RAPID RESPONSE

Managing a Newly Remote Team Through COVID-19

SWAY
A Dynamic Team of Workplace Strategists

The SWAY team is comprised of leading experts in the future of work transition from a traditional 9-to-5 routine to a flexible & remote workplace model

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HEAD OF COMMUNITY

Respond to the Challenge

If you are in the process of engaging a newly remote team, we would love to connect with you. Contact us directly at covid@swayworkplace.com.
Mindset Changes in a Disrupted Workplace: What you need to know

HUMAN VALUES

You have multiple relationships in your life, from your immediate family, friends, neighbors, and work colleagues to the mail carrier. While they may vary in degree between personal and professional in nature, they all operate on a common set of fundamental human principles: I see you, I hear you, I value you.

When these principles are in balance, the relationship is in balance.

THE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIP

Success in a workplace relationship can be defined as an engaged & motivated employee continuously contributing a high level of productivity and value to the team and company’s mission. An engaged employee feels seen, heard & valued in the traditional workplace in the following ways:

I See You

- Directly in scheduled meetings
- Indirectly by close desk / office proximity to others
- Informally at lunch or in passing
- Socially at after hour events

I Hear You

- By speaking face to face
- By reading your body language and other signals
- Indirectly through conversations with other people
- Digitally (voice call / email / message / video call) when supported by the above three touch points

I Value You

- By being heard, listened to and sought out for their expertise
- By receiving direct and timely feedback
- By receiving positive affirmations
- By receiving effective critical feedback
- By seeing that their work is included and matters
THE DISRUPTED WORKPLACE

The COVID-19 response is a rapid change in workplace location from the routine of a central office with supportive colleagues, to an unknown remote workplace location where you are unexpectedly an office of one.

In a remote location you no longer have access to most of the support touch points listed in the See / Hear / Value traditional workplace.

The workplace relationship is out of balance and it is human nature to develop conscious or subconscious fears such as:

- Uncertainty – there is no known timeline or end point
- Fear of work security
- Fear of personal & family safety due to COVID-19
- Fear of isolation

THE CHALLENGE AT HAND

The risk to business continuity is the immediate concern shared by management and employees alike. In an environment of uncertainty and fear there is a high probability of lost productivity, loyalty and ultimately turnover if left unchecked.

But this is not a foregone conclusion.

SWAY Rapid Response is an action plan that shows how companies can empower their managers to lead by influence in encouraging workers to take the initiative to co-create a successful remote workplace strategy.

A company can choose to react to a crisis or respond to a challenge.
Critical Skills for a Newly Remote Team

The act of communication is the practice most significantly disrupted by the sudden change to a remote environment and can be solved using readily available technologies.

The skill of how you communicate is the singular variable that will have the most significant impact on the success of a rapid remote workplace policy.

SOFT SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

A key to success is to use the soft skills below to intentionally address your proximity bias, which is the subconscious belief that if I can’t see a person working in the office or they don’t respond immediately, I subtly assume they are intentionally not being productive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Adaptability</th>
<th>Solution Orientated</th>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
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<td>Listen</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
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<td>Patience</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
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COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE

ENTERPRISE ACTION PLAN
Design an Effective Remote-Based Workplace Practice

There are six distinct action areas that an Enterprise should consider when designing a remote-based workplace that best suits your organization.

**Action 1: State Expectations & Clarify Responsibilities**

**Prepare: Create an Operational Risk Assessment**

- Map out your organization by function, group or team. This can look like a traditional org chart, but the key is that each team member is assigned to a team. Each team is led by a Team Lead.

- A team member should list their responsibilities at the task level and individually assess each task for risk:

  - “I have on-line access to the files I need to create and send the nightly report”
    - NO RISK
  - “I need access to paper files in my office to create and send the nightly report”
    - RISK

- Aggregate the data collected by individual team members to create your operational risk heat map. Solve for risks where possible.

  **Example:** “I can scan and load my paper files to an on-line folder so I can access what I need anytime and from anywhere”

- Team Leads should clearly state what they expect of their team

  **Example:** “I expect that you will keep your working hours in place, to the extent possible” understanding that there may be unavoidable constraints

- Team members should clearly discuss with their Team Lead their concerns

  **Example:** “I can’t keep my normal working hours. Schools have closed and I need to care give during the day. I can work early or late hours to get my work done”
Day 1: Enact your Remote Workplace Practice

As a Team Lead, you must be prepared to continuously adapt to changing variables that are outside of your influence. Keep this mantra in mind as you guide your teams:

LISTEN
ADAPT
RESTATE
REPEAT

- With data from your Operational Risk Assessment at hand, create and distribute amongst your team your custom Remote Workplace Practice plan
  1. List of Team Member names
  2. Contact information for each member
  3. Where members are located
  4. Scheduling availability or constraints if unavoidable
  5. Your communication schedule & protocols
  6. State expectations

Action 2: Communicate, Communicate, and Communicate Some More!

When in doubt, communicate again. The point being that you should strive to be an over-communicator. This intentional skill will influence the success of your team.

