

TECHWATCH 24-7



HOW TO MANAGE YOUR  
**REMOTE  
WORKFORCE**

Reality is setting in: remote work isn't going away for many of us any time soon. As a manager, it can make a real difference to how you interact with your team.

This ebook offers several strategies to help you encourage productivity, collaboration, and engagement with your remote employees.

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# Managing Your Remote Workforce

Remote work is not new. The ILO estimated 7.9% of employees globally were home based. That's approximately 260 million workers, Even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, the majority of companies transitioned to remote work, if temporarily. It's made the viability of a remote workforce plain.

- Research into the likelihood that different occupations could work remotely going forward found:
- 34% of American jobs could “plausibly be performed from home”;
- Up to 29% of Argentinians and 34% of Uruguayan workers are in occupations doable remotely;
- In Europe the same holds true for 24% of workers in Italy, 28% in France, 29% in Germany, 25% in Spain, and 31% in Sweden and the UK.

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The global economy is slowly mending, yet it's safe to say remote work is likely to remain part of the new business as usual. That means managers need to make changes to their tactics. Even experienced business owners enjoy a new approach to managing from afar. These six strategies can help.

### **#1 Turn to Technology**

The move to remote work was often held back in the past by objections over lack of oversight. Workers would be on their own! How would a manager know they were doing their work?

Fortunately, technology today makes it easier for managers to track employee productivity, no matter where they are working. Available applications take

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screenshots of employees' screens every few minutes. These tools can record what windows are open, for how long, and even record key strokes. Yet employees don't always love this technology, and there are some legal questions.

Tracking output is often a better way to go. Project management software such as Microsoft Project, Asana, and Trello, Basecamp, or Smartsheet can help. Even a shared Excel spreadsheet will work in a pinch. Giving everyone access to shared project software supports collaboration. At the same time, the manager can log in and view task progress, deadlines, and more.

Another good idea is to establish consistent systems for your team's information management. You might have relied previously on handing on paper files; now,

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you'll need to ensure everyone knows what folder documents go in. Make sure they have access. Microsoft 365 can help with this. Its Sharepoint offering is a comprehensive document management and storage system.

## #2 Trust Your Team

Digital technology today makes it easier for managers to know what's going on off-site. Still, don't lose sight of the importance of trusting your team. Your remote employees may thrive when they feel they have more autonomy.

Trust in the workplace helps:

- increase productivity;
- improve morale;

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- support team collaboration;
- reduce decision-making time;
- foster individual responsibility.

In managing remote employees, also watch out for those who struggle working solo. Working from home requires people to:

- self-direct and motivate;
- manage time well;
- work alone for long periods of time;
- effectively manage virtual interactions with co-workers, clients, and supervisors.

That's not for everyone, which leads us to our next strategy.

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## #3 Establish Regular Check-ins

There are many platforms out there for conference calling. To name a few: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Skype. You can do voice only or video, but it's a good idea for managers to encourage video. Video conferencing offers several advantages over phone conferences:

- It offers the ability to take visual cues, read body language, and make eye contact.
- Seeing each other helps create social bonds and shared understanding.
- It often makes meeting more productive – video conferencing users can save a minimum of two hours a week with the technology.
- Group collaboration is enhanced by the greater interactivity of a video setting.

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- Video communication heightens concentration, which allows participants to absorb more information.

Added features from video calling can help, too. Sometimes it's easier to show someone how to do something than explain it. Screen sharing capabilities help you do this. Slide shows or whiteboards can be available, too. Recording video conference calls makes them available to employees working different hours, plus, the discussion can be saved for future reference.

Regular virtual meetings help make a human connection and keep employees engaged. If someone needs more help, add a one-on-one call to help that individual feel heard.



## #4 Set Expectations

Participating in video conference calls would be one expectation. You'll also want to make clear from the outset your other requirements for remote work.

These could include:

- establishing a policy for when work is done – some people will stick with their old working hours, others might embrace more flexible schedules;
- determining how work hours are tracked and performance measured;
- specifying ways in which employees can reach you and when;
- laying out parameters for continued group collaboration.



Establishing security responsibilities of your employees is also critical. Make sure they know to:

- log out of a work device when not there;
- watch out for suspicious emails;
- avoid using public Wi-Fi;
- require passwords on their devices;
- secure their home Wi-Fi.

### #5 Prioritize Team Building

With remote employees on the team, everyone will have to get used to a shift in team camaraderie. Managers have to take more care with how and what they communicate. Relying only on email could backfire. Personal contact goes a long way toward developing solid relationships with your reports.



At the same time, you still want to allow for fun. Many online collaboration tools allow you to share animated GIFs or emoticons. After all, fun reduces stress and energizes teams. Research shows more engaged employees are more creative, communicative, and productive.

As a manager, you can also prioritize employee recognition. Slack and Teams both offer apps that aim to improve team culture. They make it easy for peers to recognize each other. Also, managers can make their appreciation known.

Keep the team connected by fostering an active virtual community. The daily or weekly check-ins will help. Also be sure that you are including everyone when you can. Remote workers often feel lonely and left out. Put the right people on all the email



distribution lists that they need to be on to keep team members up to date.

### #6 Listen Well

People respond to managers that make them feel respected and heard. Remember that someone can no longer just come stand at your desk to ask you a quick question in person. You'll want to be careful that employee questions or concerns don't get lost in your crowded email inbox. Setting up filters for inbox management can help.

It's also a good idea to set aside time during the day to handle emails and voicemails. This helps make sure your full attention is on your team's needs and challenges.

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Listen actively. You might use survey software or a polling app to gather your remote employees' input. Reaching out for their feedback helps them continue to feel connected. You might also gain new insight from people looking anew at objectives or challenges.

### Conclusion

Remote work, managed right, can be a great opportunity. With your employees working remotely, your business can benefit from:

- reduced office costs;
- improved employee health and well-being;
- lower absenteeism;
- greater employee retention;
- a wider talent recruiting pool;



The strategies in this ebook can help supervisors better manage a remote workforce. Productivity, collaboration, creativity, communication, and engagement can all benefit.

Managing a remote workforce is easier with the right technology in place. We're here to help.

Our IT experts can set up webcams, remote security, or project management software. We can help you migrate to the cloud or upgrade hardware or software. Contact us today at 555-5555!





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