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CHAPTER 1: BENEFITS OF REMOTE WORKING

The rise in remote working

The world of work is changing. Many employees no longer hold the traditional nine-to-five job. Instead, working time is increasingly flexible. The sophistication of today's technology means that businesses are no longer limited to specific geographical locations to manage their workforce. Technology is the primary enabler of flexible and remote working, allowing employees to change the locations they work from and their working hours. With high-speed connectivity and the right technology, people can now work not only from dedicated office locations but from their homes, a café or hub, shared working spaces or, indeed, anywhere in the world.

More people are working remotely

Both in the US and Europe, more people are now working remotely. In the US, Gallup's 2017 'State of the American Workplace' report found that between 2012 and 2016 there was a 4% increase in the number of employees working remotely – from 39% to 43% of the workforce – and a 7% increase in the number of employees working partially remotely.²

In Europe, a 2018 study by serviced office provider IWG found that 70% of professionals work remotely at least one

² <https://news.gallup.com/reports/199961/7.aspx>.

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day a week, while 53% work remotely for at least half the week.³

Skills shortage is driving remote working

Hiring people with the right skills, knowledge and experience has become increasingly important to the long-term success of organisations. In freelancing website Upwork's 2018 'Future Workforce Report', 52% of hiring managers reported that a skills shortage was driving more flexible working.⁴ In order to hire the best people, in-company recruiters anticipate that up to a third of their full-time staff will be working remotely in the next decade. They report that hiring people with the right skills is more important than hiring people who can work in the same office location.

The number of self-employed people is on the rise

This rise in 'telecommuting' is also fuelled by the increase in the number of people who are self-employed. In the UK, the Office for National Statistics reported a 45% increase in self-employment from 2001 to 2017, with numbers rising from 3.3 to 4.8 million.⁵ In the Upwork report

³ www.cnn.com/2018/05/30/70-percent-of-people-globally-work-remotely-at-least-once-a-week-iwg-study.html.

⁴ www.upwork.com/press/2018/02/28/future-workforce-report-2018/.

⁵ www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/trendsinselfemploymentintheuk/2018-02-07.

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mentioned above, in 2019, 59% of hiring managers said that they use freelancers and contract workers, up from 24% in 2017.

Employees choose to work more flexibly

A further reason for the popularity of remote working is that it appeals to both younger and older employees alike. Millennials value organisational structures where they can collaborate, innovate and be most effective. More than two-thirds of millennials in a study by AfterCollege reported that the option to work remotely would greatly increase the attractiveness of specific employers.⁶ Likewise a 2012 report from Boston College The Sloan Center on Aging & Work called *Flex Strategies to Attract, Engage and Retain Older Workers*, found that as people are both living and working longer, they seek organisations where they can work flexibly.⁷

Many predict that the trend of creating remote, agile teams is the future of work. The World Economic Forum's forecast of employment trends called flexible working and

⁶ <http://employer.aftercollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AfterCollege2016StudentCareerInsightSurvey.pdf>.

⁷ www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/agingandwork/pdf/publications/flex_case.pdf.

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virtual teams “one of the biggest drivers of transformation” in the workplace.⁸

So, what are the benefits of remote working? Based on my experience of working with organisations that have embraced remote working, I have listed the benefits from employee, manager and organisational perspectives:

Benefits to the employee

The major benefit of working remotely is having a flexible schedule.

Other benefits include:

- Less time spent travelling;
- More time to concentrate on work without interruptions and distractions;
- Not dealing with office politics;
- Better work–life balance, including:
 - More time with the family/the ability to better manage childcare arrangements; and
 - More time to exercise, attend to the necessities of life, such as doctor and dentist appointments, and do home-based chores while being able to make up the time elsewhere.
- Less stress and increased well-being.

⁸ <http://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/employment-trends/>.

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Benefits to the manager

Remote working can provide opportunities to:

- Manage by outcomes rather than by ‘presenteeism’⁹;
- Empower team members to give their best;
- Increase well-being in the team;
- Improve job performance and job satisfaction;
- Boost morale; and
- Attract new team members with the right experience and skills, no matter where they are based.

Benefits to the organisation

Remote working is proven to:

- Increase productivity;
- Drive efficiencies;
- Save money in terms of office costs and overheads;
- Lower an organisation’s carbon footprint;
- Lower absenteeism;
- Increase employee engagement;
- Meet variable staffing demands;
- Attract and retain diverse talent and skills;
- Help build loyalty; and
- Create a more inclusive culture.

⁹ www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47911210.

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Reflection and action points from this chapter

In the next chapter, we look at the challenges of making flexible working effective in your organisation. However, before we do this, it may be helpful to list the benefits that working remotely will bring to your organisation, to you as a manager and to your team.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING AND WORKING REMOTELY

More and more companies are offering their employees opportunities to work remotely. In this chapter we look at the challenges this presents, both for the manager and the employee.

Case study

Let's take an example of one team whose members have all moved to remote working – either partially, on certain days a week, or full-time. The team is made up of a manager and five team members, all of whom used to work together in one location. Business restructuring and a move to a serviced office where there are fewer desks available has led to the team revising its working patterns.

Here's the team's new working arrangement:

Table 1: The Team's New Working Arrangement

Jean – the manager	Works three days a week from the serviced office and two days a week from home.
---------------------------	---

2: The challenges of managing and working remotely

Sam	Works five days a week from the serviced office.
Chris	Only works term-times and spends four days in the office and works one day a week from home.
Peter	Main role is visiting clients, so works from home, cafés and the serviced office depending on his visit schedule, which changes each week.
Dellie	Works two days a week from home, one day a week from a partner organisation's office and comes in two days a week to the serviced office.
Anjit	Has condensed his hours so he now works four longer days each week; two of these are from home and two from the serviced office.

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Analysis

Before the organisation's move to the serviced office, the team prepared by agreeing their new working patterns with their manager and by beginning to work remotely before the move in order to get accustomed to the new set-up.

What will be the differences in the way the manager needs to lead the team when they move to new ways of working?

Challenges for the manager

One of the main challenges of working and managing remotely for the manager of this team, which is typical of issues managers face when managing remotely, is that team members are no longer physically present in one location, so the manager cannot rely on 'presenteeism' to know what they are doing. Many of the barriers to new ways of working come from the old paradigms about when and where we need to be to do our work. Too often, organisational cultures are based on monitoring inputs and the visible time spent at work, rather than outputs and outcomes.

Empowerment vs control

Managing remotely calls for a more empowered style of management where the manager trusts the team member to complete the tasks they have jointly agreed. Many managers initially fear a loss of control as they cannot see what the team member is doing. They are no longer

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physically present to be able to control and intervene in the employee's work.

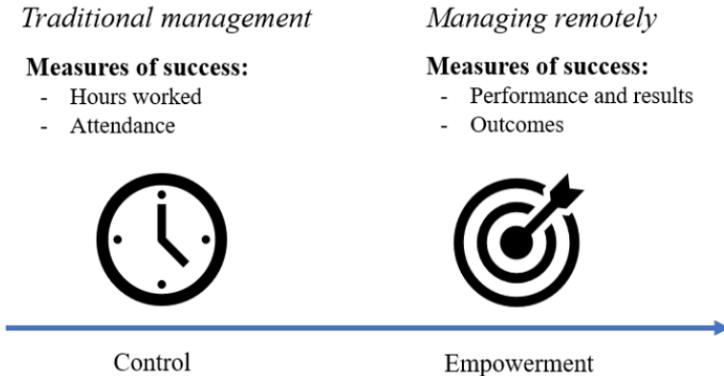


Figure 1: Traditional management vs managing remotely

Management by outcomes

When managing remotely, managers need to be very clear with team members about the outputs that are expected from them. It involves managers being there to support their team and ensuring that there is an effective two-way communication flow.

Managing by outputs also involves managers agreeing key performance measures with each team member so that everyone is clear how their productivity will be monitored.

Team collaboration and cohesion

Issues can arise around team coherence and collaboration. Not seeing your team during the week can mean that people start to feel disconnected and lose a sense of team cohesion.

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The manager needs to work hard to ensure that people still feel connected to the team.

In later chapters I provide tips and techniques on how to do this, but essentially, when working remotely, team meetings take on more importance, as does providing opportunities for the team to socialise. Much of a team's sense of unity can come from the opportunities to interact informally where they can get to know one another, have chats and 'coffee break' discussions.

Face-to-face interaction helps generate trust and understanding, which is the bedrock of the team. When moving to remote working, the manager needs to agree regular meetings with the team. Technology can be an enabler here, and in Chapter 3 I outline how this can help. However, in my view, ensuring regular face-to-face contact is just as essential.

Managers may also need to consider holding more 'off-site' team events or away days to allow team members to meet in a relaxed but structured context. Such interventions can provide a good opportunity to help build team spirit.

Loss of face-to-face interaction with other teams

Another concern for managers is that when team members start to work remotely, they lose the day-to-day contact that they may have had with other teams, such as stopping by a colleague's desk to ask a question or catch up. As well as considering how to create cohesion in your own team, it is helpful to look at ways of remaining in contact with key stakeholders. Techniques I have seen include:

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- Identifying your key stakeholders and creating a communication plan for each group;
- Asking members of other teams to take part in your own team meetings (and vice versa) to provide updates, inputs, etc.;
- Providing shadowing and secondments;
- Developing blogs and online newsletters to update other teams about what you are doing;
- Holding joint events/away days; and
- Using collaborative IT tools such as Yammer, Slack and Workplace to encourage sharing across teams.

Supportive, regular one-to-ones

As well as focusing on the team as a whole, the challenge every manager faces is to ensure that individuals in the team are both supported and challenged to give their best.

