

Leading a Remote Workforce Through Volatility

The rise of coronavirus in the U.S. is causing many leaders to develop and execute remote work strategies.

Best laid plans, and appropriate technology platforms, can still go awry if leaders and managers don't strategize to drive focus, collaboration, and value delivery from remote employees. Below are key considerations you should make when managing remote workforces:

Foster community.

Remote work does not have to be lonely work. Leverage technology in conjunction with your company's culture to humanize communication via video conferences, IM chats, and good old-fashioned phone calls. Although effective meetings are important, make a little time when kicking off sessions to foster small talk and employee connection as well.¹

Train your team and communicate remote workforce rules of the road.

Remote work entails specific technology tools. Whether it's video conferencing or instant messaging platforms, employees will respond best if they have defined training on the tools in question, as well as straightforward guidance as to workflow and etiquette. For example, instant messaging can increase employee engagement with colleagues but can also be a distracting zero-sum drive toward urgent responses. Communicate expectations around response timeframes, appropriate language, and the best channels for specific work efforts.

Enforce accountability – in and outside of remote meetings.

Nobody likes an ineffective meeting. In fact, 90% of people report daydreaming in meetings, while 73% admit to performing non-meeting tasks.² Remote meetings can create engagement traps, where attendees fail to interact or interact only as observers. Work to empower your attendees by assigning them key roles and tasks within the meeting or meetings, calling on them in the moment and beyond to report on their progress. We also recommend leveraging effective virtual facilitation techniques to drive engagement and ongoing accountability, long after the meeting ends.

01

02

03



04

05

06

Understand and communicate role expectations and remote work goals.

Remote work entails a break in normal work patterns and habits. Leaders must proactively engage their employees to define and clarify roles, expectations, and deliverable outcomes in the transition to remote work. In addition, be prepared to experiment and learn, as roles formerly considered nearly impossible to perform remotely are redefined and executed upon.

Lead with empathy (and accurate information) in periods of volatility.

Geopolitical disruption will elevate your employees' (and your own) stress levels. Work to provide clear, accurate information across the business, focusing on internal (controlled) efforts and results, as well as external (uncontrollable) events. In addition, volatility can lead to organizations' prioritizing new strategies and corresponding tasks. Communicate these changes to your teams consistently. Understand your employees' situations and provide opportunities to voice their concerns or questions in response to new strategic imperatives. Most importantly, give them, and yourself, the space to understand what their current work situation looks like, in light of strategic changes and surrounding volatility, before diving into execution.

Leverage the right technology for the right work effort.

Drive remote engagement and delivery by leveraging the right technology for the right work effort. Video conferencing can create a more engaged, collaborative meeting (and reduce the number of muted, disengaged bystanders). Knowledge management platforms and collaboration tools allow employees to develop deliverables together in real time. Instant messaging tools provide methods for rapid communication across teams.