



CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGE

The Impact of **Coronavirus** 

REMOTE WORK FORCE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES



About

Managing a virtual workforce can be a tall task. Remote work can be especially demanding on employees, especially those that are not used to the unique challenges they can face. **Challenges can include feeling isolated or lonely, issues with communication, feeling forgotten about or just feeling like they aren't a part of the team.**

This document serves to provide guidelines about how to counteract these challenges and aims to help provide effective leadership for all remote employees.

Manager Success Summary (Daily Rules to Live By)

- ✔ Establish structured daily check-ins
- ✔ Communicate, Collaborate and Communicate!
- ✔ Video Meetings > Text-based communication
- ✔ Clearly Define Expectations
- ✔ Don't forget the Human element
- ✔ Take care of yourself, physically and mentally
- ✔ Maintain a positive mindset
- ✔ Being positive in a negative situation is not naive. It's Leadership.
- ✔ Focus on solutions over problems
- ✔ Practice the art (and science) of Gratitude



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GUIDELINES TO SUCCESS

Establish Structured Daily Check-Ins

Establish at least a twice daily, structured call with remote employees. This will help drive accountability with the team and afford them the opportunity to consult with you allowing their questions or concerns to be heard. This should be held over Microsoft Teams with your entire team.

Note: All calls should be over video to maintain human interaction.

Sample meeting agenda:

- Start with a segue which is any form of sharing that in five minutes or less (any longer than five minutes will start to lose value). This helps to “segue” from your day-to-day duties to accomplishing a very specific objective.
- Review of metrics, KPIs and other relevant data based on the role of the team member. What are we learning from our numbers?
- What is your focus for the day? There should be one or two crucial items of focus that the employee is hoping to accomplish today.
- What roadblocks are present that you can help remove for the employee? It is your job as a Manager to facilitate your employees’ ability to perform their role.

Communicate, Collaborate and Communicate

Ramp up **communication**! Over-communicate!

- Communication challenges with remote employees can go beyond just missing out on casual, water-cooler talk.
- When there is not enough face-to-face communication it can be difficult for your employees to determine intent in your messaging.
- It’s much more difficult to understand a message when it’s communicated via text or if you don’t have a personal relationship with the employee.
- Any extended conversations that go back and forth via chat should be transitioned to a Video call.



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Video > Text

Over 50% of human communication is nonverbal. Regular video calls can help you gauge your team's mental health and morale.

- Visual cues in reaction and body language can help you more effectively read your team and root out any potential issues.
- An added benefit is that people love to feel heard. You can demonstrate over video that you are there for them, listening and ready to help.
- Don't multi-task during these calls! This is their chance to interact with you and they deserve your attention.

Clearly Define Expectations

Make sure you are setting clear expectations that are easily defined.

- That means showing examples of what you expect to be done or taking a little extra time to add specific details.
- People learn a lot from context and the less time they spend face to face or in the office, the less context they have about your expectations.

Example: Everyone has a different idea of what doing something "quickly" or "well" means. Rather than saying "He needs to initiate it quickly" instead try "Jerry needs to initiate the remote session so that we can get started in the next few minutes."



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Don't Forget the Human Element

Make time for small talk.

- When you're busy it can be easy to simply discuss work or a work-related problem that needs to be handled. Sometimes we need to communicate quickly with a team member. This is absolutely okay if you're on a tight deadline to complete something or putting out a fire. However, this can't be the ONLY interaction you have with your team members.
- Build trust and a rapport with every member of your team. You can't build a rapport with someone by simply talking about work. Make time to discuss non work-related items.
- Employees want to know that you care about them and this practice will help develop a trust in you as a leader. Employees to be happier at work and produce better results.

Take Care of Yourself, Physically and Mentally

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) mental health is "the state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

When you fly on an airplane, the flight attendant instructs you to put your oxygen mask on first, before helping others. Why is this an important rule for ensuring survival? Because if you run out of oxygen, you can't help anyone else with their oxygen mask.