It is also essential that the manager continues regular one-to-ones with each team member to help them feel part of the team. Depending on the work context, this can also be supplemented with supervision, coaching and mentoring.

Being alert to team member well-being and isolation factors

When managers see team members on a regular basis, they are much more likely to be in-tune with their personal well-being and how well they are integrating with the team. One of the downsides of lack of face-to-face contact is that the manager may miss the telltale signs of isolation or lack of well-being.

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Coming to work provides an important social element in many people's lives. Working remotely can cause people to feel isolated and affect their mental health. It can also cause anxiety and guilt because workers feel a constant need to appear "busy". Others feel anxious about the lack of structure and peer support that home working brings.

Being aware of these factors and watching out for signs that all is not well is important for managers in order to provide a healthy and satisfying environment for their team.

Case study

The following case study is based on a real-life situation. Decide what you would do as a manager.

You recruited Tora 18 months ago. Her experience and behaviour at the interview convinced you she was the right person for the job.

Tora was office-based until a recent drive for efficiency saw your organisation move to smaller offices and encourage more people to work from home. Before the office move Tora used to come in early to work and often socialised with her colleagues at lunchtime. She is popular with the rest of the team and they like her sense of humour. In the past, Tora always volunteered to help out, and likes chatting to colleagues and customers.

Since the move, Tora works two days a week from home and spends the rest of the week working in various

2: The challenges of managing and working remotely

locations, including public libraries and cafés. You have noticed that in the past month Tora flits from task to task and does not complete any jobs to the standard required. She appears unable to see which job needs attention first and when you have discussed this with her, she seems reluctant to engage in conversation and just says: “It’s all a bit much at times.”

You have noticed that Tora is not embracing the new technology that has been introduced to help remote working. She does not use Instant Messenger and twice has forgotten to join the weekly Skype team meeting. When she did join the last meeting, she was unusually quiet and did not show her usual sense of humour. Yesterday she declined a calendar invite to join the team lunch you have organised at the new offices next week as she says she has problems getting in.

When you spoke to Tora at her last one-to-one she denied that there was a problem. However, you are concerned that Tora is feeling increasingly isolated from the team.

As her manager, what do you do?

Challenges for the individual

Some of the issues identified as challenges for the manager also apply to team members.

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Absence of team interaction

For the employee, the absence of face-to-face team interaction can lead to a sense of isolation. IT can help bridge this gap, but as I mentioned earlier, it is key that the manager and the team have regular contact in order to create a continued feeling of team cohesion.

Appropriate location and equipment

Additionally, not every home or place to work outside the traditional office environment may be suited to remote working. In Chapter 3 I discuss issues around the use of technology when working from home. Ideally, when working from home, everyone should have a dedicated space and the technology available to support remote working. In reality, this is not always the case. I have known instances where team members have worked from their bed as they have no desk in the home, and others where a team member cannot afford to have Wi-Fi installed in their home and therefore cannot use the technology provided, but did not want to admit this to the team. Luckily, in these situations, the managers concerned were monitoring the quantity and the quality of their team members' outputs. They were able to quickly spot there were issues and establish the root causes to help their team work remotely in an effective manner.

DSE assessment

There is an onus on the employer to ensure that people who use display screen equipment (DSE) as part of their work on a continuous basis of an hour or more, undertake a workstation assessment. The Health and Safety Executive

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has published a free assessment checklist, which allows employers and employees to assess their whole workstation, including equipment, furniture and work conditions, and take steps to avoid any unnecessary risk.¹⁰

The employer needs to ensure that a DSE assessment is undertaken when:

- A new workstation is set up;
- A new user starts work;
- A change is made to an existing workstation or the way it's used; or
- Users complain of pain or discomfort.

The employer also has obligations to ensure that any employee's special requirements, for example an individual with a disability, are catered for.

Cost of working from home

As well as being aware of and taking steps to ensure the safe functioning of employees from a non-office location, some employees struggle with increased costs when working from home, such as the additional costs of lighting and heating during the day. I have not personally encountered businesses who pay for these costs. Many organisations take the line that the costs saved in travel and time getting to work should offset any incremental gas and electricity costs that the employee incurs.

¹⁰ www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf.

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Work creep

For most people, working remotely allows them to focus and concentrate on the task in hand without interruptions or distractions. However, the downside of this can be that individuals ‘in the flow’ do not take regular breaks or set boundaries around when to stop work. It is fine, for example, if you have childcare obligations, to stop work at 3.30 pm to pick up your children from school, and then to make up the time by working until 6:00 pm. However, if you find yourself continually working late, or checking your emails during the night or on holiday, this is an indication of ‘work creep’. It means that you need to reassess how and when you are working from home to prevent a decline in well-being.

Challenges for the organisation

Reliance on technology

To make the concept of employees working where and when they want a practical reality, businesses need to invest in the latest technology to enable connectivity and collaboration. I have encountered several remote working initiatives that have been slow to take off because of technology issues. Without sufficient investment in hardware, software, IT training and support, remote working becomes inefficient and ineffective.

Culture change

When businesses move more towards remote and flexible working, this invariably produces a cultural shift in the organisation. In Chapter 7, I speak about managing change

2: The challenges of managing and working remotely

– suffice to say that changing the way people work involves changing behaviour. As I explain, any behavioural change takes time to embed. The challenge is for leaders and managers to set a positive example when championing the change.

In one instance, I found that it was the executive leaders of one large organisation who were the least likely to work remotely. They came into the office almost daily. Most of their direct reports had moved to working more flexibly and were not always in the office. When the executive leaders wanted things done, they went directly to people who were present in the office, irrespective of whether they were the right members of the team to undertake the work, rather than contacting the most appropriate people who were working from home.

Leadership words and actions need to be congruent with the message of change. Many organisations need to shift the mindset that ‘working from home’ means that people are ‘on a jolly’ or not contactable.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Take time to reflect on the challenges remote working presents to your organisation and the best ways to overcome these.

CHAPTER 3: TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER FOR REMOTE WORKING

What IT is needed?

The ability to work outside the traditional corporate office is facilitated by investment in technology that allows people to work from any location. So, what is needed in terms of IT? The following is a checklist based on my own and others' experience of working remotely:

Fast and reliable Internet access

This is a 'must-have' whether you are on the road, in a public location or at home, either via Wi-Fi or a hotspot connection allowing a corporate phone linked to a mobile device.

Virtual Private Network (VPN)

A reliable VPN will allow remote access to your organisation's resources.

Mobile device

Likewise, a fully functioning mobile device will enable you to receive and make/send calls, texts, emails and messages, as well as provide access to web and video conferencing and collaboration tools.

3: Technology as an enabler for remote working

Web and video conferencing ability

The ability to hold virtual meetings is essential in ensuring an engaged team. It is also worth investing in good quality headsets.

Communication and collaboration tools

There are a number of collaboration tools available on the market as well as communication apps, including those in the Office 365 suite such as Instant Messenger. Unlike email, communication apps connect workers instantly.

Project management tools

Depending on the nature of the team, it may also be helpful to use collaborative project management tools, which allow people to work simultaneously on projects as well as schedule meetings and tasks.

Document management suites

Consideration should also be given to central file hosting and document management, which can help improve employee productivity via an easily accessed web interface. For example, Google Docs allows multiple users to simultaneously share and edit documents, spreadsheets and presentations from anywhere, using any device.

Information security elements of IT and remote working

Remote teams pose a larger information security risk than centralised ones. When you work remotely, most communication happens online. This increases the risk of

3: Technology as an enabler for remote working

cyber attacks such as phishing and identity theft. A 2018 iPass Mobile Security Report showed that 52% of US-based CIOs surveyed suspected that remote workers had been hacked in the past 12 months, with 67% believing that these incidents had taken place in cafés and nearly half believing that bring your own device (BYOD) posed an increased security risk.¹¹

As BYOD becomes more popular and the flexible working trend continues, information security becomes more important. Analysts believe that remote workers' lack of commitment to IT security best practice and lack of vigilance around IT security pose a major threat. For example, according to a 2018 Apricorn survey, around 50% of organisations enforce data encryption on remote workers' devices.¹² Meanwhile, in a 2014 Imation survey of remote workers in the UK and Germany, 30% admitted they did not protect their data with passwords.¹³

Organisations need to ensure that they have the right policies in place to minimise the risk of a breach. This involves taking measures to protect data, code or other confidential information and ensure its integrity. Using strong access control features such as password protection, limited access and editing rights, and short-lived links can

¹¹ www.ipass.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/iPass-Mobile-Security-Report-2018.pdf.

¹² www.apricorn.com/blog/index.php/2018/11/12/security-on-the-go/.

¹³ www.ironkey.com/en-US/about-ironkey/press-releases/Imation-Survey-2014-11-05.pdf.

3: Technology as an enabler for remote working

help control accesses to unauthorised information. Likewise, being clear about where sensitive information can and cannot be accessed and providing privacy screens where appropriate can be helpful. Above all, the IT security policy needs to be well communicated and monitored.

Remote worker surveillance tools

Some businesses choose to use IT surveillance tools to monitor how employees are spending their day. Typically, the team member records their task completion and activity at regular intervals throughout the day so that the manager can monitor performance. To me, this sounds very ‘Big Brother’ and takes away the element of trust. However, managers I have spoken to who have used the system report that it increases productivity and is a useful measurement tool. It highlights where there are performance issues so that these can be quickly addressed.

Surveillance tracking devices are another useful tool. These allow the organisation to identify where remote workers are located, and can be particularly useful when, for example, lone workers visit potentially dangerous sites. However, you must check the legality of using such devices before installing them.

