

Remote Work Policy Guidance

What infrastructure should we have in place for a remote work plan?

You will want to identify the roles that are critical to your business operations and determine whether those individuals can carry out their jobs while working remotely. If you can proceed, the next critical component is:

1. Assessing your technological capabilities. Do you have the support in place to assist with the inevitable questions and IT problems that will arise?
2. Do you have enough security and privacy protocols in place?

Considering these questions will help you determine whether you can move forward with a remote work plan.

What can we do to prepare for a possible remote work scenario?

There are many things you should do to prepare for the possibility that your employees will need to operate remotely:

1. Take an inventory of the types of equipment your employees would need to get their job done and ensure they have access to them. This could include laptops, desktop computers, monitors, phones, printers, chargers, office supplies, and similar materials.
2. Encourage your employees to prepare for the possibility of an immediate instruction to work at home. They may want to develop a “ready bag” that they take home with them at the end of each day that would allow them to begin working remotely at a moment’s notice.
 - a. Make sure you consider and clearly communicate with your workers about which items are acceptable to be taken from the workplace and which need to stay in your location.
3. You might want to take the time now to digitize any relevant physical materials to make remote working easier.
4. You will also want to communicate with your workforce about whether they can or should take digital photos of physical calendars, whiteboards, stickie notes, or similar items, or whether they are prohibited from doing so.
5. The most important thing you should do is take the time to develop a remote work policy if you do not have one in place, or review and update your existing policy as it relates to this specific situation.

What should be included in a remote work policy?

Your policy should lay out the expectations you have for your workers as they embark on their temporary remote work routines. The number one item you should convey to them is that you expect them to help your organization maintain normal business operations during these circumstances. Consider all aspects of their work and make sure they understand what is expected of them.

How do we ensure our remote work time is productive and successful?

There are many steps you can take to ensure remote work time goes well for your employees and your business. Here are some insights to make sure your employees are as productive as possible.

1. Utilize a single communications platform that everyone will be required to utilize. It could be email, instant messaging, Slack, Skype, Zoom Conferencing, or some other designated tool.
2. Take an honest approach and be realistic about your concerns regarding productivity. Recognize that you aren't babysitting your employees while they are performing work at the office, so you shouldn't begin to micromanage them while they are at home. Keep an eye on the bigger picture and track overall productivity, not moment-by-moment activities.
 - a. Experts say that overwork is more likely for remote workers than a lack of productivity, especially in the first week of a remote work assignment. Keep an eye out for employee burnout and overstressed workers and address your concerns as appropriate.
3. Employees who are not used to working remotely may feel disconnected from the business. Some tactics to prevent and overcome this problem include:
 - a. Developing and distributing an agenda for all team meetings, as well as meeting minutes and task lists after they are completed, so that those unable to attend can feel part of the action.
 - b. Schedule virtual team lunches and digital social time where workers can interact on a social level.
 - c. Connect workers new to remote work with your experienced remote workers to serve as informal mentors, available to answer questions or give advice about best ways to cope with the change and handle work; and
 - d. Consider other ways to ensure your workers feel connected with each other and with the organization, whether that includes daily meetings, frequent phone calls or texts, or other actions that can go a long way towards ensuring their peace of mind.