Working Remotely and Efficiently
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Managing Remote Employees
Ensuring Consistent Performance

Due to many factors, remote work may lead to a decreased in productivity. Below are some factors that may effect job performance.

- Lack of manager supervision
- Increase in time and effort needed to communicate with coworkers
- Loss of daily interaction
- At home distractions

The following will go over how to effectively deal with these problems in order to ensure the same quality of work from your employees that you would expect in the office.
Communicating with Employees

While working remotely, employees do not have as much access to manager support and communication as they would in the office. Below are some ideas to help resolve this issue.

• Provide employees with more “rich” communication channels than email. Richer communication channels include phone calls and video calls.

• Schedule daily check-ins with your employees. This can be in the form of a one-on-one call or team call is the employees’ work is more collaborated.

• Enforce what assignments should be a priority and set expectations for employees. Use videoconferencing for daily check-in meetings for richer communication, and Microsoft Teams Chat or IM when something is urgent.
Supplementing the Office Setting

Extroverted employees may suffer from not having the daily interaction of the office setting, leading them to no longer feel like part of the organization.

To make up for this lost interaction, allow some time at the beginning of calls or meetings to allow for a little social, non-work related, chat.

Be sure to stay connected and gather feedback from your employees on a weekly basis. Ask “How is this remote work situation working out for you so far?” Allow the employee’s stressors and concerns to be the topic of the conversation rather than your own.
Conducting Virtual Meetings
Conducting Virtual Meetings

During virtual meetings employees are more likely to multitask and “tune out” resulting in one or two individuals dominating the meeting. Below are some tips to make your next virtual meeting more productive and efficient.

• Use video whenever possible
• Test technology ahead of time
• Have an agenda
• Minimize meeting length
• Encourage participation
• Gather Feedback
Using Video Conferences Effectively

Virtual meetings are more effective when facial expressions and body language can be read. Attendees will also be less likely “tune out” if they are being recorded.

Include a dial-in option only for those who do not have access to a webcam.

Presentations

When you or someone else is giving a presentation, be sure to share the presentation screen so that everyone is on the same page. As soon as there is time for discussion, or the presentation is over, unshare the screen to maximize face-to-face interaction.
Test Technology Ahead of Time

Working out technical problems for 15 minutes at the start of every meeting can decrease the attentiveness of your audience. Test the technology ahead of time by making a practice call to a colleague and finding solutions to any technical problems that may arise. It may also be helpful to send a brief how-to guide to your employees that covers how to connect to the call.

Have an Agenda

Conduct each virtual just like you would an in-person meeting by clearly stating the agenda. This will help keep the conversation on track.
Assign a Meeting Leader

Assigning one person to lead the meeting will prevent people from talking over one another which is very common in virtual meetings. This person should also be able to resolve any technical problems that may arise during from the meeting.

Minimize Meeting Length

Keep the length of the meeting to a minimum. This will help ensure that attendees are actively listening throughout the entire meeting. Try to make the meeting more of a conversation than a presentation. Provide background information prior to the meeting if possible.
Encourage Participation

Start with an icebreaker. Engage each person in some social small talk to make everyone more comfortable. During the meeting, “go around the table” calling on each person individually. This will make everyone in the meeting participate rather than one or two people dominating the discussion.

Gather Feedback

After the meeting has concluded, ask how the meeting went or each person and what changes could be made to improve future meetings.
Important Meetings

Do not be afraid to conduct important meetings virtually. It may be tempting to wait to have the meeting in person, however, this may not be an option. Getting comfortable with virtual meetings may take some time to get accustomed to, but important meetings should not be postponed for this reason.
Working Remotely Guide for Employees
Staying Focused

One of the biggest issues with remote working is that employees tend to lose focus on their work. This guide will give you tips on how to stay focused while working from home.

1. Establish Your Working Hours

It is important to pretend you are not working from home. When working from home, employees tend to mix their personal life with their work life. For example: You may run errands during work time, then check your email off the clock to make up for the lost time.
Doing this will make you feel like you never leave work. (also, remember working off the clock is illegal in Texas) It is important to manage your time efficiently and clearly separate your work time from your personal time.

2. Using Proper Time-Management Skills

Use a calendar to organize your workday.

Organize every hour of your day with things that need to be done at that time.

