

## Managing Remotely? How's It Working Out?

By now, most of us have had the experience of working remotely, with managers and staff separated from each other for extensive periods. The common challenges of remote work are well-documented. Lack of face-to-face supervision and access to information, inadequate technology, distractions at home, and social isolation contribute to a number of problems that can tax the most skillful manager.

Here are 4 ways you can support your staff and make the new normal less frustrating for everyone.

1. **Establish structured daily check-ins.** These don't have to make staff feel like you're checking up on them. My team and I simply used Microsoft Teams to say a group "Good Morning" and let each other know if we were in or out that day. Otherwise, we interacted one on one or in meetings, as we normally would.
2. **Establish the rules of engagement.** Set expectation for the frequency, means and ideal timing of communication for the team. Email may not be enough for important conversations; make sure staff can reach you by phone or text, if necessary. Make sure that team members are sharing information with each other appropriately, so that nothing important falls through the cracks.



# The Expert Manager

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3. **Provide opportunities for remote social interaction.** The easiest way to do this is to leave some time at the beginning or end of team meetings to catch up with everyone is doing, though no one has to share if they don't want to. Virtual office parties can work, too. When I first started attending these virtual events, they felt artificial and forced, but I learned these events reduced the sense of social isolation that many staff members were feeling.

4. **Offer encouragement and support.** It's important for managers to acknowledge the stress that working remotely can bring. Just a general question such as, "How is this remote work situation working out for you so far?" can help. Once you ask the question, listen carefully, and let the staff member's stress or concern (not yours) be the focus of the conversation. Be sure to express confidence in the staff member and the team to meet this ongoing challenge with strength and purpose.

**A lot of people enjoy working remotely— but managing remotely is a different story! How has it been for you? Which of these tips resonate with you? What can you do to make managing remotely flow smoothly?**