

Getting Started

If your organization is having employees move to a telecommuting arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic, you will need to make sure that you formulate a plan. Because many employees aren't used to exclusively working from home for an extended period of time, your plan will be their guide for success. Listed below are some things that you should consider when you're setting up your company's telecommuting plan.

Create a Comprehensive Telecommuting Policy

This policy should include your company's work hour expectations, information about work-provided equipment and cyber security, and expectations regarding communication. Your policy should also outline any other expectations unique to your organization. See the Telecommuting Policy in the Appendix for a sample policy.

Choose the Right Technology

As the name suggests, telecommuting requires the use of technology. This means that your company needs to review its technology to ensure that it's conducive for telecommuting. At a minimum, your company should have a platform that employees can use to communicate with one another and managers, like Google Hangouts, Zoom, Slack, Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business, email and a secure network. Remote workers are proven to benefit from using technology that enables video conferencing, as it mirrors face-to-face connection. Consider licensing or purchasing technology that allows employees to use video conferencing to connect with each other and managers. Make sure that employees are comfortable with any new technology you acquire to prevent any confusion.

Set Guidelines and Expectations

Employees are looking to you for guidance regarding their new working arrangement. That's why setting guidelines or expectations is so important. Be sure to communicate your expectations of your employees while they work from home. Employees who are aware of what your expectations are will be more motivated to meet those expectations. If you want employees to be online for specific hours of the day, communicate that. If you want a daily report of what they are working on, be sure to ask.

Establish Regular Check-ins

While employees are working remotely, it can be easy for them and managers to feel like they're out of the loop. As such, it's important that your telecommuting plan provides guidance on regular check-ins with employees. Many successful remote managers establish a daily call with their remote employees. If your employees work independently, a call may only be needed between the employee and the manager. If your employees work collaboratively, holding a conference call may be better.

Avoid Micromanaging

When employees are working from home, it can be tempting for managers to reach out to check in on them constantly throughout the day. However, micromanaging employees while they're working from home can cause them to feel like they're not trusted to do their work, which can lead to disengagement and productivity issues.

Provide Opportunities for Social Interaction

Employees who are working from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely not familiar with the social isolation that can be felt as a result of not going into the office. As such, managers should encourage and provide opportunities for employees to interact with each other. It can be as simple as making small talk at the beginning of each phone call to try to normalize the situation.

An Employer's Quick Guide to Managing Remote Workers

Offer Plenty of Support

Employees may face adversity adjusting to their new work routine and dealing with the uncertainty the COVID-19 pandemic is causing. Employers should be prepared to offer support to their employees by providing transparent communications and making opportunities for employees to talk to their managers about how they're feeling, any challenges they're experiencing and how their manager can help alleviate any of their concerns.

Considerations

Every employer's telecommuting policy will look different. However, the most successful telecommuting programs keep the above suggestions in mind. Remember, this new arrangement is an adjustment for employees and managers alike, so communication and flexibility are key. Frequent check-ins and feedback are great ways to evaluate the success of your program and identify any areas that can be improved upon.