Tips and hints on effective use of IT when working remotely

Recently, I undertook a review with a team that had moved from centralised working to remote working. Below I share their hints and tips about the effective use of IT when moving to remote working:

3: Technology as an enabler for remote working

- Pre-planning how you will use technology is important. Do as much as you can before a physical move to prepare for the increased use of IT, such as going paperless and testing IT equipment from remote locations before the transition.
- Having the right IT equipment is essential. Plan to put this in place early on, particularly the VPN and mobile devices, and test they can function without issues from where you plan to work.
- Ongoing IT support is imperative. Be persistent when IT issues arise.
- Recognise the need for continuous IT training rather than just at the beginning of the transition. People learn at different paces, and becoming familiar with new technology takes time and practice. Review progress with the team and provide additional support to those who need it.
- Go paperless and don't be afraid to throw things away, shredding where appropriate. Scanning and digitising work prior to remote working enables new, enhanced ways of working.
- When working remotely, connect to the VPN before connecting to Wi-Fi to ensure extra security. Don't trust unsecured Wi-Fi and never open or send sensitive information over public Wi-Fi.
- Don't save data on your laptop – use a secure VPN or Cloud-based service.

3: Technology as an enabler for remote working

- Have a regular housekeeping day to routinely change passwords.
- Use the latest technology such as fingerprint ID and face recognition.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

As we come to the end of this chapter, take time to consider how well technology enables remote working in your organisation. Reflect on the following questions:

- How familiar are you with your organisation's IT security policy?
- Is this up to date and well communicated to employees?
- What more can be done to ensure that the IT security policy is regularly monitored and appropriately implemented?

CHAPTER 4: TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING REMOTELY

The right to flexible working

Imagine that you are the manager of a remote team. It is Monday and you arrive at your serviced office at 10:30 am, having spent the first part of the morning dropping your children at school and attending a dental appointment. You intend to remain in the office until 3:00 pm and then take an hour to collect your children and go home, where you will work until 8:00 pm. Tomorrow you plan to join a colleague at a local library to work together on a joint project. On Wednesday you will return to the serviced office, where you will hold a team meeting and two one-to-ones with team members. The rest of the week you will work from home.

This type of scenario is becoming increasingly common for managers and team members alike. Flexible working provides employees with the opportunity for different working schedules, shorter working hours, job sharing, and virtual or home working. Since 2014, by law all employees in the UK with more than 26 weeks employment with an organisation have the right to request flexible working practices, whether they are on permanent or temporary contracts.¹⁴ (This entitlement does not apply to agency

¹⁴ www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/7/The-right-to-request-flexible-working-the-Acas-guide.pdf.

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workers.) This can cover requests to move from full-time to part-time hours; compressed hours where people work their normal contracted hours but in fewer days; home-working for part or all of the week; job sharing and working flexible hours to fit in with, for example, school hours, college hours or care arrangements.

The right to flexible working complies with relevant UK legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, Employment Rights Act 2002, Working Time Regulations 1998, Children and Families Act 2014, Data Protection Act 2018 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. As a manager, it is essential that you are aware of your organisation's policy for flexible working in order to enable staff to achieve an appropriate work-life balance. You can access further information about handling flexible working requests in the Acas guidance: *Handling in a reasonable manner requests to work flexibly*.¹⁵

Having discussed and agreed with each team member if they want to work flexibly, it is important to identify the locations from which they'll work. You have a duty of care as a manager to ensure your team have a safe and well-managed working environment.

You'll need to ensure that they have access to appropriate technology to enable them to work from multiple locations, including their home (if appropriate). Remember to

¹⁵www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/g/r/11287_CoP5_Flexible_Working_v1_0_Accessible.pdf.

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identify access needs and IT requirements for disabled employees and any assistive technology that is required.

As outlined in the previous chapter, team members will also need access to suitable training to ensure they can work effectively from remote locations.

The role of HR

HR plays a key role in providing support to both the manager and the team members who work remotely. HR is normally responsible for defining, in consultation with the business, the policies relating to remote working and flexible working. They also help with setting up initiatives such as employee assistance programmes and well-being training, which can support remote workers, and can assist managers and team members in contractual issues, such as when a team member changes their working patterns or when there are grievances or disciplinary issues. HR professionals usually have their fingers on the pulse of organisational culture and can also share best practice on how remote working is working across the organisation.

The needs of the customer must come first

When moving to remote working, a key consideration is how it will impact the levels of service (internal or external) that you deliver. Working from home helps people manage their domestic responsibilities, such as doing the school run or waiting in for deliveries, but it shouldn't have a negative impact on service delivery.

If you need someone to be physically in the office every day, establish a rota with the team. A tip is to stagger your team's presence in one central location throughout the

4: Top tips for managing remotely

week. Typically, most teams who remote work prefer to be out of the office on a Monday and a Friday. Establish if this is practical and how it impacts your customer experience. If centralised office space is in short supply, everyone working remotely on the same days can put pressure on desks during the rest of the week.

Managing by outcomes

The benefits of remote working, as we saw in Chapter 1, are the freedom and flexibility this provides. People can complete work in their own time, providing they meet their targets and deadlines. However, as I mentioned earlier, this way of working requires a different style of management – managing by outcomes.

In 2008, two management consultants, Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, wrote the book *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It*.¹⁶ They were the first to set out an approach to managing in a results-only environment. They explained that the focus of managing by outcomes is on results and goals. This means that team members are clear about what they need to achieve and have the freedom to complete their work to the agreed deadlines and measured quality.

To make an approach to managing by outcomes work, there are several steps that managers need to take:

1. Agree flexible working arrangements with each team member before moving to a culture of remote

¹⁶ Reisler, C. and Thompson, J., *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It*, Penguin Group, New York, 2008.

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- working, and when recruiting new people, make it clear that the focus will be on measurable outputs.
2. Ensure each team member's job description clearly sets out their roles and responsibilities.
 3. Be clear about the team's vision, outcomes and required deliverables.
 4. Set clear and measurable objectives with each team member. Remember to make these SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound). Include specific metrics and clear expected outcomes so team members know how their performance will be evaluated.
 5. Monitor performance and provide feedback and coaching. Performance management needs to be an ongoing process.

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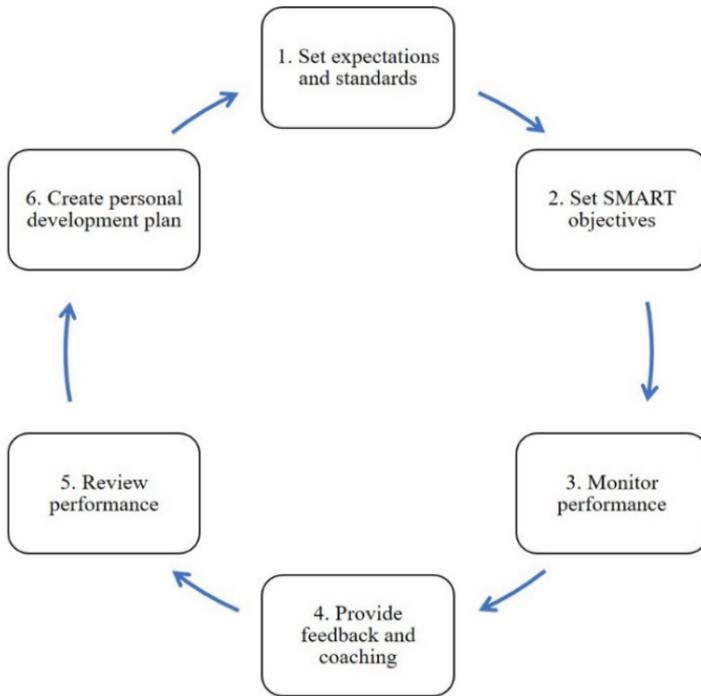


Figure 2: The performance management cycle

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Feedback skills

Recognising achievement is essential in building a supportive work environment, so remember to provide motivational feedback to each team member when they accomplish their goals.

Remind them that it is their responsibility to let you know if they won't finish a task on time and if they need support. It is the manager's job to tackle underperformance, so if someone on the team is missing deadlines or producing poor-quality work you need to have a one-to-one discussion to establish why and to develop a plan of action for improvement.

Managing poor performance when someone is working remotely is no different to when someone is working in a central location. Flexible working doesn't solve or make worse existing performance management, culture or trust, so issues with team members are not a reason to fear flexible working.

When providing feedback, use evidence-based, non-judgmental language such as:

“I noticed”

“I did not notice”

“I saw”

“I did not see”

“I heard”

“I did not hear”

“I observed”

“I did not observe”

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Focus on what is going well (motivational feedback) as well as what can be improved (developmental feedback). Be honest and specific about what you have seen and the impact of the team member's behaviour. Consider what you would like them to keep doing, stop or start doing. Remember to ask questions and allow the team member an opportunity to have their say.

The mnemonic AID is an effective way to hold a feedback discussion:

Action

What I noticed/saw/observed.

Impact

The impact was/the effect was/as a consequence.

Do

- Motivational feedback: Well done, I'd encourage you to continue

Or

- Developmental feedback: How do you think you can improve? What will you do differently next time? You did this well, but you could have done it better if you...

Connecting with team members

It can be difficult for managers to stay on top of each person's progress in a remote working environment. Managers need to make a conscious effort to engage in deliberate communication with remote workers. For example, there could be a need for increased one-to-ones

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as people first begin to work remotely so that the manager can ‘check in’ with how the new working arrangements are going. Importantly, both the manager and team member need to agree a communication plan that works for both. Ask your team members how they would like to keep you up to date.

Scheduling team meetings

If you are managing a remote team, you’ll need to make sure that you schedule regular, formal and informal team meetings.

