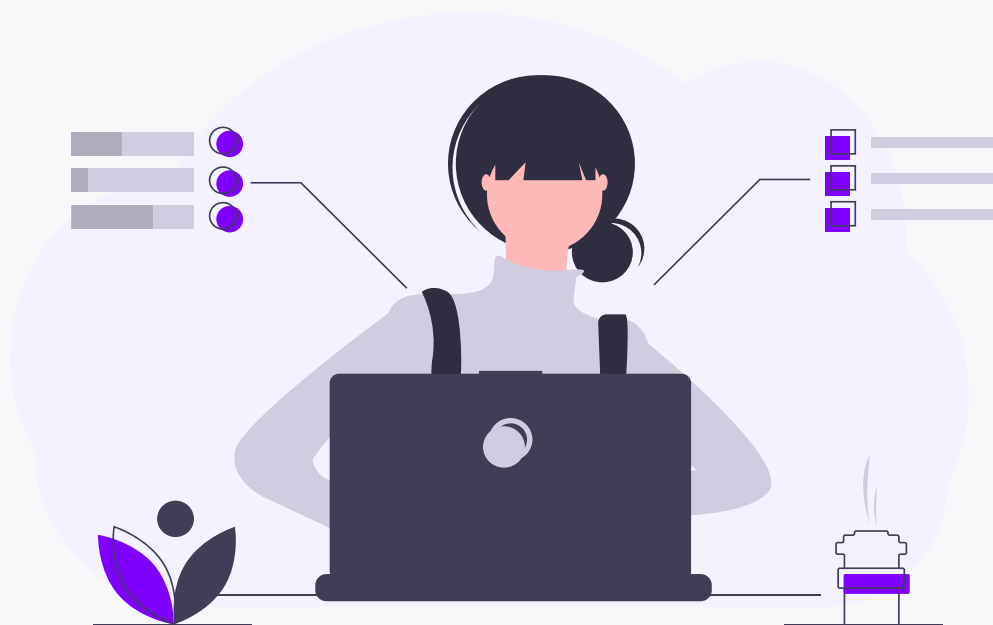# Remote Leadership

Best Practices

Purpose

This guide offers a collection of strategies to help leaders support, engage, and connect team members within a remote environment. Kudos to the leaders who shared the best practices used to create this resource.

Guiding Principles for Remote Leadership

The fundamental principles of effective leadership, whether remote or otherwise, remain consistent. Very rarely will there be just one correct way to lead. If you keep these guiding principles in mind they should help you navigate most situations, however unique they might be.
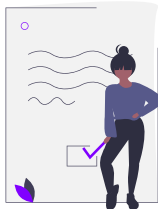
Create a vision & set clear expectations

Clarify what's expected of individuals and the team, provide visibility into progress and performance, and conduct frequent check-ins to build trust and collectively strive toward a unified vision.

Make remote collaboration easy

Overcome the inevitable challenges that come with working remotely and set the foundation for continued collaboration and productivity by creating an environment that promotes continuous communication and feedback.

Help team members navigate ambiguity

Minimize the anxiety that comes with ambiguity by providing information, empathy, and support. Guide individuals towards the resources available to them and put into perspective the things they can control versus things they cannot.
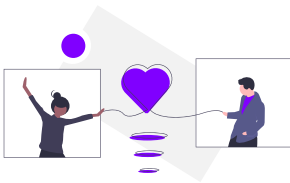
Ensure your people feel connected

Protect against feelings of isolation and foster connectedness via new team rituals and virtual activities. Make yourself available as a leader by welcoming your team members to reach out proactively for support.

Next, we'll provide you with specific ideas organized by each of these principles, so you can find the suggestions that you're most interested in.

Creating a Vision & Setting Clear Expectations

In times of uncertainty employees oftentimes look to leaders for guidance on the path forward. Creating a shared vision and setting clear expectations is critical for driving action and maximizing productivity.

1. Check-in more frequently:

a. Hold daily stand-ups.
Leverage short, virtual stand-ups to provide ongoing updates to your teams and to allow for questions and open discussion.

b. Leverage 1:1s.
Role expectations and objectives may differ for each individual, so check in 1-on-1 to align on those expectations and identify blockers you can help to overcome.

c. Check-in just because.
Sync briefly with team members to simply understand how they're feeling. No structured agenda needed. A check-in can be as simple as a quick Slack message or you can hop on a Zoom for a more intimate conversation.

2. Make work visible:

a. Track progress on weekly objectives.
Use a visual workflow tool to track weekly action items and accomplishments (e.g., a team KanBan board like Trello, or a work management platform like Asana).

b. Track metrics and KPIs.
Numbers don't lie! Continuously track critical metrics and KPIs to compare against expectations and understand progress towards objectives.

Making Remote Collaboration Easy

There are some inevitable challenges that come with remote work. As a leader, ensuring ongoing communication and feedback can be key to successful collaboration.

