



Keep Your Remote Workforce Engaged

Remote work for many people is wonderful. Working autonomously with a flexible schedule can be a dream job. What's more, many companies are relying on these telecommuters more than ever before.

What nobody talks about, however, is the potential feeling of social isolation that is inherent in these jobs. A recent global survey revealed 40 percent of remote workers felt lonely and detached from the workplace despite regular email contact. This impacts productivity and employee retention, according to Dan Schawbel, who has written a book on the topic.¹

Wellness for Road Warriors

Working from home means communicating by email or phone, with little face-to-face contact, and working off-hours. Remote workers who bring socialization into their workday are more likely to find satisfaction in their career along with their day-to-day routine.

Wellness is a perfect place to start. Extending your wellness perks beyond the "brick and mortar" office

can be a challenge. But it's not impossible. A flexible wellness program is the answer for your employees who have a flexible workspace and schedule. Here's how to approach it:

1. Always include remote staff in wellness activities. You may need to get creative, but with every wellness competition, challenge, or activity, extend the virtual invitation to remote staff to join in. Give them plenty of notice to plan their schedules.
2. If your company offers on-site perks like meditation classes, step challenges, and educational sessions, include your remote staff via video conference or with webinars. If you have an on-site gym, offer fitness membership discounts near where your remote employees live.
3. If you encourage on-site employees to take breaks to walk, run, bike, or meditate, make sure the remote staff knows it goes for them, too. Office workers need to step away from the computer, and all workers benefit from an exercise break.

4. Does your remote staff attend quarterly meetings? If so, put a fun wellness activity on the agenda.
5. Encourage remote staff to come to the annual health fair and participate in the activities, even if it is virtually.
6. Provide a call-in option for your wellness committee so off-site employees can be members.
7. Remind all employees to exercise, eat a balanced diet, and sleep at least 7 hours each night. A monthly wellness newsletter reaches everyone.

Promoting employee well-being is important in all areas. If you offer sit/stand desks to the on-site staff, for instance, offer them to the remote worker as well. Standing desks are another way to encourage activity during the workday. And don't forget to highlight the employee assistance program. Keep the program well marketed so all employees know what the program offers and how to utilize the benefit.

Staying Connected

Ultimately building socialization into a telecommuting lifestyle needs support from the employee. These *Daily Reminders* can help. In addition, encourage your remote workers to get involved in their local community and spend time with people they care about. Remind them social media is no substitute for direct interaction. Studies show that an excess of time spent on social media each day can contribute to a feeling of loneliness.

¹Young, Lauren. "How to create connections at work in the age of isolation," Reuters, April 12, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-world-work-remoteworkers/how-to-create-connections-at-work-in-the-age-of-isolation-idUSKCN1RO13J>

Daily Reminders For Remote Workers

Day 1

Schedule a time to work close to home, but away from the house: the front/backyard, the porch or even a park.

Day 2

Put a seminar or conference on your calendar. Connect with people virtually.

Day 3

Plan a team call rather than a series of one-on-one calls. Video calls or a work chat platform are also great options to stay engaged.

Day 4

Prioritize tasks, limit your work to 8-hours in a day when possible, and organize your time so you're not sitting in front of the computer all day.

Day 5

Take breaks and set an alarm to disconnect from work, drawing the line between work and personal time.