Case study

- Imagine you are the manager of a service delivery team that was previously based in a central location. The team has now moved to more flexible working.
- You used to hold a face-to-face team meeting every Tuesday morning.
- Every quarter on the last Thursday of the month you combined a team visit to a partner location followed by a team lunch.
- You used to hold weekly one-to-ones on Wednesdays.
- You have established team members’ requests for new ways of working.

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The schedule of a typical week is below:

Key	
WFH	Working from home
WFTD	Working from touch down area in partner offices
NWD	Non-working day

Table 2: The Team's Work Schedule

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Manager	WFH	WFH	IN	IN	NWD
Bill	WFTD	IN	IN	IN	NWD
Josie	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN
Mike	IN	IN	IN	WFH	WFH
Sarinder	NWD	IN	IN	IN	IN
Mattie	WFH	IN	WFTD	IN	WFH
Abdul	IN	IN	NWD	IN	IN
Helena	WFH	IN	WFH	IN	NWD

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Petra	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN
Eric	WFH	WFH	WFH	IN	WFH
Tola	IN	WFH	WFH	IN	IN
Sam	WFH	IN	IN	WFTD	WFTD

- With the new working arrangement, when would you decide as a manager to hold your monthly team meetings?
- What days would you hold your one-to-one meetings?
- Would you hold meetings face to face or can you use collaborative technology such as Skype?

Empowerment and trust

I recently ran a series of workshops with managers and team members who were about to embark on new ways of working. As part of this training, I asked both groups what they needed from each other to make working remotely effective. Both groups replied with “trust and empowerment”.

Trust is the foundation of great teamwork. In his 2002 book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, consultant and speaker

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Patrick Lencioni found that trust was the cornerstone of high performance.¹⁷

If you do not trust your manager or your team members, you are unlikely to speak honestly to them, you avoid conflict and issues get pushed under the carpet. You don't feel responsible or accountable for the deliverables of the team and the result is poor morale and lack of motivation and engagement.

Management psychologist Bruce Tuckman identified the key role of trust in his stages of a team development model.¹⁸ He explained that both newly formed teams and established teams that have new members go through four phases of development. Long-standing teams can go through these cycles many times as they react to changing circumstances.

1. Forming

The team forms for the first time or to undertake a new activity, but team members tend to behave quite independently. People are on their best behaviour and discussions revolve round non-threatening topics. The team attempts to understand the tasks and deliverables it needs to achieve.

¹⁷ Patrick Lencioni, John Wiley & Sons, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 2002, www.tablegroup.com/books/dysfunctions.

¹⁸ <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/cd78/c763010e6eb856250b939e4eec438e14ef8f.pdf>.

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2. Storming

This is phase two of team development where people begin to feel more comfortable in voicing their opinions. The group starts to sort itself out and power and status plays out. This can lead to conflict, disagreements and personality clashes. In Tuckman's study, 50% of teams went through a storming phase. When this was well managed by the leader, trust developed as a result of greater intimacy and a spirit of cooperation emerged.

3. Norming

In this phase, team members become used to the different ways of working and employees become used to different ways of working with other team members. They resolve disagreements and begin to take responsibility for a common goal.

4. Performing

The norms of the team are now established and team members value differences and trust each other. They are motivated to give their best and everyone works collaboratively to achieve the deliverable(s). Performance and effectiveness are high.

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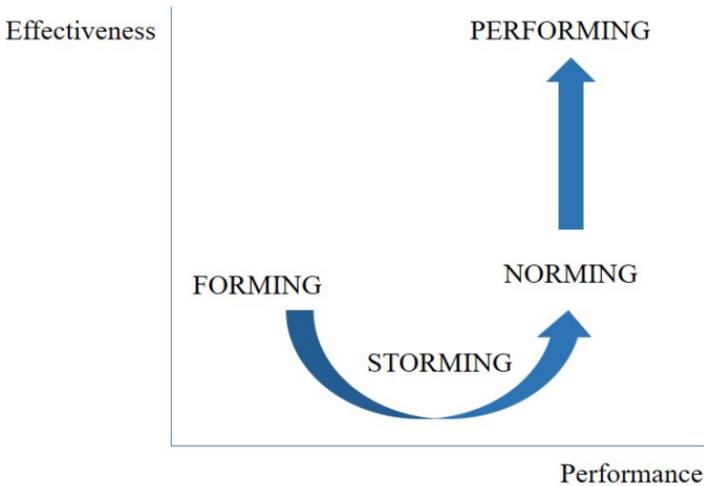


Figure 3: Tuckman's stages of team development¹⁹

When people work remotely, it is more difficult to build trust. Likewise, the 'storming' phase of development may be skipped as people do not have the opportunity to air differences when they do not often see each other face to face. In the next section we outline ways in which you can build trust and cohesion in the team. Before this, you may find it helpful to identify the stage of your own team's development.

¹⁹ Adapted from B.W. Tuckman (1965), 'Development Sequence in Small Groups', *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 284-499.

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What stage is your team at?

Look at the characteristic behaviours in each of the four stages of team development given below, and identify where you are as a team. You may wish to consult them about their views.

Table 3: Characteristic Behaviours – Stages of Development

Stages of development	Characteristic behaviours
<p style="text-align: center;">FORMING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initial awareness – why are we here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ideas• Saying ‘acceptable’ things• Avoiding controversy• Avoiding serious topics• Keeping feedback and shared feelings to a minimum• Avoiding disclosure
<p style="text-align: center;">STORMING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sorting-out process – bidding for control and power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly expressed views and poor listening• Challenging leadership and authority• Withdrawal by some• Full expression of emotions

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of collaboration and competing for control• Reacting or defending
NORMING Self-organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared leadership• Methodical ways of working• Preparedness to change preconceived views• Receptiveness to ideas• Active participation by all• Mutual problem solving versus win-lose confrontation• Open exchange of ideas
PERFORMING Maturity and mutual acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High flexibility of contribution• High creativity• Openness and trust• Shared leadership• Strong relationships• Feelings of warmth towards other individuals• Easy acceptance of differences of view

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With well-established teams, sometimes it is beneficial to shake up the PERFORMING stage to ensure complacency is avoided and there is **continual improvement**. This could be, for example, by making improvements in the ways of working, bringing in new team members or establishing new roles. Creating a sense of trust and team cohesion.

I recently worked with managers and staff who identified some factors that had helped them build trust and empower their teams when moving to remote working. These were:

- **Setting expectations** – being clear about roles and responsibilities, standards expected, objectives, deliverables and how these will be measured and monitored;
- **Developing a team charter** – setting ground rules with the team for how they will work together when everyone is not in the office all the time, and having regular check-ins with the team about how things are going;
- **Training** – providing development opportunities for the team to increase their competence and confidence both in terms of skills and knowledge; and
- **Regular two-way communication.**

Regular two-way communication

When a team works at different times and is geographically dispersed, communication and spontaneous, informal discussion and brainstorming can suffer. Remote workers who never come into the office miss out on necessary connections and can be some of the least engaged employees.

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Technology such as Skype, Instant Messenger, WhatsApp and Yammer can facilitate communication and collaboration. One remote team I know checks in each morning via a quick message on Instant Messenger.

Technology can help support remote working. However, in my experience this should supplement but not replace regular face-to-face meetings and spending time keeping people up to date.

Face to face as well as virtual team meetings

As outlined above, regular team meetings are essential to create a sense of team cohesion. In the case study example on the previous page, it seems that Thursday is the day when most people are in the office, so this would be a sensible day to hold a team meeting. Theoretically the people in the team who are working remotely can dial in to a video or conference call to join the meeting.

But is this the most sensible approach? Consider the likely effect on the two team members who are working from home on a Thursday if they never see the rest of the team face to face. It may be advisable therefore to ask these two team members to attend the meeting in the office at least once a month.

On Tuesdays, three people work from home, and two different people on Thursdays. An alternative approach would be to alternate the days the weekly team meetings are held. Again, it would be essential to ensure that there are occasions when the entire team meets face to face.

I have seen positive experiences when people are working remotely and buddy up with someone from the team who

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is physically present at the meetings. This way, the person working remotely has a physical proxy at the meetings and someone they can catch up with after the meeting should there be any communication or IT issues.

As well as face-to-face team meetings, ensure that the one-to-ones that you hold with each team member allow for physical contact as well as virtual. In the example cited above, the manager would need to schedule meetings at times that are mutually convenient, ensuring that team members are regularly able to meet the manager for a private face-to-face discussion.

Build the social element of work

As I mentioned earlier, people can feel isolated when they do not come into the office every day. The problem when people are geographically dispersed is that they miss the ‘coffee machine’ conversations and the chance to go to lunch with colleagues. Many people’s motivation to come to work involves social interaction.

When staff work remotely, managers should take steps to encourage informal conversations, talking about things other than work. Start a conversation for the sake of it and use ice-breakers in team meetings to help people share life experiences. For example, ask people to say what their first pet was or their greatest achievement or their favourite holiday destination. By spending time on people, rather than tasks, managers can help build trust and confidence in the team.

It’s also important to stay social! Use informal communication tools like Instant Messenger and WhatsApp to maintain the social element of work.

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If you are holding a face-to-face monthly meeting you could, for example, ask the team to bring in lunch to share at the end of the meeting. Invite people in the team to run a bi-annual optional social event. Hold away days with the team that include an element of fun and team interaction.

Encourage the team to share and collaborate around work and non-work topics. For example, they can tweet or post on Facebook images of team lunches, off-site events, conferences, evenings-out and other fun or collaborative experiences. This helps people feel connected to the team.

