third of their life at work, it only makes sense that you want happy people working, because happiness results in more productivity and increasing loyalty.
3. Culture determines how people within an organization interact with each other and work together. Your employees who work remotely care about the workplace culture and believe it is important to help them thrive.

Is there a gap between what senior leadership thinks is going on and what your employees say is happening on the ground.

In a traditional office environment, family-like bonds are formed at the water cooler, casual chatting before the real work begins, informal lunches, and daily office interactions. With people working from home it is important to make time for these interactions to continue and help new team members create bonds with their co-workers.

Eight things are paramount to building remote team culture:

1. Putting People First
2. Consistency
3. Fostering a Culture of Trust
4. Practice Transparency
5. Design rules of engagement
6. Communicate Well, Communicate Often, Communicate to Serve
7. Individualization and Engagement
8. Choose a Good Remote Team Manager

Let's delve deeper.

1. Putting People First

Putting humanity and understanding at the centre of every decision your organization makes is supportive of the overall well-being of employees. For remote workers this is particularly important to their work-life balance, how they show up for work, and interact with their colleagues.

2. Consistency

Consistency ensures that your employees feel aligned, supported, and a sense of belonging. Performance metrics fluctuate widely and unnecessarily in most companies, in no small part from the lack of consistency in how people are managed.

3. Foster a Culture of Trust that Makes the Team Thrive

Trust among the team is the foundation of almost every aspect of a successful business. Within a remote team trust requires more concentrated effort. It is earned through repetition over time.



You and your managers can build trust through individualization, keeping promises and engaging in frequent conversations with remote workers. Build trust by believing in people and their talents.

Key Considerations:

- A culture of trust is typified by openness, when no one feels like things are happening behind closed doors that they are not privy to. Harvard recently conducted a study of 1100 remote workers and found that by and large remote workers feel shunned and left out. Specifics of the study state: colleagues don't fight for my priorities; colleagues make changes to a project without telling me; colleagues lobby against me.
- Establishing lines of sight helps your remote worker to know whom to turn to for help while also encouraging trust and boosting productivity.
- Implement protocols for soliciting feedback from everyone.
- Truly listen to what employees have to say. Acknowledge what you understand. Act accordingly.

4. Practice Transparency

Transparency is about openness, sharing, and communication, and no surprises. Transparency is about creating a non-judgmental culture. When you promote transparency you build trust and cohesion within your organization. With everyone working physically alone, it is easy to inadvertently withhold information or not provide enough context for everyone to get a full picture. Makes sure that most information is written or recorded, available for people to consume it on their own time. Impress upon team members the necessity for them to stay on top of what the company doing or the progress and decisions of their particular business unit.

Being transparent does not always come naturally for everyone. Transparency is only a value if you do it when it is hard, so people have to be encouraged to practice transparency even when hiding the facts would be easier. Your managers and team members may need to be encouraged differently.

To practice transparency, remote workers should be encouraged to:

- Be intentional and to write things down. Share everything they are working on.
- To make a concerted effort to provide relevant information or ask questions.
- Be straightforward, direct and kind in giving and receiving feedback. Feedback should always be about the work and not the person.
- Articulate when they have changed their mind or support a different direction, or outcome because of new information. This encourages data-driven decision making.
- Speak up when they see issues. They should be able to trust that you, the team and manager will respond well as long as they communicate their concerns well.
- To acknowledge a mistake, correct it, and proactively let the affected party, team and senior management know what happened and how it was corrected and what was done to prevent future mistakes of a similar nature.
- Not to hide behind anonymity. Being visible when asking questions or making comments fosters a culture of transparency that ultimately helps build more trust with their team mates.
- Toot their own horn.
- Communicate well. Communicate often.



To practice transparency remote managers should be make themselves more accessible, be clear about setting expectations, and providing feedback. Encourage them to be responsible to:

- Take responsibility for creating a safe atmosphere, where team members can openly discuss issues related to mental health, and work with the team member to a resolution.
- Lay out the reasons for a change, not just announce the change itself. A change with no explanation can lead to assumptions and lots of questioning, which is less efficient.
- Think positive intent first and not immediately jump to conclusions. Tone and nuance can easily get lost via text, chat and email. Being empathic and assuming positive intent helps with potential misunderstandings.
- Communicate well. When in doubt, over-communicate to make sure everybody is in the loop.
- Take advantage of courses that can enhance their communication skills – writing, listening, using apps, clearly delivering and receiving messages.

