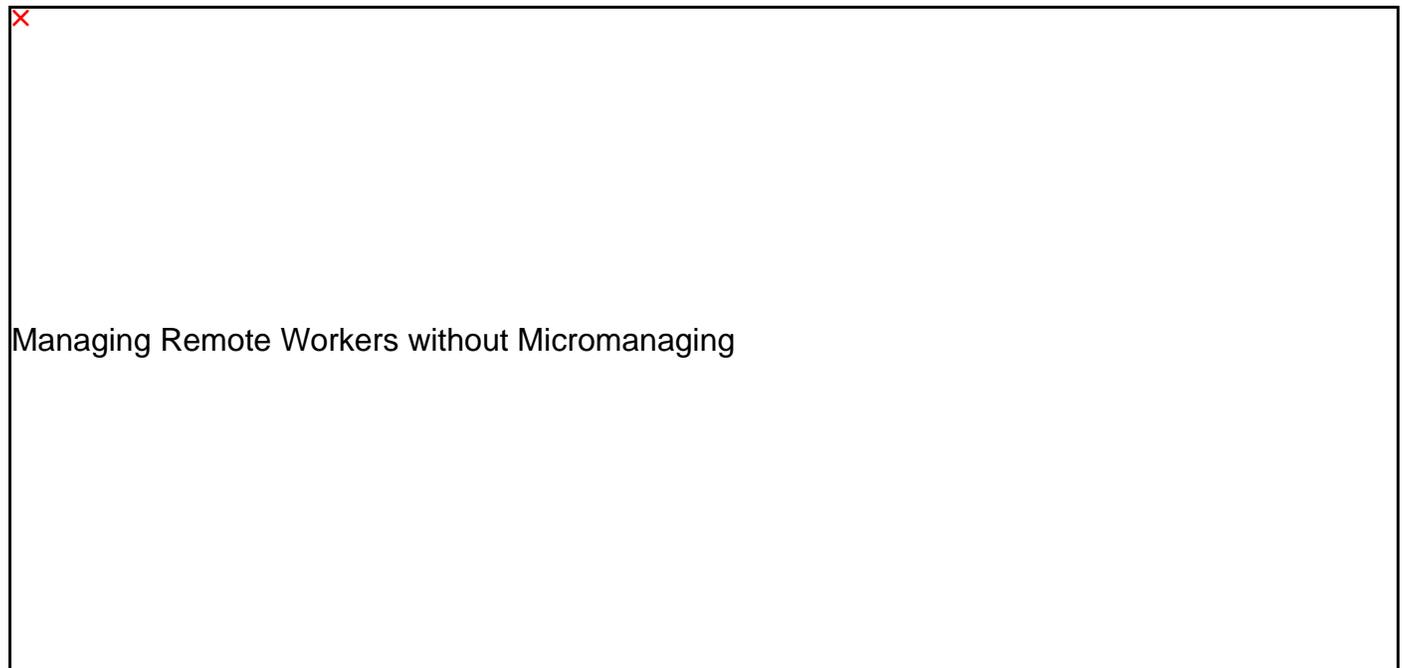


Managing Remote Workers Without Micromanaging

Posted At : January 28, 2021 3:20 PM | Posted By : Admin

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Managing Remote Workers without Micromanaging

OK, managing a remote workforce is a BIG topic. There are books written about how to do it. Many of us are in the unenviable position of having a hybrid workforce with some employees in-house, others remote and still others doing both. This article from HP Tech@work is a broad overview and since it comes from HP, it's HP centric when they pick certain computer technologies. While we don't do everything it recommends, there are some nuggets that can make your life easier.

Picture it - you're suddenly tasked with managing remote workers, on the fly. Zoom, lack of oversight, and IT headaches can make it a huge challenge. And without traditional physical views into your employees' workflows, it's tempting to micromanage. But pump the brakes.

Research shows it's better to establish productivity targets and let employees build their own paths to success. Successful remote managers trust their teams for the transition, then coach lagging members as needed to get performance up to snuff. The good news? It's not hard to step back and encourage success without micromanaging.

