Best Practices: Managing Remote Workers Cheat Sheet

SITUATION

I need to ensure my remote workforce remains productive.

1 Embrace agile management through regular "stand-up" meetings. During these, ask each team member: "In one minute or less, what will you accomplish today?" Take notes of their answers, then check in the following day to see whether those goals were achieved.

2 Assess and monitor workers' technology setup and determine whether they need anything to help them make the transition to remote work easier. Provide employees with those tools. For physical items like computer hardware, use contactless drop-off wherever possible.

3 If employee focus is a problem while working remotely, have the employee break down their work into discreet chunks. Google the Pomodoro Technique for a good example framework, as this simple productivity tool can help achieve up to 75% productivity if deployed properly.

SITUATION

I need to ensure my remote workforce remains engaged and connected.

1 Give continual feedback on work output by e-mail, phone, and video conferencing software. Synchronous feedback is preferable while working from home.

2 Use a corporate instant messaging application to regularly check in on how your team is doing. Have some small talk before delving into feedback, as staff may be lonely. A little chit-chat (within reason) can alleviate feelings of isolation.

3 Openly recognize staff achievements as you would at the office, but beware of flooding everyone's inboxes, too.

4 Send out the occasional positive message or video. Levity helps during stressful times.

5 Play team-building games once or twice per week to foster deeper connections among team members and to keep engagement alive.

SITUATION

I need to ensure my remote workforce is remaining safe and healthy.

1 Share with employees your organization's procedures for ensuring a clean and sanitized office and strongly advise employees to follow the same procedures at home.

2 Send out occasional reminders encouraging employees to stretch, go for a quiet walk, and reflect on their day.

3 Demonstrate leadership by example by sending around pictures of yourself or other managers observing office safety protocols while working remotely.

4 Keep corporate communications and work requests to business hours only in order to maintain the commitment to work-life balance.

5 Share ideas and tactics for surviving isolation for all types of employees, including those with a family and those without.

SITUATION

I need my employees to adhere to workplace policies while working remotely.

1 Create and enforce an emergency work from home policy if necessary. If your organization has a regular work from home policy, re-communicate it.

2 Have remote workers re-commit to all organizational values and policies around work hours, availability, and request turnaround time.

3 Maintain regular processes and procedures for reporting vacation, unpaid or paid leave, and absences, while making small adjustments to cope with the realities of remote work.

4 Have your CEO, president, or owner send an e-mail thanking employees for their flexibility and commitment to organizational policies and processes. End with a tone of "we are all in this together, and please support your fellow colleagues as we work through this difficult time."

SITUATION

I need my employees to focus on fulfilling objectives, not simple "make-work" activities.

1 Designate certain modes of communication for specific purposes. For example, use instant messaging for questions, but e-mail for work deliverables and planning. Phone and video conference are best for brainstorming and daily status updates.

2 Break down larger business goals into short, clear, and achievable tasks. Communicate these to staff and set up regular check-ins to ensure completion.

3 Do not hesitate to suspend non-essential goals in favour of essential goals during crisis situations. What is or is not "essential" differs from organization to organization.

4 Communicate daily with other managers and executives to find out whether the environment for corporate goals is shifting, then adjust plans accordingly. This is crucial for remaining agile when business agility paramount.

SITUATION

I need to ensure my remote workforce continues to develop and learn.

1 Ask employees three core skills they would like to learn, foster, or hone during the pandemic period.

2 Time permitting, assign additional online training to round out the broader skill sets they will need when normal business resumes.

3 For high-potential employees and continual learners, send out relevant, thought-provoking articles or whitepapers and secure online subscriptions to thought leadership publications for these individuals.

4 Host one-hour internal learning webinars to build general competencies and skills company-wide.

5 There are many courses and learning and development opportunities available on the web that are now free of charge because of the pandemic. Find them and use them.