If your organization wants to build trust, you cannot have surprises. Be open about as many things as possible. Be consistent. If remote workers feel out of the loop and unhappy, they ultimately are unable to do their best work.

5. Design Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement help define how your team will interact. That way, your team does not have to think about, debate, or rehash what is appropriate in each situation. Rules of engagement clarify expectations, collaboration etiquette, and how team decisions will be determined. One of the best rules is to clarify that information needs to be written or recorded, and made easily accessible for employees to consume or review for clarity. Rules make conduct more predictable and rein in behavior so managers are not playing “cop” as often. Your organization might propose policies such as:

- Please, speak your mind during meetings, not after,
- We accept and encourage constructive disagreement (nothing personal) as necessary to yield the best decisions for our team.
- When voicing a problem, also present a solution.
- Everything can be questioned, every decision can be changed through sound reasoning. But as long as a decision is in place, we expect people to commit to executing it.
- Managers need to be explicit about what the remote worker must produce. The parameters, deadlines and metrics of tasks must be crystal clear, but so should the manager's personal preferences or beliefs. If a manager needs weekly progress reports or prompt replies to emails, the manager must say so and hold the employee accountable.

6. Communicate Well – Communicate Often – Communicate to Serve

The culture's effectiveness revolves around how information flows. Everyone needs to feel like they have access to the same information, but remote and co-located cultures share information differently. That is why it is important that information needs to be written or recorded, available for people to consume or review for clarity.

People who aren't excellent written communicators may struggle on remote teams. It is important to select communications tools wisely. Some communication tools, like chat and email have their uses, but lack the essential verbal and emotional cues that help a person perceive the communication in the way it was intended. Recognize which tools will serve your purpose and be perceived in the way you mean.



The fastest way to build a cohesiveness and trust is have clear open lines of communication. There is no such thing as over-communication. Over communicating is always better than making assumptions.

- Create clear goals and share them. Remote workers, just like any other employees, need clear direction. Define expectations in terms of objectives, and stick to them.
- Give employees something clear to work from and encourage them to discuss things with their managers, especially if they encounter difficulty in accomplishing a task.
- Intrinsic in communication is being able to listen effectively. Everyone must make time to listen and take steps to ensure the other person know they have been heard. The team could participate in training for that purpose.
- Provide training to assist workers to enhance their communication skills.
- Don't rush and do not just fill the quiet space. Allow time during your meetings for quiet reflection and contemplation which are required for your entire team to gain understanding and form questions, as well as allow space for innovation and creativity.

Be aware of the importance of feedback in communication. Have regular conversations and share feedback. If you have constructive feedback to give, do it over a video call rather than chat or email so your intentions come across. Seeking to help others maximize their potential through quality feedback shows them that you have their best interests in mind. Employees respond to regular informal feedback on their work and frequent praise and recognition for excellent work. An employee also needs to feel that their performance — reflecting their individual achievement, team collaboration and customer value — is reviewed in a fair and comprehensive way.

Co-create a clear set of rules to live by that everyone on the team (100% buy-in) accepts. Rules relay the message that the team takes remote work seriously. Remember that empathy is everything - Tone and nuance can get lost over chat and email, so always assume positive intent in all communications.



Use Communication to Help Remote Workers Feel Less Isolated

Workers will feel more involved and less isolated when you develop a healthy system of meetings, events, and practices that keep people communicating.

To ensure that everyone feels connected. Consider the following:

- Sometimes it might mean reaching out just to ask, “Hey, how are you today?”
- Keep important information accessible for everyone.
- Plan ahead to expect a timely response not an immediate response. That means no last minute decisions. It may seem like extra work, but it is actually quite organized.
- Establish a process, structure, and agenda around meetings and updates so everyone can follow along no matter their location.

- Remember that all remote team members are equal, but their experiences differ.
- Collectively decide what types of events and activities will build a sense of cohesion and community.
- Scheduled meetings to compensate for the serendipity employees are missing from being in the same location
- Managers might consider using video calls more often to better engage with remote workers.
- Pay attention to the small stuff. When you notice someone went above and beyond normal expectations to accomplish a task or do something meaningful for a customer, for you, their team, make sure they know you noticed.
- Mindful scheduling of videoconferencing can accommodate casual interactions and enable remote culture to thrive outside the walls of any office. Unstructured time before or after a meeting allows people time to catch up or get to know each other better so they trust each other more when it comes time to get stuff done.
- Make time for the fun stuff and the personal stuff. Be mindful that you are working with a team of humans not robots. Do not leave anyone out of these casual agenda-less activities.
- Even those who may prefer to work remotely, do not want to be left out.
- Celebrate success. Recognize remote workers for their contribution and do it visibly. Encourage peer-to-peer recognition. It is one of the easiest ways to maintain an atmosphere of shared success and also build trust. Remote workers also gain insight into the contributions for which their colleagues are being recognized.

