

# TIPS FOR MANAGERS AND LEADERS



## SOCIAL DISTANCING AND WORKING REMOTELY

can pose a challenge for team members, managers and leaders in our face-to-face office culture, where we are accustomed to being able to regularly see and interact with one another.

We are experiencing a unique moment across our business around the world. This is an important opportunity in our managerial/ leadership development to focus on how we engage with our people, communicate purpose and motivate performance. Below is some guidance that we hope serves to set you up for success as a team lead during a time of challenge and change.



## 1 CREATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY.

The health and safety concerns associated with COVID-19 are all over the news and social media. This is impacting people physically, mentally and emotionally. Both being out of sight and loneliness topped a list of concerns in a study of 2,500 remote workers. It is critical for our people to know they have job security and that we value their trust in us as we adapt and pivot our practices. This is an opportunity for you to seek feedback from your team, learn from them and recognize their ideas. Ask open-ended questions and listen. Organizations that master psychological safety can gain a competitive advantage and help teams and the overall organization perform better.



## 2 TRUST YOUR TEAM.

While we have specific office hours in all of our locations and monitor staff time, please trust your team to be punctual and do their jobs. Focus on the work and their well-being versus the time clock. Some companies have cited that their managers will ask that emails are replied to in 24 hours, establish specific times for project status updates, etc. Create a plan with your team members that best supports a constructive workday and goals.



## 3 STAY POSITIVE AND PATIENT.

This is a challenging time for everyone. As a manager or leader, your team is looking to you for guidance and stability. If you are uneasy or anxious, they will feel the same. This is a continuously evolving health and safety scenario. You may not have all of the answers as this scenario evolves, but you can empathize with them and offer assurance that you and the company will support them.



## 4 BE FLEXIBLE, OPEN AND UNDERSTANDING.

Many team members have families. Schools and universities may be temporarily closing and/or switching to online classes, and daycare options may be limited. Some people are looking after aging parents or relatives with special needs. Working remotely may create additional stress and anxiety for parents and caregivers. Some of your team members may ask you for a change in working hours or other items. Some roles/functions may be difficult to perform remotely (e.g., lab work, etc.) Please listen to their requests and be as open and flexible as possible in working with them. There is always a solution.



## 5 MANAGE EXPECTATIONS.

Yes, there are a lot of unknowns. Studies show most staff are unclear of expectations in the workplace, let alone remote scenarios. Work with your team members to identify realistic goals and manage workloads during remote work times. Periodically ask them what is working, what should change, how can you better support them?



## 6 RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT DIFFERENCES.

We all have different working styles. You should know the styles of your team members. Remote working may be stressful (e.g., interaction with people, time management, etc.) It is important for you to check in with your teams in a friendly way to see how they are doing. Communicate what is happening, ask them what they need, how you can support them, etc. This is important for keeping teams motivated.



## 7 CREATE A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY.

Consider gathering your team together over Zoom or Microsoft Teams to listen to a podcast or watch a webinar or TEDTalk about leadership, best ways to work remotely or another topic of interest geared toward personal/professional development. Perhaps ask team members to nominate a topic and "host" this. Perhaps set a time with a senior manager or leader for team members to ask questions about his/her career journey, advice on working when traveling, etc.



## 8 COMMUNICATE AND BE ACCESSIBLE.

Overcommunicate. Share information with your teams. Ask questions. Be available to respond to their questions. Engage them in dialogue. How is the remote working scenario going for them? What are they learning from the experience? Why do they feel more (or less) productive? We all have to be proactive in the process. This is an opportunity to learn and innovate workplace practices and stakeholder engagement across the company.



## 9 MAKE THIS FUN.

The U.S. Patent Office implemented a remote working approach in 2011. One of the managers hosted a weekly pizza party. She would have the same type of pizza delivered to her team members at the same time, and they would "party" by video chat. While our scenario is temporary, think of fun, creative ways to engage with your teams. Share the ideas!

