



MANAGER'S WORK FROM HOME GUIDE

Telecommuting Best Practices & Guidelines

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OVERVIEW

HRinDemand offers a Manager's Work From Home Guide to help leaders navigate new remote working policies and procedures. Doing so can help supervisors overcome the challenges that come from remote work management.

In addition to housing all of your company's policies and guidelines regarding telecommuting, this Manager's Work From Home Guide provides you with tips to help you improve the engagement and productivity of remote employees, even when there is little time to prepare. On the last page of this guide, there is a sample Company Policy.

For any questions regarding your companies telecommuting policy, and how to best manage remote workers, please contact [HRinDemand](#).

STEP 1 – RELINQUISH CONTROL | MONITOR INSTEAD

Trying to manage when and how your employees work is not going to work. Instead, monitor their productivity with set metrics such as:

- Deadlines: Are tasks completed according to the deadline?
- Objectives: Are objectives being met?
- Communication: Are the employees responding to tasks appropriately?



The best way to track and monitor all the objectives is to use a tracking software so everyone can see where the project is and who is responsible for certain tasks. Some of our favorites are Notion, Trello, and Microsoft Teams. It doesn't have to be complex. Even a shared Google Sheet can be an effective way to monitor tasks, projects and objectives.

STEP 2 – DAILY, WEEKLY, AND MONTHLY CHECK-INS

To ensure that everyone is in the loop, make sure to schedule regular check-ins with your team.

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Communications can include the following:



VIRTUAL
MEETINGS



PHONE CALLS



INSTANT
MESSAGING



REGULAR
EMAILS

Scheduled check-ins are a great way to keep everyone on task and communication lines flowing. In the beginning, ask everyone to send an end-of-the-day update. Don't put a specific time on it. Be clear that you will need it before morning. This helps employees stay on task and gives managers an idea of what they are working on.

A one-on-one weekly phone call is a great way to keep communication lines open, discuss any issues and offer support to each of your employees.

A bi-weekly or monthly video call with all the team members is a great way to reassemble everyone, share progress, ideas and discuss issues.

Remember that working from home can feel isolating, especially to those new at it. Keep in mind that these check-ins are not just to track progress. They are also opportunities for social connection.

STEP 3 – KNOW THE BEST SOFTWARE PRODUCTS SO YOU CAN RECOMMENDED VIABLE OPTIONS

- Virtual Meetings – Zoom, is a video conferencing app with screen sharing features. The free version allows 40 min. meetings with up to three participants.
- Phone Calls – Separate work and personal calls using apps like Grasshopper. Grasshopper allows two numbers on the same phone. Users can get all the features of a business phone system on an existing cell phone.
- Instant Messaging – Slack is collaboration software that can replace email and improve productivity between teams. It also integrates with thousands of software options, including Google Drive and Office 365.

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- Email – Use exchange accounts or updated IMAP settings so inbox and sent folders sync across all devices. Consider using encryption and archiving services for security and compliance.
- Security Software – Webroot delivers multi-vector protection including antivirus software, endpoint and network security. It's lightweight, affordable and easy to install and maintain.
- Remote into Work PC's – Remote PC allows 24/7 access to your work pc from anywhere. Works with multiple systems including PC/Mac/Linux, Iphone/Ipad or Android Devices. It's secure and easy to use and install.
- File Sharing – Dropbox, SharePoint, One Drive or Google Suite makes file sharing and version control a snap.

STEP 4 – PROTECT THE TEAM AND THE COMPANY WITH CYBER SECURITY PROTOCOLS

Telecommuting introduces potential cyber security risks. Strategies for mitigating this risk include using anti-virus software and/or a VPN. For more information on cyber security strategies, speak to your company's IT department.

Cybercriminals are savvy and they will view new remote workers in a crisis as an easy target. It's your job to protect your employees from cybercriminals at a time when they are the most vulnerable. It's also hugely important to protect company data.

First, create the company policy and post it or send it to each employee. Emphasize the importance of adhering to the policy.