Key Considerations

- Research shows that employees respond better to and are more motivated by regular informal feedback. Annual performance reviews have a purpose but don't rely on them to keep employees engaged and happy.
- The key to building great remote relationships is intention. Leadership needs to try harder to find common interests, have meaningful meetings, and truly help employees understand each person's perspective. The result can be a lasting network, people who become friends and can depend on each other.
- Ask, how your organization can remain distinctly human in a technology driven world. Do not forsake the human element in choosing communication tools for remote teams.
- Express interest in someone as a whole human being. On a one-to-one basis, take time to understand the unique thoughts, needs, and wants of your people. Learn about what they really care about. The more you know people, the more you trust them.

7. Individualization and Engagement

Employee engagement is foundational to high performance, ongoing development, and productivity. The best form of development happens as employees are experiencing involvement in setting goals and receiving meaningful feedback. Employee engagement involves the basic psychological needs that must be met for employees to perform their specific role well. An engaged employee “shows up,” physically, emotionally and cognitively. They are enthusiastic about what they have to do, and they naturally find ways to improve and excel. In short, engaged employees generate most of the creativity, innovation and excellence in your organization.

Remote workers ask:

- Do my opinions count?
- Do I know what is expected of me?
- Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
- Do I get to do what I do best every day?
- Does the mission of my organization make me feel my job is important?
- Is my team committed to doing quality work?
- Has someone talked to me recently about my progress?
- Do I have opportunities to learn and grow?
- Do I have a friend at work?

Engagement is about much more than making sure employees are satisfied with where they work. Research finds that workplace perks matter less than the relationship between a manager and an employee.

Managers achieve higher levels of engagement when they focus on each person’s needs and strengths. Accepting a remote worker's method and reasoning for how and when they work helps managers coach to the individual so each remote worker "feels cared for as a person," which is a fundamental element of engagement which relates directly to productivity.

A Stanford University study found that the productivity increase among remote workers is equivalent to an extra day per person per week. This indicates that remote workers contribute too much value to overlook their unique needs.

8. Choose a Great Remote Team Manager

Nothing has a greater long-term impact on a business than the managers or senior leaders who have an immediate influence on its employees – no matter where they work. Some managers simply have an innate talent for engaging their employees. The talent to manage people is different than being a successful programmer, salesperson, or the person with the most tenure who wants to be on the management track.

The best managers have always individualized their coaching to the worker, but doing so at a distance requires greater intentionality and managers of remote workers have a particular challenge -- extending that influence to people they may rarely see and may barely know. There is a balance between individualizing to the person to get the best performance, keep them accountable and focused on future excellence and career growth and maintaining that delicate balance on treating everyone on the team fairly, equally and transparently.

The best remote managers do share a few basic qualities which are fundamental to remote employee engagement, productivity, profitability and a host of other bottom-line issues:

- They motivate every single employee to take action and engage their remote workers with a compelling mission and vision.
- They have the assertiveness to drive outcomes and the ability to overcome adversity and resistance.
- They create a culture of clear accountability.
- They build relationships that create trust, open dialogue, and full transparency.
- They make decisions based on productivity, not politics.

Someone who can pull off all five of these requirements may be hiding in plain sight. It may be an employee with high managerial potential waiting to be discovered. Choose a person who can “harness the power of your people”.

Collaboration Tools and Platforms

Technology in our connected world makes it possible for your employees to produce quality work while working from home. Choose quality technology that meets the requirements of your remote workers in consistency, productivity and employee satisfaction. Oh, and make sure your remote workers and managers get the training to use these technologies efficiently and effectively.

