



Managing remote working teams through coronavirus

Hi,

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, an increasing number of employees are working in remote locations, away from the office for significant periods, often for the first time. This can raise challenges for people managers. How can we, as managers, promote a connected sense of team when we are not geographically co-located in the same office?

Working from remote locations may have negative impacts both for individuals' mental wellness and productivity, and for the broader teams' ability to collaborate and flourish. People managers can play a significant role in reducing these impacts. This an opportunity for managers to significantly influence the culture of the team, guiding them through the coronavirus turmoil and beyond, with compassion and focus.

This resource is designed to support and guide managers, by setting out practical tips designed to foster a sense of connectedness across teams, regardless of location. We hope you find it useful.

Jane & Karen

Jane Perrier & Karen Hallenstein

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10 tips for staying connected with your remote working team

The purpose of this guide is to offer practical tips to support and guide managers of remote working teams, to help everyone stay connected and thrive.

There are many advantages to remote working, including increased productivity and profitability as well as enhanced work satisfaction and retention.

However, remote working can also be challenging. For individuals, it can sometimes be difficult to stay motivated and connected. For managers, it can be challenging to foster a collaborative and effective team culture to drive positive outcomes.

This resource is designed to give managers of remote working teams some practical tips on how to manage their teams, and is based on our experiences in leading teams working flexibly, from home and interstate.

We'd love to hear about your experiences, so feel free to get in touch - ipervescencecollaboration@ipervescence.com

Jane Perrier & Karen Hallenstein

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What is a manager's role when leading a remote team?

We, as people managers, play a profound role in 'setting the tone' for our teams and fostering a positive inclusive culture. We can help our remote teams feel connected to each other, to ourselves as their engaged and empathetic manager, and also to the broader business in which they work. The importance of a manager's role in fostering a connected team is amplified for managers who lead remote working teams.

Why is connectedness important?

In a work context, positive connectedness is one of the factors contributing to teams that thrive. Positive interactions with our colleagues and understanding how our role adds value to the broader organisation are important motivators.

In the absence of connectedness, individual team members can become isolated and disengaged, which can negatively impact their mental wellbeing and productivity.

What can you do as the manager of a remote working team to foster connectedness?



Lean into the challenge

Accept that you'll be doing things differently. Effectively leading a remote team requires a fresh approach and a dedication of time. Aspects will be very different to how you've approached team management in the past.

Leverage technology

Technology will play an important role in keeping everyone connected. There are a range of collaborative platforms and tools on the market. Sometimes the technology gods will be smiling, and other times less so - a sense of humour and a resilient attitude will come in handy! Make sure that your team has the skills to use the technology provided, and has access to resources which will help them get the most out of the hardware and systems used in your business.

Invest 1-on-1

Nurturing your relationship with individuals is critical. Regular 1-on-1 sessions, ideally via video, will help give you visual as well as verbal communication cues. These sessions

are a great opportunity to discuss not only work matters, but also to catch up more broadly, to get a deeper sense of the personal circumstances, wellbeing and requirements of each team member.

'Check in' as a team

A team 'check in' can be a great way to kickstart the week. Go around the team (2-3 minutes each) giving each person an opportunity to share how they're feeling, or a personal anecdote. This promotes understanding and empathy across the team for each other's unique circumstances. In formal team meetings, rotate the 'Chair' so everyone feels a sense of responsibility. Make sure you pause for questions, allowing everyone an opportunity to contribute.

Your 'virtual water cooler'

Create a 'virtual water cooler' for team banter, to allow for spontaneous moments of connection across the team. This can be achieved via a shared digital platform or group chat forum or email. Team members should feel empowered to 'dip in and out' depending on their preferences, in line with your communication protocols.

The types of things that could be shared include:

- an informal flow of thoughts, amusing memes or banter
- birthday wishes & celebrations of other milestones
- videoclips & photos of team members' remote working environment, with comments on what's working well and what's challenging
- technology tips | 'quote of the day' | Tuesday night recipes | fund raising or community service activities



Do stuff together

The (newly coined) adage *'the team that engages in activities together, stays together'* is equally true for remote teams. Just because people aren't physically located together, doesn't mean they can't do things as a group. What about a guided meditation session, virtual Friday drinks, favourite t-shirt days, or a haiku poetry competition? Use your judgement to encourage activities that are as inclusive as possible and recognise the diversity and interests of team members.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Setting up regular communication channels is critical for remote working teams. Sharing key information will empower your team and connect them to the broader business. As a manager, you should also know individual workdays, so you can tailor communications to respect their 'work-time' and their 'personal time'.

Embed an empathic culture

Empathy and compassion are key ingredients for connected, thriving teams. If people are working from home due to personal difficulties, or are feeling isolated due to

remote working, leading with compassion and kindness is likely to positively impact their mental wellbeing, productivity and loyalty. The good news is that you can embed an empathetic culture by modelling empathy in your interactions, and by calling out and rewarding empathetic behaviour.

Work collaboratively

Share challenges and work collaboratively as a team to brainstorming potential opportunities and solutions. In addition to drawing out new perspectives, challenging assumptions and driving better outcomes, collaborating in this way will foster a sense of team engagement and empowerment. A central repository for your team's emails and documents can also help to make everyone feel that they're all on the same page, strengthening collaboration.

Be patient and be present

Perhaps the most important tip we have for managing a remote team is to be patient and give your full attention to an individual or the whole team when you're interacting. Confusion and misunderstanding occur when people feel isolated and 'out of the loop', and this can happen more frequently across remote teams.

You will have to work hard at building and maintaining trust and embedding effective communication channels, but doing so will help everyone stay connected and thrive.



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