Stay true to your calendar and strive to meet the goals and deadlines you have set for yourself.
3. Set Boundaries with Others

Maybe your spouse comes home for lunch every day, or your kids are out of school and think you have more time to play.

Explain to friends and family that working remotely is a privilege, not an opportunity for nonwork-related activities.

This does not mean you have to shut out those around you. If a neighbor stops buy, you can be open for short conversation, just as you would with a colleague stopping by your desk. End the conversation by saying, “it was nice seeing you, but I have work to get back to my work”, then return to your work.
4. Take Breaks

Just as you would in the office, be sure to take an occasional break in order to “reset” your brain. Working 8 hours non-stop will cause you to burnout and become more unproductive as the day continues. In order to prevent this, schedule a short 15-minute break at least every 2 hours in order to keep thinking clearly. Remember, the brain is like any other muscle: it needs time to rest.

5. Stay Connected

Do not isolate yourself

When working remotely, you lose the face-to-face interaction you would normally receive every day in the office.
Even if your job does not require you to call others on a daily basis, it is a good idea to arrange a few minutes each day with one or more of your colleagues for coffee chat and small talk.

6. Reward Yourself

When working from home, it is easy to lose motivation.

At the end of the day, focus on what you have done that day, rather than what you still have to do.
Working Remotely Guide for Parents:
Three steps to bring your old plan into your new normal.
1. Maintain routines.
The first step is to keep the structure of the day the same as it has typically been. Beyond the benefits of familiarity, maintaining a regular schedule will give you firm guideposts for building your work and childcare schedules.

Sample Schedule:
For one sample family, their daily routine used to include breakfast at 8:15am for the kids and then a day of activities with the nanny once the parents left for work: an hour of free-play time, an outdoor adventure, lunch at home, and then a mix of educational and craft activities before one more outdoor time. They ate dinner at 5pm before the parents came home at 6pm. In the evening they read books and played before bedtime at 7:30 or 8pm. This family should work to keep their routine. Whether or not they still have the nanny, they should try to keep the meals, blocks of activity, and outdoor time.
2. Create modified schedules.

Next, build a schedule for each week that incorporates these routines at a high level but is modified to account for your work blocks and other new responsibilities meals, chores, childcare.

In your planning make sure you’ve covered:

- What is your kids’ schedule?
- What will you have for each meal?
- When will you do chores? (laundry, dishes, tidying, cleaning)
- When are your key work meetings or times it’s critical you have someone to cover your work while you handle a household task?

Take this info and put it into a calendar and start assigning shifts and duties to specific family members.
2.1 Work Blocks.

Finally, create work blocks. Depending on your childcare, community, and quarantine situation, here are three ways to make this work:

- **A partner swap:** 4-hour shifts in which one partner works and the other cares for kids.

- **Short shifts:** 30-minute to 2-hour shifts that rotate among some number of adults.

- **Video shifts:** While you’ll still need to be paying some attention, it’s possible, especially with older kids, to organize virtual playdates (more on this below) or calls with grandparents that will keep them entertained while you’re getting in a phone call or doing some heads-down work.

It will feel like you need to squeeze every ounce of productivity out of every minute in the day. It’s a reality that many of us will have to find time to work early in the morning or after the kids are in bed. But be sure to schedule in breaks and unstructured times to unwind and connect with your partner and kids. This is going to be a marathon and it’s important we find ways not to burn out.
3. Swap in new ways to do old things.

Finally, if your kids are used to having playdates or weekly activities, find ways to keep those events on the calendar, just in a new form. Everyone will appreciate the social time and, as a bonus, it also can buy you 30 minutes of uninterrupted work time. Some options to consider:

- **Virtual playdates:** Choose Google Hangouts (or Zoom if you prefer) and then send invites to your kids’ friends’ parents. For the playdate itself, have a station set up in your house with a tablet, laptop, or Facebook Portal ready to go. During the playdate, it can be as simple as the kids catching up and coloring together or one of the parents leading an activity or reading books.

- **Creative athletic activities for the kids.** Register your kids for free online classes like Cosmic Yoga, Art Hub for Kids, or Go Noodle. Schedule these during the times they might otherwise be doing after-school activities. They should get some exercise every day — this could even be just going into the backyard and do some soccer drills or play catch.
THANK YOU!

We appreciate your time and dedication to learn to work from home more effectively during this difficult time.

Stay safe and don’t touch your face!