

STAR UPDATE

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

Conducting Performance Reviews When Your Team is Remote__

Workplace dynamics have changed drastically over the last few months. From minimal personal interaction to increased reliance on communication technology, the word “office” has taken on a whole new meaning. As the year-end approaches, this leaves many companies wondering about the best way to conduct performance reviews. How can you evaluate your remote employees accurately, deliver clear feedback, and foster trust?

“The first thing to consider is that you have to evaluate your people based on their output, not their working schedule,” says Nancy Halverson, SVP Global Operations at MRI. “When employees are working remotely, you need to know that you can count on them to complete tasks on time and to be available when they’re needed. Use the performance review to determine if those who consistently fall behind with their workloads need a different arrangement, better technology, or more guidance.”

Halverson’s suggestions for making sure performance reviews are effective and beneficial include using some of the traditional elements of the review process, removing factors that you can’t measure for remote workers, and adding others that this kind of work environment creates. “Recognize and prioritize qualities that are more relevant in a virtual setting, such as teamwork and communication,” she says. “Focusing on these skill sets also helps make individual contributors more successful in a remote environment.” She advises managers conducting remote reviews to follow these three steps.

Give advanced notice about when reviews will take place. Your team needs time to prepare for a private and professional exchange while working from home, particularly now that so many people are juggling childcare and homeschooling with their jobs. Halverson recommends scheduling at least one hour for the performance review conversation and letting employees know that reviews will be the dedicated focus of the meeting. If you don’t have easy access to tools that support video, make arrangements to

talk with one another via FaceTime to ensure you aren’t sacrificing the value of a face-to-face conversation.

Discuss changed priorities openly and honestly. Business priorities may have shifted during the pandemic, and employees might be worried about job security. Dedicate time in the performance review to discuss how they can remain valuable contributors moving forward. Clearly outline duties that may evolve or change in the coming months so they clearly understand where to focus their efforts and can evolve with the business appropriately.

Create a plan to support your employees from a distance. Although evidence suggests that remote workers are as, if not more, productive than those who work in a physical office, those statistics are typically based on employees who have chosen to work remotely. Employees thrust into remote working may not feel connected to company culture or to their coworkers. Their work arrangements can be isolating, and often require a level of self-direction, motivation, and discipline that isn’t intuitive for everyone. “Be sure to discuss how your employees can still collaborate with you and their coworkers in this new World of Work,” says Halverson. “How much coaching, guidance, and support do they need from you while working from home? Do they understand their priorities and goals, and feel confident that they have the tools and skills to achieve them?”

Every employee has a different work style and varying needs when it comes to succeeding remotely. Thoughtful evaluations help employees identify opportunities for professional growth and reinforce the importance of their contributions, which can greatly impact their satisfaction and commitment. “Use this time to get to know what your employees enjoy doing, where they feel capable and where they are struggling,” concludes Halverson. “Agree on a plan that will fuel professional success moving forward, and assure your people that their mental, emotional, and physical health is as important to you as their performance right now.”