Managing a Remote Workforce

Top 5 Considerations

Hope McIntosh – www.macgroupconsult.com
## Remote Management: What Stays the same? What Changes?

### What stays the same when leading remotely?
- Helping your team understand how their contribution supports the Goals and Objectives of your company
- The tools and technology you use every day
- Ensuring your team understands their daily tasks and providing detailed context of the work at hand
- Removing obstacles
- The importance of planning and being proactive in your daily activities
- Keeping “office hours”

### What changes when leading remotely?
- Communication is more scheduled and frequent vs. face to face interaction
  - How are your calendaring skills? They need get great and fast
- Providing feedback scheduled and disconnected vs. Real-time /on the spot coaching
  - Check in frequently but don’t micro manage: Default to video interaction as much as possible (watch for non-verbal queues)
- “Leave it at home” vs. balancing the blend of personal and work physical locations.
  - Be more flexible on how the work gets done: default to work at home policies if in doubt
- Team building happy hours and activities vs. building comradery virtually
  - Get creative. Ensuring no one feels siloed
1. Educate yourself on your company’s Telework or Remote Work Policies and Procedures.
2. Shape the remote work standard operating procedure based on your team’s needs if needed. Then communicate it!
3. If you don’t have one, get HR to publish one quickly. If that’s not possible, develop a “social contract - work from home” for your team.

Key elements

Work place:
- preferably quite room or converted space for home office. Follow company ergonomic guidelines as much as possible

Work hours:
- non-exempt: track hours based FLSA follow same procedures as if on-site.
- exempt: agreement between manager and employee on work hours performed (set minimum standards: example is: online and available during business hours, etc.)

Work tools:
- Access to company resources through BYOD or company assets is at company discretion
- Access to office supplies normally provided (paper, staples, etc) but at company discretion
- Cell/data plans (stipend – ask for professional vmail greeting to be added), internet typically not provided

Common Code of Conduct Guidelines:
- Follow same standards as if on-site
- Workplace etiquette, promptness, if customer facing common dress code
Managing a remote workforce for the first time?

TOP 5 considerations for effective management of teleworkers:

1. Make LIVE communication a top priority

- Make sure pertinent information is easily — and frequently — communicated. Otherwise, you risk having a disjointed and unproductive team.
- Calendar up with regularly scheduled department meetings, project meetings and individual meetings
- Take time to communicate expectations, set up processes and tools for documenting and sharing information, and make sure no remote worker feels isolated or siloed.
- A simple calendar app - have basic information, such as project timelines and team members’ work schedules, should be current and available
- Require email signatures with pertinent contact information, set up voice mail
- Start the week: 30 min virtual staff call, set the tone of productivity providing detailed context for the upcoming weeks projects or tasks at hand.
TOP 5 considerations for effective management of teleworkers:

2. Check in but don’t micro manage

- Never let a remote worker feel like they’re on an island. Aside from the department and individual meetings you schedule, try to connect with every team member at least once a day (a few times a week for sales types) via instant message or email.
- Default to video interaction as much as possible (watch for non-verbal queues)
- Telecommuters need to feel confident that their manager believes they will work as hard as they would in a regular office, logging similar hours, hitting deadlines and maintaining productivity.
- Be careful not to micromanage. Don’t just call and ask “how are things going?”
- Institute the use of a Manager / Individual meeting aka: “one-on-one”. Rarely missed, the one-on-one is MOST IMPORTANT activity you will perform than any other meeting or task you will do in a week.
TOP 5 considerations for effective management of teleworkers:

3. Emphasize work and life balance

- If you and your team are doing this for the first time. Allow time for your teleworker to adjust, but set clear and reasonable expectations
- Have your teleworker come up with a plan and support them, and then expect them to stick to it
- It’s easy for dedicated creative professionals to become workaholics when they decide to embrace the telecommuter lifestyle. So, encourage teleworkers to practice good time management.
- Set your own start and stop times, and have teleworkers do the same. Make sure you respect each other’s schedules. Refrain from contacting your workers outside of office hours when possible and don’t expect a response while they’re offline.
Tips for knowing your teleworker doesn’t have work life balance….

Missing deadlines, usually precedes:
• Late and distracted participants on team calls
• Sounds of distractions cooking/eating, dishes, washing machines/dryers
• Not getting on video so they can be seen
• Poor quality is becoming a norm

What do you do?
In a one-on-one: Be specific and ask when/where your teleworker is performing their tasks?
Suggest alternative work schedules 5-7am or after 9pm when family is asleep
Suggest alternative work location (converted bedroom vs. kitchen counter)
When in doubt refer to the teleworker policy and guidelines

The bottom line:
Proper time management can become part of the conversation – even if its you helping them figure out when to do the laundry.
TOP 5 considerations for effective management of teleworkers:

4. Focus on deliverable quality and outcomes, not the steps to get there

- Providing feedback is in a scheduled and disconnected format vs. Real-time on the spot coaching
- The sensitivity to micromanaging is greater in a teleworking environment
- Important: when you interact with your teleworker, ask the status of their outcome and not necessarily the steps they are taking to get there
- The powerful use of the open ended question “Tell me about <insert deliverable due here> you are working on?” Most people will generally open up to their own steps, challenges, and milestones they are proud of when you start with a simple “tell me about it”. Then you can then support and adjust the conversation as necessary.
- The use of “I feel” vs. “You are demonstrating vs. You are not demonstrating”
- When non-verbal, disconnected conversations are the norm...WORDS MATTER
TOP 5 considerations for effective management of teleworkers:

5. Build morale and comradery to strengthen team

- As a manager, it is equally important to set expectations and clearly articulate project tasks as it is to build team morale in a virtual environment.
- Team building normally done in Happy hours, lunches, team outings must continue, creatively.
- End the work week with a team wrap-session. A 30 min meeting that’s less formal. Consider guest speakers, trainings, or topics of interest
- Rotate facilitators, don’t be the only one always leading/talking on a team call
- Highlight team weekly team heroes! Give gift-cards, prizes, special perks (have the team come up with it)
- Leverage and highlight individuals’ strengths in a virtual team environment, share the stage
- These small gestures can go a long way when remote
About Hope McIntosh

Hope is a 20+ year veteran in business and technology leading large virtual teams of engineers, technologists, sales, and operations across the globe and within the 50 states. With MCG, her clients are seeking highly trained and agnostic consultative services, in the business disciplines of Technology & Digital, Sales, and Strategy. Seeking to conquer complexity, drive material change, and spark positive and long-term impact.
“Yogi Berra once said, ‘If you don’t know where you are going, you are likely to end someplace else’. A simple and provocative thought with broad implications. Clients don’t seek outside consultation when things are going well; they come to MGC when things are challenging, complex, and the plan on where to go and how to get there is difficult to see”. - Hope McIntosh, CEO

hope@macgroupconsult.com
505-508-8819
www.macgroupconsult.com