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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Tool 5: Managing the Performance of Remote Workers

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MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE OF REMOTE WORKERS

Managing the Performance of Remote Workers

Remote or hybrid working environments create unique opportunities for workers with disabilities.

According to a survey conducted in 2020 by the Conference Board of Canada, 74% of businesses surveyed reported that less than 10% of their workforce was remote prior to the pandemic. However, 34% of businesses surveyed now predict that 40% or more of their workforce will continue to be remote after the pandemic has subsided. [1]

For managers leading remote or hybrid teams, the essential aspects of inclusive and accessible performance management remain the same. Providing consistent and constructive feedback, holding regular performance reviews, and setting clearly defined goals – these are all fundamental to good performance management and can be carried out effectively online, over video chat, or face-to-face. Nonetheless, to deliver quality performance management to remote workers, managers must take into account several unique considerations.

Shifts in Measuring Remote Workers' Performance

Leading remote workers may require different people management strategies as well as changes to performance assessment measures. When working in person, it is easy to fall into the habit of equating presence to performance – when we see someone at work or remember them being on site, we sometimes assume this implies productivity. In fact, “Teleworkers are more productive and less likely to take time off work.”² Employers who have already successfully deployed remote work for some time know that with proper management and guidance, remote work can provide many benefits for employers, as well as employees. [2]

However, effective performance management of remote workers necessitates a fundamental shift away from this mindset. It requires managers to evaluate workers by outcomes, results, and contribution rather than presence. Practice has shown that most workers with flexible or remote work models respect the freedom they are given and work hard.

Among new remote workers in 2021 in Canada, approximately 32% reported they accomplish more work per hour. [3]



MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE OF REMOTE WORKERS

Move away from managing and assessing input to assessing output:

Performance Measures when Assessing Input

- Amount of hours worked
- Attendance, visible presence, or visible participation
- Visible effort

Performance Measures when Assessing Output

- Goals or objectives are achieved
- Work is delivered on time
- Contribution to organization's overall targets

If ever in doubt, always bring yourself back to the workers' bona fide occupational requirements, and the performance standards and measures developed for each of these essential duties.

STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE REMOTE PERFORMANCE

Strategies to Effectively Manage Remote Performance [4]

The key to successfully conducting remote performance management is to implement a continuous feedback loop. Remember, performance management is an ongoing process.



STRATEGIES FOR REMOTE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

First, it's important to understand common challenges faced by remote workers, from isolation to distractions to lack of face-to-face supervision. Then, managers can collaborate with their worker to identify what can be done to support them and their performance. This might look different depending on the worker – for instance, you could schedule regular, structured check-ins, provide multiple communication options, present opportunities for social interactions, and provide ongoing encouragement and emotional support. Take a look at these strategies for remote performance management:

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:

- Ensure remote workers understand their core job requirements and performance standards. With less face-to-face interaction, make sure they know what tasks fall within their role and when to escalate issues to you.
- Provide detailed descriptions and clarity when assigning new tasks to avoid stress and poor performance.
- Confirm that workers understand your instructions and encourage them to ask questions if needed.

Monitor Without Micromanaging:

- Address performance issues promptly; they rarely resolve on their own.
- Schedule regular review meetings to align performance with standards.
- Focus on task performance, deadlines, and team participation rather than micromanaging every detail.

Celebrate Performance Excellence:

- Recognize and celebrate great performance, as it can be as hard to spot as poor performance in a remote setting.
- Acknowledge contributions and provide recognition for exceptional work.

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