



Managing Teams Remotely

1. Establish new ground rules for communication

From Day 1 (or earlier if possible), get your team together to discuss and agree how you will work together brilliantly in this new virtual environment. Acknowledge that different personalities and styles will have different needs, and there is a high risk that everyone will assume others want to be communicated with in the way that *they* like to be communicated with. Get everyone's views out on the table and agree as a team which method; (email, IM, text, phone, video, etc.) you will use for the various types of interaction you need to have. As an added tip, for conversations involving heightened emotions, (either positive or negative), commit to avoiding email and conveying your message with voice and face instead!

2. Be clear on roles, goals and outcomes

Working virtually can feel more confusing and unpredictable than working in an office, often leading to miscommunication and inaction (or duplicated action). Keep productivity and performance high by giving crystal clear direction to your team on objectives and outcomes, so that they understand what's expected and can work independently, or more likely - *interdependently*. Feelings of uncertainty will be trickier for you to detect in the virtual world, so go the extra mile to sense check understanding with your team, help them see how their activities can be carried out in new ways, and ensure they know how to remotely access the resources they need to do their jobs from home.

3. Stay regularly connected

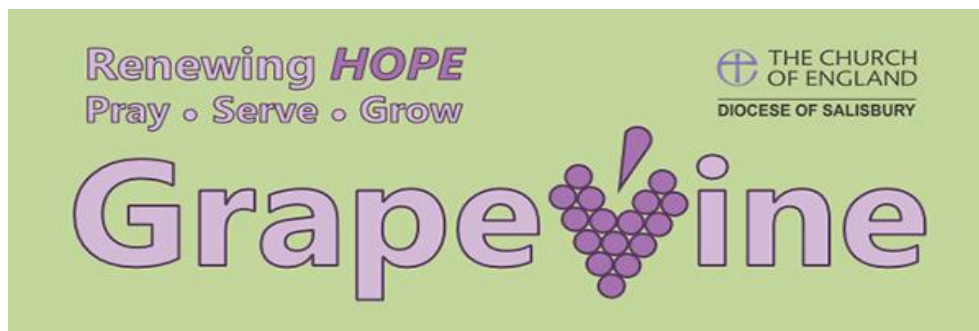
Humans are wired to socially connect. So, having remote working suddenly enforced could leave many experiencing negative feelings of loneliness. You and your team may start to realise that all the seemingly pointless chit-chat with colleagues around the office was actually the glue that held your day together and kept you sane, in a way that lengthy periods confined to your own thoughts with just your four walls and the cat for company unfortunately cannot! Stay in touch with team members regularly and informally, (not just to check on work progress) and encourage them to do the same with each other. Face-to-face interaction can never be replaced, but using video whenever you can, where facial expression and body language continues to feature, is the next best thing for achieving a sense of connection.

4. Don't lose the human touch

Whatever your personal attitude and approach to dealing with the Coronavirus threat, many will become increasingly anxious over the weeks to come. Be proactive in reaching out to your team, actively listening to them and showing them compassion. Virtual working can sometimes feel a bit transactional and soulless, with team members only contacting each other for a scheduled call or when they desperately need a question answered. And emojis can only go so far in conveying what's really on our minds! :-). Dial up the human touch by making personal time for others. Create moments of fun and humour in the virtual setting...get creative with it! Make sure your team's efforts don't go unnoticed or unrecognised and let them know that just because they may be out of sight, they're certainly not out of mind.

5. Embrace the opportunity that home working brings

One of the joys of remote working is the sense of freedom and autonomy it creates, to plan one's own time and approach to completing daily tasks and longer-term goals. Despite the tough challenges that this period will bring, offset these where possible by promoting autonomy and flexibility for your team. Show them that you trust them to deliver their goals in their own way, and in doing so – you may just help them grow and achieve more, for themselves and for you, in the process



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