

STAR UPDATE

MONTHLY INSIGHTS FROM THE MRINETWORK TEAM OF STAFFING PROFESSIONALS, TALENT ADVISORS & RECRUITMENT EXPERTS

How will remote work affect the employee experience long term?

Even as restrictions ease and businesses reopen, it seems almost certain that the workplace has been permanently altered. Although many people will physically return to their places of work, many may not do so or at least not every day. The work week for information-based jobs will likely evolve into a hybrid of work from home and work at the office; work is more than ever what you do - not where you go.

This transformation will have a profound effect on employee engagement and experience. Leaders must ensure that their companies are giving their employees everything they need to stay productive in a positive environment - regardless of their location. So what steps can your business take to give your people what they need in this transformed world of work?

Provide clear leadership. From the top down, an environment of respect, trust, transparency and mutually understood expectations is imperative to the success of remote work. Especially when times are difficult, straight talk from leadership about the reality of what's happening and what it means to the individual and the business alleviates some of the stress of uncertainty.

Assess your digital preparedness. Leveraging digital technologies is critical to managing your remote workforce and requires careful planning, execution, and organizational agility. "All your business systems should be easily accessible, available across a spectrum of devices, and with sufficient levels of network security appropriate for an individual firm," says Nancy Halverson, MRI Network SVP, Global Operations. "Your people need a seamless digital platform that they can access from anywhere for functions ranging from onboarding to training to meeting with their teams." She also recommends the use of video. "Video chat tools like Zoom, GoToMeeting and Google Hangouts are a great way to hold video meetings without losing nonverbal, visual cues. Our recruitment network has seen a significant uptick in remote interviewing via video for even senior-level white collar jobs indicating how far remote management skills have gained footing in the business world."

Continue to develop your employees. This means not only measuring and assessing employee performance but also looking at whether they are getting sufficient training to perform well. Are they receiving adequate coaching and mentoring from their supervisors? Do they have the tools they need not only to do their work but also to grow and improve? "Encourage your team to take control of how and when they do their work so that they feel empowered," advises Halverson. "Develop a culture that promotes the exchange of feedback between employees and managers."

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Keeping remote employees informed and in the loop assures them not only that they are an integral part of a larger organization, but also that the organization has a vested interest in their well-being. Don't assume that because you hear no complaints from them - or from your customers or clients - that no problems or concerns exist. Encourage their questions and concerns so that they raise issues they face quickly and proactively. You'll be able to solve problems more efficiently and keep your people feeling satisfied and appreciated.

"The responsibility for good communication works both ways," observes Halverson. "Good remote workers understand the importance of reaching out to their team members. So keep an eye on the interaction among them to be sure that they are sharing the context and relevant details their colleagues need from them."

Promote well-being. Working remotely can be lonely, leading to feelings of disconnection among team members and difficulties in protecting your company's culture. "Make helping your people maintain a healthy work-life balance a priority," says Halverson. "Provide access to resources and discussions around topics like mental health, meditation, and exercise."

Companies that look after their employees have engaged workforces. And that translates into workers who are committed and productive, even when they're working remotely.