Collaboration tools can be both useful and fun to improve company culture:

- Video and web-based conferencing solutions
- Team collaboration apps
- Project management platforms
- Live chat apps
- Cloud unified communications services
- Brainstorming and collaboration tools, interactive whiteboards
- IP telephony
- Screen and file sharing
- 4G connection
- Smartphones
- Presence indicators
- Virtual assistants and bots
- Instant messaging
- Security solutions
- File storage solutions
- Task trackers and workflow tools
- Password managers
- Screen and video capture tools

Key considerations

- You don't want to implement technology until you are clear on your strategy and the roles you and your teams will play. While technology vendors can help inform your strategy, only your team truly knows what will work at your organization.
- Select collaboration tools that can be used by all members of the team, whether they work from home, remote office space, on the road, different time zones, or on a long-term or a flexible schedule.
- Collaboration status tools provide information updates in real-time, so team members can pick up the context, communications, and status of any request, project, meeting agenda, or other item at their convenience.

Avoid the Pitfalls

Remote work offers many advantages for your business and for employees' work-life balance. There are pitfalls, too. Here are a few to avoid.

1. Avoid Dragging Your Feet

Your organization has decided:

- Our product is better
- Our talent is stronger
- Our purpose is clear

Say you've got your infrastructure right, developed sound policies and procedures, created a well-defined strategy, and secured the best technology and the smartest people. Until you put those ideas and decisions into action with the right leadership and good support, they are just words on paper.

Lack of Training

Lack of training can sabotage a remote work program. For example, people who are not skilled in written or verbal communication may struggle on remote teams. In many businesses, practices like learning and development, employee engagement, and performance management are rarely integrated; they are separate efforts run by separate teams using separate tools and separate communications. If you discover your organization has a fractured approach to training it could create a poor experience for managers and employees, who may feel inundated and confused. Training can help them.

The key to the success of your remote working team is to ensure managers have the skills and policies to support remote teams. Give managers the training to help them work on the balancing act between surveillance and managing status and progress toward goals. Managers may have to adjust their expectations and focus. They may need training to change how they communicate and how to manage objectives, milestones and results.

Choosing Managers who are not a Good Fit for Remote Employee Management

As addressed in the previous section, managing remote employees requires talent and greater intentionality to develop engagement and productivity in remote teams. Managers have to have the ability to empower every person to manage their time, to manage their days and their responsibilities.

Choosing Employees who are not a Good Fit for Remote Work

Some industries are better-suited for remote work than others. Some workers simply do not like working from home. They prefer or need the structure, clearer boundaries, social interaction or other benefits of a conventional workplace to be effective and satisfied. Some people struggle with the isolation or the sense of being cut off from the hub of professional activity. Some remote workers struggle with combating loneliness, while others may find it difficult to unplug when the day's work is done.

Key Considerations

- Workers may have been dissatisfied with their initial experiences with remote work because of team composition, managerial monitoring, and inadequate training or support.
- Remote work may be ideal for some employees but not for all. Leadership should not insist on remote work for employees who would rather not.

Micromanaging

Employers do all this work to find people who are reliable, self-starting, ambitious people. Once they are hired, too often leadership is too authoritarian, instituting a bunch of restrictions that hinder engagement and productivity and create an environment of distrust.

Many managers and supervisors new to work at home arrangements struggle with remote teams. They ask: How do I know the employees are working? Nothing screams "I don't believe in you" more than constantly inquiring about someone's status when the manager has already set a clear deadline that's somewhere in the future. In managing virtually, this old school approach of micromanaging the person and their process hinders productivity and creates an environment of distrust. Micromanaging delivers a negative message about leadership. Did you hire the wrong people?

Since remote workers were hired for a reason – because they were bright enough to do the work. You and your management team have to trust that you hired a team that will get things done when they say they will. They know that their failure to deliver puts their value to the organization into question. Therefore, leadership has to understand that remote workers are getting up and going to work every day just like everyone else, except they probably have a shorter commute.

Bright energetic people need to be able to craft their work in ways that give them purpose and meaning. They should be given control and flexibility to use their time to productive advantage to get things done on their own terms. If work does not involve clients, some individuals work best in the evening, early risers might pump out a project before noon. In other words, let each employee perform without unnecessary restrictions and micromanagement.

Inability to Deal with Burnout and Anxiety in the Remote Setting

Leadership must be sensible about expectations. It is foolish to expect a team member to maintain excellent mental health when their workload requires a sustained amount of sacrifice. There is a fine line between collaborating with a team member on an ambitious goal and assigning a task that will be perceived as impossible.

