7 Ways to Maximize the Effectiveness of Your Remote Work Plan

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence of remote work was only growing. Employers realized the possibilities of remote work to connect their company with top talent, regardless of the employee's physical location. Now, out of necessity, large swaths of businesses across the globe have transitioned to remote work.

Previously on this blog, we've covered 10 steps you can use to create a quality remote work policy. In this article, we'll detail seven ways your business can maximize the effectiveness of your remote work plan. Maximizing the effectiveness of your remote work environment takes a lot more than the right equipment. Keep reading to learn these seven strategies and how your business can implement them.

Maximizing Your Remote Work

There are seven crucial steps your company should take to optimize your employee's success while working remotely. Read about these steps, in detail, below.

1. Be Transparent and Create a Safe Space

The first step to fostering a productive remote work environment is to be as transparent as possible. Plus, your leadership should work to create safe spaces for all employees to communicate. Ideally, both actions will work in combination to accomplish the same objective: to give your employees an environment to communicate openly.

Your business needs to be direct and honest with every communication. This transparency should also encourage employees to ask questions and admit when they have an issue they don't know or understand. For example, employees should feel comfortable admitting if they are having trouble using a particular technology.
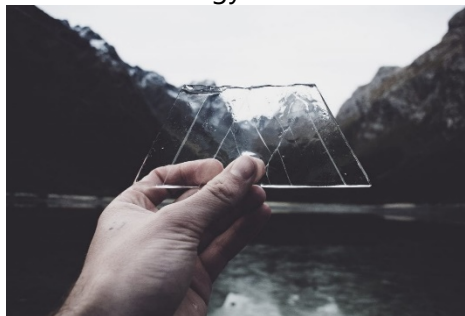
This example also demonstrates how a transparent remote work environment can prevent ageism in the workplace. Baby boomers are typically perceived as having less technical skills than younger employees. But workers of all ages experience technical problems. So, building a safe space where employees can ask questions can help employees improve their technical knowledge without fear of negative workplace repercussions.

Similarly, employers who are proactive and transparent in their communications help reassure and calm employees. This reassurance is especially vital during times of crisis, such as now. Also, staying proactive with your communications allows you to address remote work issues as they occur. The timelier your communication, the more effective the message.

2. Lead with Social Intelligence and Empathy

One of the essential steps employers can take to maximize remote work is to lead with social intelligence and empathy. Social intelligence, per HRDive, is the ability to build relationships. Empathy, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Both of these abilities are vital to building a transparent remote workplace.

And, as with a transparent work environment, social intelligence and empathy are especially critical during uncertain times, such as now. Employers should try to look at the remote work experience through their employees' eyes and anticipate what challenges they may face and develop plans to overcome these potential issues.

Similarly, after creating a plan to address remote work challenges, make sure to reinforce a sense of safety and calm among your staff. Troubled times, like a global pandemic, can leave people on edge, constantly feeling anxious. So, one of the most important steps an employer can take to help remote employees is to foster a sense of safety and security when it comes to working. And the best way to do so is to lead with social intelligence and empathy.

Learn more about the importance of empathy in your business.

3. Frequently Check-In Through Multiple Means of Collaboration

Another method your company should use to get the best out of employees' remote work, is to regularly check-in with your staff. When physically separated, the need for consistent and quality communication between your employees only grows in importance.

Plus, according to HR Technologist, happiness at work is closely related to employees' perception of work processes and the ease with which they can do their job. So, to ensure your remote work process are functioning correctly, make sure to communicate with your staff as frequently as possible.

In addition to ensuring you frequently check-in with your employees, make sure you do so through multiple forms of collaboration tools. Email and messenger apps are great ways to mimic the kind of quick communication you get when working in the same physical space. But during an extended remote work period, such as now, employers need to use multiple collaborative tools.

For example, Zoom conference calls can be used to communicate face-to-face with your staff. Face-to-face interaction is especially essential during turbulent times; especially when physically separated. We may not be able to meet in the same room, but that shouldn't stop you from interacting with your employees face-to-face.

4. Set Clear Expectations

A vital part of maximizing the effectiveness of your remote work plan is to set clear expectations for remote workers. Your workers need to understand what's expected of them, and what the overall goal is for your company's remote work. And, as a part of establishing distinct expectations and goals for your staff, make sure you err on the side of overcommunication.

When physically separated, the importance of communication between your staff only grows. So, have your team communicate as often as possible. More frequent contacts during this time will help foster a sense of connection among your employees working virtually. This sense of connection can ensure your employees understand both their work goals and your organization's overall goals.

5. Ensure Security

While new technology has made the transition to remote work more accessible, it has also opened up new threats to your employees and your company's security. Employees using personal Wi-Fi networks, or personal devices, are more susceptible to cybersecurity threats. To combat these threats, employers should invest in secure cloud apps and technology that can protect both employees' devices and threats.

For example, mobile device management technology can protect employer data on employee-owned devices. This technology allows organizations to lock down personal devices and erase proprietary company data from a lost, stolen, or compromised device. A new way of doing business creates new opportunities, but it also presents new threats. Make sure your company is ready to combat these threats.

Learn more about quelling cybersecurity threats to remote work here.

6. Emphasize Training and Development

A crucial piece to maximizing your remote work plan is to emphasize employee training and development. During normal times, when working in the same physical space, training, and development is one of the most vital benefits you can offer your staff. The importance of this benefit only grows when you transition to remote work.

Your leadership team needs to work with your staff to identify opportunities for new skills training, as well as learning and development. And these opportunities for growth benefit both employees on an individual level and your company as a whole. In fact, according to recent research from Skillsoft, 85 percent of companies who invested in modern learning see an almost immediate improvement in productivity.

Plus, promoting employee growth shows your company's interests are aligned with those of your workers. Helping develop your staff demonstrates your company's commitment to building trusted relationships among your employees. A study by Gallup revealed managers who took time to build trust and authentic relationships with their employees, contribute 48 percent higher profits.

Learn how to build a quality upskilling and reskilling program.

7. Promote Employee Health

The final step your business should take to maximize your remote work plan is to promote employee health. The primary purpose of this transition to remote work has been to keep employees safe despite the COVID-19 pandemic raging throughout the world. Still, while your employees are working from home, there are several steps your business can take to help them maintain good health.

The first step to promote employee health, while working from home, is to encourage a healthy work-life balance. Working remotely can blur the line between an employee's work and personal lives. So, make sure your managers are attempting to track and support the mental health of your staff. Depression and anxiety can wreak havoc on both an employee's personal and work life. Anxiety alone costs employers almost $35 billion a year from lost or reduced productivity in the workplace.

Similarly, remote work can have an adverse effect on not just your staff's mental health but their physical health too. According to Employee Benefit Adviser, 80 percent of us will experience back pain at some point in our lifetimes. So, even under normal circumstances, back and neck pain is likely common throughout your staff.

But the present extenuating conditions are only expected to increase the prevalence of this kind of pain. Stress and anxiety can make the experience of physical pain even worse. So, this anxiety, when combined with employees now working from home, can lead to increased back and neck pain.

To combat this potential physical pain, make sure you're helping employees stay safe and comfortable while working remotely. Per Employee Benefit Adviser, tips employers should use to promote employee health while locked down include:

- Checking your posture

- Getting a change of scenery

- Continuing to exercise

- Implementing simple stretches throughout the day

The Wrap

Eventually, the COVID-19 pandemic will recede. Still, the importance of remote work is only likely to increase, even after coronavirus begins to subside. So, use the above seven tips to maximize the effectiveness of your remote work plan. **Working remotely doesn't also have to mean you're working ineffectively.**