

GUIDE TO REMOTE WORK FOR SUPERVISORS

Strategies for leading from a distance

Remote work remains an important strategy during the pandemic and beyond. This guide is designed to support and enhance leadership in a remote, or partially remote, workforce. Use these tools and resources as you lead, evaluate, and empower remote workers.

The guide is divided into sections based on four key actions:

Adapt Your Leadership Style

Find ways to lead, set expectations, and evaluate performance in a remote setting.

Build and Maintain Trust

Learn how to build trust from anywhere.

Support Work–Life Integration and Well-Being

Share resources and techniques.

Enhance Technology and Standardize Tools

Keep yourself and your team up to date on the latest technology and online tools.

Information is presented in each section through one or more challenges, with several solutions for each.

As a good starting point, familiarize yourself with the [Guide to Remote Work for Employees](#) found on the HR website and share it with your team.

Adapt Your Leadership Style

Find ways to lead, set expectations, and evaluate performance in a remote setting.

LEAD

Challenge Employees do not understand the value of remote or hybrid work.

Solutions

- Set the example. Arrive to all meetings on time or even early, engage, and follow through.
- Be vocal about the value of being able to work from anywhere. Highlight successes of remote and on-site work.
- Support your team with the technology, resources, and tools necessary to succeed. Re-evaluate those needs periodically.

Challenge The lack of in-person face-to-face interactions over time may make it difficult for you and your employees to align priorities and communicate effectively.

Solutions

- Have a structured daily or periodic check-in, even if it's short.
- Use several different communication tools, not just email.

Challenge During virtual meetings or events, employees may multitask, dominate the conversation, or tune out. Meeting facilitators may struggle to maintain purpose, flow, or even engagement.

Solutions

- Evaluate which meetings or events are appropriate to offer hybrid meeting options (in which some employees are physically in the office and some join remotely). Hybrid meetings may improve participation, make scheduling easier, increase location options, increase safety, and reduce cost of travel and other logistical costs.
- Create and share an agenda in advance.
- Test technology in advance and use it appropriately.
- Assign a facilitator or establish a rotating schedule of facilitators to manage discussion for larger meetings.
- If people don't already know one another and the schedule permits, take time for introductions.
- Follow up with action items or meeting minutes when possible.

SET EXPECTATIONS

Challenge Expectations for remote work—parameters, daily deliverables, etc.—may be unclear for employees.

Solutions

- Evaluate whether the position is appropriate for remote or hybrid work. Use the [Work Location Decision Guide](#) to analyze roles for eligibility for full or part-time remote work. Not all situations and positions are appropriate for remote work.
- Work with HR Compensation to complete a formal remote work agreement to establish expectations and duration of remote work.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the remote work agreement periodically.
- Set specific and clear expectations up front to avoid micromanagement of daily duties and other responsibilities. Expectations around response time for emails and voicemails, work hours, requests for leave, and arrangements for illness and inclement weather will help employees know what to do in these situations.

Challenge Time management and work–life boundaries may be difficult for remote workers.

Solutions

- Keep in mind that Tennessee wage and hour regulations specify that employees must take a 30-minute break for every six hours of work. For many positions the lunch hour satisfies this requirement.
- Understand that overtime rules apply even in remote work situations. If a nonexempt employee works more than 40 hours in a work week, they must be paid overtime or comp time. See [Policy HRO445—Overtime Compensation](#) for more information on overtime.
- Set boundaries for contacting employees outside of normally scheduled work hours. If you must communicate outside scheduled work hours, do not expect an immediate response.
- Use technology to show when you are away even when you are working remotely. Encourage your team to do the same. If your work group uses Teams, set your status to away or busy when you need to focus on a particular project.

EVALUATE PERFORMANCE

Challenge While you can no longer see your team members in action as you could on site, they still need your coaching and performance feedback.

Solutions

- Evaluate quality, quantity, and timeliness of work, not just actual time spent working.
- Encourage employees to keep a work log when necessary.
- Establish an agenda for your one-to-one meetings.
- Communicate using several different methods like Teams channels or chat, not just email.
- Discuss performance regularly. Ideas include conducting a midyear review, periodically checking on the progress of established goals and objectives, and addressing performance concerns in real time.
- As you would for in-person team members, keep notes of an employee's performance throughout the year so you have them at annual performance review time. For information, resources, and tools related to annual performance reviews, see the [Human Resources performance and feedback web page](#).

