Managing remotely

Organisational Development

March 2020
With most teams working remotely for the foreseeable future, the OD team have created this short guide for managers and their teams, on how to work most effectively in what might for many be a new medium.

Managing in a virtual world as well as running meetings online requires slightly different or heightened knowledge and skills to those we normally associate with these activities.

This slide deck includes tips and techniques, references and videos as well as suggested e:learning courses designed to help make working remotely as smooth as possible.
Agenda

• Main differences and challenges
• Managing virtual teams
• Running meetings remotely
• Further Resources
• Contact Details
Introduction

• It is unclear how long it will be necessary to work and connect remotely so be prepared to adjust how you might ordinarily manage

• It is obvious that the current situation is placing a strain on everyone. Some will be able to adjust to the circumstances quicker than others, but be prepared for everyone’s morale and performance to possibly be impacted.

• Encourage people to see this as an opportunity to learn new skills, work in a different way and have some fun with it!

• Be aware that, as a leader, your words, facial expression, energy level and even body language will make an impression – choose them appropriately
Main Differences & Challenges
For many, working remotely will be a new and possibly challenging experience

They may feel frightened, depressed, lethargic, frustrated

Don’t be shy about openly talking about feelings; lead by example

Encourage team members to build a structure to their day that replicates their normality as much as possible (though this may take a while)

Seek to maintain the quality of work and contribution needed from people but balance it with understanding and patience during this difficult period
Key Barriers

• Things that cause the most issues when trying to work remotely with others
  – Distance
  – Culture (for cross cultural teams)
  – Time Zones
  – Technology
How far is remote?

What is the likelihood of spontaneous communication happening?

You will need to plan your spontaneity. Surprise someone with a call or email if only to ask how they are or share a joke.
Culture

• National cultures
  – individual or group
  – seniority or experience
  – work and life
  – meaning of success
  – language
• Organisational cultures
• Functional cultures

Be aware of and make adjustments for cultural differences. This may not be an issue if the team you manage or are a part of has previously worked together. Be sensitive to and make allowances for differences of communication preferences and style, particularly when there has been no previous relationship.
• You may have team members or colleagues who are currently located in another country or on another continent

• Take this into account when scheduling your calls or meetings

• Don’t always expect those in India or the US to be online early or late in (their) day

Technology

- MS Teams is the collaborative tool Royal Holloway is using
- It has only just been rolled out and many who are using it for the first time may need time and patience as they learn
  - See the video tutorials on the RH webpage Being Prepared To Work Remotely for more technical information and hints and tips
Managing virtual teams
Skills and qualities needed in a virtual world

• Important qualities when working remotely with others (as a manager and team member)

• Sincerity
• Openness
• Acceptance
• Reliability

“Trust needs touch” said Charles Handy, but it is not impossible to build and/or maintain it when working remotely.
When social/close connection is not possible, increase your focus on and demonstration of these qualities even with teams who have previously worked together in the real world.
Be aware of...

Social loafing (an imbalance of work done by individual members)

Work overload (it can be more hidden or go unnoticed in a virtual world)

Conflict (unresolved disagreements can be hidden and/or fester in a virtual world. Address them early)

The above are common in all teams but can be potentially more difficult to spot and harmful in a virtual team
and sensitive to...

- People (particularly those with children now at home full time or who have vulnerable people to care for) adjusting to the ‘new normal’
- Those living alone who may now feel doubly isolated
- Your own health and well-being
Those with caring responsibilities

You can help team members who have caring responsibilities by e.g.:

- Changing the pattern of working hours during the day to accommodate the needs of children and other dependents at different times
- Balancing shorter hours worked on some days with longer hour on others when, for example, others may be able to share caring responsibilities
- Work different days e.g. alternate days with others sharing caring responsibilities
- Requesting leave at short notice
- Reducing the percentage of time worked for a temporary period

See the policy on Temporary working remotely while caring for children and other caring responsibility in the Guidance on working from home with children section
Daily team ‘check-in’ meetings

- Set up brief (30 mins) daily team ‘check-in’ meetings; they will help give structure to the day
- Ask at top of every meeting how people are e.g. on scale of 1-10
- Speak to people offline if you detect anything of concern
- Get everyone to give a quick update on what they are working on
- Ask them what they need and how they can best be supported
Business as usual….just online

There is a wealth of resource and material on the internet to help with development. See ‘Further Resources’ at the end of this presentation for suggestions.

