How to Improve Communication

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

A Guide for Supervisors of Remote Employees

Telecommuting/Remote Employees

COVID-19 has contributed to a rise in TWU employees working from home, resulting in communication challenges and stress.

Hopefully, this presentation will help you navigate this issue by exploring ways to not only maintain communication with your employees, but to enhance it to be more effective.

Importance of Good Communication

Good communication helps to:

- Engage teams in their work more fully
- Contribute to higher efficiency in the workplace
- Lead to successful outcomes for organizational goals.

Communication Challenges

Be aware of common challenges that occur when people work remotely, such as:

- Lack of socialization opportunities can easily lead to forgetting the TWU culture in remote teams

- Difficulty maintaining an open-door policy when leaders aren't literally sitting in their offices with their doors open

- Lack of access to online tools and/or software

- Confusion if consistent communication channels are not well established

How to Improve Communication

You should still strive to enhance the following aspects of effective communication:

- Active listening
- Paying attention to nonverbal cues
- Asking questions for clarity
- Being friendly and open in demeanor
- Showing confidence

- Using empathy to understand people
- Being open-minded and respectful
- Giving and receiving feedback when appropriate
- Using the right channel for communicating certain ideas

How to Improve Communication

Adapting normal communications to work well online:

1. Help remote employees define goals.
2. Be proactive, not reactive.
3. Encourage feedback and discussion.
4. Help employees minimize interruptions.
5. Use the right channels for the right reasons.
6. Stick to scheduled team video or phone calls.
7. Make sure no employees feel forgotten or invisible.
8. Remember praise and recognition.

1.   Help remote employees define goals.

- Communicate your expectations for your remote team, preferably in writing.
- Offer tips and tricks to help them achieve their goals just as they would in the office, like:
  - Creating a workspace and daily schedule in their home
  - Setting aside time for one-on-one communication
  - For those with a lighter workload, ask them to evaluate department processes

Department Processes

- What processes could be improved?
- What are some common communication barriers within the process?
- What kind of communication works best for the process?
- How can I include my team members to successfully accomplish our department goals?

## 2.	Be proactive, not reactive.

- Routinely check in to ensure employees are staying on track and feeling confident doing their working from home.

- Be careful not to micromanage; provide guidance and lead by example.

- Be sure your employees feel heard and respected.

3. Encourage feedback and discussion.

- Set up a group discussion board or instant messaging location, such as:
  - [Google Meet](#)
  - [Skype for Business](#)
  - [Microsoft Teams](#)
- Encourage employees to collaborate with you and other team members to ensure the sharing of ideas.

4. Help employees minimize interruptions.

- Speak openly and respectfully to any employee who has concerns about productivity.

- Ask your employee how you can help them focus.

- Avoid sending instant messages or calling during certain hours.

- Keep communications concise.

5. Use the right channels for the right reasons.

- Avoid instant messaging employees every 30 minutes.

- Condense important info into a single email that goes out at the beginning of each day.

- Use a team video chat or conference call to deliver info needed by everyone.

- Use an instant message or a phone call to deliver time-sensitive info.

6. Stick to scheduled team video or phone calls.

- Try not to randomly call for video or phone conference calls.
  - Should only be used for special circumstances.
- Plan out communications to minimize interruptions for employees.

7.   Make sure no employees feel forgotten or invisible.

- Check in with your employees to make sure they're feeling included.

- Try and keep contact on a weekly basis with scheduled meetings.
  - Make time for small talk, too!

8. Remember praise and recognition.

When employees do their jobs well, it's important to recognize them! Here are some ideas:

- Recognize employees at the end of regular group video or phone calls

- [Pioneer Now Awards](#) - Thank You Notes & Certificates

- Nominate them for [Pioneer Proud](#)

More resources and tips can be found here:

- [TWU IT Solutions for Working Remotely](#)
- [11 Essential Tips for Managing Remote Employees](#)
- [Impact of Social Distancing on Well-Being](#)

Effective communication is more important than ever. Departments that can maintain positive and effective communication during these trying times are the ones that will succeed.

How to Improve Communication:
A Guide for Remote Employees

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