Managers must be adept at:

- Understanding a team member's strengths and weaknesses. What is perceived as impossible for one team member may seem trivial to another; it is not always the task that triggers duress, but mismatching a task with an ill-equipped team member.
- Recognizing individual struggles and being proactive in asking remote workers about it. How they phrase the questions can be very important to garnering the truth. Asking "Are there any assignments that you do not feel comfortable or equipped to handle?" is a better way to uncover truth compared to a broad questions such as, "Why isn't this working?"
- Recognizing that not every team member prefers to discuss touchy topics using the same medium. While some may prefer video communication, others may prefer voice, writing, or something else.

Remote leaders should strive to be inclusive when searching for answers and solutions.

Avoid Isolation

Physical separation makes it harder for remote workers to feel connected to their organization. This can lead to isolation in work projects. When it is difficult for a remote worker to get the materials or information they need, they might easily think their achievements or development are ignored. Ensure your team has visibility and feels recognized and appreciated for their contributions. (See more below.)

How to Avoid Isolation in Remote Teams

Your Vision and Culture

Clarify your company's mission and values in clear relatable and honest term. Put it at the forefront of your interaction with your remote team. If your remote team knows what they are working toward and can connect to it, they're more likely to be engaged with your organization.

Have a webinar session, especially during onboarding of new remote workers, to allow senior leadership to emphasize what the mission and values mean to the organization.

Clear and consistent expectations and transparent goals keep remote employees engaged and feeling part of the culture – feeling the impact of the vision and culture even from afar.

Make Onboarding Interactive

Involve your remote team members in the process of welcoming new employees, familiarizing them with the organization's culture and practices, and making them feel more comfortable. There are benefits to fostering these early connections. Give new hires a project to work on through the onboarding process so their week is not filled with lectures and instructions. Involve other teams in the onboarding process. Besides building relationships, this will help new people see how their role fits within the entire organization.

Regular Training

Professional development can be a pillar of your organization's remote work program. Training can help your workers enhance any skill they desire.

Encouraging remote workers to participate in webinars or video courses to continue developing their skills. Hosting internal webinars is a great way to involve entire teams and work on a skill that may be lacking in a larger group. Your video conferencing program can help serve as a classroom and allow for lessons to be taught from a variety of remote teachers and trainers. Explore our library of more than 120 courses designed for organizations of all sizes and interests.

Communicate Well – Communicate Often – Communicate to Serve

The more effective your communication is, you'll be able to eliminate more misunderstandings. Have regular one-on-ones with your team members to communicate what's happening or to let them know they are not alone and you are there to help.

Meet More Often

Virtual meetings help team members connect to the rest of the team, to their managers, and to the entire organization. Meetings should be productive (and socially enjoyable) but should not be scheduled just for the sake of having a meeting.

Recognition

Visible employee recognition goes a long way to keeping employees in the loop and feeling valued for their contribution. Notice something small, something that he or she did above and beyond normal expectations – make sure they know you noticed. Little compliments let them know they are valued team members and add up a lot to how they feel about and fit in with your organization.

Don't Micromanage

A great characteristic of any leader is to avoid micromanaging and to allow team members to have freedom. Daily check-ins can be useful, but rigid micro-monitoring of daily activities hinders productivity and creates an environment of distrust.

Measure and Improve

Engaging your remote employees is not a simple responsibility. But it's important in order to have an engaged team. To gauge employee engagement and get a handle on company culture, conduct regular surveys. Once you review the results, make improvements to fill the gaps and reinforce actions that are already supporting your areas of strength. There is a variety of studies on collaboration, motivation, connectivity, hours worked, loyalty, and work culture, that you can research to become better informed.

How to Evaluate and Hire Remote Workers

An organization with a remote work program can attract top professionals from around the world. How will you choose the best of the best from a global pool of applicants?

- Decide your criterion. What degree of past remote work experience is important for the role.
- If the hiring process starts with a recruiter, vet that person or organization well.
- By the time you come face to face with the applicants you should have a profile of their experience, skills, and successes.

Of course, you are looking for more. There are unique challenges to remote work and that raises the stakes in hiring the person who is the right fit for your organization and other team members. If you manage a remote collaborative environment, where people may need to spend 4-6 hours heads down every day, working on hard problems, you need folks who can make the most of that time and require little to no direction to do great work.

So let's explore advice that we have accumulated from various experts in the field of hiring talent.

1. Ensure Applicants have a Realistic Outlook on Remote Work

It is important to recognize that full-time remote work is not for everyone. It comes with a unique set of challenges and to make sure the arrangement benefits both the individual and the organization, it makes sense to select those people who flourish working in this way.