Continue to conduct as many normal activities and practices online as possible.

Celebrate success and what is working well.
PDRs and 1:1s
Managing in stressful times

Bolster morale and build a sense of community through acts of kindness, however small. Encourage people to share their stories of how they have helped or been helped by those around them.
Running meetings remotely
What’s best?

Simple exchange of info, yes/no answers

Detailed exchange of opinion/information

Discussion

Plan and work together
Planning and running your virtual meeting

• Create an agenda and share it on screen
• Agree a social contract with the team on how you want to work online
• Share screen to show any papers or documents you are discussing
• Use features that enable you to exchange work and comment on same document simultaneously
• Summarise key actions & make a record of who is to do what at the end
Managing who is speaking

- Make a list of all participants
- Make enough columns to cover the key points on the agenda, plus a few extra
- Treat each agenda item as a ‘round’ of contributions
- As you invite each person to speak on each agenda item – keep a note of the ORDER in which they speak (by numbering as you go along)
- If some speaks twice on a subject, add an extra tick
- In this example you can see that:
  - Cate spoke last in the first two discussions – it would be good practice to invite her to speak sooner in the next round
  - Farah possibly dominated Item 1 - which may be appropriate, or you may want to manage Farah’s contribution in the next round
- Make the last column Agreed Actions, and ensure each person speaks to confirm what, if any, actions they will be taking.

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Agenda items are:

Information to share – one or two people give info, and all others are invited by the call manager to ask questions or share reflections/feedback.

Issues to explore – person who ‘owns’ the issue to seek input from others. Owner outlines issue and context, others invited to reflect, contribute or ask questions. Owner continues to seek further contribution from rest of group as needed.

Decisions to make – one or two people invited to outline the recommended decision and all relevant info. Others are invited to ask questions, share reflections, share feedback. One person sums up feedback and suggests the outcome of the decision. Others invited to agree/disagree. If no agreement, call manager to invite contributions for practical next steps where appropriate.
Remote meeting etiquette

Remember that if you ask people to mute their microphones (where there is a lot of background noise) – you will miss those non-verbal hmmms and ahhs that tell you a lot of what is going on behind the camera – not as perfect as in real life, but it works well.

Spend the first five minutes or so on small talk – it helps people get familiar with the concept of virtual communication before you start your content.

Make sure cameras are switched on (though be aware of what surroundings are on view).
The four classic challenges

- Eye contact
- Body language
- Disagreement
- Silence
The four classic challenges

Camera on
Look at camera
Use people’s names

Eye contact
Body language
Disagreement
Silence
The four classic challenges

- Eye contact
- Body language
- Disagreement
- Silence

- Leave mics on
- Use chat features + emojis
- Frequently check in
The four classic challenges

Eye contact

Don’t ignore

Ask for other perspectives

Take offline if it distracts too much

Body language

Disagreement

Silence
The four classic challenges

- Eye contact
- Body language
- Disagreement
- Silence

- Everyone speaks at start of meeting
- Ask open questions
- Leave pauses
- Invite comments by name
When it all goes wrong

- Prepare a co-host if you can
- Log off and back on again
- Dial in by phone (if you have this facility)
- Re-schedule if needed
10 Tips for remote working success

20 minutes
To view ensure your screen is fully enabled
Courses & Materials

• **Remote Working: setting yourself and your teams up for success** (various short free courses on the Linkedin website – you will need a Linkedin profile)

• Everyday etiquette in Microsoft Team (e:book)
Mandatory Online Training for staff

Now might be a good time to encourage your team to catch up on those RH mandatory online courses

• Fire safety
• General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
• Cyber Security
• Equality and Diversity
• Freedom of Information
• Anti-fraud
Contact details

We hope this guide has been of some help but if you would like further information or advice please contact the OD team at:

Orgdev@rhul.ac.uk

THANK YOU