

## Employer Guidance - Managing Remote Teams

The non-exhaustive list of tips is intended to help managers set themselves and their teams up for successful remote working, from both a team productivity, and also a wellbeing and support perspective.

### 1. Have a Daily Check-In

Catch up with each of your team members one-on-one (over and above any team stand ups), and preferably face-to-face via video. Phone conversations and email will only go so far. Your team needs to see you, and you need to see them. We can get a better sense of this through voice and face to face than in written communications and this contact helps de-personalise the remote working experience which can be isolating. It also encourages healthy daily routine if these are scheduled in diaries ahead.

Tools such Microsoft Team, Slack or Zoom should make this relatively easy. At first, this should be every day. The purpose is to set the agenda and provide the feedback, direction and resources your team members need.

### 2. Communicate

It goes without saying that you should be in regular communication with your team. One of the hardest things about working from home, especially if you are used to an office environment, is the sense of loneliness and isolation that can set in. This is especially true considering that many people are practicing social distancing. Regularly checking in with each other on the phone, arranging online team meetings and encouraging feedback and discussion amongst the team are all proactive measures that can easily be put in place.

Sometimes, if a remote employee is busy or distracted while talking to you about something, they'll tend to agree just to get the conversation over and done with. It is important you encourage and make it easy for your remote employees to ask questions, so they have a crystal-clear understanding of everything that's going on.

When you are working remotely with your teams, you won't have the same moments in the office to talk about issues, like passing by a colleague's desk or at the coffee area. So give more time to employees for one on ones and give them the time to contact you on your chosen communication platform. Always let your teams know when you are available.

### 3. Take Advantage of Technology

As a manager, your job is to keep your team connected. Communication tools are a simple way to keep everyone engaged. While email and text messages might be a short-term solution, tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams are far better suited for collaboration and communication. However, as a manager of a remote team, you'll want to make sure that you're bringing the team together properly by ensuring that everybody is using the same platforms, so provide consistency and guidance as to expectations and how things will work.

Make sure that all remote employees have the same programs downloaded and are capable and trained in using them all effectively. Don't assume that everyone has used all of the tools before in the same way, especially when interacting with colleagues from other teams and areas of the business, as we need to let new ways of working bed in. Check everyone has access to the tools they need such as high-speed internet and fully functioning equipment - it is your responsibility as a manager to make sure that they do.

#### 4. Manage Expectations

Help your team figure out what they should do and create realistic expectations and timelines for their work, ensuring that expectations are managed regarding staff workload. Set yourself and your team up for success by clearly stating both the tasks and the reasons behind them, and help your team understand exactly what is expected and how you will measure success.

This means defining the scope, deadlines, and deliverables for each task or project your team is working on to ensure everyone is working towards the same goals. Just like you would do in the office, provide regular feedback, especially if things are not going as they should, or an approach needs to be adapted. Positive feedback is good to share with the wider team and corrective or constructive feedback is for 1:1s.

#### 5. Encourage Healthy Practices

To function effectively we all need to take care of our health and wellbeing. This can be especially challenging in stressful situations or when operating out of normal routines. Lead by example, focus on taking regular breaks from the screen, exercise and fresh air and the importance of eating well and taking care of our mental as well as physical health.

The news and media can be overwhelming at times, let your team know they can talk to you if that might help. Some people find it hard to switch off when working from home without the physical 'stop' of leaving the office – make sure that routine is encouraged and try to avoid sending emails and requests outwith normal working hours if you can.

*Helpful information for maintaining good wellbeing:*

- [COVID-19 wellbeing support](#)
- [Coronavirus and your wellbeing | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

*Some useful apps for mental health:*

- [Headspace](#)
- [Calm](#)
- [Spill](#)

#### 6. Be Flexible

Understand that, especially in the current environment, your team has a lot going on. That is not an excuse for not getting things done, but it is a reason to reconsider what productivity really means. Unless otherwise agreed, normal contracted working hours should apply. If regular work hours are an issue for some of your staff, for example if they are needing to care for dependents, then a proactive discussion must take place, to manage expectations and ensure clarity, with arrangements

regularly reviewed to check these are working in practice. Speak to your own manager or HR if you require guidance or support.

Finally, trust your team and give them the freedom and flexibility to get work done on the schedule that helps them be the most productive. This will be good for your team in the long run.

Please get in touch if you have questions or would like any additional advice or support by emailing [info@purposehr.co.uk](mailto:info@purposehr.co.uk)