The power of recognition

Acknowledge birthdays. People will appreciate that you took the time to get to know them on a deeper level and show appreciation for something other than submitting a project on time.

Recognise achievement and acknowledge someone specifically by name. Give them public praise for a job well done. Share team triumphs and successes.

Career development

Employees who choose to work remotely and have flexible working arrangements should still enjoy career progression. Managers need to be conscious not to be biased in favour of those people who are more physically present in the office. It is important to be fair and create personal development plans for all team members. There should not be a hierarchy of entitlement; everyone should have the opportunity to develop based on merit.

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Highlight the importance of well-being

Be in tune to your team's stress levels, especially if they are remote workers. Isolation can aggravate a period of stress that may be alleviated easily with prompt support. In Chapter 5 I set out common burnout symptoms that team members may encounter.

As a manager, watch out for signs such as a dip in performance – team members missing deadlines, producing poor quality work and not reaching targets. Monitor the times that emails are being sent. Team members may work longer hours than contracted when they work remotely, and this can lead to stress and burn-out.

Here is a list of tips and techniques you can use as a manager to help promote self-care in remote workers:

- Arrange regular face-to-face meetings with team members – don't just rely on tele- or video-conferencing. Seeing each other in person allows you to pick up on signs of excess pressure and stress, and can build closer bonds.
- If you do schedule catch-ups via phone, watch out for the other person's tone of voice and be aware of the impact your tone of voice can have on others.
- Encourage your team to undertake a workstation assessment when they work from home to check it is fit for purpose.
- Discuss with team members how they create work routines and set boundaries when working from home.

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- Encourage the team to assess their own stress levels on a regular basis and talk about any issues as they arise.
- Ask each person what they need most support with at the moment.
- Include a well-being session in a team meeting, and share tips about how to maintain a good work–life balance and techniques for switching off.
- If you see that someone is struggling, act quickly to offer support if needed.
- Listen, show empathy and understanding, and explore practical solutions with the team member.
- Make sure your team know about any assistance available to them if they are feeling stressed, such as well-being training or employee assistance schemes.
- Ensure they know that they have another outlet to discuss their issues/worries if they don't want to speak to the manager in this case: HR, other teams?

Team temperature checks

Remember to check in with your team around how they are feeling as well as what they are doing. Here is an example of a short questionnaire that I have used with remote teams to gauge levels of well-being and team morale. This can be completed anonymously by each team member. You then discuss the range of scores and agree resulting improvement actions.

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Table 4: Team Temperature Check

Temperature check	
Please rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), your:	Score
Satisfaction with the current working arrangements	
Current perception of how well we operate as a team	
Current personal level of morale	
Current level of personal well-being at work	

[N.B. One person's 8 may be another person's 6 – perception can affect these results so it is clear to understand the individual and track their results over time.]

What to cover in one-to-ones with remote workers

Just like with team members who are office-based, it is important to hold regular one-to-ones with team members who work remotely.

The format of the one-to-ones you hold will probably vary according to role and need. Remember, the one-to-one

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should be a two-way conversation and the agenda should be as much driven by the team member as the manager. Indeed, some managers ask their team members to tell them the agenda items they would like to cover before the one-to-one takes place.

Here is a best-practice checklist for running effective one-to-ones with remote workers:

- **Build opening rapport**

It is tempting, as a manager under time pressure, to go immediately into ‘task’ mode when conducting a one-to-one and get straight down to business. Do take time to establish rapport with the team member at the beginning of the interaction. This could be, for example, a brief social discussion, such as asking about a recent holiday or family event. The best managers take time to create a climate of trust with their team. This happens on an emotional level rather than just the rational.

- **Agree what’s important to both of you to cover in the session**

A question such as “what would you like to discuss today to make you feel the session is a good use of our time?” can help set the agenda and clarify the important items to be discussed.

- **Give and receive feedback**

One-to-ones are a great opportunity to discuss the progress of work tasks and projects against objectives and to provide and receive feedback. Asking the team member what has gone well and what they could improve can engender thought-provoking discussions. The manager has then an opportunity to add their own

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motivational and developmental feedback. It's helpful to ask the team member what you as a manager can do more of or differently to support them too.

- **Well-being temperature check**

Take the time to ask questions about the team member's general well-being and happiness at work. How are they finding working remotely? What is working well for them and what barriers are they encountering? What do they think about the quality of team interventions? Are they happy with the level of communication they receive? Listen attentively to what is not being said as well. Check your understanding of the situation and don't make assumptions. For example, you may say: "I sense from what you've described that you're finding it difficult to establish boundaries for when you stop working in the evenings at home." The team member may say: "No it isn't that, it's the isolation factors that get me down." Either way, you will have identified the causes of anxiety or stress and you can then help the team member to consider how to overcome them.

- **Improvement actions**

Make sure that if issues are aired, you ask the team member for proposed solutions and agree improvement actions. It is helpful to also ask periodically for their ideas on how the team dynamic and/or a work process can be improved.

- **Career development**

Knowing that your career is progressing can be a powerful motivator. Take time periodically to discuss career aspirations and plans with remote workers.

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- **Looking forward and next steps**

Make sure that both you and the team member leave the meeting knowing what their objectives are for the next period and what actions you have both agreed. It is helpful if you both make a note of the outcome of the one-to-ones and the next steps so you can review progress at the next meeting.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Use the following self-assessment to identify what you are doing well and what you can improve when managing remotely.

Table 5: Self-assessment for Remote Working

When managing remotely...	Yes	No	In need of improvement
I am aware of my organisation's policy on flexible working			
I am confident when managing by outcomes			
I provide regular feedback to my team			

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I hold regular one-to-ones			
I ensure team meetings are held face-to-face as well as virtually			
I proactively build trust and team cohesion			
I encourage informal social interaction with my team			
I recognise individual and team achievement			
I encourage each member of my team to create a personal development plan			
I promote self-care and well-being among the team			

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I regularly undertake a team temperature check			
--	--	--	--

CHAPTER 5: TOP TIPS FOR WORKING REMOTELY

The case for remote working is clear in terms of providing more flexibility and autonomy. Yet the reality of remote working is that it can increasingly blur work–life boundaries, and technological enhancements can lead to an ‘always on’ culture.

In this chapter, I look at tips for working remotely, balancing work and home life as well as ensuring a healthy physical and mental state, irrespective of where you work or whether you are a manager or a team member.

Balancing work and home life

Case study

Bethany started working remotely for four days a week three months ago, having previously been based in the office five days a week. She now works three days a week from home, one day from the central office and one day in a public library. Bethany has always been very conscientious, but she is finding it increasingly difficult to manage her time effectively. She feels it is now not possible to achieve her goals in her contracted 35 hours a week.

One of the reasons for Bethany requesting flexible working is that she has two children, aged five and nine. Her new working arrangement means she is able to do

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the school run on the days she is working from home, making up the hours later that day. She also cares for her elderly mother, who lives with her, so when Bethany works from home she can have lunch with her mother and keep her company. On Fridays, Bethany works from the public library. However, as this is a public location, she can only do work here that is of a non-sensitive nature.

Three months into the new arrangement, Bethany is finding that to manage her workload, she needs to work long into the evening, often past 10:00 pm. She starts work at 6:00 am each day to get in an hour's work before she gets the children up at 7:00 am. Bethany is becoming increasingly tired and irritable at home. She is not sleeping well and keeps waking up and checking her mobile phone.

Working remotely involves active management. One of the downsides is that the boundaries between work and private life can become blurred. People can struggle to shield the work sphere from private matters and to keep work matters from spilling over into 'the home zone'.

Setting up for success

Wherever you are working from, make sure your equipment is set up properly and be mindful of health and safety. Make sure, if appropriate, that you have adequate child and other care arrangements in place so you can work. If you have previously been working in the office, take

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everything you need home with you so that you can work effectively the next day.

Tips on effective time management

Unless you are clear about what you need to achieve and have a degree of self-discipline, it is difficult to manage your time and achieve your deliverables. Both the team member and the manager have a responsibility to discuss and agree key outputs and outcomes for the role. Regular one-to-ones and catch-ups should help establish priorities.

Typically, when working remotely, the volume of email traffic that you receive increases. It is essential, therefore, that you are able to prioritise effectively. There are two elements to consider in relation to each task or activity:

- URGENCY in relation to TIME
- IMPORTANCE in relation to ORGANISATIONAL NEED

You can classify tasks into four categories:

- A. Urgent and important
- B. Important but not urgent
- C. Not important but urgent
- D. Not important and not urgent

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+ I M P O R T A N T -	B. Important but not urgent	A. Urgent and important
	D. Not important and not urgent	C. Not important but urgent
	-	+

Figure 4: Importance versus urgency

- A category A. task (urgent and important) could, for example, be an email that needs to be sent to a key client and has to reach them today. Do these tasks straight away, and if you have more than one, prioritise them – A1, A2, A3, etc.
- A category B. task (important but not urgent) could be a report that you need to prepare and complete by next week. Add these tasks in your diary so that you have enough time to do them and they don't all become As.

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- Category C. tasks are not important but urgent, such as confirming a room for a meeting you are having later today. Although it is tempting to focus on Cs, do them quickly or delegate the tasks and make sure that you achieve your As!
- Category D. tasks (not important and not urgent) are not linked to your objectives and are things you really do not need to do. For example, attending a suppliers' drinks reception or a meeting where you don't really need to be present. Either dump or delegate your Ds!

One habit we have is to overestimate how much time we have each day to achieve tasks. We also tend to make long lists of things to do and end up not achieving many. It is better to concentrate on a few critical tasks each day rather than more less important ones. Ensure you complete at least one of these key tasks a day. Say to yourself: "Whatever happens today, I will get this one job done."

