



Remote Work and Virtual Teams: Challenges and Tips

With the continued spread of the coronavirus a number of organisations have decided to institute a remote working policy for their staff members. Remote working has many benefits but can be challenging for employees and managers who need to adapt to this significant change.

Research into remote working indicates that there are several challenges for employees who are embarking on a remote working journey. As a manager if you are aware of these potential challenges you can proactively support your employees and in doing so encourage productivity and job satisfaction.

Challenges with remote working:

1. Distractions at home

Working from home will be a significant change for employees and their families. It will be important that employees set up a demarcated working space that is away from other household members and free from distractions however this is not always possible. Employees will need to discuss working from home with family members and set clear boundaries to separate their work and home life. Managers can help employees have these discussions and choose the most appropriate working space.

Top tip: It can promote team cohesion to ask all employees to send pictures of their working space to share with the team.

2. Loneliness

The social interaction is a core component of most employees work environments. Regular human interaction is taken for granted often until you aren't in the office everyday. As a manager you can encourage participation between team members. Managers should use video as much as they can for interaction and make time for small talk. This can mean having regular and longer one on ones with subordinates or daily check in's.

Top tip: Create a virtual happy hour or coffee break for your team members.

3. Communication issues

Remote teams communicate via telephone, emails or conferencing tools which lack of non-verbal cues and can often lead to miscommunication. Managers can role model effective communication for employees by using a variety of different platforms for communication. This can mean the manager finding out the preferred method of communication for individual employees and using this.

Top tip: Emoticons can be used to add a visual cue for tone and mood when communicating online.

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4. Unplugging after work

With your workstation in your home switching off after work hours can be challenging. Managers need to assist employees in encouraging work-life balance to avoid employees burning out or becoming overwhelmed working 24/7. As a manager its important to focus on the completed tasks and outputs rather than the hours put in. This should be made clear to employees and your expectations of them set out.

Top tip: Be a role model around work life balance and ensure that you keep emails and calls to work hours.

5. Staying Motivated

Some employees can struggle to stay motivated and productive out of the office space. Motivating employees who are working in a virtual team can be challenging as many traditional tools wont work well. We work hardest when we have a compelling sense of purpose and understand how the value our work contributes to the end goal. As a Manager its important that you create the link for employees between their tasks and the organizations goal and help them understand the value of their contribution.

Top tip: Use GIFS to congratulate or say thank you for a job well done or a success no matter how small. Remember to include other team members when you praise work.

If you would like some managerial guidance around supporting your virtual / remote team or troubleshooting particular problems call us to speak to one of our telephone managerial consultants.

Toll-free:

(from land and mobile phones)

or request a call back: *134*905#

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