



Working from home

Toolkit for managing remote working teams

Determine Communication Protocol

Set up communication protocol in advance

Communication plans aim to establish communication norms and should include the following:

1. How to reach everybody (e.g., all contact information in one place, primary communication channels clarified – email, mobile numbers, Cisco WebEx etc.).
2. How employees are expected to respond to team members/customers and expected response times.
3. Mutually convenient work hours for the team.
4. Individual team members' work hours.
5. Times for individual and team meetings.
6. Whom to contact in case of technical difficulties.

Set communication expectations early

Refer the below table for some general rules of thumb that have been provided for each protocol. Though ideally, each team should decide what works best for them, considering the nature of their work, team structure, availability of team members etc. Make sure you have an explicit conversation with your whole team about each item in the below table.

Item	General rule of thumb	Protocol for Your Team
Availability and responsiveness		
When are employees expected to check their emails?	At least three times a day, during the times they have confirmed they will be working. Preferably at least once in the morning hours and once in the afternoon.	
When are employees expected to answer their work phones?	Ideally, during the times they have confirmed they will be working.	
How quickly do you expect a response to an email?	At minimum, within four hours of receiving the email. This could include acknowledgement of receipt for emails that are to be actioned at a later date.	
How quickly do you expect a response to a voicemail?	As soon as reasonably possible, if it is an urgent requirement.	
What are the blackout times when individuals can separate their work or devices to focus on personal/family matters?	Varies per individual's needs/requirements.	
How should individuals signal when they are going to be unavailable?	If it is at a time that they had previously confirmed they would be working, they should send through an email to the team stating their unavailability and when they would be available again.	

	Indicate unavailability on their MS Outlook calendars.	
How should team members cover for each other?	Dependent on the nature of work and structure of each team.	
When will virtual team meetings take place?	Schedule in bi-weekly initially, and adjust to weekly if suitable.	
When will one-on-one check-ins take place?	Schedule in quick one-on-one check-ins on a daily basis initially. This can be adjusted to bi-weekly, weekly or more frequently if required to suit each individual team member.	
Coming into the office		
Are all onsite events (meetings, presentations, trainings) mandatory?	Specify if onsite events are mandatory. Determine an alternative method for attending the event if working offsite. This could include video conferencing options, recording for later viewing or sharing of meeting minutes, presentation summaries etc.	
When will team members' presence be required in office?	Specify under which circumstances team members' presence will be required in office, if any.	
Spontaneous meetings		
If a spontaneous virtual/physical meeting is called, what are the expectations around attendance?	Ideally, all team members who have confirmed that they will be working at that time must attend the meeting virtually. Other team members should make every effort to attend, if it is practically possible.	
How will such meetings be conducted (in-person only, with video conferencing facilities etc.)?	If meetings are being conducted, offer video conferencing options for those offsite.	
Who will be responsible for coordination?	Make sure you identify a coordinator.	
What are the expectations around confirming attendance?	Confirm attendance to the coordinator as soon as reasonably possible. This could be via text message, phone call or email.	