

# Managing a Remote Workforce During Tumultuous Times

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many companies to adapt to the new norm of remote work in a short period of time. While only time will tell when and how organizations will transition back to a physical workplace, remote work is here to stay and will more than ever become an integral part of the way we operate. Organizations that implement a healthy and effective remote work footprint will not only see a reduction in their costs, they will also find their employees more engaged, less stressed out and overall more productive. So where do you start?

## Support People First

Employees are experiencing fear, loneliness, anxiety and stress unlike any other time in history. Train your managers to be more compassionate and allow staff to speak their minds, with a focus on connection before content. Change your approach from company first to people first:

- Set the stage for meetings to allow employees to openly express their feelings (ask open-ended questions)
- Encourage employees to share their challenges (e.g., child care, elderly parents, etc.) and be sensitive to those issues
- Support collaboration and continued focus on health (physical and mental)
- If you are not already offering expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as part of employee benefit options, check with your broker on how you can add the option

## Establish Communication Best Practices

Visual connectedness through video communication is a must. When managers are able to see their teams, they are able to pick up on social queues and body language they might not otherwise see. This also increases inclusion, even for staff who tend to be quieter in meetings. Consider the following:

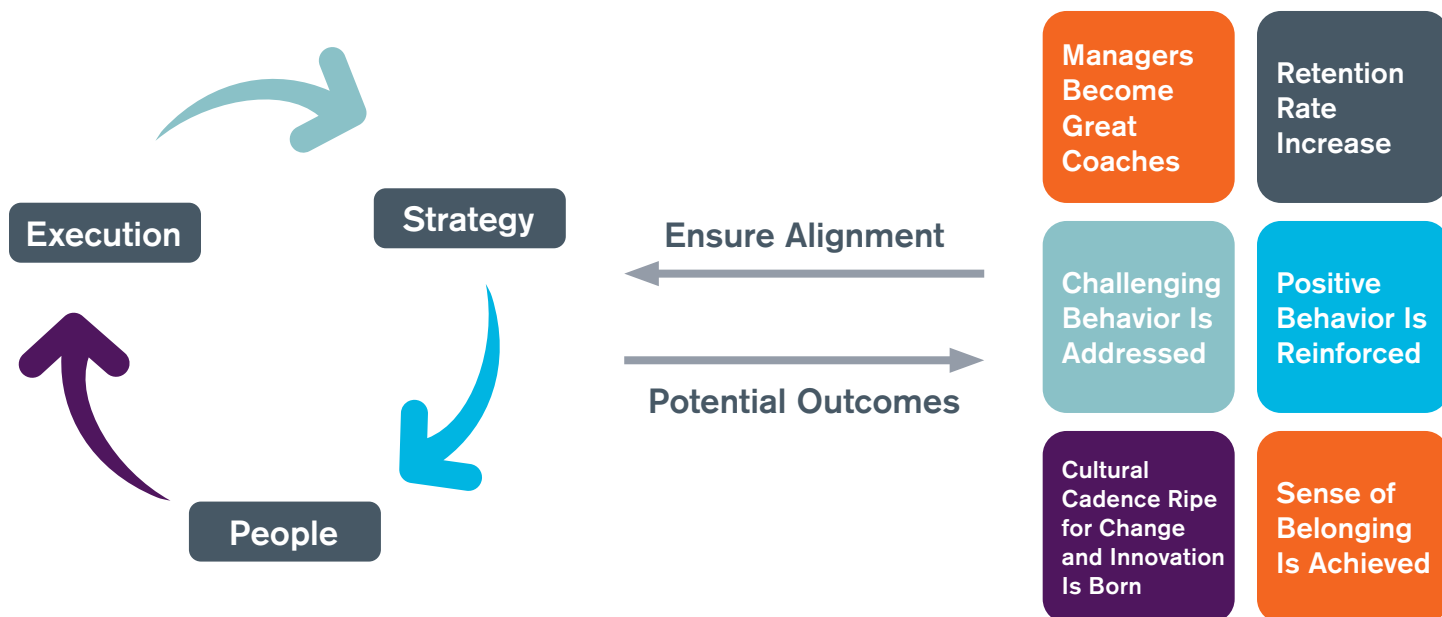
- Make sure to get on video, do not just make a call (video for real-time communication/feedback, email for non-urgent matters)
- Bring people into the conversation, especially those who do not ask questions
- Develop rituals to keep things as normal as possible (video social gatherings, virtual team activities, etc.)
- Establish communication norms and make suggestions to leadership team (weekly touch calls, encourage employees and managers to stick to work hours, increased communication from leadership, etc.)
- Teach employees best practices around communicating over email (emails must be concise and clear, when to reply all and who should be included, etc.)

## Ensure You Have the Right Policies in Place

Take a look at your policies and make adjustments, as appropriate. Make sure your work from home policy includes and identifies the equipment employees need to work remotely. Follow-up with staff to ensure they have the tools they need to be productive and coordinate with your HR and IT departments. In addition, managers should continue to maintain policies prior to the pandemic. For example:

- Timekeeping policy (overtime approvals, time tracking options, reduced schedules, etc.)
- Expense policies (identify additional remote expenses, particularly as it relates to CA Labor Code 2802)

- Emergency travel policies (especially for essential workers who are still traveling)
- Remote management (create good leadership and management practices, such as regular feedback and communication)
- Shift productivity from task oriented to outcome based (create measurement criteria to manage work without micromanaging, create accountability and set clear goals and outcomes)
- Performance-based conversations should continue, but on a monthly cadence, as company and individual goals change (document with tools that are collaborative, set expectations for both employees and managers)



What is necessary is to ensure your staff is accountable, engaged and aligned to the organization's objectives while working remotely.

## Contact Us

Let us help you train your staff, update your policies and execute a plan tailored for your specific company.



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