Most applicants talk extensively about loving full-time remote work and rave about the benefits. Fewer applicants can demonstrate an awareness and readiness for the challenges of full-time remote work. Is the applicant able to talk about the pros and cons of remote work?

Have them tell you how they meet these challenges:

- Experiencing loneliness or anxiety connected to isolation from colleagues
- The irreplaceable value of in-person interactions, especially impromptu exchanges
- Collaborating effectively via digital tools and across time zones
- Getting distracted by at-home tasks,
- Trouble separating work from home life
- Feeling like a lesser contributor to the company

You might ask questions such as:

- Tell us, what have you really not enjoyed about remote work in the past?
- What was your biggest concern about working remotely for the first time?

Top applicants are able to speak openly about their difficulties with remote work while also articulating how they deal with the various challenges and why they have been or could be successful at it.

An applicant with prior experience working remotely tends to be more aware of potential pitfalls and will be interested in what practices your organization or team has already put into place to alleviate the challenges of remote work. They might ask about the ground rules that foster a remote-friendly culture and the collaboration tools that are utilized.

2. You May Need to Test Applicants for Strong Digital Communication Skills

Since communication is almost exclusively digital in remote work, strong communication skills are a must-have for any competitive applicant. The key is designing an interview process that reflects the actual types of communication your team engages in daily to get things done.

- You might want to integrate some of these communication measures into the early recruiting process to test for particular skills in specific mediums. Are their emails clear and well-written? If you use video calls in the initial contact phase, do they respond promptly to scheduling requests, or do they leave your coordinator hanging for a few days?
- Another technical exercise might be to use a casual written communication with a vagueness component to evaluate how long it will take for an applicant to ask questions to clarify the communication, and whether they suggest engaging in another video call to talk things through.
- Is the applicant at ease presenting complex information over a video call?
- Are they able to stay calm in the face of tech issues?
- Are their text chats clear, friendly, and effective?

3. Does the Applicant Show Genuine Interest?

Applicants might prioritize the idea of remote work over their interest in the job itself. There is no sure way to screen for genuine interest in the work itself. However, a well-designed conversation-based interview integrating work-based evaluation questions should be revealing.

- Pay attention to how the applicant discusses the remote aspect—is it their primary focus?
- Is he or she absorbed in the discussion about the work?

Ultimately, your job is to hire the best fit for the job itself, not the most enthusiastic remote work zealot.

4. Does the Applicant Seek Work-Life Harmony?

When you hire people who love the work, they might end up doing it for 12-14 hours before they even realize it. Obviously, this is not sustainable or healthy, which is why it is optimal to look for a high level of self-discipline and work-life harmony when hiring people.

People who work remotely see their work as meaningful, but they also need things like family, hobbies, and other passions to pull them away from work,. When people are disciplined about maintaining work-life harmony, three great things happen:

- 1) They don't burn out,
- 2) They do their best work, and
- 3) They are happy working at your company.

What's all the Buzz Around Coworking Spaces?

With Covid 19 many people were suddenly working remotely. Yet, it was not a new phenomenon. Some companies transitioned to remote work several years ago and have proven how successfully it can be done.

This transition spurred a coworking movement among freelancers, entrepreneurs and the tech industry. They needed space to escape the isolation of a home office and feel part of a business community from time to time. Affordable, shared coworking spaces with fully-serviced professional business environments popped up all over the world. People thrived in these coworking spaces.

Studies show that people who cowork demonstrate higher levels of thriving than their office-based counterparts. It makes such an impact that these coworking venues have become increasingly relevant for a broad range of people and organizations that are shifting away from having all their personnel in one stand-alone building and opting for geographical diversification..

If the transition to remote work has piqued your interest, consider the option of incorporating coworking in your remote program or business strategy.

- They are less costly than the capital your organization invests in property, leases, maintenance, equipment and overhead. You only pay for the space you use and the amount of time your remote workers spends there.
- Coworking spaces are well-designed productive work environments that provide for a curated work experience – a complementary place for people to work.
- The coworking environment is great for sparking new ideas, innovation, and community relationship building.
- Most are open great hours to gives your employees flexibility and autonomy in designing their workdays.
- They provide relaxed areas to focus, dedicated spaces for privacy, collaborative meetings, training, or interacting with clients.
- They are collaborative environments where people can look for guidance, spur innovation and creativity, and attend regularly offered networking events, training programs, or social events.

Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success