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Supervisor Tips for Managing a Remote Team

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Human Resources (<https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/>)



Tips for Managing a Remote Team

As many employees continue to work remotely, it is important for supervisors to take the time to think strategically about ways your department can adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ways to evolve your supervisory style. During this time, it is important to maintain regular, effective communication and nurture a shared sense of purpose with team members. Staying connected when you're not in actual physical proximity of your co-workers, team members and colleagues takes work, but – with some adjustments and creativity – it is possible to keep both productivity and engagement high.

Ensure your Department is Efficient

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, departmental work may look different. There may be new high-priority assignments, some work may need to be placed on hold, and possibly a temporary reduction in employees due to illness. Supervisors should think about the following:

- Cross-training employees is critical. Are employees in the department cross-trained to cover for each other?
- Ask employees to document how to do their job and share that information is imperative. Has the work been documented, shared, and made easily accessible?
- During this time of disruption, we are especially vulnerable to cybercrime, phishing, and other data security threats. Make sure your team is using VPN and has reviewed the [Data Management](http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/policies/data-guidelines/) (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/policies/data-guidelines/>) guidelines. Discuss ways to enhance data security in the department while working remotely.
- Connect with other supervisors within your division regarding workload and transferrable tasks/skills. How can employees assist others in the department/division/college to complete necessary tasks?
- Does the workload need to be rebalanced? Are there employees who have more available time to accomplish tasks and should work be reassigned accordingly?
- Are there future projects that can be acted upon now?
- Are there valuable skills which can be learned via [LinkedIn Learning](https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/development/pathways/) (<https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/development/pathways/>) to increase departmental efficiency and/or support professional growth and development? See our new remote work pathways.

For additional resources about how to manage your team remotely please view our [LinkedIn Learning path](https://www.linkedin.com/learning-login/share?forceAccount=true&redirect=https%3A%7C). (<https://www.linkedin.com/learning-login/share?forceAccount=true&redirect=https%3A%7C>)

Also consider reading this informative articles

- [Working Remotely: A Guide for Leaders](https://www.gallup.com/workplace-teams-working-remotely-guide-leaders.aspx) (<https://www.gallup.com/workplace-teams-working-remotely-guide-leaders.aspx>)
- [Making Virtual Teams Work: Ten Basic Principles](https://hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten) (<https://hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten>)
- [Tips for Supervisors: How to Motivate Your Staff During Difficult Times](https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.r) (<https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.r>)
- [How to Hold Productive Remote Work Meetings](https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.r) (<https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.r>)

Manage a Productive and Engaged Remote Team

Review technology needs and resources.

- Identify [technology tools](https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/remote-work/supervisor-checklist/) (<https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/remote-work/supervisor-checklist/>) staff use in their daily work and determine whether the resources will be accessible when working from home.
- Ensure staff know how to access [technical support](http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/services/helpdesk/) (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/services/helpdesk/>) should they need assistance.
- Ensure staff know how to [access their voicemail from home](https://www.carleton.edu/telecom/voice-mail/). (<https://www.carleton.edu/telecom/voice-mail/>)
- An alternative is to [set up call forwarding](https://www.carleton.edu/telecom/tutorials/forward-calls/) (<https://www.carleton.edu/telecom/tutorials/forward-calls/>), which enables

simultaneous ringing on another designated 10-digit phone number.

- Determine which platform(s) you will use to communicate as a team, clarify expectations for online availability, and confirm everyone has access to the technology tool(s) and support resources.

Review work schedules

Remote work sometimes gets confused with flex work. Be clear about your expectations with staff for maintaining their current work schedule or if you are open to flexible scheduling based on staff needs. This may be especially important when supervising parents of young children.

Draft a work plan

Review the questions below with staff and work through answers together.

- What routine responsibilities/tasks cannot be fulfilled while working remotely and how will that impact operations or other people? What are ways to reduce the impacts?
- What routine responsibilities/tasks require regular communication and collaboration with others? Proactively contact each staff member to confirm how you will communicate while everyone is working remotely.
- Often times staff experience fewer interruptions while working remotely. Are there any special projects or tasks that you can work on in advance while working remotely?
- What events or meetings are scheduled during the time in which the temporary remote work arrangement is in place? Will they be postponed or canceled, or will they take place using technology? What follow-up needs to occur due to postponements or cancellations?
- Remote work may provide the perfect opportunity for an employee to accomplish a few development goals. Are there any developmental goals that can be worked on at this time? Are there any [LinkedIn Learning pathways](https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/development/pathways/) (<https://www.carleton.edu/human-resources/development/pathways/>) that the employee could benefit from?

Make a communication and accountability plan

Supervisors should tell staff how often they should send updates on work plan progress and what those updates should include. Supervisors should also communicate how quickly they expect staff to respond while working remotely and the best ways for the staff member to contact the supervisor while working remotely.

- Conduct regular check-ins. Start each workday with a phone, video, or instant message chat. Your staff will be eager for connection and information during the disruption and the structure will help everyone create a positive routine. Every other day or weekly may be fine, so long as you are in contact frequently enough that your staff are in sync with you and/or with one another.
- If you normally make daily rounds to visit staff at their desks, you can give them a call during this period. Maintain team meetings and one-to-one check-ins, altering the schedule if needed to accommodate any alternative schedules that have been approved.

Have fun

Things are hectic right now. Change and uncertainty sometimes seem like the only constants from our previous work. Take time to engage with employees on a personal level and insert levity whenever possible. Some of our Carleton peers have reported success with the following:

- Setting a daily/weekly Zoom virtual background theme and take a few minutes to review and discuss why individuals choose their backgrounds.

- Hosting a weekly coffee hour as a department or division. Let people connect on topics unrelated to work.
- Playing [Video Call Bingo](https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/321/2020/05/Carleton_Video_Call_Bingo_Card_2.png) (https://d31kydh6n6r5j5.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/321/2020/05/Carleton_Video_Call_Bingo_Card_2.png) or creating a virtual scavenger hunt.

Additional considerations for managing non-exempt employees working remotely

Make sure that non-exempt staff are provided an expectation of working and [tracking hours](https://apps.carleton.edu/handbook/employment/?policy_id=870365) (https://apps.carleton.edu/handbook/employment/?policy_id=870365).

- Non-exempt employees must track and record the start and stop time each time they engage in work. This can be broken up throughout the day.
- It should be clear to non-exempt employees that they should not work more than their normally scheduled hours (FTE) unless they have received prior approval.
- Non-exempt employees working more than 5 consecutive hours in a day are required to take an unpaid break of at least 30 minutes during which they must not perform any work.

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