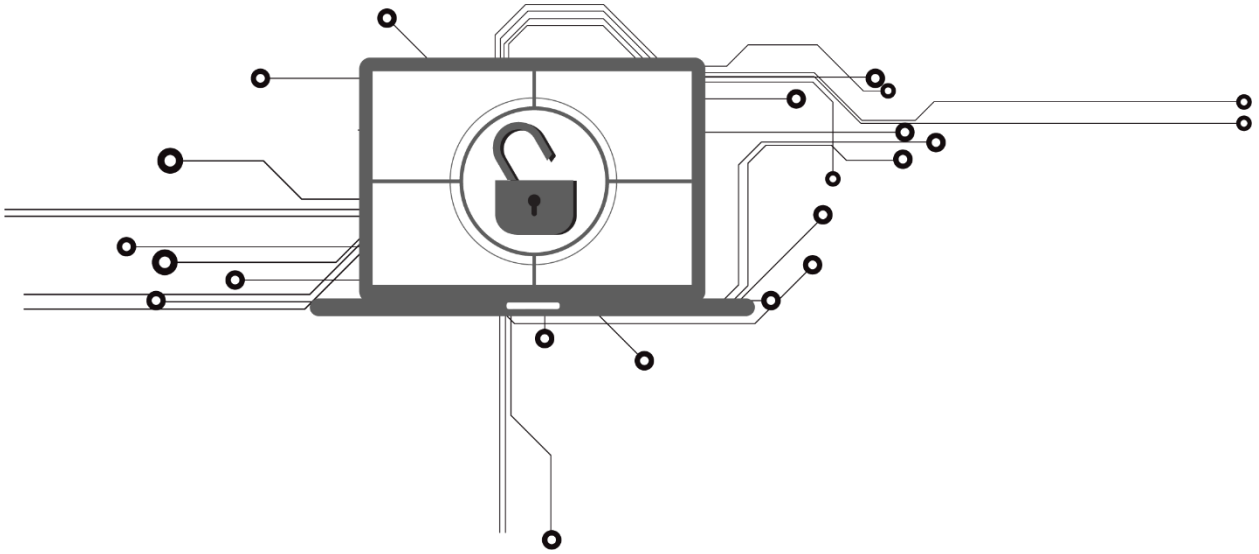
Next, make sure remote workers have up-to-date secure software. As of January 2020, no one should be operating on Windows 7.

Make it mandatory for workers to connect on secure Wi-Fi. Public Wi-Fi presents a huge risk.

Manage risk by using common tools such as malware scanners, firewalls and virtual private networks to help maintain security.

Stress the importance of nightly backups. Backups should be taken nightly and stored locally and duplicated in an offsite location. This type of protocol will protect everyone should something happen to their environment.

Encourage remote employees to close all their windows at the end of the day and disconnect from their browsers.



STEP 5 – OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Research tells us that employees look to their managers for cues about how to react to sudden changes or crisis. Offering encouragement and support to your employees now is more important than ever.

Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams.

Use phrases such as:

“We’ve got this.”

“I know this is tough, but I’m confident that we can handle it. “

“Let’s look for ways to use our strengths during this time.”

Offering encouragement to your team will greatly improve the outcome. Let them know that you support them in their roles and that you understand that their roles have changed. Sympathize with the fact that many of them are also in charge of their children and their schooling. Be sensitive to their schedules. Encourage them to set a consistent schedule that works for them and their family and ask them to keep you apprised on it.

Lastly, identify some of the common pitfalls of working from home and try to help your team avoid the hazards.



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- Encourage an ergonomically friendly, dedicated workspace.
- Encourage workers to set a schedule and to clock out when not working.
- Encourage breaks. It's easy for people to sit down and let hours go by without getting up.
- Encourage a quitting time. It's too easy for workers to keep their eye on their email late into the evening.
- Encourage employees to set boundaries with family members so that they realize even though they are physically home; they are still working just as if they were in the office.

STEP 6 – PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REMOTE SOCIAL INTERACTION

One of the most essential steps a manager can take is to structure ways for employees to interact socially. That means have informal conversations about non-work topics while working remotely. This is true for all remote workers but particularly so for workers who have been abruptly transitioned out of the office.

The easiest way to establish some basic social interaction is to leave some time at the beginning of team calls just for non-work items (e.g., “We’re going to spend the first few minutes just catching up with each other. How was your weekend?”). Other options include virtual pizza parties (in which pizza is delivered to all team members at the time of a videoconference), or virtual office parties (in which party “care packages” can be sent in advance to be opened and enjoyed simultaneously). While these types of events may sound artificial or forced, experienced managers of remote workers (and the workers themselves) report that virtual events help reduce feelings of isolation, promoting a sense of belonging.

STEP 7 – MIND YOUR MANNERS AND SHARE OFFICE ETIQUETTE TIPS

Working from home doesn't make everyone immune from office etiquette. While we are no longer face to face, know that all the same rules apply with some additional ones too.

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- Choose communication methods wisely. If it's after typical work hours, don't use chat or text. Even if you don't expect a response, sending the message after hours may put undo pressure on someone else.
- Don't email and expect an immediate response. Just because you're working doesn't mean everyone else is. Be respectful of schedules and ask the same of them.
- Let people know when you're in, when you're away, and when you need to hear back from them. When everyone is remote, set a precedence for deadlines like "end of the day" with the expectation that you'll look at it first thing in the morning. This accommodates everyone's schedule fairly.
- Minimize interruptions. First, encourage your team to turn off desktop notifications. With the amount of emails we are all receiving, a buzz notification can be very distracting. Also don't go crazy on instant messenger. Each message is an interruption to the other person so make sure they are thoughtful, short and clear. If your text or instant message is more than a sentence or two, consider putting it in an email or calling.
- Long emails are hard to get through. If your email is more than three paragraphs or includes multiple questions, set up a phone call instead.
- Resist the urge to 'cc everyone. It's tempting to 'cc everyone in the office so they know you are working but really, it causes a lot of over communication that isn't necessary.
- Remember that your words matter. When communication is mostly done in writing, remember that tone is very important. Also, consistency. Begin and end emails in a friendly manner. Nothing is worse than getting an email that ends abruptly with no thank you or goodbye. It may lead others to think that you are angry when you're not.
- When video conferencing, mute yourself when you're not talking. You may be quiet but sometimes mics pick up papers rustling, reverb and other loud noises that are very distracting to participants.
- Clean up your space before video conferencing. Everyone will notice what's in your background so make sure it's clean and free of distractions.

