

APRIL 2020



# EMPLOYER TIPS AND TRICKS FOR WORKING FROM HOME



The aim of this guide is to provide you with a variety of useful tips and tricks to help in your transition to managing a team who need to work from home as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. For many this is something completely new and will take some time and adjustment to get right.

This guide offers some simple suggestions and considerations to assist you in this journey. This guide aims to provide some useful tips for managing your team while working remotely. This may be new to you and your team, but with these simple suggestions, the transition can be easier.

## MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A WORKING FROM HOME POLICY

Before you consider having employees working remotely make sure you have a working from home policy in place. This ensures your employees are clear on their obligations.



## HAVE EVERY REMOTE EMPLOYEE COMPLETE A WORKING FROM HOME AUDIT

Your employees' homes become an extension of your workplace and their safety continues to be your responsibility. It is important you have a thorough understanding and assess the risks associated with every employee working from home.



## SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

It is even more important to set clear deliverables, deadlines and KPIs. Encourage your team to self report against these. Set up working from home guidelines for your employees, such as no calls between certain hours, emails must be responded to within 12 hours etc.



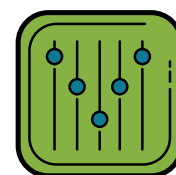
## TRUST YOUR EMPLOYEES

Trust begets trust. Majority of your employees want to do the right thing and make this work.



## ALLOW TIME FOR ADJUSTMENT

For many employees this is a massive change and there is going to be an adjusted phase. Be patient and allow for this. Support your team in this change.





## FOCUS ON GOALS, NOT ACTIVITY

Be very clear about what you are looking to achieve and allow your team to work out the best way to get there. Innovation is likely to be a by-product of doing things differently.



## ENGAGE YOUR WORKFORCE & GIVE THEM A SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS

- It is more important than ever that you continue to build an engaged and supported Workforce. To have a disengaged or not engaged employee costs 34% of their salary.
- What doesn't get measured doesn't get done. Make sure that KPIs are set and that you have a daily standup over Zoom/Skype/video conference call. Initially, you might like to do this at the beginning and the end of the day. Make employees accountable but making these KPIs public for all to see. That way no one can hide.
- 6Q's is a great way to measure your team's engagement on a monthly basis (the survey only takes around 1-2 minutes to complete!) <https://www.6q.io/>
- Consider running online training for your team! This is a great opportunity to get your employees all together (on video conferencing call) and upskill them.



## USE TECHNOLOGY

- The reality is that there has never been a better time in terms of technology support to work from home. We recommend the following:
- Trello is a great tool for managing projects
- Voxer is a quick and easy tool to allow teams to communicate.
- Zoom is a great video conferencing tool - they also have virtual backgrounds available which are very handy if anyone has a cramped or untidy workspace
- Slack is another effective team communication tool



## BE FLEXIBLE BUT KNOW YOUR OBLIGATIONS

- If you have employees working from home and employees work flexibly at night you may have to pay overtime allowances. Ensure you know the requirements of your industrial instrument. You do have options here so be sure you seek appropriate advice if this impacts you.
- You may be liable for any additional expenses your employee incurs while working from home. Be clear on your expectations here. If an employee usually receives an allowance such as travel or parking consider switching this (while they are not needing it) to cover the costs of an employee working from home. Make sure this agreement is made in writing.





## MENTAL HEALTH

- Make sure you have Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place
- Encourage exercise. If your team normally commutes, can they use their normal commute time to go for a walk/do some exercise.
- Keep especially close to those employees who you feel will struggle with the change to remote working or who are having a particularly difficult time. Examples include:
  1. Employees who are particularly panicked about the situation with COVID-19
  2. Any employees considered in the high risk category due to the current COVID-19 outbreak (i.e chronic health issues, age, family with health issues)
  3. Employees who you are aware suffer from a mental health condition
  4. Employees suffering/possibly suffering from financial stress or hardship as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak (e.g. partner self employed /has casual employment status and no work )
  5. Employees who have been asked to work from home who will struggle eg; employees who live alone, employees who are going to really struggle with the lack of social interaction.



## CHILDREN AT HOME

Usually, working from home policies do not permit working from home if the employee needs to supervise their children. This rule may need to be relaxed with school closures etc. Think about new guidelines which allow for more flexibility in terms of when your team meetings can occur and when the work can be done.



## COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!

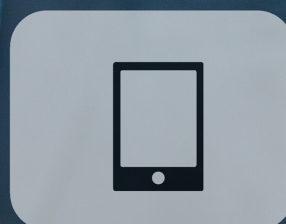
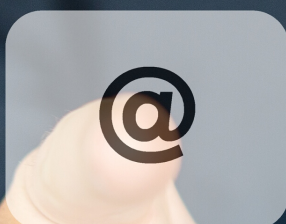
Communication is really important to:

- Keep everyone up to date in a dynamic environment
- Ensure everyone understands the framework for working from home
- Allowing you to 'lead by example' in setting the framework for how you want everyone else to act and behave
- Counter any issue of social or work isolation.



### Communication suggestions:

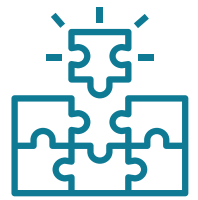
- Daily or weekly update meetings - 'virtual huddles'
- One on One meetings - Check in individually with your people to ensure they are Ok, any work or productivity issues etc.
- Stay close to your people and keep the lines of communication open.
- Support them and show extra care and compassion.





## ENCOURAGE INCLUSION

Promote an inclusive working from home culture. Ensure you don't have mini teams or groups forming who are off doing their own thing and intentionally leaving people out who need to be included.



Remote working can cause employees to feel paranoid if they are being left out of emails, meetings and communications. Ensure you set clear boundaries and quickly manage situations where this is occurring.

## ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES TO VIRTUALLY SOCIALISE

In order to counter any feelings of isolation or separation, encourage opportunities for your employees to 'virtually socialise'. Set up some events during normal break times, team meetings or allocated times. Suggestions:



- Virtual coffee breaks - a chance just to chat about life in general with work colleagues
- Virtually eat lunch together - just like sitting in a cafeteria only via zoom or another video conferring facility
- Lunch time quizzes - as above but with a quiz thrown in
- Virtual Friday night drinks - obviously ensure some ground rules are clearly set here. Remember you still have a WHS obligation while your employees are at home!
- Tour of the work space - have everyone give a brief tour of the set up and home they are working from home
- Virtual team building activities - online charades, remote working bingo, competitions (i.e cute picture of the day).

There are lots of great ideas on the internet of virtual team building ideas.



## PRACTISE WHAT YOU PREACH & LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As a leader, ensure that you are actively following any guidelines you have provided for your team. If you are asking them to (for example) only have calls between certain hours, respond to emails within a set time frame and be on time for all meetings... Make sure you are keeping to the rules too!



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WARNING

- There is a real concern in the community that in particular victims of Domestic Violence are at real risk, particularly those who are having to work from home. Essentially, they are being forced into a position where they are 'being sent home' to their perpetrator.
- If you have employees who you suspect or who are victims of domestic violence, we strongly encourage you to reach out to Domestic Violence Business Solutions on 0448 744 874.



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