If you have a long list of tasks:

- Allocate each task a priority – A, B, C, or D according to each item's urgency and importance;
- Allocate an order of priority to each of the As, Bs, Cs and Ds – e.g. A1, A2, A3, A4 etc.;
- Work through all the As, then the Bs, then the Cs, etc.; and
- Where new tasks appear, slot them into your ranking.

Be realistic about the time you have each day/week to achieve desired outputs.

Using the OATS principle can help, see Table 6 below:

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Table 6: The OATS Principle

O	Objectives – what do I want to accomplish today/this week?
A	Activities – What do I have to do to achieve my objectives?
T	Time – How long will it take to perform these activities? How long have I got?
S	Schedule – Place each of the activities in sequence. Focus on the important and urgent tasks.

I have seen people who work remotely effectively manage their days by setting themselves time periods to achieve certain tasks, for example:

- **9:00 – 10:30 am:** Complete status report
- **10:30 – 11:00 am:** Personal time
- **11:00 am – 12:00 pm:** Conference call

Another characteristic of effective remote workers is that they take regular breaks. They discipline themselves and structure their day as if they were working in an office, setting themselves a daily routine and limits on when they will work. For example, ensuring they don't turn their laptop on before having breakfast and then skipping breakfast.

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Communicating effectively and being accessible

When working remotely, here are some tips and techniques to help you stay accessible:

- When you log in each day, if using Office 365, make your presence known. You can select ‘working elsewhere’ on your calendar to show you’re available.
- Make sure your calendar is kept up to date so that the team and your manager know your movements.
- Use communication tools such as Instant Messenger to keep in touch with the team – it’s quicker than email.
- Some of these communication tools, such as WhatsApp and Instant Messenger, can also be used for casual interactions and social chit chat.
- Remember to save your documents where others can access them.

Tips for telephone and video conferencing

To stay in touch with your manager and the team, it’s important to make effective use of telephone and/or video conferencing. Here are ten tips to use this to best effect:

1. When using tele- or video-conferencing, test your Internet connection beforehand to ensure it is stable.
2. Use an agenda; if you are responsible for the meeting, make sure this is circulated to everyone beforehand.
3. Ensure that everyone is introduced at the beginning of the conference. If someone joins later, or drops out and needs to re-connect, ensure they say who they are when they come (back) on the line.

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4. After introductions, if there are people you don't know, say your name again when you speak for the first time so that people can put a name to a voice.
5. If on a video conference, dress properly – don't be caught in your pyjamas!
6. Focus on the conference – don't be distracted by other tasks. It is tempting to multi-task, but people soon pick up if you are doing other things.
7. Wait for people to finish speaking so you don't speak over them.
8. Keep to time.
9. Use the opportunity at the end of the call or at the beginning of the call if you are waiting for people to join, for informal chat but don't forget the task in hand.
10. Make sure actions and responsibilities are agreed at the end of the meeting and, time permitting, check if anyone has any questions.

Hot-desking

If you work occasionally from a central location or a serviced office, the chances are that now or in the future you will be hot-desking, as many businesses are moving to this way of working to save costs.

Hot-desking is the practice of using any desk to work from, rather than allocating workstations to specific employees. Desks are available on a first come, first served basis, so you might find yourself sitting at a different desk each day. You will need to clear personal effects and paperwork from the desk at the end of the working day or if you are away from the desk for a long period during the day (usually

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three hours). The office environment also contains both formal and informal meeting areas.

Typically, each employee is supplied with an IT technology package that effectively supports key applications and business requirements, enabling them to carry out their work both within the office or remotely. This could for example be an IT package that includes Skype for Business and a 'soft' IT telephone within their laptop to make and receive calls so effectively the employee is contactable from any location.

If team members have specific health requirements, they may have allocated areas of desks and seating that meet health and safety standards. I have also found that many businesses allocate 'team areas': banks of desks allocated to specific teams to ensure effective communication between team members. People are still not allocated a specific desk, but they do sit near their colleagues.

At the end of the working day, team members pack up their equipment in storage lockers or take it home if they are working off-site the next day. By using centralised IT storage such as the Cloud, no paperwork, documents or files are left out and the desks are empty for the next day.

It takes time and consideration to get used to working in a shared environment, so it is useful to review with your manager and the team how this is working if you are new to this approach.

Isolation factors

By having regular one-to-ones, ensuring you have opportunity to meet people face-to-face and keeping in

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communication with people throughout the week, hopefully you can avoid feeling isolated. However, if you are used to and seek social interaction as part of work, you may become isolated from the team when working remotely.

If you find this happening, there are several actions you can take:

- Speak to your manager.
- Speak to friends, family and colleagues who can provide support.
- Make contact with an employee assistance programme for support (if this is available in your organisation).
- Consider changing your working patterns – you could, for example, request to work more days in the office or go out to a café or library to work so that you see more people.

If you do decide to change your working pattern, set a trial period to do this and then review its effectiveness.

Well-being

Studies suggest that being able to flexibly arrange working hours is beneficial for well-being. When you start to feel lack of control and that things are getting out of hand, however, it can have a detrimental effect on health and well-being.

We all need a degree of stimulation at work in order to be efficient and effective. If we are just sitting twiddling our thumbs, our performance is low. However, if we feel overwhelmed and have too much stimulation, our work

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performance also diminishes and we can suffer physically and mentally, leading to exhaustion and illness.

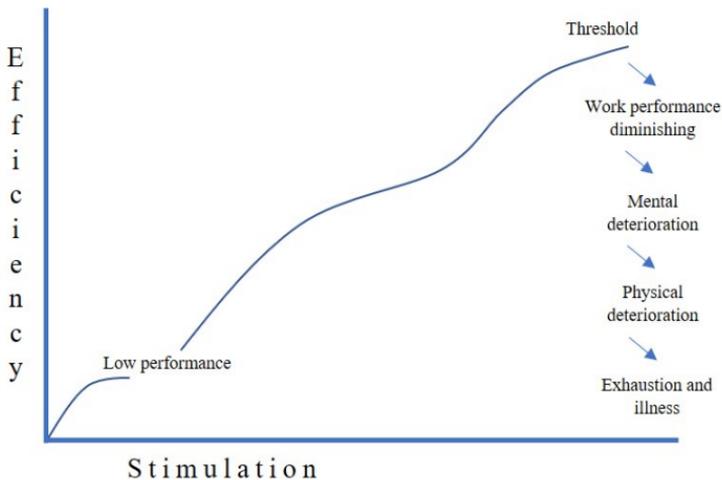


Figure 5: Efficiency threshold

Typical causes of stress

Frustrations at work, lack of time, the pressure of meeting deadlines, change, boredom and bureaucracy are typical causes of stress at work.

Outside work, we have additional pressures:

- Moving home
- Financial worries
- Losing a loved one
- Crisis in relationships
- Family pressures
- Illness

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- Poor living conditions
- Caring for others
- Poor self-esteem

If you work remotely, you may not have the support network to help you cope with stress that can exist when you work from one central location on a nine-to-five basis.

Watching for the signs of stress

As we have seen, some degree of pressure helps work performance. Indeed, there is such a thing as positive stress, called ‘eustress’ (the opposite of ‘distress’), and it helps us to focus our energy and motivates us to achieve our short-term goals. Eustress is the excitement we feel when working up to completing a major, important task. It is when we know we can cope with the pressure; in fact, it improves our performance.

Conversely, distress, which can be short or long-term, is when we feel we cannot cope. It causes us anxiety or concern, is unpleasant and negatively affects our performance.

When distress occurs, we experience physical, emotional and behavioural effects:

Table 7: Examples of Physical Signs of Stress

Pressure	Stress
Good posture	Poor posture

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Relaxed breathing	Rapid breathing/tight chest
Aware of body needs	Indigestion/stomach cramps
Vitality	Shoulder and neck pain
Wellness	Headaches
	Pupils dilate
	Sweating/clammy feeling

Table 8: Examples of Emotional Signs of Stress

Pressure	Stress
Confident	Anxious
Efficient	Tense
Pleasure	Distress
Good self-image	Poor self-image
Assertive	Under-confident

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Able to cope	Swamped
Energised	Depressed

Table 9: Examples of Behavioural Signs of Stress

Pressure	Stress
Focused	Poor concentration
Clarity of thought	Confusion
Awareness	Lack of awareness
Effective planning	Poor planning
Decisive	Indecisive
Objectives achieved	Not completing tasks
Clear communication	Ambiguous communication
Time to rest and relax	Lack of time/fatigue

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Self-care

To ensure well-being, be aware of the common burnout symptoms. Look at the list below and tick any that relate to you in the past month:

Table 10: Self-care Checklist

Weight loss/gain	
Tense posture	
Trembling	
Increased smoking/cups of coffee	
Pallor/blushing	
Inarticulate speech	
Sighing	
Colds or infections	
Tearful	
Frowning	

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Taking unprescribed drugs	
Twitches, tics	
Not sleeping well	
Dropping things	
Forgetting things	
Biting nails, lip or cheek	
Wanting more time to yourself	
Eating too much/too little	
Late for work, long lunch breaks	
Clock watching	

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Reduction in output	
Making mistakes	
Having aches and pains	
Losing temper, mood swings, overreacting	
Withdrawing socially	
Failure to meet deadlines	
Feeling sick	
Expecting yourself to do more/better	
Feeling angry, hurt, worried, unhappy	

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Having minor accidents	
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Coping with stress

If you do find your well-being affected by new working patterns and you are experiencing any of burnout symptoms from the list above, it is important to act to prevent further decline and illness.

