

REMOTE TEAMS

UNDERSTAND WHAT DRIVES YOUR REMOTE EMPLOYEES.

As a remote leader, you don't get a chance to spend time interacting in-person with your employees and discovering what makes them tick. A workplace behavioral assessment—such as the PI Behavioral Assessment™—can give you a wealth of information about your employees' drives, needs, and natural work style. It will help you understand how they like to work and be rewarded. For example, if you know someone has a low degree of extraversion, it might be OK to contact them infrequently. On the other hand, if an employee has high extraversion, you might want to spend more time interacting with them—even if it's grabbing a cup of coffee over Zoom.

Especially now, when your employees are feeling uncertainty and fear, it's all the more important to communicate and support and serve your people in meaningful ways.

CHECK-IN ON EVERYONE'S EMOTIONAL STATE.

The psychological impact of a pandemic and downturn isn't something you can ignore as a people manager. Yes, you should check-in on their workload and projects—but you should also check-in on their emotions. Don't be afraid to ask your people, "How are you feeling emotionally?" As Josh Bersin said, "In today's world, the CEO has to be the Chief Care Officer first." And the same goes for managers. In a crisis think *people first*. Are you doing all you can to support and lift up your team?

EMBRACE YOUR OWN SELF-AWARENESS.

When faced with extra pressure, it can be easy to get overwhelmed and let the negative thoughts flow. But if you're the best version of yourself, you can lead your team through any crisis. Look deep inside—leverage your last review if you have one. Be aware of your weaknesses and continue to keep them under control to set a great example for your direct reports.

MANAGE FOR SUBSTANCE AND RESULTS, NOT ADHERENCE TO A 9-5 SCHEDULE.

One of the top reasons employees enjoy remote work is they can fit work into their lifestyle. Whether they have morning childcare duties, like to workout midday, or serve as a caregiver for a family member, working from home can offer flexibility that allows them to live their life while still making a living.

That's why a general best practice is don't judge your employee based on their adherence to a 9-to-5 schedule. Instead, evaluate remote performance on what they're able to produce—not how they produce it. *But right now, employees need even more schedule flexibility.* Mandatory school and workplace closures mean your people will be trying to be productive in spite of interruptions from kids, partners, roommates, and pets. Be cognizant and empathetic.

DON'T BE A HELICOPTER BOSS.

Each person on your team has a different rhythm and workflow. Don't micromanage it. A huge key to the success of remote teams is trust. Trust that your employees are doing their job, even if their workflow isn't the same as yours. (Of course, if an employee has abused that trust, a different conversation must take place.) This means not using little check-in tricks to

see if they're working or not early in the morning or throughout the day. These types of "gotchas" destroy trust and create ambiguity.

BUILD A COMMUNICATION RHYTHM.

When conversations go from in-office to remote, it's extra important to communicate. Remote employees need clarity, communication, and connectedness—now more than ever. Keep them looped in—and engaged—with daily team standups, weekly manager/employee one-on-ones, and weekly team meetings. To avoid communication overwhelm, try to aggregate all the important announcements and updates in one place (an employee newsletter works well). You can even use the Donut app to randomly match employees across the company for virtual coffee or schedule a group video chat where remote team members can "meet" each other's pets! Of course, when it comes to extracurriculars like these, be clear these activities are optional.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR REMOTE WORKERS.

Many of the steps above require a healthy dose of trust that your remote employees are doing the right things—even if they're doing it their way. However, this doesn't mean they're running the show. It's important to set and communicate clear expectations about how you'll judge their work performance and any practices, guidelines, or updates you, as a manager, need to see. For example, if you really need people to tell you when they'll be away from their computers longer than an hour, communicate these requirements clearly from the outset.

CONNECT WITH COLLABORATION TOOLS.

As frustrating as technology can be at times, it's amazing how well technology can keep employees connected and engaged. Social tools like

Slack, Facebook Workplace, and Microsoft Teams allow for everyday interactions and communication. Real-time collaboration tools like Google Docs, Asana, Trello, and Basecamp allow teams to collaborate across time zones and manage projects in one easy-to-access place. Right now, your company is likely cutting discretionary spending—but while some leaders could see social tools as frivolous, they might be critical to maintaining your culture and team relationships. *Can your employees chat as fluidly as they would in office without social tools? Will they stay connected without them?* Don't underestimate the power of things like emojis, random GIFs, and off-topic channels like music, books, and even cats.

BRING THE TEAM TOGETHER.

As the evidence suggests, remote work can work really well. But it's also important to bring your team together and create lasting, in-person relationships and memories. Of course, meeting physically in the real world isn't possible at the moment—but there are still ways to bring the team together virtually. If your team already has a good foundation of trust, try this activity: have everyone create a timeline off-line then schedule a video call where each person talks their team through the key moments in their life. If your team doesn't have a strong foundation yet, try this word cloud activity to build team bonds.

THE REAL KEY TO SUCCESSFUL REMOTE TEAMS, IS TO CREATE TRUST.

Ultimately, many of these tips are about creating trust between you and your remote employees. Let them flourish in their own way—and always stay connected, communicating, and aligned.