Connecting with Your Team Remotely

Working remotely has become more and more common with new technology and flexibility throughout the company. While working remote can benefit both the company and the employee with increased moral, flexible work hours and overall financial savings, there can be some challenges. Team collaboration, innovation, and communication can be hindered without the typical office setting. Being intentional with communication, including recognition, relationship building and socializing, can create a more cohesive remote team.

Leadership Tips

Set Expectations

Set team expectations around communication. Provide where updates will be posted and how often; share how team members can get in contact with you and how you can get in contact with team members.

Create timelines and deadlines for all projects and clearly communicate these expectations with your team.

Encourage use of Technology

Get comfortable with Microsoft Teams and use it daily. It doesn't have to be used for video meetings – the chat function adds an easy communication method to share ideas, ask questions, or just chat! Create a group chat for small teams, or a new Team page for department wide communication.

The easiest way to stay connected is with a simple phone call or text. FaceTime or Teams on your phone make for a quick video chat option without too much interruption.

Meet Regularly

Meet throughout the week as a team to touch base on everyone's plans for the day, what roadblocks anyone is encountering, check on status on what was accomplished the since the last meeting, and answer any questions team members have. Spend the first few minutes of the call for non-work items. Ask questions about their night, plans for the weekend, new favorite show to binge watch on Netflix, etc. This will also encourage continued interaction and collaboration across the team.

Hold regular 1:1 meetings with each team member and check in through Teams, email, and phone calls throughout the day as you would normally in the office setting. Your 1:1 is a great time to track progress on projects and assignments the team member is working on and set goals. Ensure team members aren't feeling isolated from you or from their team members. Ask how they are doing and listen to their concerns.

Show Appreciation

Use **Boost!** regularly to show appreciation and recognition publicly for the work team members are doing. Keep celebrating team and individual successes and highlight each win, big or small.

Give a shoutout to employees in department and team chats for smaller victories.

Virtual On-Boarding Additions

Team Meet: Have a document located in Teams with a photo, name, and job description of each person in the department. Team members can also use Microsoft Teams to facilitate this interaction with a video call and walkthrough their handout. The goal is to have every new hire familiar with their team member's expertise and have the opportunity for an informal meet and greet.

Lunch: Schedule time to do lunch together virtually or in person (based on location) so the new hire and manager to get to know each other better

Staying Connected Remotely

Virtual Water Cooler

Start group chats or texting groups to stay connected and feel like you are part of a team again. Send a cheerful photo greeting, create polls, exchange funny memes, share images of your workspace or have a workspace-decorating contest, talk about the most mundane things just as you would in person.

Team Check-ins

Whether you choose to do so organically or block off time on the calendar, having regular touchpoints—both 1:1s and group calls—with your teammates can help you gain some semblance of normalcy during what can be an otherwise abnormal time. This can be anything from sending a chat, calling a teammate, or doing a video meeting.

Create collaborative work activities

Attend seminars or webinars as a group—you can have your group chat open so you can begin a discussion thread as you learn. Attend educational lectures together (LEO and the Leadership Trainings are a good start!)

"Share a meal" and hammer out creative ideas for your next big project or call a group meeting for a brainstorming session.

Offer to Help

Now more than ever there may be team members who could use a bit of a pick-me-up. The simple act of reaching out can brighten someone else's day at no cost to you. If you want to take it a step further, offer to help wherever you can to help ease the burden from a co-worker.

Use Teams for Common Interests

Create new Public Teams for others to join based on common interests. This creates an opportunity to get to know more than just your team and meet other employees in the company.

Examples of these include:

- **WPS Young Professionals:** Use this for remote opportunities to do virtual happy hour, networking on ideas, professional development and volunteer suggestions
- **Wellness:** A few times a week hold fitness, meditation, and yoga classes with employee as a host or hired local gym trainer for companywide activities
- **Book club:** Choose a new book for each month and discuss it one time a week during lunch hours. Have various options of books to keep the group small for easier talking.
- **Friday Poll:** Nominate a member of the team to create a "poll" for others to answer, creating conversation over common interests (What animal would you be in another life, your most recent shower thought, craziest food you've ever had, etc.).
- **Football Fans:** Discuss the big Packers-Bears game, Badger's Politics, and Fantasy Football