Managing Remote Employees and Teams

Managing people and teams when some employees are working remotely comes with challenges. Managers must be able to build trust and communicate effectively while managing performance and maintaining engagement without the benefit of all interactions being in-person. Following are some tools and techniques to help managers of remote workers and teams.

- **Set Clear Expectations** – helping employees fully understand expectations ensures that roles, responsibilities and workflows are aligned and you know how best you will need to support them. Clarify how their role and responsibilities affect the university’s objectives. Suggested items to be discussed and/or clarified in writing at the outset of a telework arrangement include:
  - Establish clear protocols for knowing the employee’s work schedule and make it accessible to all team members. Clarify that similar to when working on campus, if the staff member becomes unable to work due to illness, etc. the supervisor must be notified and appropriate leave accruals would be utilized.
  - Supervisor expectations of how the work will be performed, delivered and reviewed.
  - Develop a plan for any responsibilities that cannot be fully performed while working remotely and how the impact of this can be reduced.
  - Establish requirements for the staff member’s presence on campus as well as expectations for team communication.
  - Talk about phone options such as Call Forwarding and Avaya SoftPhone as well as other IT considerations.
  - Discuss how any confidential information will be appropriately safeguarded.
  - Clarify that employees are responsible for the safety and security of all university property.
  - Discuss the plan for managing distractions in the employee’s home work environment. Teleworking isn’t a suitable replacement for childcare/eldercare and the commitments and expectations of time off versus work should be discussed.

- **Communicate Effectively** – effective communication is always key between employees and supervisors, but even more essential for success of teams who are partially or fully virtual.
  - Check in regularly to ensure employees have the information and resources they need.
  - Increase recognition for successful outcomes while being up front when things haven’t gone as smoothly and provide guiding feedback. Regular feedback is vital to the success of the remote work arrangement.

- **Stay Connected** – find opportunities for team members to stay connected. For example:
  - Take just a few minutes at the beginning of a team meeting to mingle as you might if all team members were there in-person.
  - Ensure there is involvement on project work where it makes sense to promote collaboration and interaction among staff.
  - Ensure inclusion during team meetings inviting those who may not have contributed yet to share items relevant to the team.
  - Foster a sense of collaboration and inclusiveness and encourage team members to connect with the rest of the team regularly.
  - Monitor changes with interaction of team members. Struggling employees may tend to disconnect. Ask them in a one-on-one meeting how things are going for them.
• **Focus on Outcomes** – you won’t always be able to see *how* employees working remotely are getting their work accomplished. The same can often be said when employees are working on campus when schedules are busy.
  
  • Showing up and working at a computer is not performance, but only attendance. Performance management has always been best measured by pre-determined metrics to evaluate the quality of work, whether departmental goals and directives are being met timely, as well as feedback from “customers” the position serves.
  
  • Holding employees accountable for the outcomes they achieve gives them the flexibility to meet the outcomes creatively and in the way that works best for them.