

## How Your Business Can Build the Best Work from Home Plan (In 10 Simple Steps)

There are a lot of opinions out there right now about how to best implement and run a remote work program. But one aspect of remote work, not enough people have covered, is employee engagement. Engagement is essential to the success of any organization, full stop.

Even before a global pandemic shook the way we did business; employee engagement was a top priority for most businesses. Now, with a significant chunk of employees working from home, staff engagement is more vital than ever. It's imperative your organization has a plan to maximize, capture, and record employee engagement.

At The Olson Group, we strive to serve as an employer's trusted adviser. Part of this dedication to becoming your trusted source is to help you maximize all facets of your employee benefits program, including your work from home plan.

In this article, we'll break down the seven data-driven ways your company can build the best work from home plan possible. So, keep reading to learn what science can tell you about maximizing the success of your remote work program. The relationship between remote work and employee engagement is complex and desires a complex response.

### How to Maximize Your Employees' Work from Home Productivity

To maximize your remote work plan's success, you must maximize employee engagement. Engaged employees, work harder, are present more often, and are more likely to stay with your company.



But, as previously mentioned, the relationship between remote work and employee engagement is complicated. So, ultimately, there are no "wrong" answers. Still, the following seven methods can be crucial to building remote working employee's engagement.

## 10. Balance Structure with Flexibility

Like most things in life, building a quality work from home plan requires balance. You must work with your employees to find a balance between structure while being open enough to give them the flexibility working from home can require. So, what does that look like?

Well, your employees should have a daily routine or schedule. We're all better at managing time and maintaining a healthy work-life balance when we have some structure. Still, remote work requires flexibility on behalf of both managers and other coworkers. For example, those with children may have to delay a meeting to provide care for their kids.

This flexibility includes providing employees the space to work different hours than they typically would. As a result, some employees may not always be available during normal work hours. But it's best to focus on the quality of work rather than which hours your staff works.

## 9. Make Sure Your Team is Prepared

Per a [Gallup poll](#), this March, 55 percent of full-time workers strongly agreed they felt well prepared to do their job. How many of your employees would say they're well prepared? To ensure your employees are ready for continued or future remote working, make sure they have the necessary tools, materials, training, and expectations.



We'll talk about setting expectations further down. That leaves tools, materials, and training. To effectively work remotely, your employees need the necessary technology and materials. These tools include:

- Workplace tools like Salesforce and Dropbox
- Communication and collaboration technology like Slack and Zoom
- Antivirus, firewall, VPNs, and other security technologies
- Physical devices such as printer/scanners, monitors, keyboards, and cables.

## 8. Keep Your Employee's Health & Mind

Under stressful, unprecedented times, the health of your employees should take priority. If your team members are healthy, they can't work. It's that simple. Always encourage employees to follow the latest scientific guidelines regarding COVID-19.

And, if you're working, even partially, in the office, make sure everyone is keeping as safe as possible by following the latest guidelines and providing protective equipment. Make sure to promote social distancing and masks even if you're working with a reduced workforce.

Additionally, encourage your staff to maintain both their physical and mental health while spending more time in the house. And make sure your employees know about telehealth if it's available. This service can help your employees avoid unnecessary exposure. Plus, many telehealth providers now offer mental telemedicine as well.

## **7. Give This Situation Context**

To prepare your team and keep their health in mind, it's vital to give the situation context. A global pandemic is a strange and foreign situation. It's something none of us have lived before, so don't try and pretend like it's normal. Make sure you're telling your employees it's okay to feel uneasy or unsure. Providing this context can help normalize your employee's feelings during this time.



## **6. Communicate Early and Often**

A key to maximizing the effectiveness of your work from home plan is to make sure you're communicating early and as often with your staff as possible. Communication is a key ingredient to any relationship but is especially vital in business when working remotely. You may not be able to meet face-to-face, but tools like Zoom, Slack, Teams, and FaceTime can help you address any issues or questions as they arise.

## **5. Set Clear, Realistic Expectations**

As previously mentioned, it's vital to set clear expectations for all your employees to maximize your company's work from home effectiveness. These clear expectations are necessary because remote work is typically less structured than in-office work. To ensure your expectations are clear, make sure to your employees know:

- Your mission and values

- Yearly, monthly, and weekly goals
- Hours of operation
- Available tools and resources
- Preferred communication methods
- Project/Task ownership
- Contact information and guidelines for support

#### **4. Acknowledge Hardship and Show Gratitude**

Employee recognition from management or leadership can go a long way toward building a positive and effective work from home policy. So, take some time to recognize the exigent circumstance we're all living under right now.



And thank your employees for their continued work during this crisis. Make sure they understand how grateful you are for their presence and their continued hard work. Recognition can go a long way toward making employees feel satisfied and engaged with their organization.

#### **3. Use Empathy and Transparency**

Companies and leaders everywhere, if they haven't begun already, need to implement both empathy and transparency. Maintain transparency in your communications and make sure your employees know what your company is up to as clearly and often as possible. Another skill all leaders need to practice and implement is empathy.

Empathy is key for any business to support the mental and emotional well-being of your employees, especially during turbulent times, such as now. [Empathy in the workplace](#) has multiple positive effects when widely implemented. Similarly, transparency in your communication ensures employees feel you're being honest and helps reassure them.

#### **2. Give Your Staff Options and Autonomy**

One of the most essential steps any company can take to support the strength and effectiveness of your remote work plan is to give your team both flexibility and autonomy. Each of these attributes provides your staff with a freedom that can help improve both employee engagement and productivity.



Per a 2013 survey from Gen ability to focus (despite the

significantly higher levels of (open plans). Similarly, tech workers are, on average, both happier and more satisfied in their jobs and with their workplaces.

And what was, on average, the difference between tech workers and employees of other industries? Technology employees were nearly 10 percent more likely to report choice and autonomy when deciding where, when, and how to work.

## 1. Use Science-Based Judgement

According to Gallup, it's imperative organizations use science-based judgement to examine multiple aspects of your workplace and determine how to best implement your work from home policy. These workplace dimensions include:

- Job roles and key job demands
- Workspaces and safety
- An individual's perceived readiness & comfort
- Life circumstances
- Performance
- An individual's ability to use one's strengths
- Team engagement
- The dynamics of working together remotely

Each of these aspects of the workplace affects an individual's, and subsequently your entire organization's, ability to maximize your work from home policy. Per Gallup, the relationship between remote work and employee engagement is complex. So, treat it with the complex decision-making it deserves.

## The Wrap

According to a [Gallup study](#), **those with some remote work options have the highest employee engagement.**

Conversely, **those with no remote option and those who work remotely 100 percent of the time have somewhat lower employee engagement.**

There may not be one exact formula for maximizing employee engagement through your work from home policy. *Still, you can use the 10 methods above, and the listed considerations, to build one that best works for you and your employees.*

And if you need help with implementing a work from home plan, or any other facet of your employee benefits plan, [contact The Olson Group](#), today!