This is an important metaphor for leadership as well. If you don't take care of yourself, you can experience burnout, stress, fatigue, reduced mental effectiveness, health problems, anxiety, frustration, inability to sleep, etc. In order to remain a solid, positive influence for your employees you need to take care of your well being.



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Maintain a Positive Mindset

Being positive in a negative situation is not naive. It's **Leadership**. Positivity empowers your team and removes friction. **Positive teams are productive teams!**

- Your attitude is contagious, make sure it's a positive one! Positive work cultures have to be created and nurtured, they cannot be ordered into existence.
- Enthusiasm is a more productive method of motivation than fear. In a positive, supportive climate people will often go above and beyond what's necessary. If you choose to lead through fear, people will likely do only enough to get by and stay off your radar. Positive enthusiasm is motivational.
- The road to success is full of challenges. With a positive mindset, these things are minor setbacks and not overwhelming morale killers. When your team sees your resilience in the face of adversity, they feel confident and build trust in you as a leader.
- A positive mindset will help you focus on solutions rather than roadblocks. Instead of thinking "I can't do this" and immediately closing your mind off to solutions, ask yourself "How can I do this?".

Assume Positive Intent

Just as you must maintain a positive mindset, it is also helpful to assume positive intent from others communicating with you.

- It is a natural defense mechanism to assume malice before ignorance when communicating with others. When messaging an employee, they're liable to assume negative intent when you say something they might take as a "threat" (such as offering a critique, feedback, asking a question).
- Assuming positive intent when someone is communicating with you is an easy way to avoid any friction or tension with your team.



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Gratitude

Gratitude is a key tenant in most major philosophies and religions and is a foundation of positive thinking.

- As a leader, you should cultivate a culture of respect and gratitude with your employees.
- Showing gratitude benefits employee engagement and facilitates more positive interactions.
- When gratitude is present it allows you to acknowledge your team's accomplishments, no matter how big or small.
- Gratitude and thankfulness encourage you to focus on successes, not failures or mistakes.



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TOP 4 POINTS TO STAY ENGAGED, PRODUCTIVE, AND POSITIVE

1. Communication / Transparency:

Daily Huddle Best Practices:

- Round of good news or key news positive if possible
- Metrics -what are we learning from our #'s -project forward.
- What's Up in the next 24 hours -2-4 key focus points
- What's your biggest frustration?
- Limit participants to 2-8 people if possible
- Start at an odd time (9:23)
- 10-15 min max depending on the # of people
- Rotate facilitators
- Make sure people come in prepared
- Don't let people skip on "biggest frustration"
- Allow time on your calendars after the meeting for short small group of 1-on-1 meetings.
- Don't troubleshoot during the meeting
- Cascade the information up or down the org chart



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TOP 4 POINTS TO STAY ENGAGED, PRODUCTIVE, AND POSITIVE

2. Working Remotely / Keeping People Productive

- Keep giving the staff meaningful things to do
- Encourage people to try new things and make it ok to fail. Fail fast.
- Use slow time as Training time
- Mentoring
- Get people in touch with your clients and share what they are learning
- Research -get them researching / thinking for you on key topics that might propel you forward.

3. Work from home best practices:

- Get dressed for work
- Try to find a space in your house that will allow you to work
- 8 hours -doesn't matter when
- More tips [here](#)



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TOP 4 POINTS TO STAY ENGAGED, PRODUCTIVE, AND POSITIVE

4. Coming Together as a Team

- Staff perspectives and Leader perspectives are often misaligned
- We are not aiming at the same goal
- We are not speaking the same language!

What Keeps an Employee Up at Night?

- Job Security/ Layoffs
- Mortgage Payment
- Do I have the virus?
- Kids home from school
- Forced Time Off
- Working Remotely
- Paycheck Reductions

What Keeps an Owner Up at Night?

- Financing
- Communication
- Survival of the business
- Revenue Declines
- Customer Changes
- Cost Control
- Productivity