1. Structure communications for success.
Ask yourself: *"Is the information I need to provide better delivered through written or verbal communication?"*

a. For teams who use Slack, here's a guide we've used to help inform when to use different tools: Use Slack or e-mail when appropriate and ensure sensitive or intricate details are communicated through Zoom (simulating face-to-face interactions) or other video conferencing tools.

b. Meet strategically.
Sure, it's important to stay connected while working remotely, but too many meetings can lead to work-life imbalances and take away opportunities for team members to spend time working heads down. Before scheduling a meeting, ask yourself: *"Can this question and/or task be completed asynchronously?"*

c. Make it fun!
Boost morale by sharing silly questions (*click here for 122 icebreaker question ideas*) or funny photos in team channels to create some levity and engage teams. And hey, what better time to nail a "Brady Bunch" style photo op then with the remote Zoom meeting board view?

2. Establish a continuous feedback culture.
Create an environment that promotes giving & receiving feedback. Encourage team members to provide both positive and constructive feedback continuously. Recognize accomplishments by giving kudos and provide candid, developmental feedback to help individuals course correct. Note: when providing constructive feedback remotely, use video conferencing to help convey your message. Be patient and lead with empathy.

Use Slack for

Quick questions

Group brainstorms

Use Email for

Long, detailed messages

Communications with important calls to action

Use Zoom for

Individual check-ins

Sensitive conversations

Be sure to structure meetings with best practices in mind – check out Kevin Hoffman's Meeting Design resource for helpful tips.

Pro Tip

Small Improvements (SI) allows employees to give and ask for feedback from anyone at any time. Educate your team on the SI features and how to use them.

Helping Others Navigate Ambiguity

Change is a given on teams and across the firm. While some may thrive in fast-changing environments, others may need a bit more support to navigate impending changes and the accompanying ambiguity.

1.

Point team members toward the right resources. Most companies have developed internal sources for key announcements, and COVID-19 related information. But that doesn't always mean everyone has those places bookmarked or committed to memory. Help create simple reference points for employees for access to quick answers.

2.

Encourage optimism. While acknowledging the reality of a situation is important, research shows that instilling optimism has numerous benefits for teams, ranging from greater cohesion to more seamless coordination and delivery of projects.

a. Let the team know you're in this together.
Use empathy and openness to reassure your team members that they're not alone during this ambiguous time. Ask about challenges in stand-ups or 1:1s and swap strategies to overcome these difficulties.

b. Acknowledge individual and team wins publicly and purposefully. Make a regular habit of identifying and highlighting wins (both big and small) in team meetings and/or channels to ensure achievements stay visible.

3.

Focus on what's within control. There are so many variables in our personal and professional lives that we simply cannot control. Help your team members identify what they can control and share ways to prioritize these areas.

a. Mindset
Free meditation & minset apps

b. Physical Health
MDLive (telemedicine)

c. Productivity
WFH Pro-tips & Best Pactices

Things that matter | Things you can control

↑
Things to focus on
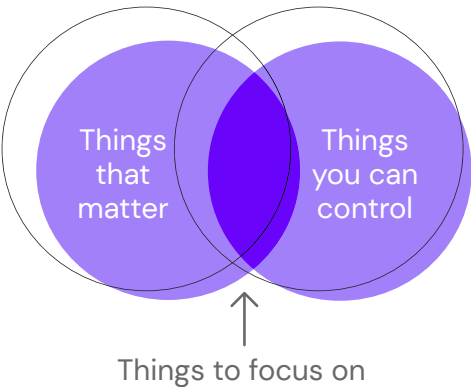
4.

Help people take care of themselves. In these uncertain times, wellness becomes increasingly important.

a. Health comes first. Ensure your team members are taking care of themselves. In addition to taking time to recover from illness, encourage individuals to go for walks, exercise, and establish healthy coping mechanisms in the face of rapid change and ambiguity.

b. Watch for changes in behaviors. When under stress, individuals may behave in unexpected ways. If you notice sudden or unexplained shifts in team member behaviors or habits, take the opportunity to connect and ask how they're feeling and what support they need.

Ensuring People Feel Connected

Working remotely for long periods can increase feelings of disconnectedness, but there are things we can do as leaders to protect against these feelings. Go the extra mile to help your team members feel connected and supported.

1.

Stay Connected

a. Promote meaningful interactions and social bonding by sharing photos, recipes, mental and physical health practices.

b. Encourage team members to participate in the firm-wide Connectedness challenges (e.g., daily virtual buddy check-ins).

c. Get creative by finding unique ways to recreate typical face-to-face office events.
Closeout the week with a "Fun-Friday."

i. Host *virtual* happy hours and meet via Zoom to chat over drinks (BYOB 🥴)

ii. Coordinate a game night or lunch break. Jackbox games & Houseparty are apps that encourage social bonding via virtual games.

2.

Be there for support.
Simply put, be there to lend support. Communicate to your team members that it's OK to put work aside for a minute and make their mental health and wellbeing a priority. Help to lift people up by taking the time to understand their needs. We're all in this together, so do what you can to make yourself available.

Helpful Resources and Thank Yous

Many leaders have contributed great ideas to this list, and many more will add to it over time. Thanks to everyone who is taking a moment to help others and help themselves best lead their teams and their businesses through these challenging times.

Other Resources

[K+C GUIDE] WFH Pro-tips & Best Practices

[ARTICLE] Closing the Distance: Leading productive teams during COVID-19

[ARTICLE] How to Keep Your Team Focused and Productive During Uncertain Times

[ARTICLE] Leading Through COVID-19: Making Smart Decisions Amid Uncertainty