

Top tips - managing home workers

Around two million employees in the UK currently work from home and it's a fundamental shift that's brought a host of new challenges for leaders, who have to ensure that their teams perform consistently across significant distances. Managers have to recognise that their leadership is key to making these arrangements work, so read on for my tips for success.

1.) Team or group?

Decide whether you work with a team or a group. A team is generally a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they are mutually accountable. A group is a simpler affair with linear links to the leader where each person's responsibility is principally to meet their individual target.

2.) Plan ahead

Map out a clear and compelling vision that everyone buys into and that clarifies one another's expectations.

3.) Motivate

Engage your people through coaching rather than instructing, and encourage them to feel that they are contributing to the organisation's overall strategy, even though they're not at the hub.

4.) Trust

Recognise the importance of trust and understand that it is developed differently in remote working.

5.) Monitor achievement

Reward and compensate in line with individual preferences and set measurements of performance based on results not activities. This permits some flexibility in how things are delivered and avoids unnecessary micro management.

6.) Work together

Despite not being physically together, it's important that the team agrees on how they will communicate, make decisions, resolve issues and deliver results.

7.) Communicate

Keep in touch using as many different media as possible. Check in regularly with members to monitor progress and provide necessary feedback. Keep members apprised of critical information and decisions. One recent survey revealed that while 80% of employees would

like the option of working from home occasionally, they would miss the camaraderie of the office environment too much to want to do it full time.

8. Use the right tools

Consider what communication tools will deliver the desired results. Audio and visual conferencing might suit the leader but not have the attention of the participants. The return on investment of face to face communication will always pay dividends so long as the agenda is 'how?' not 'what?'

9. Evaluate your working practices

Monitor performance and constantly evaluate the processes in place to maximise the benefits of remote working. If productivity and overheads do not show immediate improvements, it may be because you have failed to engage managers and employees in the new working arrangement.

10. Keep an open mind

Avoid imposing your own values and outlook, be open to diversity and recognise how everyone brings something to the party.

REMEMBER!!

This way of working is far from straightforward, for instance, the communication needs to be more frequent, more overt and more specific. Working with people remotely or virtually might pose some challenges but, if approached properly and closely monitored, it can deliver significant benefits.