Tips for Managing a Remote Workforce

"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."

– Peter Drucker

Some of the leadership traits that are best suited to managing a remote workforce are:

- Being naturally proactive
- Great communicators
- OK with ambiguity

Treat Remote Worker Like They are Local

While this instance is different from being able to plan for remote work, we still need to help remote workers feel connected. We don't have the opportunity to run into each other in the hall or on the quad, much less pop by someone's workspace.

- Create opportunities for checking in
- Instead of always resorting to email, pick up the phone
- Plan a virtual video conference

Take Advantage of Technology

UIC has multiple virtual platforms - go to the Academic Computing and Communications Center (ACCC) website for access and help: https://accc.uic.edu/

- UIC WebEx
- Zoom
- Microsoft Team
- Skype for Business
- U of I Box

Resource Your Team

Make sure your team has the technology it needs to get the work done and they know who to contact for questions, challenges, and concerns.

Communicate … a lot

Virtual workers needs communication to be direct and transparent.

- Be clear about your expectations and deadlines
- Talk about it first then confirm via email
- Allow for questions
- Keep in mind, loneliness and isolation can become an issue, especially if your team is used to working together
- Work style and communication style can contribute to work performance

- o Task oriented people may see this as a treat, they can focus on their work without interruption
- o People oriented people may exhibit more signs of loneliness and isolation, stress
- o Introverts
  - may love this opportunity to work without others around
  - may feel more productive
  - introverts who are task focus may get work done quicker and have some free time during the day
  - introverts who are people focused may find the lack of making person connections difficult and stressful
- o Extraverts
  - may feel stressed by not having the opportunity to see co-workers
  - may miss the collaborations
  - extraverts who are task focus will miss the opportunity to instantly share accomplishments
  - extraverts who are people oriented will miss the face-to-face interactions, both work related and idle chatter

Know your team members, where do they prefer to work and communicate. Don't ignore these additional stress points that may be occurring for your team members.

Have Regular Check-Ins

- One-on-one face-to-face video
  - o Phone conversations and email only goes so far
- Start more often, this can taper off a bit once everyone gets more into the swing of working remotely
- Some may be used to working more independently, others not so much, know your team members style
- Be understanding of the work from home environment for each person on your team
  - o May be sharing home workspace with spouse, partner, roommate also working from home
  - o Children in their household, schooling needs
  - o Even their pets and household needs

Manage Expectations

All good performance demands goals and expectations, people nee to know what is expected of them. Set yourself and your team up for success by clearly stating both the tasks and the reasons behind them, help your team members understand exactly how you will measure success.

- Help your team figure out what they should be working on
- Create realistic expectations for their work
- Managing expectations applies to **you** as well
- Adapt as things progress
- Define scope, deadlines and deliverables for each task, assignment , or project

Focus on Outcomes, NOT Activity

IT is not possible to manage every aspect of the work done by a remote team. Actually, you shouldn't be trying to manage every aspect of any team member's work. Instead of focusing on activity or hours worked, focus on the outcomes and measure your team accordingly.

- Provide options for your team members to work on things
- Set clear deadlines
- Provide learning opportunities
- Don't be a micromanager

Schedule Video Based Coaching

Coaching and feedback conversations still need to happen and these are best when we can see people, see body language and facial expressions, hear voice tone.

- Collaborate with employees to schedule and discuss training and professional development opportunities
  - Afterwards talk about what they have learned and how they will apply it to their work

Trust Your Team Members

It's hard, most of us had to quickly get employees set up and working from home, not much time for planning and preparation.

- 60% of executive leader say that 'earning trust is a major challenge for virtual team leaders'
- It takes approximately 4 times longer to develop trust in a virtual work environment

"TRUST but verify." - Ronald Reagan

Be Flexible

These are trying times for everyone, all our lives have been disrupted. This is not a typical day…

- Understand that teach team member has a lot going on
  - Work responsibilities
  - Child care and schooling
  - Care giving for family members
  - Household maintenance
- Within reason, allow personnel to set their hours, trust them to meet the expectations and outcomes you have discussed
- Give them some freedom to get their work done on a schedule that helps them be most productive

"Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better." – Bill Bradley

Resources

UICHR courses: Training Calendar https://hr.uic.edu/uic-hr-training-dates/

LinkedIn Learning offers video-based tutorials 24/7 for convenient, self-paced online learning. Industry experts teach thousands of tutorials on Leadership Competencies, Business Skills, and Computer Applications.
Tutorials range from 10-minute demonstrations to seven or eight hours of detailed information, longer tutorials are broken down into easy-to-manage 5-15 minute segments, and learners finish at their own pace. Your UIC NetID is required for login.
https://accc.uic.edu/services/professional-services/pd-training/online-training/
Select 'Access LinkedIn Learning

Log in and search for your professional learning topics today. This is a University sponsored free resource for all faculty, staff, and students of the University of Illinois System.

Articles

Top 10 Tips for Remote Work Teams https://global.wilsonlearning.com/resources/virtual-survival-guide

Top 15 Tips to Effectively Manage Remote Employees
https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/05/30/top-15-tips-to-effectively-manage-remote-employees/#590437bd503c

4 Ways to Manage Remote Workers When You Don't Know How Long They Will be Working From Home
https://www.fastcompany.com/90477145/4-ways-to-manage-remote-workers-when-you-dont-know-how-long-theyll-be-working-from-home