Build and Maintain Trust

Learn how to build trust from anywhere.

Challenge It may be harder to build and maintain trust in a remote setting.

Solutions

- Recognize success. Publicly praise and acknowledge your employees for their great work, and encourage your team to recognize their colleagues. Ideas include praise and thank yous at team meetings, e-cards, and announcements on workplace management platforms such as a departmental newsletter or Teams channels.
- Share information broadly. Provide ongoing open communication to build trust. This includes sharing difficult information or critical feedback. Conduct these discussions online or in person as needed per the remote work agreement. Avoid using email as the sole communication method.
- Be vulnerable. If you do not know the answer, ask for help and know your resources.

- Intentionally build relationships. You may want to provide optional departmental images for virtual backgrounds that promote team spirit. You may also want to incorporate [Zoom-friendly warm-ups and icebreakers](#).
- Create a virtual space for social connection. Ideas can be as simple as opening meetings early for informal conversation or as complex as planned team-building activities. This [FlexJobs article](#) provides some tips for staying connected.
- Remember that Vol is a Verb. Foster our culture of mattering and belonging. Encourage your team to stay connected from anywhere by visiting the [Division of Diversity and Engagement website](#) for more information on diversity and inclusion initiatives, funding, and other resources.

Support Work-Life Integration and Well-Being

Share resources and techniques.

Challenge Finding balance between work and home while prioritizing well-being and remaining productive may take a toll on your team.

Solutions

- Encourage your team to practice productivity. Ideas include establishing an effective at-home work space, sticking to a schedule, prioritizing tasks, and getting a good night's sleep.
- Connect your team with resources for finding balance and intentionality. Ideas include joining the Work-Life Sounding Board, which, as its name implies, talks through the balance between life and work. Encourage people to listen to the group's [podcast](#) discussing work-life issues and to watch the university's events calendar for upcoming meetings.
- Make sure your team knows that benefits-eligible employees and their immediate family have access to our Employee Assistance Program. Most employees associate the EAP with mental health assistance, and it is a great resource for mental health. But it also offers resources for things like managing stress, improving relationships at home and at work, addressing legal and financial concerns, getting the most out of your career, and finding resources for child or elder care.
- Another valuable resource to share is the [Sanvello](#) app, which offers clinical techniques to help dial down symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. UT employees get the premium version at no charge with the code Here4TN.
- Promote campus wellness initiatives. [Be Well](#) offers a wide range of programs and resources for creating healthy habits, including healthy lifestyle programs, healthy cooking classes, community gardens, employee fitness and wellness challenges, campus walking paths, community races, and events.

- Take time for yourself to reset and recharge. Connect with other leaders or a mentor to create accountability and learn from others. The Employee Assistance Program also offers resources for leaders.

Enhance Technology and Standardize Tools

Keep yourself and your team up to date on the latest technology and online tools.

Challenge Staying up to date and engaged with technology may prove difficult.

Solutions

- Encourage your team to visit the Office of Information Technology's [remote work website](#) for tips on setting up a home work space, checking voice mail, collaboration and file sharing, connecting to VPN, and other topics.
- The university has software licenses to assist with remote work for software such as Microsoft Office365 and Zoom.
- Choose and communicate your team's go-to tools. Be open to changing and updating tools over time, and communicate with the team about any changes. Some examples:
 - Project collaboration—Microsoft Teams, SharePoint
 - File storage and sharing—OneDrive, UTVault, Google Drive, email
 - Meeting and video conferencing—Zoom, Microsoft Teams

Need help with these tools? Visit [OIT's Knowledge Base](#). You'll find guides, articles, and instructions to help you and your team work effectively.

We're Here to Support You and Your Team!

We hope this guide has been helpful. Below is a quick list of additional resources for you and your team:

[Be Well](#)

[Department of Environmental Health and Safety](#)

[Division of Diversity and Engagement](#)

[Employee and Organizational Development](#)

[Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Events Calendar](#)

[Human Resources](#)

[Knowledge and Training Excellence \(K@TE\)](#)

Can't find what you're looking for?

Contact the Human Resources Employee Relations team:

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