

GUIDE TO REMOTE MANAGEMENT

How to Help Managers Lead and Stay Connected
in the New Era of Work

HAVE REMOTE EMPLOYEES?

If your managers are leading teams in a variety of locations, they're likely facing new challenges. Whether teams are fully remote or hybrid, it's indisputably more difficult for managers to communicate with employees, ensure productivity, and maintain team engagement when teams are distributed. Your managers need support, reminders of best practices, and fresh tactics to lead their teams and stay connected.

New data from the Paychex Pulse of HR survey¹ reveals that half of all companies have and plan to maintain hybrid work arrangements, at least for the next 12 months. To help with the management challenges this creates, two-thirds of HR leaders say they'll train their managers on how to better communicate with and manage remote staff.

Use this guide to help better support your managers when it comes to leading remote employees.



DON'T WAIT, COMMUNICATE: 5 WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS WITH REMOTE EMPLOYEES

1. Facilitate problem-solving

It might seem obvious, but the first step to ensuring effective communication is establishing protocols for escalating urgencies, getting manager input for decision-making, and troubleshooting. Without this, productivity can suffer while remote employees wait for manager input to make a decision. Encourage managers to be available to their remote teams for critical problem-solving. For example, suggest the use of online messages for simple issues and updates, and a specific email subject line for when timely input or a face-to-face discussion is needed. Encourage managers to pick up the phone or have employees call them directly when input is critical, since

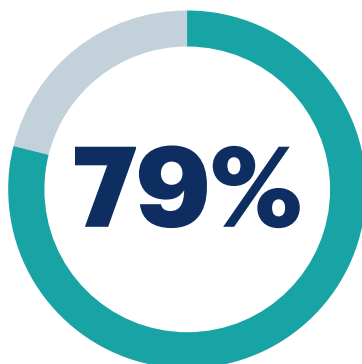
“hopping on a quick video call” is today’s equivalent of “stopping by my office.”

2. Ensure meetings are optimized

Are meetings designed to be productive no matter where participants are located? Make sure managers include agendas, add descriptive meeting titles, and clearly outline the purpose of the meeting in all meeting invites. These practices will encourage attendance and call preparation. Have them send all materials intended for discussion to participants prior to the meeting and outline how participants should prepare for the call, in advance. And, don’t forget to remind managers about “desk equity” — if some participants are in person and others remote, they should ensure proper technology is in place to facilitate communication for all attendees. Meetings should conclude with managers following up with priorities, next steps, and deadlines.

3. Encourage regular meetings

While this might seem like what *not* to do, frequent, shorter meetings can help eliminate the need for longer sessions.



Number of HR leaders who say better employee/manager communication is a top priority.



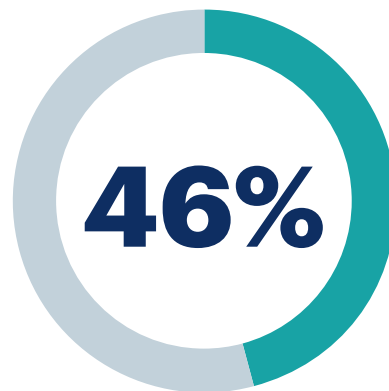
Consider having managers schedule daily or twice-weekly “stand-up” meetings with their teams to set and review work priorities and progress on initiatives. They can use this time to make up for hallway conversations and other typical office connections, while addressing day-to-day priorities and longer-term goals to keep employees on track and feeling part of a larger team effort. If possible, have them schedule these check-ins at the same time each day for consistency.

4. Make sure employees feel nurtured

Communicating appreciation and providing feedback are critical in today’s hybrid work environment. Encourage managers to provide positive feedback immediately when an employee has a “win,” and to celebrate both small and large employee milestones. Suggest they set a dedicated time to meet with employees to discuss workload and job concerns. Many remote employees need this type of regular reinforcement to stay positive, productive, and engaged.

5. Support skill-building and career development

Make training and development a component of the performance review process, as this establishes a protocol for managers to incorporate training, skill-building, and career development conversations into their meetings with employees — especially with those who are remote. Rather than wait for a once-a-year performance review,




Number of HR leaders who say that the top focus for remote employees is supporting well-being.

conducting shorter feedback and review sessions 3–4 times a year can help professional development, and can assist managers in helping employees set future goals, in addition to reflecting on the prior quarter. Have managers consider adding “stay” conversations to these meetings for employees who may seem disengaged or show other signs that they’re considering

leaving the company. Many HR technology platforms provide performance management capabilities that help to ensure these kinds of conversations are being held effectively and consistently. Some of these technologies even include training libraries and more sophisticated systems that make it easy to create custom training plans and courses that can be assigned to individual employees.

