



Spring
Professional

**HOW TO MANAGE A
REMOTE WORKING TEAM
TO ENSURE PRODUCTIVITY
& POSITIVITY**



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MANY WORKERS ACROSS THE WORLD CURRENTLY FIND THEMSELVES WORKING FROM HOME AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SPREADS. THIS MOVE IS A CHALLENGE TO EMPLOYEES AND THEIR MANAGERS AS THEY ADJUST TO A NEW NORMAL.

Like all work, remote working has three challenges: team bonding, collaboration, and work oversight. In achieving success, leadership matters. According to General Assembly, up to 70% of employee engagement can be attributed to managers, while feelings of isolation reduce performance by up to a fifth.

Using and getting comfortable with the technology is one element, but establishing trust, ensuring accountability, and fostering good collaboration are critical to success. Managers play a key role in making remote work a success. Here are our tips on how you can maximise the potential of your team.





ESTABLISH A NEW NORMAL

In a remote setting everyone will develop their own new normal. As a leader, it is important to start with a meeting that establishes some of the ground rules. It's best to be collaborative and flexible about introducing these, rather than dictating norms. For example, setting a meeting for 9am every morning might not work for parents whose children are now also at home with them. Think about who is in your team and what is going to work best for everyone.

BE FLEXIBLE

While the pandemic plays out, many people have extra responsibilities, such as looking after children, parents or sick relatives. Establish core hours or meeting points throughout the week when everyone should be available but create flexible periods outside of that. Take the time to determine the skills and capacity of your team members, so that you know what to expect from each.

GAIN SOME PERSPECTIVE

It is a tough time for many people now, and each team member will be handling the situation differently. You need to now decide what constitutes an emergency. With your team juggling other responsibilities during isolation, it's best to specify when an urgent task needs to be completed and within what timeframe. Be crystal clear with your team, so that there is no confusion. It is a great idea to put together a task list outlining assigned priorities and rating their urgency and circulating to the team regularly. Everyone should be clear which tasks they are responsible for and what the deliverables are.





COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

To be successful in remote working the biggest thing that you need to ensure is constant communication. Have meetings at the beginning and/or end of the day, at regular times. Put these in the calendar and set the expectation that everyone needs to be on the call. Go through your action list, talk through any updates, issues and congratulate those who have completed a task and acknowledge the great work the team are doing.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Just because everyone is working remotely, doesn't mean that the team cannot continue building their relationship. Acknowledge achievements and give shout-outs to those who are doing good work. Celebrate birthdays or other milestones. Create a virtual water cooler, where people can unwind but also chat about things outside of work. This could be a channel on the company messaging platform, where people can share video clips or jokes and quizzes.

SEE YOUR TEAM

When it comes to team meetings encourage everyone to turn on their cameras (taking into consideration the current limits of internet speed, connectivity, and network capacity). Seeing people, rather than only hearing them, will create a stronger connection and make it easier for people to keep their attention on the call.



FEELINGS OF ISOLATION ARE UNPLEASANT AND UNPRODUCTIVE

KEEP EVERYONE IN MIND IN YOUR INTERACTIONS AND REMEMBER THAT PEOPLE WILL BE EXPERIENCING MORE STRESS AND ANXIETY THAN USUAL.

1. Send a funny joke each morning to set the tone for the day
2. Find quick 10-minute Yoga video to share with your team to promote them to stretch and exercise at home
3. Send a morning round up – top five news items from within the company (birthday announcements etc) that will make them feel more connected
4. Start a Spotify list and ask all your team to contribute songs each day – like your own team radio channel!
5. Ask the team to share what they are doing to help with the isolation and ask each person to give a tip to the team
6. Have a team lunch each Friday. Get all your team on video and have lunch together – talk about things other than work for an hour
7. Send a quick healthy recipe to promote your team to try something new to eat each week
8. Invite other teams to join to promote cross collaboration – perhaps invite them to a weekly lunch or Friday drinks. Invite the team that you usually sit close to in the office or the ones you work closely with to promote conversation and communication
9. Encourage reskilling and upskilling. Why not have a weekly training where another team member trains the team in a new system, process or skill they have (could be anything not necessarily work related)
10. Celebrate the small things. With so much uncertainty and the media being saturated with news about the pandemic, it is nice to keep things positive and highlight areas of small wins. This can be work related or non-work related and look companywide to share everyone's wins



TIPS TO KEEP YOU PRODUCTIVE

BYE-BYE PYJAMAS!

It can feel tempting to roll out of bed and over to your laptop in your pyjamas. If you're dressed for sleep, it can be much harder to get your brain in productivity mode. Try maintaining your regular morning routine to set boundaries between working and living at home.

CREATE A WORKSPACE

If possible, get yourself a space designated to work from home, ideally with a properly adjusted desk and chair, like your workplace. This will help as well to separate your private from professional activities and boost productivity.

GET STRUCTURED AND ORGANISE YOUR WORK DAY/WEEK

It is important to separate your working hours from your personal home time. Here are a few tips on optimising your daily schedule:

- Try to adopt the same working hours you would be doing if you were in the office.
- Start each day by reviewing and prioritising the tasks you need to get done that day and throughout the week.
- Your brain is like any other muscle, it needs to rest from time to time. Schedule regular short breaks to stretch, get outside and rest your brain.





POST PANDEMIC

BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW QUICKLY THE GLOBAL ECONOMY WILL RECOVER FROM THIS SITUATION AND HOW SOON WE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN TO NORMALITY.

However, that normality is likely to be different to what we were used to and, as part of that, this is likely the beginning of a fundamental transformation in the world of work.

Although the situation continues to evolve daily, we can already point to three emerging trends and issues:

REMOTE WORKING IS HERE TO STAY

Whilst “working from home” is becoming the new normal, it could also be here to stay.

Research shows that working virtually can drive productivity improvements of up to 43% but it must be done effectively. Many businesses have resisted home working for various reasons, but the current crisis might well have proven to them that it can work.

Reskill and upskill your people to operate more effectively in a more virtual world. We are already in the era of the reskilling revolution and the pandemic will accelerate the need to upgrade the digital skills of our workforce in preparation for a major shift in how businesses operate.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS WILL EVOLVE

The mettle of any leader is truly tested in a crisis. And this is a rare challenge.

The pandemic is now amplifying the need for a new set of leadership skills and capabilities. In the post-pandemic era, we will work in a totally different way, leaders must learn how to lead remotely, instead of centrally.

Leaders will need a new toolbox for the leadership of a remote workforce. A few organisational fundamentals will be critical such as a strong culture; deeply ingrained values; excellent communication skills; and comprehensive reporting capabilities, systems and processes.

Leaders who will succeed in navigating their organisations through the change ahead are those who are agile, externally orientated, have a mindset that adopts disruption, and possess relationship-building skills that can build inclusion across diverse teams and geographies.

THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT IS GREATER THAN EVER

The changing labour market has increased the number of flexible workers, but the pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of these workers in a crisis.

Whilst the Australian Government has rolled out a variety of stimulus packages these emergency measures highlight something we have been advocating for some time now: we need a new social contract to ensure that all workers, particularly those in diverse forms of work, have the social safety net they need.

What is clear is that when the world comes out on the other side, the way we work will be changed forever. With consideration and planning, businesses and individuals can prepare themselves to be at the front of the curve.

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