CHOOSE VIDEO & VOICE CALLS

Re-establish the human connection by choosing Video & Voice calls over email & text wherever possible.

- Lead calls with empathy
  Example: “How is everyone feeling this week?”

- Continue with work questions
  Example: “We did a great job executing. Now let’s look at the challenges.”

ESTABLISH A TEAM COMMUNICATION SCHEDULE

- Team Video Calls
  One every morning and a second at the end of every day to boost morale, check in on team progress and discuss challenges

- 1:1 Video Calls
  Between a Team Lead and an individual team member at least once a week to provide a personal sense of support and look for emerging risk areas
• **Management Calls**
  Where Team Leads can communicate with senior management the success and challenges experienced that week

• **Weekly Survey**
  Design & send a Weekly Survey (*i.e.* Survey Monkey) to entire remote workforce to gauge the success and weaknesses in the current Remote Workplace Practice

• **Clarify Expectations**
  Create communication norms in written communication to clarify expectations
  
  *Example:* "4HR": 4-hour-response; “NNTR”: No Need to Respond

**USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM**

The idea of a Buddy System is to create a “virtual water cooler” experience. Work colleagues are often a source of camaraderie and friendship. Actively encourage your team to find a “buddy” where they connect throughout the week. This will help ease the feelings of isolation, fear & uncertainty

**SHARE DOCUMENTS**

We are writers first. In a traditional office we communicate verbally in formal and informal ways. Formally in a scheduled meeting, and informally when we pop our head into someone’s office for a quick chat. The value of what happens through informal communication cannot be underestimated and can be considered the glue that binds the work effort together

In a remote setting, we are all writers. A solution can be to create a shared document (*i.e.* Google Docs) where a team can:

• Write & share thoughts
• Add ideas
• Enter comments
• Ask questions on a real time basis
• Provide updates

**Action 3: Financial Concerns**

In a remote work situation, the physical workplace shifts from the responsibility of the company to that of the employee. The financial implications should be proactively addressed as part of a complete solution.

**JOB SECURITY**

• Team Leaders should regularly assure overall job security
• Consider a financial contingency plan for Hourly workers
• Clearly communicate your position on Paid Sick Leave & PTO
COWORKING (IF APPROPRIATE)

- Reimbursements for coworking costs
  
  **Example:** a day pass to a WeWork location

- Provide a stipend for teams to work from a local coffee shop
- Provide a stipend to cover unexpected child / elder care costs

HOME OFFICE

- Home office furniture [desk / chair / lighting]
- Printer, printing papers & ink cartridges
- Home office supplies [paper & pens]
- White board

HOME OFFICE TECHNOLOGY

- Laptops & desktops
- Monitors & cables
- Mouse & keyboard
- USB drives
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Webcam
- WiFi extenders & hotspots
Action 4: Technology Considerations

Create a remote technology plan that is updated and shared regularly with team members where they can contribute their experiences real time. There are unique technology considerations to be assessed when developing a rapid remote workplace:

- VPN access for remote team members
- Stress test VPN access with large number of remote works and assess risks
- Utilize external technologies to create a robust communication channel
- External video services have record functions to record & document video calls
- Assess privacy & data concerns when introducing external technologies that live outside of your company’s security protocol
- Utilize VOIP protocols
- Call Forwarding from traditional phone numbers to a remote phone numbers
- Create a cloud-based shared folders system (i.e. Google Docs)
- Grade your teams remote WiFi access and solve for weaknesses

Technologies for Remote Work

These suggestions are all popular platforms trusted by remote workers everywhere. They are commonly used, easily accessed & intuitive software platforms that can be used to create a dynamic communication channel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIDEO CALLS</th>
<th>BUDDY CALLS</th>
<th>GROUP MESSAGING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skype for Business</td>
<td>Facetime</td>
<td>Slack</td>
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<td>ZOOM</td>
<td>Marco Polo</td>
<td>Google Hangouts</td>
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<td>Voxer</td>
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<th>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>VIRTUAL WORK HUBS</th>
<th>FILE MANAGEMENT</th>
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<td>Trello</td>
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<td>Google Drive</td>
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<td>Asana</td>
<td>Google Docs</td>
<td>DropBox</td>
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<td>Monday.com</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
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Note: These services will often live outside an organization’s security protocol and data sensitivities must be considered.
What You Need to Know and Do as a Remote Worker

Perhaps you work from home occasionally, maybe it’s every other Friday or you have never worked outside of the office. Whatever your experience with remote work may be, adjusting to a rapidly deployed remote work situation in response to COVID-19 requires some special considerations. The guidelines below will help you to develop an approach to successfully work through COVID-19 and beyond!

