# 3 Ways Strong Leaders Can Support Work-From-Home Employees



These are the keys to successfully managing a staff that is working from home and keeping its social distance.

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Though remote work has risen steadily in recent years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time work from home is still a surprisingly new concept for more than two-thirds of Americans. And managing a staff virtually calls for a modified mindset, perhaps more than many leaders understand or appreciate, especially during a global pandemic.

Here are three ways leaders can emotionally support employees

during this difficult time.

# 1. Exhibit empathy

Your organization’s people are its most valuable resource.

Some employees are juggling endless distractions. School is closed. Parents struggle to hold down jobs and perform as homeschool teachers – simultaneously! No more school lunches mean kids need to be fed, the fridge needs to be stocked, shopping needs to get done and someone needs to find toilet paper! Through these bizarre and unsettling times, try listening to your employees’ newfound challenges and express that you are there to support them in any way they need. Perhaps, when appropriate, can you even find the humor in this “new normal”?

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Other employees live alone. They may feel isolated and lack a sufficient amount of work to accomplish. Perhaps they manned your firm’s front desk and their job entailed checking corporate visitors in and out. Suddenly their main role has vanished. Are there new projects you can assign to this team member to keep productivity high and demonstrate to this worker that they are still a valued team member?

# 2. Resist micro-managing work-from-home employees

Since you’re no longer encountering your employees face-to-face, it’s natural to be curious about how engaged your staff is with their work-related projects and timelines. How and when can they be producing for the company with so important things they need to do to keep themselves and their loved ones safe?

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Interestingly, according to Gallup, 70 percent of employee engagement is directly related to effective leadership. Research shows it's best to take a situational approach to your role as a leader and adapt to the circumstances your team may be facing. Thus, assume your staff is doing the best they can. Though productivity may not be as robust as it was when your staff was physically present in the office, can deadlines be adjusted to meet these unprecedented times? The best leaders do not focus on "inputs," i.e., what their team members may or may not be doing at any one moment in time. They instead focus on overall "outputs" and team-related accomplishments.

## 3. Pay special attention to your newest team members

The old adage still holds true: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Research shows nearly 70 percent of employees are more likely to remain with a company three or more years if they have a positive onboarding experience. Conversely, nearly 20 percent of employees who leave a company do so within their first 45 days on the job. Thus, most effective organizations continually practice onboarding for new hires during the entire first year of employment.

What specific steps can you take for new recruits while working from home? Schedule personal check-ins at least once a week to ensure they have access to the systems, processes, procedures and people they need to succeed in their role. This goes not just for employees new to the company, but also for young folks just entering the workforce, as well as for people new to remote work. If your calendar tends to be packed, assign a fellow team member to take new team members under their wing to answer questions when you're tied up. This not

only supports the new hire, but it also empowers the veteran and shows that you value their longevity and expertise.

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The best leaders, according to Gallup, motivate employees, build trust-based relationships and have the ability to overcome adversity. The good news for you as a manager, amid all of the bad news of late, each of these attributes can be exhibited virtually.

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