STEP 8 – SAMPLE TELECOMMUNITING POLICY

Telecommuting

Location:

Effective Date: March 16, 2020

Revision Number:1

ABC Company

Purpose

This policy establishes the guidelines ABC Company will use to select and manage those employees approved to telecommute.

Scope

This policy applies to all ABC Company employees authorized to work remotely as a primary job function. It does not include those who are temporarily allowed by their managers to work from home or other location on an irregular basis due to extenuating circumstances.

POLICY GUIDELINES

Definitions

Telecommuting is defined as working from a home or other off-site location using electronic communications, such as the Internet, to connect with the primary place of employment.

Criteria for Selection

ABC Company always strives to provide equal opportunities to all employees when it comes to working situations. However, telecommuting is not conducive to every employee and position. Keeping this in mind, ABC Company will review all reasonable employee requests to telecommute using the following criteria:

- Is the employee a good candidate for telecommuting?
 - Dependable
 - Flexible
 - Proven performance
 - No record of disciplinary action

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- Comprehensive knowledge of position
- Can the duties of the position be successfully fulfilled through telecommuting?
 - Measurable work activities
 - Little need for face-to-face interaction with coworkers
 - Clearly established goals and objectives
 - Duties can be performed alone
 - Equipment needed is limited and can be easily stored at the off-site location

Note: The management of ABC Company reserves the right to deny or revoke telecommuting privileges at their own discretion.

Responsibilities

Position requirements and responsibilities will not change due to telecommuting. Workers face the same expectations in relation to professionalism, work output and customer service, regardless of where the work is being performed. The amount of time an employee is expected to work in a given week will not change, although the exact scheduling of allotted hours will be left up to the discretion of their direct supervisor(s). If an employee's physical presence is required at ABC Company's primary work location, he or she is expected to report once given adequate notice.

Contact with Primary Location

Employees approved for telecommuting are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their supervisor(s). The supervisor(s) will act as the employee's primary contact at ABC Company. Both the employee and his or her supervisor(s) are expected to work together to keep each other informed of any developments that occur during the workday.

Employees must have approval from their supervisor(s) to:

- Alter their defined work schedules.
- Move company equipment to a new location.
- Transfer primary off-site operations to a new location.

Off-site Work Areas

ABC Company has a legal responsibility to provide liability and worker's compensation coverage to its employees. Such legal responsibilities extend only to authorized, off-site work locations during scheduled work time. ABC Company is responsible only for injuries, illnesses and damages that result directly from official job duties. ABC Company also accepts no responsibility for employees' personal property.

As ABC Company could foreseeably be held responsible for an injury befalling an employee in their off-site work area, ABC Company reserves the right to inspect off-site locations for safety concerns. Such an inspection will always be planned in advance for a time convenient for both the inspector and the employee.

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If employees have domestic responsibilities they must attend to during scheduled working hours, they are expected to do so in a reasonable manner that will still allow them to successfully fulfill their job duties.

Off-site Security

While positions that regularly deal with highly sensitive information may not be ideal candidates, under certain circumstances such employees may be allowed to telecommute. In these situations, it is up to the employee to enforce a rigorous standard for ensuring the security of all sensitive information entrusted to them.. Failure to do so will result in loss of telecommuting privileges.

Expenses

Working primarily off-site could result in expenses not directly addressed by this policy. If such expenses are necessary for their official duties as prescribed, ABC Company will reimburse the employees. However, since reimbursement is subject to management approval and is not guaranteed, potential expenditures should always be approved prior to the transaction being made.

Equipment

Employees approved for telecommuting will be supplied by ABC Company with the equipment required to perform their duties. It must be kept in mind that:

- All equipment purchased by ABC Company remains the property of ABC Company. All equipment is to be returned in a timely fashion should the employee cease telecommuting operations for any reason.
- Hardware is only to be modified or serviced by parties approved by ABC Company.
- Software provided by ABC Company is to be used only for its intended purpose and should not be duplicated without consent.
- Any equipment provided by ABC Company for off-site use is intended for legitimate business use only.
- All hardware and software should be secured against unauthorized access.

ENLIST THE EXPERTS AT HRINDEMAND TO HELP

Melissa Marsh, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, is a human resources consultant and founder of [HRinDemand](#), a human resources company in Reno, NV, offering expert guidance and easy-to-use tools to help small businesses with employment regulations, compliance, employee relations, and company growth. [Subscribe to HR Tips](#) for more human resources news and information. Contact: (775) - 400 – 1322 / info@hrindemand.com