

## How to manage a remote team



Successfully managing a remote team requires a different approach to managing people who are in the same physical workp Here are a few tips to manage a remote team, drive outcomes and maintain engagement, collaboration and employee satisf

### 1. Trust your staff

The first step is to trust your people. This is the foundation of any successful working from home experience, but many mana they struggle with uncertainty about whether the work will be completed to the same standard as would be seen if the employ working in the office. Others worry about time theft. If you find yourself in this situation, do not be tempted to increase your le over your employees' workload. Micromanaging will only lead to low employee engagement and morale. Similarly, while there employee monitoring tools available to track your employee's activity throughout the day, if you feel the need to use such softi flag that there could be a lack of trust in your employer-employee relationship.

Instead, take a step back and trust your remote employee to deliver what is expected of them – which leads into our next poi

### 2. Set expectations

Employees working from home need to know what is expected of them. Just as you would for staff working in your office, set expectations with remote staff around their duties, priorities and deadlines. So long as you are realistic and focus on outcome these expectations ensures that your employees know what constitutes success when working from home and can achieve it can be assured that the tasks you need completed will be done so on time.

As part of this process, establish a regular one-on-one phone call or videoconference with each employee to discuss and agr priorities. This also provides your employees with an opportunity to ask questions. Depending on the nature of their work, this occurs daily or weekly – any more frequently and it can be seen as interference.

### 3. Minimise disconnectedness

Such regular one-on-ones should also be supplemented with a recurring team meeting to help minimise any sense of disconn who work remotely. While your remote staff cannot attend this team meeting in person, you can use videoconferencing tools stronger sense of connection, team spirit and unity.

While email is a great tool to get a message across in certain instances, such as when sharing documents, videos and image dispersed workforce, it can pose challenges when people are working remotely on a larger project. For example, you can enc never-ending email thread, people forgetting to copy others in, conversations getting side-tracked and the common objective can be combatted with a videoconference, in which you lead a real-time conversation with a clear, unified objective. By giving chance to speak and provide updates, you foster an inclusive conversation that keeps everyone aligned and informed.

Given that remote employees miss out on the informal information exchange that typically occurs naturally in an office across the water cooler, videoconferences also play an essential role in filling this communication vacuum.

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## 4. Be perceptive

In-person meetings allow you to read the body language and facial expressions of attendees to gauge their mood, which can identify and diffuse any possible conflicts, tensions or issues between team members. Such non-verbal communication is missed in a telephone call or teleconference. Therefore, it's advisable to schedule a videoconference for regular team meetings when possible.

You will however need to ensure you are paying extra attention. Video calling can help mitigate the problem to some extent, but it's still tricky to read people's body language and facial expressions when you factor in aspects like camera quality and angle. Therefore, pay attention to people's voices, specifically any changes in tone, pitch or pace, which can help you identify and nip any potential problems in the bud.

## 5. Keep the rules consistent

Make sure remote employees follow the same rules as those who work in the office, including treating company information confidentially and keeping equipment and data safe.

All staff, whether they work in an office or remotely, should also use the same agreed communication tools. Whether you choose phone calls, instant messaging, videoconferencing or mobile apps for communication – or a combination of tools – make sure your team understands the best tool to use when to communicate with each other.

## 6. Set clear boundaries for working hours

Encourage employees to stick to their regular finish time. Diligent employees may find themselves regularly working into the night, blurring the boundaries between work and home life. Make sure you ask your staff to log off and unwind at the end of each day to avoid burnout.

## 7. Offer time management tips, if required

Not everyone is a natural at effective time management. You may find that for some of your employees, the lines between their work and professional life begin to blur when they work from home. If this is the case, offer your advice on how to schedule their work to minimise distractions and maintain their productivity. These [tips on time blocking](#) may help.

## 8. Use technology to fill the social gap

In an office environment, team members have ample opportunities to build both a professional and personal rapport with one another. Impromptu interactions can bring a team together.

When people start working from home, many find that they miss these exchanges and they may even begin to feel isolated from their colleagues. Therefore, explore other ways you can provide staff with the social interaction they need. For example, set up a channel to share successes or status updates.

You can also ensure your remote workers are involved in brainstorming and collaboration by using online tools – and there is no shortage of digital products to help achieve this.

## 9. Maintain your team's culture

Maintaining a team or organisation's culture when all or some of your employees work remotely is often a manager's greatest concern. However, there are a few simple ways to keep a team working together as a cohesive group.

To begin with, a team's culture boils down to the way people work, such as how they communicate with each other, their customers and stakeholders. As we've mentioned above, there are various tools that can be used to keep the team connected, so make sure your team – both those who work in an office and those who work remotely – use them regularly. They really will become the lifeblood of the team.

Next, make sure your remote employees understand your organisation's values and align their actions accordingly. You no doubt hired your employees in part because of their natural fit with your team's way of working, so this shouldn't be an issue. But if you sense an employee's way of working slipping out of alignment with your organisation's culture, you'll need to address the issue promptly.

In addition, invite remote workers to use the group chat platform for casual as well as business conversations. This can serve to keep the team connected.

You could even consider taking this one step further by hosting a virtual Monday morning coffee chat for example, with a short videoconference in which people share what they got up to on the weekend as well as what their main priorities are for the working week ahead. The former allows your team to build and maintain rapport, while the latter allows them to gain an understanding of what everyone is working on and remain engaged with the wider team focus.

Videoconferences can also be used on a team member's birthday, enabling everyone to send their best wishes. You could even arrange for a local florist to deliver a bunch of flowers to your employee's home beforehand.

We've even heard of bosses arranging for a food delivery service to deliver to all their remote staff a weekly lunch at a set time, with people then connecting via videoconference for a virtual team working lunch.

Such actions are certainly unconventional, but they will help you maintain your team's camaraderie, culture and morale.

To sum up, uniting a remote workforce mainly involves trusting your staff to do their job and clearly and regularly communicating to ensure priorities and expectations are set and met, and your culture is maintained. In doing so, you'll achieve a unified, successful and productive remote workforce.

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Nick Deligiannis, Managing Director, began working at Hays in 1993 and since then he has held a variety of consulting and management roles across the business. In 2004 he was appointed to the Hays Board of Directors. He was made Managing Director of Australia and New Zealand in 2012.

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