With some effort, progressive managers can find ways to engage their remote staff, leading to an increase in productivity, team work, and engagement.

KEYS TO LEADING AND ENGAGING EFFECTIVELY INCLUDE:

- Communicating often.
- Being positive and encouraging.
- Relying on everyone's contribution.



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CALL OR TEXT JUST TO SAY HELLO

Irma's organization decided to have a number of its project managers work from home. Stacy is a project manager who works for Irma. Irma and Stacy have their regular one-on-one meetings every other week, either by phone or Zoom. Additionally, Irma makes a point of calling Stacy at least one other time every week. Irma does not have an agenda for these additional calls, and usually starts out the conversation with, "Hi, Irma. I am just calling to say hello. How's everything?"

This phrasing by Irma gives Stacy the opportunity to bring up a business matter, if needed. Often, though, Stacy will comment about her son, her dog, or her garden, in which case Irma may bring up her daughter or cat. Often they talk for ten to fifteen minutes about what's going on at home. Irma has found this technique keeps the line of communication with Stacy open.

DON'T FORGET ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

Don't fall prey to the adage "out of sight, out of mind." Be sure that you have one-on-one meetings with remote staff, just as you have with your staff

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Engaging Remote Staff

With more organizations having employees working from home, managers need to ensure that they are keeping remote staff engaged.



who are in the office. If feasible, on occasion, you can invite the remote employee into the office for his or her one-on-one meeting with you. You might use this as an opportunity to also have coffee or lunch with the employee before or after the meeting. Or, consider occasionally meeting your remote employee in person at a nearby coffee shop. Of course, you can also hold your meetings with remote staff by videoconference.

GET REMOTE STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN MEETINGS

It's easy to inadvertently exclude remote staff who are participating in meetings virtually. Dan, a Team Leader, makes notes to himself to "call on" his two direct reports who work remotely during meetings. Sometimes Dan will ask one of the two employees

whether they would like to add to a comment made by someone else. For example, he might say, "Wally, anything you would add to Cherry's comment about the new onboarding program for claims processors?"



If a remote employee is, by nature, an introvert, you will especially need to help them participate in virtual meetings. To help the introvert prepare, you can in advance tell the employee that you may ask him or her to offer thoughts on a particular topic.



project meetings at times that are either very early in the morning or late in the day for your remote staff.

RECOGNIZE REMOTE **STAFF**

Just as you should for staff who are in the office and who you see more often, be sure that you recognize and provide feedback to your remote employees. Remote staff who may sometimes feel left out



will appreciate your recognition and feedback.

TEAM BUILDING

Managers with a number of remote staff should consider virtual team building activities that enables the remote staff to participate. For example, some managers will occasionally hold a virtual lunch or happy hour with their staff via videoconference. These small gestures can go a long way in engaging all of your staff, especially the remote employees.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT **TIME ZONES**

If you have remote staff who are in different time zones. be respectful of the time difference. For instance, if your remote employee is based in Seattle and you are in New York City, try not to schedule a meeting at 8:30,

since that will be 5:30 a.m. for your employee in Seattle. Also, if your remote staff are on project teams, check to be sure that project managers are not consistently scheduling



BUILD TRUST



We all know that trust is earned through action. Be reliable, friendly, and do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it. That will go a long way in building trust among your staff, both onsite and remote.

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