Let's look at how to manage remote workers without command-and-control leadership.

1. Train them in remote work

Employees don't all natively know how to switch to remote work while still reaching company goals. The challenge is to give them the tools to succeed without stepping on their toes. Rather than mandating their every remote move, you'd like them to make good decisions on their own.

Don't worry. The fix is cheap, quick, and easy. An inexpensive 1-day training can turn your newly-remote team into telecommuting superstars. The U.S. government has [free telework training classes](#) online to get employees up to speed. There's a [manager training guide](#), too.

2. Set clear expectations

Part of letting go of control means giving it to your team. But it's not enough to tell team members what you want and when you want it. To succeed, they'll also need to work to [the right metrics](#). And those metrics should be universal, so everyone has the same goalposts. Knowing how to manage remote workers without micromanaging starts with highlighting the goals.

Measure quality of work, efficiency, and individual goals that each employee helps create. Then, make sure those metrics are clear to each employee. Once they know the targets, trust them to figure out how to reach them without intervening. When you share targets in advance, you set crystal-clear expectations for success.

3. Encourage them to choose their project management software

“Hi, I’ll be rearranging your furniture now. You’re going to love it.” We know that’s silly, but for some reason, it doesn’t seem so off-base when it comes to managing remote workers. But forcing project management tools on your team without their input in the selection process is just as unworkable.

Before you pick a tool like [Jira](#) or [Trello](#), ask your team to suggest their favorite tools or research the available options. Support them with the time to test drive their favorites before you move forward. Then make sure they have some leeway to set up the tools in a way that best suits their daily work. When employees have control over their own workflows, they’re more likely to be [engaged](#). With engagement, managing remote staff becomes easier.

4. Offer them a choice of good teamwork tools

What collaboration tools do your employees use? Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, Google Drive, and Slack are all excellent platforms. But it can be tempting to take tech to the point of overkill, with the learning curve on every digital workspace weighing on staff member productivity and damaging morale. Knowing how to manage work-from-home employees includes giving them a say. And lets them say, “no thanks,” to some options.

Take the pulse of your newly remote workforce to learn which collaboration tools they’re used to. You may not need to choose a single tool, since many companies like Google and Microsoft make it possible to sync [and integrate](#) tools like Google Drive and OneDrive. That means there’s no need to force everyone to use the same digital toolbox.

5. Give them power over their workflows



Burnout comes from [a lack of autonomy](#). If your employees feel out of control or over-controlled, productivity will suffer. In the same way that good remote work managers encourage team members to choose their own software, they also give them space to craft their ideal workflows and schedules. Managing remote workers is all about employee freedom.

Support your employees to choose where, when, and how they’ll work. Be clear about when they’ll be expected to join meetings or collaborate with other members. Set rules for how soon they need to reply to requests, and when an, “I’ll get back to you in one hour,” answer is acceptable. Beyond that, ensure they have enough autonomy to succeed.

This lets parents working remotely plan around their child’s remote school or other activities, which will boost morale as it reduces their stress levels. Tytus Golas, CEO of SaaS chatbot builder [Tidio](#), says, “Try taking little notice of when or how your remote team does their work. Make it clear that you only care about the results, delivered on time.”

6. Establish daily check-ins

Daily check-ins don’t equate to daily meetings. Meetings – especially on virtual platforms – have their fair share

of issues and can lead to productivity losses. Embrace new communication channels whenever possible, and when you must meet, make it short and productive. If Google can get by with [fewer meetings](#), you can, too.

A daily check-in can be as simple as a, “How’s it going?” DM on Slack or WhatsApp. When you do use meetings, keep them short. And as a manager, focus mostly on active listening. If a certain team member has a lot to say, quickly suggest a brief one-on-one. Then schedule it right away, and follow through to provide maximum support. Learning how to manage remote workers shouldn’t be a hand-holding exercise.

