10 Easy Ways to Keep Remote Workers Happy and Engaged

By Johnny Duncan

Although sometimes dismissed as another modern perk designed to attract talent, remote working arrangements don't just benefit employees. A solid remote work program's potential for cost savings position it uniquely as a win-win, both for employees and the organizations they work for.

According to a Global Workplace Analytics study, a typical business saves about $11,000 per person, per year by leveraging remote work policies, and if those with compatible jobs work from home just half the time, there would be a national savings of $700 billion per year.

Facetime, Hangouts, conferencing, cloud-sharing, and other collaboration technology have made it possible to produce quality work while enjoying the comforts of home. In fact, a 2015 SHRM article reveals that perhaps even more work gets done at home.

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But there is also a downside to working at home.

Happy, but losing steam

While the lure of getting the work done at home is exciting for many workers, the exuberance of producing from the humble abode can wear off over time. Deadlines and commitments aren't always enough motivation.

Still, employees who work from home continue to report loving their jobs more than those in their cubicle.

[Leadership IQ provides an online test](#) that gathers data regarding an employee's feeling toward their job based on the employee's work location. The quiz separates work locations based on three categories: office workers, telecommuters, (those working from home), and mobile workers, (employees who moved between offices).

In a 2016 survey of close to 3,500 employees that took the quiz, Leadership IQ found that 38 percent of mobile workers loved their job, 24 percent of office workers loved their work. But 45 percent of remote workers loved their job.

The quiz also revealed that remote workers tend to show more ambition: expending discretionary effort, and striving to be the best at their job. However, the survey also uncovered that remote workers need to be self-motivated — more so than office workers.

This should not be surprising, but it does provide a wake-up call for business leaders. Though remote workers are often happy and productive, they do need to drum up inspiration and motivation in order to achieve their full potential.

Motivation and engagement

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Keeping remote workers engaged and motivated doesn't have to be complicated. Most of the motivational methods you currently use to inspire in-house employees can be applied to employees working from home as well.

Here are ten simple, yet often overlooked, methods that can be used for motivating and getting your remote employees engaged:

1. Provide a platform for effective communication
As with all things in business and relationships, communication is key. Remote workers have an equal stake in being included in the direction of the business.

Keeping remote employees informed and in the loop reminds them not only that they're part of a larger organization, but also that the organization has a vested interest in their relationship.

"When I was a remote employee, my boss thought that if he didn't hear from me and there were no complaints from customers, that I must be doing fine," says Carol Hughes, former Vice President of Professional Services at Mactive. "The thought was that no news was good news, but that isn't always the case for remote workers. I knew there had to be a better way to keep remote employees engaged."

As a VP, Hughes created a virtual lunch where she would get all remote employees on conference once a week to have lunch together.

> "We would spend the first 15 minutes only discussing business and then we would chat about personal things or anything else while eating. Then, once a

month, I would take them to lunch so that we could interact and share thoughts and feelings just as office employees would do at lunch. This, in addition to daily chats or texts, had a tremendous impact on providing inclusion for our telecommuters."

2. Keep them happy

According to a TINYpulse study, remote workers report to be happier than other employees. All HR professionals know that a happy employee is more likely to be engaged in their work.

Keeping remote employees happy isn't overly-complicated — simply ask them if they're happy, and what they may need to make them so. Sometimes its as simple as some additional training, or upgraded hardware to help them perform better.

Whatever it is, make it happen.

3. Recognize great work

Although remote workers have proven their productivity rivals or exceeds that of their office-dwelling counterparts, they don't always receive recognition for that work.

Make it a point to ensure remote workers are being recognized for the myriad contributions they're making to your organization.

But don't stop there.

Make that recognition highly visible so other members of the organization are aware of the valuable contributions remote workers are making on a daily basis. Modern communication and collaboration tools make accomplishing this dead

simple.

Call out remote workers' big wins on company wide channels, and empower the rest of the team to do the same.

4. Clarify goals

Remote employees may be at home producing, but are they meeting expectations?

Remote workers, just like any other employees, need clear direction of what is expected in terms of objectives and company goals.

In a May 2016 Forbes piece, Victor Lipman points out, "If expectations are completely clear, and preferably mutually agreed-upon, it helps to bring the entire remote working arrangement into clearer focus." Setting expectations is a motivator for remote workers.

5. Place an emphasis on what is produced, rather than when

Since the remote worker's position exists for a reason, let those employees use it to their most productive advantage.

In other words, if one remote worker performs better in the evening and the position doesn't call for interaction with clients, allow them to produce during that time. Others may be early risers and desire to pump out a project before noon — great! Let them perform without unnecessary restrictions.

6. Keep coordination of job functions in the forefront

Employees working in the company office generally know and understand workflow processes and why they are necessary.

Remote workers don't have the same constant feed of

information from supervisors coming by their desks or general updates through the cubicle telegraph. Giving remote employees continual access to mission and vision statements, project updates, company performance records, etc. helps the remote worker understand how their role contributes to the company's overall success, resulting in a more engaged employee.

7. Emphasize culture

A recent Harvard Business Review article addressed the importance of developing company culture with remote employees in order to foster engagement.

This can be a difficult thing to do when communicating virtually.

The article suggests that in order to nurture culture, you first have to build trust and one good way to accomplish this is to bring team members together on a frequent basis.

By including remote workers in on company meetings and other events on a regular basis, a common thread of culture is more easily shared by all.

8. Assist with time management

One of the obstacles reported by remote workers is their ability to manage their time effectively.

They have the freedom to take care of household chores, taxi the kids to school, go to a doctor's appointment, and more, but may struggle with scheduling focused work time into their day.

Providing tools and training that can help remote workers better manage their time is a great motivator. It shows that management cares, and it gives them resources help with

their path to success.

Adopting collaborative project management tools like Asana and Trello can make a big difference here.

9. Get to know your remote employees

Remote workers can often feel like castaways. Help them to get rid of those feelings by taking time to meet with them one-on-one, and learn about what is going on in their lives.

If the same employee were in the office, people would notice their moods, get wind of their situation, and be able to offer words of encouragement or congratulations, whichever is appropriate.

Remote employees don't enjoy the same kind of working conditions, and as such, efforts must be made to spend time getting to know them.

10. Cut out the fluff

One of the drawbacks of working remotely is that communication levels with the office have the potential to drop off. As mentioned, a good flow of communication needs to be established with the remote workers to keep them engaged and motivated.

However, there is a such thing as too much face time. If a meeting is not necessary, don't schedule one just because it was agreed to address a specific project every day at 8:30am. Communicate when necessary, then leave the remote employee alone to do their job.

There you have it: ten simple keys you can begin implementing this month to motivate your remote employees to a higher level of engagement.