There are many strategies for preventing and coping with stress. These include:

- Undertaking activities to ensure you are mentally and physically active, such as hobbies, physical exercise, chores, helping people;
- Self-nurturance: having sufficient rest, maintaining a healthy diet, treating yourself and recognising achievements;
- Emotional expression, which can include talking or writing about stressful situations (keeping a stress diary, for example), having a good scream or cry, and creative expression;
- Confronting underlying problems by thinking them through, speaking directly to other people involved, and escalating the issue to your boss or someone in authority; and
- Practising mindfulness, which is the mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment while calmly

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acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations.

Watch out for signs of stress in others

As well as keeping an eye on your workload and the balance of home and work life, look out for signs of stress in other team members. Be supportive of others and be available to offer a listening ear. It is helpful to discuss how you and others are feeling in team meetings and agree any actions to help improve well-being in the workplace.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Whatever your new working patterns – be it for example working part- or full-time away from the office, condensed hours or job share, take a moment to reflect:

- What is working well?
- What can be improved in the way I am working?

Take time to discuss this with your manager and to review this regularly.

CHAPTER 6: PREPARING TO WORK REMOTELY

If you and your team are about to move to flexible working, this chapter will help you prepare by providing practical advice. It should be read in conjunction with the next chapter around managing change.

Anticipating the future

Imagine you and your team are moving in the next six months from a centralised location to serviced offices where you will be hot-desking. The ratio of desks to people is one to two, so some people on the team are taking advantage of the move to work flexibly and will not be in the office every day of the week.

It is helpful to prepare everyone for the move by sitting down as a team to discuss deliverables, the benefits anticipated from flexible working, the implications and any concerns.

Creating a team charter

Creating a team charter is a practical way of helping the team envisage what new ways of working will mean to them. It also allows the team to commit to a set of behaviours that will help them work together remotely. A team charter is generally discussed as part of a team meeting where team members consider and respond to a set of questions about future ways of working.

6: Preparing to work remotely

The team charter is developed over several sessions and reviewed regularly as the team moves to remote working patterns. During the first session the manager facilitates a discussion and captures people's thoughts about the benefits of new ways of working as well as their concerns. The manager helps the team draft a charter, which is reviewed and finalised at the next session.

Typically, a team charter will contain the following sections:

Who are our customers and what are our deliverables?

The team captures in a short paragraph the purpose of the service they provide and the key deliverables and outcomes for external and internal customers and team members.

Where and when will each team member work?

In this section, team members share where they will be working from, as well as their anticipated timetable for the week. This allows all the team to understand who will be where, when. It also allows you to develop a team rota to cover essential times for the service and/or to discuss and agree core working hours, as appropriate.

Prior to the development of the team charter, the manager holds a discussion with each team member about their working arrangements. They then hold a follow-up chat with each team member on the outcomes of the team discussion about the team schedule, to check that everyone agrees.

6: Preparing to work remotely

What's important to us as a team about how we work? How will we communicate and support each other?

In this section, team members identify a set of behaviours or ground rules to help and support the effective performance of the team, no matter where or when they are working.

For example:

- Everyone needs to be clear about the expected deliverables.
- Hold regular weekly meetings via tele-conferencing on Monday mornings.
- Hold a face-to-face meeting in the office on the last Wednesday morning of each month.
- Have an optional team social event once a quarter.
- Use instant messaging each morning to check in with your manager and team mates.
- Have our Outlook calendars open and always up to date.

How will we review the team charter?

To make the charter a living document, team members are asked to commit to how they will review progress and make additions and improvements.

For example:

- We will review how we are working as a team under the new arrangements at our monthly team meetings.

6: Preparing to work remotely

By having these discussions before new working arrangements take place, trust and openness can be built in the team.

Preparation actions

Here are other actions that a manager as well as team members can take to prepare for remote working:

The manager

- Hold regular updates with the team as you move towards changing working practices. Allow opportunities for people to discuss their hopes and concerns.
- Discuss each person's new working arrangements as part of their one-to-ones to clarify what is expected of them and what support they may need.
- Encourage the team to undertake a DSE assessment. Discuss any health and safety issues as well as any special needs.
- Ensure the team has the right IT equipment and training on how to use it.
- Encourage the team to trial remote working prior to a 'big bang'.
- Develop a team charter.
- Discuss with relevant other teams if you need to share meeting space or coordinate team meetings on different days of the week once people move to remote working.

6: Preparing to work remotely

- Plan with the team how you will engage with customers about any changes and how they will access services in the future (if necessary).
- Use technology to enable remote working, such as central storage of documents and video-conferencing facilities.
- Role model remote working by working away from the office on occasion to set a positive example for the team.

Team member

- Plan where you will be as far as possible during a typical week and think about practical arrangements such as travel and childcare.
- Test the technology you will need to use and ensure connectivity.
- Attend relevant training courses to help you master IT.
- Undertake a DSE assessment and notify your manager of any special requirements.
- Do as much as you can before to prepare, such as going paperless, having a clear desk area, and starting to work flexibly.
- Agree the team charter about how you will work together.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Use the manager and team member preparation bullet points listed above as a checklist to see what you need to do to prepare for new working arrangements.

CHAPTER 7: MANAGING CHANGE

Any change to working patterns and arrangements can take time to embed. We are creatures of habit and everyone adapts to change at their own pace.

In this chapter, I discuss what to expect when working patterns change and how to help ensure a smooth transition to remote working.

The stages of change

In the 1960s psychologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross identified the stages people move through during grief and loss after the death of a loved one.²⁰ Further studies by management consultant Rosabeth Moss Kanter showed that we go through a similar pattern of emotional responses to change in the work environment.²¹ The transition curve in Figure 6 shows the stages we go through when we experience change and how they can impact our productivity and performance.

²⁰ Kübler-Ross, E. (1969), *On Death and Dying*, Routledge.

²¹ Moss Kanter, R. (1985), *The Change Masters*, Abe Books.

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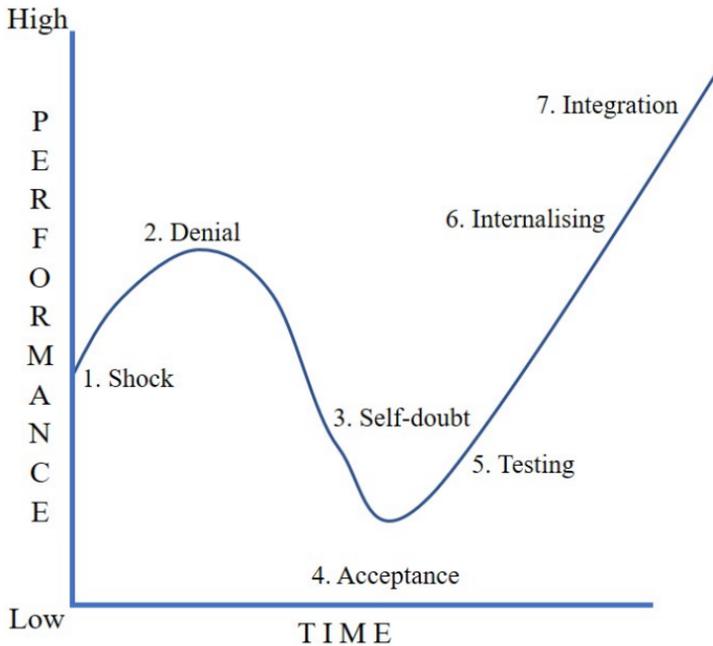


Figure 6: The transition curve

Not everyone embraces change. It can make many people apprehensive and anxious. Habits and patterns in our lives provide certainty. Think about the way you got out of bed this morning and the order in which you got dressed and ready for work. You probably follow the same routine practically every day.

It's a bit like crossing your arms. Do it now as you normally do. Next cross your arms the other way. You'll see one way comes naturally, without thinking. The other seems less comfortable and requires conscious effort. The transition

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curve describes what we go through for a work pattern to become a routine, something that we internalise and do automatically.

The transition curve is broken down into seven stages. There are no rights or wrongs when it comes to change. Don't expect if you are a manager that people will be at the same place as you on the curve nor that everyone goes through each stage sequentially.

People move at different speeds through the stages; you can even move through one stage and then slip back on the curve. For example, you may have a new office and a new route to work. Then, one morning, after going into the new office twice a week for the past six months, you find yourself, without thinking, going in the direction of your old office location.

Another factor to consider is the amount of change that people experience. For example, as a result of an organisational restructuring, team members may have requested and moved to flexible working. At the same time as coming to grips with the changes in the organisation, they will also have to get used to new working patterns and potentially learn how to use new and different technology.

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Here is a description of the seven stages of the change curve:

Table 11: The Transition Curve

1. Shock	When we first hear about change, there can be a sense of shock. This can lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed. It could be that the reality of the change(s) to take place does not sink in. There can be a feeling of inertia, apathy and numbness, and a hope that things will soon be over.
2. Denial	The next phase is denial. You will notice that performance actually increases here. People focus on building up their defences and minimising the disruption. Their behaviour is based on the past ('how we did things before') rather than the present.
3. Self-doubt	As the transition begins and time moves on, the reality of change becomes apparent and can cause uncertainty. People can feel

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	<p>a bit lost and don't know what to do. They don't feel as competent and may feel they are sinking rather than swimming. This may manifest itself in depression, anxiety and sleepless nights, and maybe withdrawal from the team. Other people may feel angry: "I gave my all and now look what I get". This can manifest itself in hostility – anger, cynicism and resistance to the change. Some people may question the change, others may decide to leave the organisation altogether.</p>
4. Acceptance	<p>At this stage, people start to let go of the past. There is an acceptance of the reality of change and a tentative willingness to experiment. Optimism for the future becomes possible.</p>
5. Testing	<p>This phase involves trying out new behaviours to cope with the transition. There can be lots of activity and energy and mistakes are liable. There may be a sense of over-preparation. People may have lots of ideas and feel that</p>

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	they can't concentrate because they have too much to do.
6. Internalising	Once people have experimented, there typically is a quiet, reflective period where people think through how and why there was a change and how they will cope going forward. Some people may be quieter in the group, while others will choose to share insights and learning.
7. Integration	The final stage of transition is now over. Team members have developed new and better ways to do things. There is increased self-esteem and effective teamwork, and people have a clear focus and plan. New behaviours have been incorporated into 'business as usual' and teams seem more stable as a result.