7. Provide feedback

This one’s kind of like an old-time comedy bit. You know how your team is doing. *They* know how they’re doing. But do they know that you know how they’re doing? Don’t assume they know whether they’ve met deadlines and KPIs from your perspective. Check in regularly with pluses and minuses, and not just when they miss something.

Checking in doesn’t have to be a 90-minute face-to-face, either. You can do it in small ways; in Google Docs margin comments, Slack DMs, and short emails. A steady flow of microscopic attaboys and “this could be better” notes is better than bimonthly info dumps. Plus, feedback can [boost morale by 30%](#).

Create opportunities for them to provide *you* with feedback, too. “Don’t tell your employees about their work,” says Tytus. “Ask about it. Never assume anything about their expertise or performance.” Tytus also recommends having HR send the team a regular, anonymous employee survey to ask if they experienced micromanagement. Otherwise, you’ll never know.

8. Equip them for success

Sometimes, the biggest pitfall to managing remote workers without micromanaging is the tech. When Bob’s laptop crashes and he works from home on his phone for three weeks, productivity will suffer. Is your team equipped for success with the best laptops, fast internet connections, and the latest software and gear?

Make sure your employees have these essentials.

[The best work-from-home computers](#)



[Shop for EliteOne All-in-One PCs](#)

The [HP EliteOne 800 All-in-One PC](#), for example, is a playground of efficiency and power. With a fixed 2 MP FHD low-light webcam and remote-desktop collaboration, it’s the next best thing to being in the office.

Zippy internet connections

Waiting an extra ten seconds for each web page or app to load adds up over time. Arm your employees with the fastest internet packages they can get and you’ll worry less about their project deadlines.

[Great work-from-home office setups](#)

The right telecommuting desk, chair, and dual-monitor setup can make telecommuting more comfortable and, as a result, more productive.

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HP Laserjets or Inkjets. Both are great solutions. For the value oriented companies, the HP OfficeJet 5255 All-in-One printer, which has fast WiFi access, cloud-printing, and fax and photo capabilities. With all those features, you can support your remote workers' workflows from every angle.

World-class security



HP makes the world's most secure PCs. Enjoy privacy cameras and HP Sure View screens to block you and your work from snooping eyes. Plus let HP Sure Sense's deep learning algorithms spot malware before it can cause damage.

The best remote work tools



Help your teams get things done with speedy routers, the best antivirus software, and a dedicated work phone line. Provide inexpensive cloud storage too, to make sure all their files are safe.

Virtual conference and online learning opportunities

Keep your staff learning and growing with remote events like the Accounting & Finance Show or Social Media Week. You can help them develop crucial skills by using providers like [LinkedIn Learning, Udemy, and Masterclass](#).

9. Delegate

When you have a good team, trust them to do the work. Set them up for success and then step back. Take comfort in research that shows remote employees are [13% more productive](#) than in-person workers.

Next, understand that managing remote workers without micromanaging is the same as doing it with in-person teams. The communication platforms are just different. Embrace the idea of [leading with humility](#). That's continuous improvement guru Bruce Hamilton's recipe for letting go, and admitting that the people who do the actual work are in control. Don't be so sure you know what's best, and the results may be transformational.

10. Engage them

You don't have to goad an [engaged workforce](#) into meeting specific metrics. If you show team members where the goal posts are, then support them when they tell you what they need to get there, the results will be magical. Make employees part of the decision-making process, and encourage idea-sharing.

Summary

Letting go may seem difficult, but managing remote workers without micromanaging can be easy. Better still, it can improve your team's output and productivity. To lead remote teams to success, let them set up their own workflows, and give them a voice in the tools and tech they use. Set clear expectations from the start, then turn

employees loose to reach your shared goals.

About the Author: Tom Gerencer is a contributing writer for [HP® Tech@Work](#). Tom is an ASJA journalist, career expert at Zety.com, and a regular contributor to Boys' Life and Scouting magazines. His work is featured in Costco Connection, FastCompany, and many more.