

6 Simple Things you can do to Manage Better in a Remote World

Prior to COVID-19, the majority of workers in the U.S. performed most or all of their work in person. According to SHRM, only 24% of the U.S. workforce had some kind of remote work arrangement in 2018. How times have changed. A remarkable [42% of the US workforce](#) is now working from home, and the results of this new work environment and style are mixed at best. There is a high degree of strain on both employees and managers. Since this change is likely to continue in some form for the foreseeable future, it's important for managers to skill up to effectively engage with employees.

Below are 6 tips that can help set the stage for better engagement:

- 1. Check in with your employees.** "Walking the floor" in the traditional sense is impossible for most in today's environment. But regular connection is critical. A simple first step is to go virtual: one-to-ones, skip-level meetings or weekly team meetings can easily be transitioned to telephone or videoconference. Some employees are struggling with balancing family and work or just miss the everyday water cooler chat. Consider setting open office hours a couple of times per month so they can reach out at their convenience. This provides an opportunity for employees to come to you formally or informally, on their own time. Finally, consider the occasional informal interaction: a phone call just to say hello, check in and see how they are doing.
- 2. Turn cameras on...but allow for individual circumstances.** With our limited ability to see family, friends and coworkers in person, it is important for managers and employees to see one another. By having cameras turned on it helps people stay visually connected. Set the expectation by turning on your own camera. Sometimes family interruptions or unexpected noise (those loud lawnmowers and leaf blowers) mean taking a quick break from the video or putting the audio on mute. Grant your team some grace when the unexpected happens.
- 3. Create opportunities for employees to engage and socialize with each another.** Take a break! Allow your employees to gather and talk about non-work related topics. These could include morning coffee, lunchtime get togethers or social gatherings toward the end of the day. Adding a theme can help get the conversation started and make it more fun. Keep in mind that it's important for you as the manager to show up and participate in the interactions.
- 4. Bring the team together more frequently.** When we are all in person, larger group gatherings like employee town halls or quarterly business reviews are held periodically throughout the year. In a fully remote environment, these gatherings are even more critical. You may need to convene the larger team even more often to share information, especially as it relates to COVID-19 and its impact on your organization.

5. **Ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.** Following proper remote meeting etiquette is a must. When leading a conversation be mindful of creating an inclusive environment where all involved are able to engage and share their thoughts and ideas. By doing this your employees should feel like they belong and are part of the team.
6. **Be flexible and understanding.** Work and personal lives are blended together in today's remote work environment. Many of us are parents, caregivers, or have other responsibilities to attend to during the work day. While work still needs to get done, it is important to give your employees the flexibility required to manage all aspects of their lives. If an employee needs to make lunch at noon, try to be flexible and avoid scheduling a meeting at that time unless absolutely necessary.

Being thoughtful about how and when you engage with your employees can have a positive impact on the team. Using a little creativity can help make up for one's inability to casually walk around and engage with employees.

Need assistance with managing the remote working environment? [Stanton Blackwell](#) is here to help. Reach out to me at info@stantonblackwell.com and let's talk through how to make remote work better for you and your employees.



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