

Getting the most from remote management

More and more people are managing some or all of their team remotely these days – partly because technology allows and in some cases, because circumstances dictate. Whatever the reason for you managing others remotely, or even you being managed remotely, here are some tips as to how to get the very best from yourself and your team if you're in that place.

Know your team: find out each member of your team's preferences for communication, contact, reassurance, updates and communicate with them on that basis.

Know your team: remote management needs an even deeper level of understanding of your team, where you're getting more into the psychology of each individual team member. Check in and see how your people are really doing, rather than going through a tick box exercise of contact.

Play to strengths: know the strengths of each member of your team and encourage them to use those strengths when working on tasks or projects or when under pressure. Also, know the risk areas of each of your team members which may show up when they're under additional pressure or in new circumstances.

Provide clear objectives: people need clarity and focus, particularly when working remotely, so being certain on what they are being asked to do in a given week or month and the prioritisation of those objectives is really important.

Manage to outcomes not inputs: managing remotely requires even greater focus on outcomes and not on activity, so be sure what you're measuring as an outcome, or objective, for each member of your team and focus on how that outcome can be achieved most effectively.

Clear communication: when working remotely, there's less opportunity for your team to get clarity informally on what's happening in the team or organisation, so make sure that you always communicate what's happening clearly to your team and encourage them to get clarification on whatever they need.

Weekly face to face meetings: make sure that these happen, ideally on a regular, diarised basis and make sure they're videoconference (if possible) so that members of your team feel present and so that you can pick up on any body language cues where they may appear.

Whole team check ins: making sure that everyone has the opportunity to experience whole team communications and 'live' check ins or meetings from time to time is even more important when working remotely, so make sure that you set up, and encourage your team to attend, any such meeting so that you all stay connected and supported as a single team.

Respect boundaries: respect time boundaries with your team and this becomes extra important when managing people remotely – if someone is finishing work at 5 or 5.30, then they shouldn't be contacted after that time, or at least, you need to agree that there's no expectation of a response until the next working day.

Remember your organisation's values: if values are important in your organisation, keep them present. Particularly during times of uncertainty or change, organisational values can take on a greater relevance than ever as they can bring people certainty and reassurance.

The most important thing of all to remember when managing remotely: don't manage 'remotely'! Do be sure to communicate often, to be available to remote workers and to help them feel supported at all times. And look after yourself too, that way you'll feel better able to be there for your team.