



THE TALENT
c o n s u l t a n t s



MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS – MANAGER TOOLKIT



UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE AS A MANAGER OF REMOTE WORKERS

Managers play a critical role in embedding flexible working practices.

Key aspects of your role are to:

- Ensure employees are aware of their roles and responsibilities around flexible work.
- Provide employees with support and build a team culture based on high performance, trust and outcomes.
- Ensure communication and resource management are enabled between teams and departments.



FLEXIBILITY GOOD PRACTICE FOR MANAGERS

There are 6 good practice considerations for managers explored in the toolkit:

1. Leadership: to help workers be effective in their roles, managers need to establish their leadership, allocate roles and provide a clear vision.

2. Team culture: adjusting how team members connect and communicate can help to ensure the team is grounded in trust and provide clear understanding of roles and goals.

3. Information flow: finding a consistent means of ensuring free flow of information to and from your team is critical to ensure that everyone is kept in the loop.

4. Achieving confidence in performance: with workers in different locations/time-zones. Managers who work towards a trust based, outcome-oriented culture are most likely to enjoy highly successful flexibly working teams.

5. Stakeholder management: working effectively with your internal and external stakeholders in a remote context is important for continued success.

6. Change management: any substantial change in the workplace can create a need for good change management practices. Some managers may find it helpful to learn about ways to implement change effectively.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

I: LEADERSHIP

- What leaders say, how they act, what they prioritise and how they measure results all have an impact on effective leadership. Remote Work, by its nature, is more likely to thrive in a collaborative, goal-oriented environment.
- Managers need to work harder on creating this collaboration in remote teams: team meetings, 1-2-1s, MS Team chats etc.
- Create new remote/virtual team activities, share pictures and experiences of working from home and continue with providing structure to the team through regular daily interactions.
- Managers who collaborate well with their teams can help all members feel appropriately included and overcome any feelings of isolation that can ensue from remote working.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

I: LEADERSHIP

Introduce transparent expectations

- Ensure team and individual objectives, goals, aims or other results are transparent and clearly defined. Give timeframes to complete tasks and other measurable standards.
- This will assist you as a manager as will quickly reveal whether a person is meeting their objectives or might need some help.
- It also helps if roles are clearly established and communicated when new projects commence or when new teams form.
- Transparent objectives are best used as a collaborative mechanism for both managers and employees to work towards the stated goal/s, rather than as a stick to ensure compliant behaviour.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

2: TEAM CULTURE

What is your team culture like now?

- Do all team members participate and have a sense of belonging?
- Are the Company values modelled and communicated regularly?
- Are you specifically aware of what you do to create great teamwork?
- Are there issues such as social isolation and communication breakdown?
- Does your team have a trust-based culture?



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

2: TEAM CULTURE

Foster good team dynamics

- Consulting with your team members about how you could adjust your current practices is a good way to improve remote team culture. This could include changing the ways that meetings are run (perhaps rotate team member responsibility for running meetings) or consider new ideas for how new team members will be introduced and how projects are conducted remotely.
- A good idea is to make time for a virtual social chat, with no work talk allowed.
- Social media can also be a very useful platform for building social relationships in virtual teams, use MS Teams and create new chats where needed.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

2: TEAM CULTURE

Establish a trust-based team culture

- Trust is an important aspect of remote working and is based on an expectation that an agreement will be upheld, as well as a belief or confidence in a person's competence.
- Trust is also developed around a person's commitment or good will.
- Having team members working remotely can challenge these aspects of trust, so both manager and employee will need to work towards a mutually trusting relationship.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

2: TEAM CULTURE

Manage communication across your team

- Communication – whether it is electronic or in person - is a valuable tool for enhancing team culture. Remote work can require changes to traditional ways of communicating.
- It is important to choose the right communication platforms to suit the circumstances. Email is a very useful communication tool and often suffices, but there are times when a video camera call will be more effective and productive. This may be particularly important if sensitive or complex discussions are needed.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

2: TEAM CULTURE

Manage communication across your team

- Ask all team members to turn on video at the start and end of each call as a minimum – seeing your team, even virtually is crucial for engagement.
- Regardless of the platform, it is important to have clear meeting protocols. This means that each meeting should have a clear purpose and clear roles. The importance of non-verbal communication should also be taken into account when some members are not physically present. Ask people questions and to contribute.

REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

3: INFORMATION FLOW

Establish communication patterns that support remote working

It can be a good idea to establish communications patterns deliberately, to ensure that information flows freely. By doing so, the patterns of communication that happen in your team can become part of your team's norms. Here are a few examples of communication patterns that you could consider:

- Projects are updated daily via a collaborative project management software tool or a phone call
- Handovers occur weekly via an email update and MS Team call
- Team meetings occur weekly via face-to-face Zoom meeting
- Sensitive or complex discussions with individuals occur ad hoc as needed via face-to-face zoom meeting (camera on)
- When team members are on leave, out-of-office notifications are handled by an automatic email response and phones are diverted to a team member



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

3: INFORMATION FLOW

Use email appropriately

- Between face-to-face Zoom meetings, MS Teams, instant messaging and email there is a wide range of communication platforms at our disposal.
- Text-based communication technologies have their uses, but they are often not appropriate for communication tasks that need rich interaction.
- Email is usually less efficient and less successful than Zoom conversations for discussing sensitive, complex or sophisticated topics.
- Often a phone call for quality calling purposes is the best option. Make the right choice. Use WhatsApp when needed.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

4: ACHIEVING CONFIDENCE IN PERFORMANCE

Establish accountability

- Remote working teams often need greater transparency about the work being done across the team, and this can help ensure accountability. Some remote workers may also need more guidance in the early days to understand the standard of work that needs to be delivered.
- Remote working often means people will work more autonomously. Research and experience clearly show that when staff members are given greater autonomy to decide how they achieve work outcomes; they work more productively and are more engaged. Make the most of this by loosening your grip on 'how' work outcomes are achieved.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

4: ACHIEVING CONFIDENCE IN PERFORMANCE

Discuss performance regularly

- Your employees need clear, factual feedback about how they're tracking in relation to their performance objectives. These discussions should focus on objective, observable facts.
- If you are having 1-2-1s and team/project meetings, there will be clear and readily-accessible information about the person's performance to hand.
- Your employees will respond more positively if you resist any temptation to make snap judgements when discussing a team member's performance. Uphold trust in the relationship by being open to alternative explanations for behaviours you may initially see as negative.
- Remember to reward good performance. Not only does rewarding good performance contribute to stronger results, it also improves morale and staff engagement.
- Manage poor performance effectively – engage the help of HR when needed.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

5: STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Support your stakeholders

- If remote working results in a disruption to stakeholders' business needs, ensure you highlight your concerns to your Manager immediately. There will most likely be some work-around that can be implemented easily.
- Outline any changes to ways of working with your stakeholders. For example, they may be more likely to keep dealing with the same person; or they could expect greater engagement from contacts within your team; or there may be potential to contact the team across a wider range of hours and so on.
- Remember to keep your internal stakeholders informed and supported, not only your clients.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

6: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Work with your team to help them adjust

- Your team may need some help adjusting to working remotely and the changes it may bring to team culture, performance management, resource planning, information flow and so on.
- To help them, outline a clear vision of how the team will work productively together, and with others.
- Team members can often see issues that are less visible to managers. Taking note of these issues and trying to address them will help each member of the team to align with the change.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

6: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Work with your team to help them adjust

- Constructively address negative assumptions and attitudes and ensure that all voices are heard. Give time and encouragement to those having difficulty changing long-held habits and behaviours, and overall, work with your team to help them adjust.
- Ensure that you and your team change out of your pyjamas each morning – while you don't have to dress as formally as you might when going into the office, getting out of your pyjamas can help you get in the right headspace to start your day.
- Ensure that you and your team members have set up dedicated workspaces in the home environment.



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

6: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Work with your team to help them adjust

- Set a work schedule for everyone – It can be hard to switch-off from work, so it is important to clearly define your working hours, ensuring you have regular breaks. Unless it's a requirement of your role, disconnect from all work-related accounts (e.g., remote desktops, email) at the end of your working day to help maintain a clear boundary between your work and home life.
- Limit distractions – Being at home can mean you can be easily distracted by other people or tasks (e.g. children or household chores). Schedule set times (i.e. lunchbreak) where you can take a break from work to complete home-based tasks, rather than completing them randomly throughout the day where you can lose track of time.

REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

6: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Work with your team to help them adjust with self isolation due to COVID-19

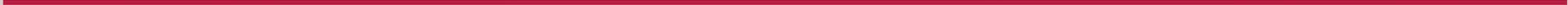
- Maintain a positive outlook during any periods of self-isolation by:
- Reminding yourself that this period of self-isolation is temporary
- Thinking of the benefits of self-isolation to the wider society, including slowing the spread of the virus and protecting those most vulnerable in your community
- Remaining mindful that medical and scientific experts are following strict protocols to contain the virus and treat those affected



REMOTE WORKING GOOD PRACTICE

6: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Ensuring you have access to accurate, reliable and up-to-date information that communicates what is expected from you if you are in isolation
- Maintaining relationships with family, friends and colleagues (e.g., via telephone or video technologies)
- Not overusing social media as you are likely to be exposed to negative news and get drawn into doomsday discussions – in your spare time try to keep your mind busy with activities you enjoy such as reading, watching movies, exercising and even spring cleaning the house
- Structuring your day when working from home – allocate specific work hours, schedule breaks and set-up a dedicated workspace where distractions are limited.



This was adapted from the WGEA flexibility toolkit.

