



5

Ways to Engage Employees When Going Remote

To help slow the spread of COVID-19, companies are increasingly taking their employees off the road and out of corporate offices, shifting to work-from-home cultures as much as possible. For many employees, this will be their first time working remotely.

How can you best engage and communicate with your workers across multiple locations? Consider these five remote employee engagement ideas.



1 Create a camera-on culture.

Think about the collaboration challenges that going remote can bring—like trying to keep pace on fast-moving conference calls or breaking into conversations when you are not the loudest voice.

Try using video conferencing—with webcams on—for all meetings. It ensures that everyone has the same audio and video experience. It also allows the host to survey video feeds as they would in an in-person environment—to see who's engaged, who may have questions and who's checked out. Daily face-to-face video interaction also helps build relationships over time across the organization.



2 Talk time zones.

Always keep time zones in mind, especially if you have team members across geographies. And remember: It's unrealistic to require employees to work the same office hours given the reality of how coronavirus may be impacting commitments such as childcare and home care.

Encourage employees to work within their own time zones, and avoid scheduling meetings before 9 a.m. PT and after 5 p.m. ET, but also allow room for flexibility. Once you determine how each individual works, respect their working hours.



3 Use technology to build a sense of community.

Working remotely does keep employees from gathering in a conference room to celebrate a birthday or stopping by their co-workers' workspaces to recognize significant milestones. But you can offset the void of cubical conversation while connecting employees:

- Purposefully leave space at the start of calls or video chats for small talk, to fill the gap from the lack of hallway banter.
- Provide a central location where team members can share highlights from their weekends and their top priorities for the week.
- Encourage team competitions or fitness and other well-being challenges (e.g., a Million Steps Challenge).
- Use Skype or another instant messaging service to spontaneously celebrate team wins, individual achievements, birthdays and work anniversaries.



4 Offer a high-touch onboarding program for new hires.

Take care of your newer associates, who may be less familiar with whom to go to for guidance, or how to find company policies and procedures. Assigning a mentor or hosting daily check-ins during the first few weeks can help to answer over-the-cubical-wall questions.



5 Honor actual office hours and the weekends.

Just because you find it convenient to catch up on email later in the evening doesn't mean your co-workers or direct reports do.

Refrain from creating an always-on working environment by clearly communicating expected response times for emails. Or simply delay sending emails until the next day.