

Morales, Erica

From: Montalbano, Ivonne
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2020 10:29 AM
Subject: ESO tips for managing your team during COVID-19

Good morning!

The complexities of managing your team under normal circumstances is tough enough, let alone during a crisis like COVID-19. It is a confusing time and your employees look to you for guidance.

ESO understands how difficult this all can be for you. To help, we compiled the following list of helpful tips on communication, connection, wellness, productivity and onboarding to guide you while managing your employees during this pandemic.

COMMUNICATION

- **Touch base regularly.** Keeping your employees connected while working remotely is vital. Briefly check in with each employee daily and consider at least one Zoom meeting each week to keep everyone connected. Try to connect with every team member at least once a day via Zoom messaging, phone call, text or email.
- **Post your availability.** Let your staff know the best time to reach you during the day and the best method to reach you throughout the day, whether by email, text, etc. This will help your telecommuters feel supported by and connected to you.
- **Make communication a priority.** Take time to effectively communicate with your employees. Each employee communicates differently. Understanding each person's communication style and preferred communication tools will help you significantly improve communication with them while telecommuting.
- **Show trust.** Since you cannot see your telecommuting employees in person, you may worry they are not working as hard as they would be in the office. Research has shown that most employees work more when telecommuting than if they were coming into the office every day. As a manager, you need to trust unless given a reason otherwise.
- **Be positive and kind.** Communicate positively about telecommuting to set up a powerful dynamic that will help your team be successful during online operations. When communicating in general, ensure you word your communication to express kindness and understanding, even if you need to reprimand. When communicating, whether through email, phone or video conference, remember how hard this situation is for everyone and act with kindness and compassion even when upset.

CONNECTION

- **Check in.** Ask your staff about their remote experience, such as what works for them, what doesn't and how you can better support them.
- **Listen.** It's important to remember communication is a two-way street. Listen to your employees to ensure everyone is in sync and aware of what is going on in the department and at the University.
- **Create connection.** Employees miss office social interaction and a lack of it can cause your employees to feel less belonging and connection to you, your department and the University. To create social

connection celebrate birthdays, praise successes, amplify team rituals, create new virtual team building activities, host virtual office parties or anything else that will help foster connection. Virtual events have shown to reduce isolation and improve a sense of belonging.

WELLNESS

- **Emphasize work/life balance.** Encourage balance between home and work. Ask employees to practice good time management. Stress the importance of having set hours and leaving work at work when off the clock. Avoid contacting your employees outside of office hours, when possible, and don't expect a response when they are offline.
- **Encourage stress reduction.** As a manager, it is important you acknowledge the stress COVID-19 may be causing your staff. Listen to their concerns and challenges. Empathize with their struggles. Encourage them to [learn how to manage COVID-19 stress and anxiety](#).
- **Be a good example.** Employees look at their managers for cues about how to react in a crisis. Remain calm and provide affirmations of confidence in your team.
- **Value your employees.** Take the time to value your team. Provide positive comments and feedback. Make your comments public when appropriate. Take advantage of [UHD Kudos](#).
- **Provide understanding.** Because of the sudden transition to telecommuting, many employees have been thrown into suboptimal work conditions, including contending with children at home while they work. Understand there will be distractions and unexpected stops and starts and exercise patience with your staff during this challenging time.

PRODUCTIVITY

- **Ask about needs.** Find out from each employee if they have everything they need to be productive and comfortable while working from home. Find out if there are challenges that may need to be worked around, such as children. Ask how you can support them and offer solutions where possible. Encourage your employees to check out [UHD's telecommuting tips and resources](#).
- **Manage expectations.** Don't confuse work activity with results. Set clear objective and performance indicators, but focus on results and output and not time spent. Reassess goals as needed. Understand tasks may take a bit longer than usual due to added stressors and the transition to telecommuting. Offer grace on deliverables and set realistic timelines to reduce employee stress. Focus on quality and not quantity.
- **Avoid micromanaging.** Your employees need to know you believe they will work as hard as they would in the office. If they are hitting targets, don't be concerned about how and when the task is completed.
- **Designate communication channels.** Determine how you will use video conferencing, messaging, texting, phone calls and email. Explain what needs to be put in an email and what can be communicated in text or Zoom messaging. Let your staff know when phone calls and texts should be used.
- **Follow up.** Provide written follow up after video meetings to reduce confusion and keep a record of what was discussed. This will help everyone stay on the same page. Video meetings are valuable, but they have communication challenges and do not take the place of face-to-face meetings.
- **Be clear.** Avoid assuming others know what you know. Describe exactly what you mean when communicating and patiently repeat yourself if necessary. Not everyone has the same information or understanding you do.

ONBOARDING

- **Nurture new employees.** With the recent move to remote work, it's easy to forget how difficult this experience is on your newest employees. Your latest hires did not get the luxury of being able to acclimate fully to University and department operations and culture before the move to online operations. You may need to work harder than usual to continue your new employee's onboarding.
- **Assign a mentor.** To help onboard your newest employees, assign them a department mentor to help them adjust to their new job. To help them acclimate to UHD and its culture when employees are back on campus, encourage them to join the [GatorConnect Mentorship Program](#).
- **Engage prospects.** Despite our current hiring freeze, continue to work to keep prospective candidates warm. Regularly communicate and stay connected with your prospects and find time to stay in touch with talent communities.

We hope these tips help ease the transition and stress that have come with managing employees during online operations and COVID-19. Above all else, take care of yourself. Make time for yourself and your family. Remember to implement most of the tips mentioned above into your own lives. It will help you be a stronger person and manager.

Ivonne Montalbano, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP Vice President, Employment Services and Operations

University of Houston-Downtown
One Main Street, Suite S910
Houston, TX 77002

Phone: 713-221-8667

Fax: 713-223-7496

Email: montalbanoi@uhd.edu

www.UHD.edu



[ESO blog](#) | [facebook](#) | [linkedin](#) | [twitter](#) |

Major Opportunity Employer

Notice: Unless otherwise specifically indicated, the information contained in this e-mail message is confidential and is only intended for the review and use of the above-named person(s). If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that the recipient is strictly prohibited from any use, storage, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this communication. If you have received this email message in error, please immediately notify me by telephone at the number above and return the original message to us at the address above. Thank you.

Rate our Customer Service!

To serve you better, please take a moment to complete our [Satisfaction Survey](#).