

A woman with glasses and a blue shirt is sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. She is holding a white mug in her left hand and typing on the keyboard with her right hand. The background is a blurred office setting.

HOW TO CHECK-IN WITH REMOTE EMPLOYEES (WITHOUT BEING A MICRO-MANAGER).

4 Steps to Improve Productivity and Engagement

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REMOTE EMPLOYEE CHECK-IN CHEATSHEET

As a manager, it's always been important to stay connected to your team. As many organizations have shifted to work from home arrangements, this has become increasingly challenging.

When working remotely, there's no way to really know how your people are doing without checking in with them frequently. But, how do you check in

more often without employees feeling like you are trying to micromanage them?

Below are a list of steps to help you more effectively check-in with your employees in a way that keeps them engaged and productive, regardless of where they do their work.

1 GET IN THE RIGHT MINDSET.

The purpose of your check-in isn't for you, it's for the employee. Your goal is to reinforce to the employee (through both your investment of time and attention) that you care about them and are there to support them. Channel your energy into being empathetic. Try to really understand your employee's circumstances so you can best help them succeed.

Here are a few reminders to review as you prepare for a check-in.

- Remind yourself that this check-in is for the employee, not you. It's their time with you.
- Less talking, more listening. In a great check-in, the employee will talk most of the time.
- Give your full attention to the conversation--no multitasking or distractions.
- Seek to understand and learn about the employee and how you can help them.

2 HAVE A PLAN.

When you show up to an employee check-in without a clear plan, you send a message to the employee that you didn't care enough to prepare. Don't make this mistake. Spend at least as much time in advance preparing as you have scheduled for the check-in. A plan can be as simple as a basic outline or agenda.

There are a few signs you have a good plan for the check-in:

- The check-in and prep time is scheduled and a recurring appointment in your calendar for each employee.
- You have an outline or agenda for the conversations along with notes about the specific employee you are meeting.
- The employee knows the purpose of and what to expect from the check-in.

3

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS.

The key to a great check-in is asking good questions. Particularly when people are working from home, many facing less-than-ideal circumstances, the key to learning about how they are and what they need is the right question. But remember, asking a good question only matters if you truly listen and hear the response. Use your active listening skills to ensure employees feel truly heard.

Here are some examples of good questions to get you started:

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how's your stress level right now? What makes work hardest for you right now?
- How do you feel about your work from home set up?
- What was your biggest win this week—with work or just in general?
- How can I help make your work day less stressful?

4

SHOW THE LOVE.

We all crave acknowledgement and validation by others--particularly those who are important in our lives. As a manager, one of the most important things you can do is to show appreciation to your people. The simple act of acknowledging an individual's efforts or struggles can go a long way towards making them feel like they matter. And don't worry, it's virtually impossible for you to "over do it" on appreciation as long as it's sincere.

Tips for how to show the love to your employees in a check-in:

- Use video. Making eye-contact, smiling, and giving other visual cues of your commitment to the conversation is powerful.
- Lead off your check-in by expressing some sincere appreciation. Prepare some notes in advance. Reinforce that you care about them and are committed to helping them succeed.

A FINAL NOTE

If you are wondering when you get to talk about work priorities and tasks, it will surface through your conversations as needed. The check-in shouldn't be the only conversation you have with your people. Others might focus on planning work, managing expectations, setting priorities, and personal development.

The key to the check-in is to ensure the human beings doing the work are well and have what they

need to perform. Once that's done, the conversation about the work will surface and find its way to what matters most. Take good care of the human first, they will then take good care of the work.

As a manager, you have the awesome opportunity to shape the work experience of other people for the better. Your commitment to being a thoughtful and caring leader can literally change people's lives for the better. Managing isn't always easy, but putting in the effort to do it right is always worth it.