

Five tips for Working from Home During the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Working from home can impact communication and leave employees feeling disconnected and unsure about their role but there are a number of ways to overcome these difficulties, find researchers from BI Norwegian Business School (<https://www.bi.edu/>).

Professor Sut I Wong and Associate Professor Gillian Warner-Søderholm, from the Department of Communication and Culture have outlined five simple tips for better communication when working remotely during this global pandemic:

1. Establish a good routine on how to share information on digital platforms so people don't get drowned in too much information.
2. Set up regular interaction points every day, such as morning coffee Skype meetings or digital lunch breaks to connect with other team members for knowledge sharing, feedback, or just to catch-up socially.
3. Agree on what it means to be a good digital colleague - clarity combined with respect - who does what: clarify responsibilities each team member has while working from home.
4. Celebrate group achievements and company news by sharing a digital message or snap to the team
5. Encourage transparency and inclusion – it is easy to forget to include all members in the chats, so encourage debriefings and discussions in teams, even digitally.

This advice follows their study which found remote workers communicate substantially less with colleagues and managers when working from home and were often left feeling helpless about their work. Subsequently, they may feel unsure about their tasks or how to coordinate with other team members. A sense of ambiguity sets in leaving them feeling at a loss in regards to motivation and feeling connected.

During a crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic, people are also struggling with the fear of getting sick, the practicalities of a lock-down, and uncertainty surrounding the future.

Teams need to set up a 'digital water cooler' – a social online interaction point for team members to hangout and compensate for lack of physical interaction. Daily communication with remote colleagues and your manager is even more important in such stressful times. It helps people stay connected and feel part of their work community. This avoids feelings of loneliness, boosts confidence in work, and maximises team productivity. Good communication leads to better understanding of individual tasks as well as improved coordination among members in the teams.

Establishing a good communication norm is essential to an effective remote working team. Professor Wong and Professor Warner-Søderholm recommend daily communication opportunities among team members and managers via Skype calls and messaging. Companies can even set up social half-hours with their colleagues via Skype.

These tips and pieces of advice should help your colleagues to feel connected when working from home and enable them to maintain a level of productivity without the 'real-life' social environment of a work office.

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If you would like more information or to speak with Professor Wong or Professor Warner-Søderholm, please contact Kyle Grizzell on 07904706136 or kyle@bluesky-pr.com