TOP HR TECH SUPPORT FOR HYBRID/REMOTE WORKERS


HR leaders plan on providing technology that...

52% 

Makes it easy for employees to communicate questions and concerns to management

52% 

Enhances communication between managers and remote/hybrid employees

49% 

Fosters remote/hybrid workspace productivity

i.e., computers, mobile devices, monitors, furniture

48% 

Supports collaboration between on-site and off-site employees

i.e., conferencing and workflow management tools

49% 

Helps staff track, reschedule, and swap shifts



REMOTE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES (AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THEM)

Managing remote teams is a whole lot easier said, than done. Here are four common challenges you may be facing as a business with remote employees, and what you can do to mitigate them.

1. Adjusting and communicating new policies for remote/hybrid teams

First, review your current employee handbooks and workplace manuals in light of hybrid work. Gather input from your managers about the issues they're experiencing to be sure you're addressing work environment and productivity issues. HR leaders should take responsibility for updating policies and protocols as needed to reflect any recent changes, and review all adjustments against any local, state, or federal regulations to ensure your company remains compliant. You may also need to delineate differences in policies by role or job title.

Once policy updates have been made, a plan should be developed and implemented to communicate these changes to the leadership team and broader workforce. Be prepared for both positive and negative reactions from employees. You may want to develop an exception policy or a list of anticipated questions to use in the communication and policy rollout.

2. Enforcing policies consistently

Re-train your managers and leaders on key policies related to the hybrid workplace. Pay special attention to items such as hiring and discipline, as well as daily issues such as flexible hours and workplace surveillance. If you've made recent policy changes, communicate them in a timely manner to



managers and leaders, and emphasize why those changes are being made, as well as the perils of a lack of enforcement. Provide clear direction to managers on when/how to share policy changes with employees. HR leaders can also help to ensure your company remains in compliance with any federal, state, and local regulations that may be in place. Additionally, consider what remote/hybrid work policies need to be included in job postings and discussed during the interview process, and ensure your management team is aligned on this protocol.

3. Managing compliance for employees in multiple jurisdictions

Completing all necessary paperwork to adhere to employment laws and requirements in a variety of locations is essential and complicated, as states and localities often have different regulations. If you employ or plan to employ workers in multiple locations, you should review any laws regarding job posts, hiring, pay and payroll, taxes, and time off (among others) for each jurisdiction in which your employees reside. Managers with distributed teams need to be trained on any policy differentiations based on geographic work locations, as well. Employee handbooks should reflect individual rules and requirements for the various geographic locations, as well as company-wide policies.

4. Onboarding/offboarding remote employees

Remote employees need effective training, support, and welcoming if you want them to hit the ground running at your company. This includes having the right technology to do so — as well as the training and IT support to help employees understand how to use it. Ensure your HR technology platform allows you to effectively — and seamlessly — onboard remote employees. Do you offer a digital experience for employee verification, payroll management, and benefits enrollment?

Once an employee starts, managers should send an email and hold a meeting to introduce them to the team. It may also be beneficial to pair new employees with a co-worker who can mentor them.

When it comes to offboarding, make sure processes that were once done in person are able to be done remotely. For example: Unlike on-site employees, it can be difficult to get equipment and technology back in a timely fashion when a remote employee leaves. So, be sure to have a return policy in place, and a process that ensures all digital logins are promptly deactivated. And before a remote employee leaves, don't forget to review discipline/dismissal procedures for noncompliance with the return policy.

REMOTE MANAGER ASSESSMENT

Use this chart to assess your existing employee/manager communications and determine the areas where more support is needed.

| | ALWAYS | SOMETIMES | NEVER |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| It's easy for employees to reach managers to solve small or large problems that impact productivity, or to simply voice their concerns. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Managers communicate meeting agendas clearly to ensure attendance and productivity, with time built in to socialize and answer questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Managers clearly communicate and emphasize priorities and important deadlines at the end of each meeting. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Managers nurture employees by regularly providing positive feedback. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We have processes in place that make it easy for managers to have consistent conversations with employees about career development. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Have a Business Challenge You're Looking to Solve?

Whatever your business needs are, Paychex offers award-winning technology and a comprehensive suite of HR solutions to help you meet them. Learn more about our variety of products and services, and take our quiz to discover which ones might be the right fit for your business.

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¹The 2023 Paychex Pulse of HR Survey was conducted via an online survey from Feb. 24 to March 31, 2023, among 1,350 HR leaders and business principals at U.S. companies with five or more employees. It is the seventh in an annual series of benchmark surveys investigating HR leaders' challenges, priorities, and use of technology.