

How to manage remotely during COVID-19



1. Manage your expectations.

Try This:

- Look at your team's goals and work plans for the next few months and consider what can be adjusted and what absolutely needs to be prioritized. Ask your staff for their input. Then, communicate the changes in a team meeting.
- In your one-on-one check-ins, ask your staff members how (not if) they are being affected by this situation. Work with them to reassess and adjust their work plan given the new realities.
- Make weekly (or even daily) time on your calendar for reflecting, analyzing, and responding to the situation and supporting your team. Give yourself permission to shift priorities and renegotiate your time.

2. Check in with each staff person about their remote work set-up.

Try This:

- Ask each person, "Do you have everything you need to be productive and comfortable while you're working remotely? Is there anything about your remote work set-up that might present challenges or that we may need to work around? Is there anything I can do to support you?" Then, offer solutions where possible.
- Add 2x2 feedback to your weekly check-ins specifically about remote working — the feedback should cover: 1) what you are doing well and what you could be doing better to support your staff in working remotely and 2) what they are doing well and what they could be doing better to work effectively

3. Focus on output over activities.

Try This:

- Start a daily email (or Slack message) thread with your staff to share your "big rocks," or priorities for the day. Report back at the end of the day to celebrate your wins (and create plans to get to the priorities you missed).
- Set up a 30-minute team meeting at the end of the week to share outcomes from the week.

4. Check in with each staff person about their remote work set-up.

Try This:

- Block off time on your calendar to indicate when you will be working, and have your staff do the same. Aim to have one significant chunk (4-5 hours) of overlap between your schedules each day.
- Use your calendar to show times during the workday when you will be less responsive (such as if you have an appointment or will be doing a focused work block where you won't be checking email or chat).

5. Set up (or revise) communication practices.

Try This:

- Create guidelines* about when to use chat/messaging apps, email, and phone or video calls. For example, "Gchat is for quick questions and informal chatter; Email is for longer-term planning or items that require more thought."
- When you send calendar invitations for meetings, state how the call will be conducted in the description (for example, "A will call B at 555-555-5555" or "via Google Hangouts").
- Set up Zoom "co-working" sessions for people to hop on for an hour or two at a time (on mute!). Add an accountability measure by having people share their goals for the session at the beginning and reporting on their progress at the end.
- If you're on Slack, encourage the use of the "watercooler" channel. Consider sharing a fun daily check-in question or prompt, like "Share something funny you've seen or heard in the last week" (yes, this may sound cheesy, but emotional contagion is a thing and we could all use a laugh these days).