

How to conduct performance reviews and one-on-ones for remote workers

As so many businesses transition to remote work arrangements, many managers now find themselves tasked with how to lead employees from afar for the first time. Whether you're having ongoing one-on-one calls with employees to simply stay connected to what they're doing, or you're [delivering critical conversations](#) like performance reviews, these simple tips can help you get the most out of virtual meetings.

1. Let employees know that you'd like to see them. Sensitive conversations like performance reviews are far more streamlined when you can see the employee's facial expressions and reactions--even if the review is positive. Schedule at least one hour to have your performance review conversation, and let employees know that the review will be the dedicated focus of the meeting.

Give your employee several days of advance notice that you'd like to have the conversation using live video tools so he can prepare for a private and professional exchange while working from home, particularly now that so many employees are tasked with juggling homeschooling and their job. If your company doesn't use tools that easily support video or those you do use tend to freeze, delay or crash, make arrangements to speak with one another via FaceTime on your phones.

2. Make it a two-way conversation. Every person in the world is collectively dealing with uncertainty and anxiety as we all navigate these challenging times. Traditional performance review conversations tend to focus on basics like compensation changes, promotions granted, areas in which the employee succeeded since the last review, and highlight opportunities for improvement, skill development, and growth.

All of these factors still apply to a remote performance review, but remember that employees likely have more questions about the present and future than the past in this new environment. Approach the review as a collaborative conversation, first and foremost, and plan to listen more than you talk. Invite the employee to ask questions about the "new normal" in the company as you review past performance, new goals, and areas for development.

3. Discuss changed priorities openly and honestly. Business priorities may have shifted in your company over the last weeks or months, and employees may now fear for their job security. Dedicate time in the performance review to discuss the wins and misses of the past, and how the employee can remain a valuable contribution moving forward. Clearly outline duties that may evolve or change in the coming months so the employee understands where to focus, and why.

4. Create a plan for how to support your employee. There's plenty of evidence to suggest that remote workers are more productive than those who work in a physical office, but those stats are based on employees who have *chosen* to work remotely. The fact is, remote employees may not feel connected to company culture or co-workers. Remote work arrangements can be isolating, and require a level of self-direction, motivation, and discipline that's not intuitive for every employee. Regardless, many employees do not have a choice about where they're working right now.

Dedicate at least part of the review to discuss how your employee can still collaborate with you and co-workers in this new normal: How much coaching, guidance, and support does she need from you while working from home? Does she understand her priorities and goals, and feel confident that she has the tools and skills to achieve them?

Every employee has a different work style and varying needs when it comes to succeeding remotely. Now is the time to get to know what your employee enjoys doing, where she feels capable and where she's struggling. Agree on a plan that will fuel your employee's professional success moving forward. As importantly, assure your employee that her mental, emotional, and physical health is as important to you as her job performance right now.