

HR Insights

Brought to you by the insurance professionals at
New England Employee Benefits Co., Inc.

4 Ways to Support Remote Employee Collaboration and Productivity

Working remotely doesn't always come naturally to employees, especially among those who are used to the accountability of in-person workplaces. Remote work requires focus and restraint amid the countless distractions present in the home, and it lacks the socialization capabilities that come with physically going into the workplace. What's more, remote employees often need to collaborate on different tasks. Without guidance, these conversations can become distracting and inefficient.

With this in mind, employers may need to step in to help facilitate productivity and attentiveness—particularly when working in person isn't an option, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article provides four tips for supporting remote employee productivity while still enabling collaboration.

1. Limit Distractions Where Possible

Employees need to be in contact with their co-workers and managers. This is vital for collaboration and maintaining working relationships. However, employees don't need a whole catalog of applications and services to accomplish this feat.

In other words, employers should consider which communication platforms are strictly necessary and which should be discouraged among employees. For instance, using one dedicated instant-messaging service is efficient. Having multiple platforms could be distracting, especially if employees must juggle multiple conversations across different services.

2. Spell Out Remote Work Efficiencies

Some employees may be working remotely for the first time. As such, they can't be expected to know how to efficiently work outside of the office.

Employers should communicate remote working best practices to help remedy this concern. For instance, employers should go over when employees are expected to be on their computers, when breaks are allowed and how to stay focused throughout the day. Employees should also know how to set their availability so that co-workers know when they are unavailable for chitchat.

3. Establish Respectful Meeting Standards

It can be tempting to talk about personal matters during a video meeting, especially if employees have no one else to socialize with at home. However, this practice can disrupt co-workers' schedules and derail collaboration time.

To avoid this issue, employers should establish ground rules for virtual meetings. These rules may vary based on the details surrounding the team, but can include requiring an agenda, asking attendees to mute their microphones when they aren't talking and sticking to the predetermined meeting schedule. While chitchat may naturally seep into a meeting, having set standards can help limit these occurrences.



4. Provide Creative and Social Outlets

Employee productivity and collaboration isn't accomplished in a vacuum. Rather, it comes from a number of factors, including socialization. In fact, some CEOs believe employee creativity is best channeled through impromptu exchanges in shared spaces. When working from home, there's no shared hallway or water cooler, but employers can still help facilitate these interactions.

A good way to do so is through scheduled extracurricular meetings. These could be rotating meetings with a few colleagues to chat about whatever they like. Alternatively, they could be larger meetings to play games, conduct team-building activities or simply socialize. The main goal is to set time aside for employees to talk with their co-workers in an unstructured setting. This enables employees to discuss matters that may come up organically and aren't necessarily fleshed out enough to warrant a meeting.

Summary

Balancing employee collaboration and productivity can be a challenge, especially among those who are unfamiliar with remote working. However, with a little guidance, any team can function just as well as they could in a shared workplace.

Reach out for more tips to help your employees stay happy, healthy and productive.