

Working Remotely - Hints and tips for team members

With the corona virus outbreak, we need to alter the way we work together and, in the spirit of working in the Marshalls Way we will need to make some adjustments. This puts different responsibilities on you as well as your line manager. We are doing this for the health and safety of our colleagues, customers, suppliers, families and for the continued sustainability of our business.

It is expected that teams that are used to working together, at the same site and in the same office will now be asked to work remotely with individual team members working more from home. This is a temporary measure and we will review as the government issues any guidance.

This will have an impact on how we interact effectively – the onus is on all of us to make this arrangement work.

Working from home means just that – working. It is important that your goals, objectives and day-to-day tasks are still all completed. Attendance during your contracted hours still applies and you need to be contactable during these times (as if you were in the office and at your desk).

So what about virtual teams – how do they differ?

The short answer is that virtual teams are still made up of people; what works well face to face will work remotely as well to ensure effectiveness, however where people work remotely...

1. ...it's much harder to assess how people feel, the mood or climate of the team, whether people feel energised or empowered. It's harder to know (and feel) that the team has a common purpose – so **more time needs to be invested to build and maintain trust and relationships.**
2. ... you don't have the opportunity for informal time (eg. Coffee machine chats) you will need to replace these with **regular phone calls, and more formal reviews.**
3. ... it's harder to pick up on misunderstandings, emerging problems, new ideas and discussions. You need to make an effort to **check in on these things more frequently.**
4. ... you can't see people, you can't accurately guess what they're thinking or feeling! About 55% of what we communicate is non verbal ... from facial expressions to body movement. Hence with phone calls or even video links, **you may have to make verbal what you can usually see ...** How are you feeling today? Do you still really feel part of this team? What support do you need?

What can you do to contribute to an effective remote team? – HINTS and TIPS

1. Actively contribute to agreeing **clear roles and ways of working** for this period of time
2. **Play your part in the agreed ways of communication:**
 - a) Reply to e-mail in a timely fashion
 - b) Attend and contribute to more frequent formal meetings
 - c) Daily contact by phone (if needed)
3. **Adhere to the rules of etiquette** your manager has outlined for virtual meetings.
4. If you receive **agenda and information by e-mail before meetings** make sure you read it all and turn up prepared to contribute.
5. Act quickly if you feel isolated or don't know how what you are doing will affect others – **pick up the phone!**
6. **Actively contribute to virtual team meetings** – it might feel uncomfortable at first because you can't see the others around you, but for now this is the channel we use to collaborate. If you hold back you might slow down progress.
7. Speak up with your views, needs, concerns and contributions when you are connected, be it in a 121 or virtual team meeting. Remember, the team can't second-guess your thoughts, it is your responsibility to share them if you want the team acting on them!