Step 1: Connect with Your Employer

ASSESS & PREPARE
- Assess your job function and identify tasks you may not be able to complete remotely. Identify the constraint and work with your Team Lead to find a solution
- In collaboration with your Team Lead create a Remote Work Action Plan
- Clearly communicate how you need your Team Lead to support you directly and what you need to be successful (i.e. variable hours to accommodate caregiving needs)

TRACK YOUR TIME
- Create a Daily Work Log
- Set boundaries around your availability

COMMUNICATE
- Clarify Paid Sick Leave & PTO implications in your HR company policy
- Regularly and proactively communicate with your team members & Team Leads

DEVELOP A DIGITAL MINDSET
- Assess your digital skills and develop a digital mindset

Example: “I won’t print this document; I’ll save to my teams shared drive so we can digitally collaborate in real time.”
Step 2: Create a Workspace

PREPARE YOUR ENVIRONMENT
Select a dedicated space at home or in your local area where you intend to work from every day, if available. Make sure the space is well lit, with natural light, good ventilation and a comfortable temperature.

CREATE A LOCATION SCHEDULE
To avoid disruptions and to alleviate the sense of isolation, consider varying your environment. Wherever you choose to work, create a location schedule in advance to help you prepare. Please use your discretion for social distancing.

Example: “In the morning I work from home and transition to the local library in the afternoon. Tomorrow I’ll work from a coworking space and transition to a local coffee shop in the evening to wrap up emails.”

Home Office Checklist

- Comfortable desk, chair & lighting
- Laptop or desktop
- Keyboard & mouse
- Monitors & cables
- Webcam
- Headsets
- Noise cancelling earphones
- Office supplies
- Printer, printing paper & ink cartridges
- USB sticks & scanning capabilities
- WiFi extenders & hotspots

Step 3: Organize Your Day

DEVELOP A REMOTE MINDSET
To succeed as newly remote team member, it is critical to develop a remote mindset. Follow the tips and tricks below to ensure you are making the most out of working remotely!

KEEP A DAILY ROUTINE
- Your daily routine doesn’t change. Wake at the same time and follow your morning routine. Maybe you workout or get up early to read the paper. Continue the practice. Dress for the day and put on your shoes! No pajamas!
• If you typically get to the office at 8am and leave at 5pm, you follow the same schedule — that is when your day starts and ends

LIMIT DISTRACTIONS
• A small distraction can lead to many distractions. That load of laundry can work wait until the evening
• Make sure that you spend your workday focused on work matters
• Use noise cancelling headphones to drown out noise and limit distractions. If you don’t have a pair, use regular headphones to listen to light music. If music is distracting, consider listening to binaural beats or an alternative on Spotify or Pandora (create a free account!). The sound drowns out noise without causing you any distractions

CREATE A HOME SCHEDULE
Create a Home Schedule if you have a spouse or partner working from home when you must also simultaneously be a caregiver

• Cluster your video calls and meetings to the same part of the day
• Tag in and tag out with partner assigning blocks of time that you can dedicate to work
• Communicate your availability and blocked out time to your team members

Step 4: What Can I Expect?
Working in a remote workplace for an extended period of time is an adjustment and can cause some unexpected feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUSTRATION</th>
<th>ISOLATION</th>
<th>UNCERTAINTY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due to disruptions and noise if there are people working and living around you</td>
<td>A sense of isolation due to lack of regular person-to-person interactions</td>
<td>We don’t have a clear timeline on when your normal routine will commence</td>
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Try to respond, not react. Step away and take two deep breaths. Think about what YOU can control in this moment and go from there.

Be brave and share how you feel. Reach out to a friend or colleague and set up a zoom chat. Get some fresh air and go for a walk or jog.

Focus on today. Consider writing an accomplishment list at the end of each day. Include things both big and small.
These are natural and inevitable feelings that can be managed through wellness techniques. Be sure to take regular walk or fresh air breaks, take time to listen to calm and meditative programs and keep up a healthy workout routine! Focus on the outcome you’re producing and not on the need to prove that you’re working!

Step 5: Golden Rules to Remember

COMMUNICATION
Communication is an ongoing, active and engaging two-way conversation

NO ASSUMPTIONS
Don’t assume anything about anyone at anytime

WRITERS FIRST
We are all writers first

EXPRESS YOURSELF
Be patient, empathetic to others, adaptable, proactive and be a problem solver

ADAPT YOUR TASKS
Develop a digital mindset
The Future of Work

Advancing technologies are rapidly changing the nature of work as we evolve from a physical to a digital world — in the future, we won’t commute to a central office on a fixed timetable. We will have choice in where and when we work as the workplace relationship becomes increasingly digital, highly connected and collaborative.

In our emerging digital world, skills are supremely valued over schedule.

SWAY is a community of people evolving to work-as-lifestyle. We see a future of work where people choose where and when they work within a culture of trust. Within our community we educate, inspire and empower enterprise and talent members to evolve to a choice-based model of work.

The response to COVID-19 is difficult as most people are unexpectedly being forced to adapt to a flexible model of work, making decisions based on fear and feeling unprepared and uncertain.

The SWAY team is here to provide expert guidance and support as we collectively work through the impact of COVID-19

Let’s do this.

Let’s Connect

If you are in the process of engaging a newly remote team, we would love to connect with you. Contact us directly at covid@swayworkplace.com.