

4 Best Practices for Supporting Your Remote Team

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2021 marks the beginning of a new year and the end of a year that brought many trials and tribulations. Companies battled business shutdowns, workforce reductions and adapted to a new work-from-home lifestyle that we all thought would last two weeks. Employee burnout was more prevalent than ever and brought new challenges that came with remote work.

Almost a full year after the world changed in the blink of an eye, we're still figuring out how to navigate this "new normal," not knowing when we'll all be able to gather in conference rooms and ditch the video calls that have all of us fatigued. While there have been many advancements made towards ending the pandemic, morale should remain a top priority for HR professionals and team leaders alike.

Check in with your teams on a regular basis: While touch-bases were undeniably easier when the team could quickly congregate in a conference room, continuing these practices virtually is extremely important. With tools like Google Meetups, Microsoft Teams and Zoom at our disposal, virtual communications are more efficient and easier than ever. I recommend setting up one-on-one meetings with key team leaders on a weekly basis, 15 to 30 minutes each depending on topics to be discussed, to walk through the status of both personal and professional life. While keeping business initiatives on track is crucial, it's also important to remember that we're all human and experiencing different challenges with life right now. The more an employee feels supported in career and in life, the higher quality of work they will produce.

Outline manageable work expectations: A recent Gallup study reports that 28% of full-time employees reported feeling burned out at work "very often" or "always." An additional 48% reported feeling burned out "sometimes." That means most full-time employees experience burnout on the job at least sometimes.

Burnout comes from a lot of different sources, but one of the most common contributing factors is an overwhelming workload. With the daily workflow looking a lot different than it did a year ago, it's important to shift expectations and workloads based on industry changes. Checking in with your team on a regular basis can help teams get ahead of this by opening up the lines of communication and giving employees a safe space to voice their concerns and express any grievances they might have with their current workload. With the work-from-home lifestyle continuing into the new year, it's important to continue being nimble and flexible with employees when it comes to workload. It's also crucial to clearly outline what an employee is responsible for so there's no confusion that can be blamed on not being in a traditional office environment.

Encourage a productive work/life balance: If you're anything like me, finding this balance has been one of the biggest challenges of the remote work lifestyle. With our home offices just steps away from our kitchens and living rooms, it's easy for your personal and professional lives to blend and for previously set boundaries to fade away. Working late becomes easier without the time commitment of a commute and it's easy to fall out of any previously existing personal care routine. With this new challenge continuing into 2021, I highly recommend reiterating the importance of a balanced lifestyle to employees across the board. Encourage your teams to get outside and take a walk, do a fitness class, put time aside to pursue a passion or hobby each day and

make sure teammates are taking the time they need for their mental and physical health. If there's one thing we've learned in 2020, it's that we need to give ourselves grace.

Trust the people you hired to do the job: My perception is if you can't trust the people working for you then there is a hiring problem. Trust yourself to know that you selected a good team to work at a high leave. Trust your employees to be adults and resist the need to micromanage.

As we all continue navigating our new "normal," communication, reasonable workloads and encouraging boundaries will all lead to a more successful remote work lifestyle. Offer guidance in all areas of life, personal and professional, and lead by example — at the end of the day, employees watch your behavior and emulate it. We're all facing these challenges together and as business leaders, our priority is always our people.