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As many companies adjust to working remotely, there is an overwhelming need for employees to be recognized and engaged on an ongoing basis. No matter where they are, they want to be connected to their leaders and each other, and they want to work for managers who appreciate them. With just a few simple adjustments, leaders can successfully recognize remote workers using many of the same techniques they use for on-site workers.

1
one**Effectively use technology.**

Working remotely depends entirely on technology to be successful. Take advantage of all forms of technology available when communicating with and recognizing your team members.

- Ask your employees which communication method or technology platform works best for them. Some will have very particular ways they like to be communicated with, while others will be open to whatever is available.
- Mix up the way you send recognition messages. For things you want the entire team to know about, use a broadcast method like a conference call. For a personal word of congratulations, pick up the phone whenever possible. Challenge yourself to think of ways to make it different or special, like sending a handwritten card in the mail or hosting a virtual team celebration.
- When you do have “face-to-face” opportunities with employees, make the most of it. Spend time with each team member, one-on-one if you can.
- Be timely with all recognition. Place your call, send your text or post your message as soon as you are aware of the recognition-worthy action. (Depending on the technology you choose to communicate with, you may need to be mindful of time zone differences or work schedules.)

2
two**Make a personal connection.**

It can be difficult to maintain relationships or form new ones when working remotely. It's important for leaders to reach out and take the initiative to make connections.

- For new hires, send a welcome message to their home a few days before their start date. Make a point to schedule a video call on their first day so they can “meet” their new team members.
- Get to know at least one thing about each employee – their hobbies, volunteer activities, pets, children, etc. Having things to talk or ask about other than work will go a long way in forming a more personal connection.
- It's easy to forget to greet people when you work in a remote setting. Be sure to reach out to each employee every day or two. Keep it light and friendly so they know it's in the spirit of camaraderie and you are not “checking up” on them.



- Use video conferencing to meet with each employee once a week. Ask what went well for them that week. This gives you the opportunity to give immediate feedback for good work.
- Proactively ask for feedback and use employee responses as an opportunity to improve how things are working. Even if you can't solve their problem, sometimes the best thing you can do is simply listen. It shows you value their opinion and are willing to take the time to hear it.
- When you make a mistake or can't follow through on a promise, communicate it quickly and clearly with the affected employees. Although they may be disappointed, they will appreciate that you are treating them with respect.

three

Build community

When working remotely, employees don't have the same opportunities to develop friendships that can happen naturally in face-to-face work environments. However, you can foster a sense of community by using technology and helping employees form their own personal connections.

- Create a virtual team recognition area where all team members can go to see who is being recognized and when appropriate, to recognize each other. This can be done through a private social media group or using other internal applications like group chats, collaboration tools, etc.
- Ask new team members to share a photograph and a brief bio as a way to introduce themselves to their co-workers. This can be posted in a team recognition area or distributed in other ways.
- Help all team members see the big picture of what is going on by sharing messages of praise from customers, suppliers, managers and other employees. Communicate with the mentioned employee first and ask permission to broadcast it to the rest of the team. Encourage your team to post about or share the positive work they are doing and projects they are excited about so the whole team can celebrate successes.
- Have fun! This is important since you don't have the luxury of light-hearted, casual hallway conversation. Create a virtual traveling trophy to send via email or to post in the team recognition area. It can be a photo of a crown for the "reigning monarch of deadlines" or an image of sunglasses for being a "rock star." If you have photo editing skills, adapt an employee photo with the sunglasses or crown.
- Project a smile in your voice, in your written words and on your face during video calls. The more you project an upbeat positive attitude, the more your community of employees will too. Attitude is contagious – both positive and negative.



4

Magnify the success of your team

Most employees want to advance within their careers, whether it's by being promoted or taking on new and more challenging tasks. In a virtual workplace, it can be difficult for employees to get the exposure they need to position themselves for career development.

- A great way to recognize employees is by simply telling other managers and your leaders about them. Be sure to tell your employees when you've passed on their praises to others in the organization. Not only will it make them feel great but it will show them you care about their personal success at the company.
- Whenever you implement a suggestion made by an employee, let their colleagues and your managers know where the great idea came from. Doing this gives you and the employee credibility throughout the company and builds trust within your team.
- Employees are more amenable to change when they know what's going on from an organizational perspective. Show employees how much you respect them by sharing key organizational measurements on a regular basis. Remote workers may not have easy access to the company "grapevine" so this keeps them tied to the mission and reinforces the meaning of their work.
- To help employees develop professionally, suggest specific company online training classes, additional education, books to read or seminars to attend to build their skills.
- Be sure to acknowledge key milestones to show employees you value their loyalty and commitment. This can be something like a six-month anniversary as a team member or completing three consecutive quarters supporting a certain project.

Whether you manage virtually or in a traditional environment or both, you always have the opportunity to make someone's day. Each time you recognize or compliment an employee, you are encouraging them to continue the good work and to find even better ways to succeed.

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