

Promising Practices to Managing and Supporting Your (Newly) Remote Workers

In response to COVID-19, many of you have been asked to work remotely, or manage your team remotely. Fortunately, there are specific, [research-based steps that managers can take](#) without great effort to improve the engagement and productivity of remote employees, even when there is little time to prepare. As much as remote work can be laden with challenges, there are also relatively quick and inexpensive things that managers can do to ease the transition. This [article](#) was written in Harvard Business Review (Larson, Vroman, & Makarius, 2020). We have summarized the promising practices here:

- ✓ **Establish structured daily check-ins:** Many successful remote managers establish a daily call with their remote employees. This could take the form of a series of one-on-one calls, if your employees work more independently from each other, or a team call, if their work is highly collaborative. The important feature is that the calls are regular and predictable, and that they are a forum in which employees know that they can consult with you, and that their concerns and questions will be heard.
- ✓ **Provide several different communication technology options:** Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from having a “richer” technology, such as video conferencing, that gives participants many of the visual cues that they would have if they were face-to-face and also helps reduce the sense of isolation among teams.
- ✓ **Establish “rules of engagement”:** Remote work becomes more efficient and satisfying when managers set expectations for the frequency, means, and ideal timing of communication for their teams; and for when their employees can reach them during the workday.
- ✓ **Provide opportunities for remote social interaction:** One of the most essential steps a manager can take is to structure ways for employees to interact socially (that is, have informal conversations about non-work topics) while working remotely. Check in at the beginning of calls; virtual pizza parties; virtual cake days; coffee breaks; etc.
- ✓ **Offer encouragement and emotional support:** Especially in the context of an abrupt shift to remote work, it is important for managers to acknowledge stress, [listen to employees’ anxieties and concerns](#), and empathize with their struggles.

[Research](#) on emotional intelligence and [emotional contagion](#) tells us that [employees look to their managers for cues](#) about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If a manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will have what Daniel Goleman calls a “[trickle-down](#)” effect on employees. **Effective leaders** take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams, using phrases such as “we’ve got this,” or “let’s look for ways to use our strengths during this time.” We’ll add our own note of encouragement to managers facing remote work for the first time: **you’ve got this.**

If you have questions at any time, please speak with your own supervisor or departmental Human Resources Manager.