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Reactions to change

It may be helpful to investigate the reasons why people react the way they do during change. This will indicate any potential implications and what tactics to adopt.

Shock, denial and self-doubt can be created by:

- Lack of understanding around why the change has happened – “it doesn’t mean anything to me”;
- Not being fully aware of the implications of the change – “I might lose my job” (therefore threatening my safety and belonging needs);
- Realising the implications of the change – “My power base will be taken away”, “I will have to work in a different area and I will lose my colleagues/friends”;
- Lack of buy-in from team members to the change either because it has been imposed or they fundamentally disagree with it; and
- Discomfort with having to do something that they are either not comfortable with or competent at.

Leadership during change

During this phase, it is important to listen to people on a one-to-one basis. Be empathetic and encourage people to be solution oriented.

If you are a manager, how you lead and manage your own reactions to change is vital. Clearly explain to team members the reasons for change, and talk openly about your own questions, hopes and fears and how you will overcome them. Authentic leaders paint a compelling

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vision of the future while at the same time showing authenticity; that they are human and vulnerable too.

Tips on managing change

If you are a manager, before the change, whenever possible, follow these steps:

Prepare for changes in ways of working

Prepare your team

Let them know what is happening in good time. Telling them too far ahead is not always best (for example, telling people about a change two years before it happens leaves too much time for anxiety to build, or they could forget about an upcoming change and when it is implemented they may find the transition period as a shock).

Describe the change as completely as you can

How do you see the change affecting individual employees and the workforce as a whole? Identify who will be most affected and approach them first.

Research what happened during the last change

Did your team manage change well in the past, or was it traumatic? For example, were there previously redundancies where people lost their jobs? If so, what can you do to communicate, if appropriate, how this change will be different? What can you learn from past experiences of change and how can this influence your current actions?

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Assess the change readiness of your team

Are they ready to undertake change? A team that isn't mentally and emotionally prepared will tend to remain in the denial stage, rather than accept the change and move on.

Don't make changes that aren't critical

People need all the stability they can get during change. If possible, don't change everything at once. Change the most important things, one at a time.

Plan the change

Think through the implications of change. During this stage:

Make contingency plans

Think of the possibilities the proposed change could bring about. If things go one way, what will you do? What if things go the other way? Anticipate the unforeseen, the unexpected and any setbacks.

Allow for the impact of change on personal performance and productivity

Don't expect people to adapt immediately to the new work situation. This will frustrate any sense of achievement they may experience.

Encourage employee input

Discuss each stage of the way and ask for suggestions.

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Anticipate the skills and knowledge that will be needed to master the change

Do your team possess them? Have you prepared training plans?

Set a timetable and objectives so that you can measure your progress

Plan to hold regular reviews with the team.

Implement the change

Create new channels of communication

As we have seen, new ways of working need collaborative communication tools to help people receive and provide information remotely and engender a sense of team.

Arrange frequent meetings

- Meet frequently to monitor the unforeseen, provide feedback or check on what is happening.
- Give people a chance to step back and look at what is going on. Encourage them to ask — “Is the change working the way we want it to?” Encourage people to think and act creatively and to identify areas of improvement.

Provide appropriate training in new skills and develop new attitudes and behaviour patterns

For example, when moving to remote working, people may need training on technology such as Skype or Google Docs if they have not used them before. It is also helpful to run

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training ‘surgeries’ on IT and new ways of working that allow people to refresh their knowledge, ask questions and find solutions to problems. Along with additional training, provide extra feedback to ensure that people always know where they stand.

Allow for resistance

Help people let go of the “old”. Be ready to help those who find it particularly difficult to adjust and don’t dismiss them as being resistant to change.

Be patient and understand different people’s needs

Everyone must find their own rhythm when working remotely; it also affects those who are totally office-based. People adapt to new arrangements at different rates. Give new ways of working time to settle – resolutions will come in time.

Review

Monitor the change process

- Hold frequent reviews and encourage team members to voice concerns. Monitor what isn’t working so it can be addressed. Be prepared for glitches.
- Focus on team morale. Conduct temperature checks and surveys to find out how employees are responding to the change.
- Be kind to each other – provide support and create an environment where nothing is too small to raise or escalate.

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- Encourage team members to voice concerns. Monitor what isn't working so it can be addressed. Be prepared for glitches.

Recognise and celebrate success

Organise special events that publicly acknowledge those groups and individuals who have helped to make things happen. For example, one organisation I worked with held a company conference where teams that had managed change successfully were acknowledged via presentations and awards. Another organisation awarded a sum of money to all teams that successfully moved to remote working, which they could put towards a team celebration.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Share the information in this chapter with others on your team. Use the transition curve drawing to identify where you are on the change curve and encourage others to do so too. Talk about concerns people have about change. Discuss the following with your team members:

1. What are your main concerns around change?
2. What is important to you during change?
3. How can other people at work best support you through change?

CHAPTER 8: IS REMOTE WORKING RIGHT FOR EVERYONE?

In this final chapter, we look at whether remote working is right for all businesses and if this is a trend that is set to grow.

Keeping people in productive work for as long as possible

In the UK, unemployment records are at an all-time low and it is predicted that as the labour market becomes more fluid and skill shortages more acute, the gig-economy is set to rise.²² As we have seen, employees favour flexible and remote working. A 2018 study shows that in the UK, 77% of employees would like the possibility of working remotely.²³

There is a growing trend towards remote working, and it touches all aspects of business. I have seen examples in sales offices, operation centres and contact centres where organisations request that people work core hours but provide flexibility in the hours and days that they work. Enabled by enhanced phone technology, some contact centres encourage home working. In the US this is a growing trend; SouthWest Airlines, for example, has been

²² www.scribd.com/document/392664514/Public-First.

²³ <https://press.airbnb.com/uk-workers-demand-better-remote-working-options/>.

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enabling call handlers to work from home since the 1990s.²⁴

Where remote working is not appropriate

There are also some organisations that need front-line staff to interact face-to-face with customers, so remote working is not possible. This is often the case in ‘high touch’ organisations such as retail, where shop workers and their managers need to be present every day. However, even in organisations where remote working is not always possible, there is a trend to give employees more control over how and when they work. Supermarkets Tesco and Morrisons, for example, have introduced software that allows staff to request shift patterns they want. Meanwhile, parts of the NHS are using e-software to help roster employees in a more flexible way.²⁵

It’s fair to say that for other organisations such as manufacturing, remote working is not yet possible, particularly for blue-collar workers. In parts of the world such as Asia, people live in smaller homes with their extended family. Unlike Europe, there is not the desire to work remotely if this involves working from home. Nevertheless, Asia is seeing an increase in serviced offices and hubs where employees can work closer to home, thus avoiding long commutes. For example, a 2018 report

²⁴ For more information about Southwest see:

<https://careers.southwestair.com/>.

²⁵ www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/long-reads/articles/why-cant-everyone-work-flexibly.

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identified that 56% of the top Asia-Pacific companies were already using flexible workspaces and 91% were considering starting to use these or using these more in the future.²⁶ A further report by Hydrogen Group into working practices in Asia-Pacific also identified a growing appetite for flexible and remote working among employees.²⁷

An additional factor is that some employees don't want to work remotely. They prefer to work from a central office location, with a fixed desk and fixed work hours. Also, when people are newly recruited to an organisation, it is sometimes helpful during the initial induction period for people to be office-based while they learn the ropes.

A culture of remote working

There is a wealth of evidence of the benefits of remote working, so why aren't businesses embracing flexible working to a greater degree?

I believe it is a cultural issue for some organisations. They may say that they are pro-flexible working but there is still a shift to be made in terms of the way people are managed. Empowering employees to achieve their deliverables is a step too far for some cultures. However, as the number of millennials in the workplace rises, flexible working will

²⁶ www.colliers.com/-/media/files/apac/asia/Colliers-FlexibleWorkspace2018-APAC.pdf.

²⁷ *Flexible and family friendly working: a competitive advantage for organisations*, Regional snapshot: Asia-Pacific Horizon Group plc, 2016.

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become a necessary criteria for being an employer of choice.

Reflection and action points from this chapter

Are there still parts of your organisation where managers question the practicality or ability of team members to work remotely?

Given what you now know about the benefits to employees of offering flexible and remote working, consider the steps you can take to challenge misconceptions and to encourage new ways of working in your organisation.

CONCLUSION

I hope that this book has convinced you of the benefits of remote working in terms of work–life balance, well-being, engagement, collaboration and productivity. You should also have gained an understanding of what it takes to successfully manage and work remotely by using the methods covered in this book.

When working with teams that have moved to flexible and remote working, I have found that underpinning the change is the manager’s trust in team members to work flexibly, and trust among the team that they will deliver. The quality of work will remain high even if ways of working are different.

The key is to invest in making it work. Flexible working isn’t scary; it may take time to bed in and is a learned skill for team members and managers, but if you are intentional, dedicated and are relaxed about it, the dividends will pay out.

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