



## ORGANIZATIONAL, LEADERSHIP & INDIVIDUAL REMOTE WORK STRATEGIES DURING COVID-19

As more physical offices are closed due to government mandates and business continuity plans, remote work is new normal for many employees. Here's how everyone can do their part to ensure business continuity and individual success. Organizations need to establish guidelines and support systems to help employees be as safe and productive as possible.

1. **Lead with empathy.** First and foremost, show empathy, support, and appreciation with your messaging. Discuss the organization's current remote work policies; address how long new operating procedures will last, when policies will be revisited, and general expectations.
2. **Communicate the policy.** Outline a business continuity plan to employees. What are the remote work expectations and how is this separate from a general remote work policy. Remember to note that teleworking under Covid-19 is a different operating situation all together. Communication from the top should be on-going.
3. **Utilize resources.** What are your current technology capabilities to support teleworking? Are there ways to support employees with childcare needs (i.e. stipends)? What coaching or counseling can you offer? Are you offering training on how to successfully telework under these unique circumstances?
4. **Assign point people.** Who should employees go to for IT support or sick/leave questions? Realign roles and designate specific contact people employees can turn to for help. Leverage talent management teams' expertise in people management skills, coaching, and employee resources. Monitor challenges and successes for quick resolutions and ways to revamp current and/or future policies.
5. **Continue to make D & I a priority.** Caregivers, women, and diverse professionals may be the most adversely affected due to unconscious bias during this time. Utilize your talent management team's expertise to monitor work allocation, conduct check-in meetings with employees, and interrupt bias.

Leaders need to think about how they can lead their teams through this crisis. What advice can you offer, and how can you help individuals overcome hurdles?

1. **Exhibit empathy.** Let team members know you understand these are unprecedented times. Start by expressing appreciation; *everyone* is juggling personal/professional obligations at once.
2. **Establish open communication.** Clarify expectations on availability both for yourself and the team. Open communication is important now more than ever. During a crisis, employees are facing school closures and unforeseen caregiver issues. Prioritize projects

and be clear on deadlines. Help team members with alternative solutions as timelines change. Share preferred communication methods and ask the same of your team.

3. **Manage workflow and be mindful of unconscious bias.** If one employee has too many active projects while another has too little, manage and reassign projects. Pay particular attention to your under-represented team members' workloads. Under normal work environments, they often face more barriers to accessing mentor/sponsor relationships. This may be more prevalent during remote work.
4. **Leverage technology.** Utilize collaboration tools and video conferencing to connect with employees, but limit mandatory video conferences. Personal and caregiver responsibilities can make too many video meetings stressful or unrealistic.
5. **Check-in and provide/solicit feedback.** Do individual check-ins to understand successes/challenges. Share feedback and express your appreciation; make sure any constructive feedback is unbiased under the current situation. Coordinate virtual happy hours and non-work meetings to keep morale and engagement up.

Individuals also have to maintain self-care and professional best practices for their remote work success.

1. **Manage your mindset.** It's easy to let the news consume you, but focus on the positive and what you *can* control. Start the day off by talking about one positive thing that happened yesterday. By setting your mindset with a more optimistic approach, you'll reduce stress and increase productivity.
2. **Create a routine.** Set a daily routine for yourself and other household members. Stay consistent with times to wake up, work, exercise, eat, address home issues, and go to sleep, etc.
3. **Communicate and solicit feedback.** Be transparent about your schedule/availability; personal and professional obligations can easily intertwine and create new conflicts throughout the day. Ask supervisors for feedback at natural intervals (i.e. when projects are complete); supervisors are also going through challenges and may forget to provide it.
4. **Leverage technology and resources.** Stay engaged and visible with available technology. Outreach to your supervisor and initiate regular check-ins. Is your organization offering resources/technology stipends to assist with teleworking?
5. **Connect with your community.** Have you checked in on your mentors/mentees to see how they're doing? Host virtual events with friends and family to stay connected. Isolation, especially under these types of circumstances, is not healthy.

We're here to for you! Members can access our [Business Continuity, Success \(and Sanity\) During COVID-19 Telecommuting](#) recording for training and success strategies. Under Covid-19. To discuss more ways to navigate remote/flexible work issues through this crisis, contact [Manar Morales](#).