Remote Collaboration

Practical guide for effective remote working

COVID-19 is posing new challenges for companies and in the professional and personal lives of almost everyone. With a lot of us working from home, Deloitte has put together some practical advice and best practices to help you continue to work as effectively as possible in these extraordinary circumstances. This advice is based on techniques we have experienced, tested and refined on a day-to-day basis here at Deloitte as well as best practices shared with us by customers across a wide range of local and global industries.

First of all, senior management and all staff need to be aware that, in unusual circumstances like these, people's individual needs come to the fore as our personal and professional lives inevitably become intertwined. Working remotely completely upends how we go about our day and how we work. More than ever before, it is therefore essential for managers and teams to show empathy for their colleagues and adapt their behavior accordingly.

These practical tips are for everyone working from home, with three main topics designed to make your new work routine easier:

- **Remote work environment**: introducing the new office environment and new meeting formats
- **Remote leadership**: senior management faces new challenges
- **Remote collaboration**: every employee can make collaboration more effective through their behavior
Remote work environment:
Based on our experience with working remotely, we have identified a range of factors that are relevant in setting up an effective at-home office and using technology in a pragmatic and beneficial way depending on the meeting formats required.

- Employees must take a systematic approach to setting up their new “office” at home – and will need practical guidance on how to do so.
- A wide variety of tools are available to achieve your meeting goals in the most effective way. It is wise to rely on tools that may offer more functionality than many people expect, but also to choose different tools depending on the objective of the meeting in question.
- Establishing the precise purpose of a meeting – whether you are simply brainstorming or making critical decisions – is just as important in a remote working environment. Meeting participants will, however, need appropriate assistance to leverage this success-critical factor effectively.

Remote leadership:
Senior management has a special role to play in these unusual circumstances, particularly when it comes to security, sensitivity and stability. They will be expected to proactively manage potential conflicts even more than they have in the past:

- Senior managers are human too! Their personal lives and professional lives are just as mixed up as they are for members of staff. And yet the crisis puts them in the spotlight, when everyone on staff looks to management for guidance on how to act and how to cope with the situation.
- People expect senior managers to structure tasks and assignments in such a way that they can easily be done from home.
- Senior managers have to be much more aware of how their team is handling their workload, particularly for employees that are working from home. Some will have more work than others, and it is important to structure the workload and to monitor it closely. They must ensure that the team is working together effectively despite initial imbalances during the first wave of the crisis and that “free time” is used as an opportunity for learning.
- Another factor that is particularly critical for success is for senior managers to master the delicate balance between day-to-day operational challenges, decisive future-focused initiatives and preserving stability while also practicing empathy.

Remote collaboration
It is not only up to senior management to advocate good collaboration – everyone on staff shares that responsibility. Creating moments that matter can be extremely beneficial and contribute to a “new” sense of shared purpose. It can redefine the corporate culture and positively impact commitment and productivity across the workforce (particularly during the post-crisis period).

Our recommendations are consistent with the practices that help us work well together in our personal relationships – and yet we need to be particularly conscious of our own behavior in times like these. We have put together a list of concrete practices that can lead to better cooperation.

- Once again, it is important to put yourselves in your coworker’s shoes and consider what they might be thinking when you are communicating with them. (Walk in their shoes)
- New challenges require new perspectives, but you ultimately have to achieve a result. That’s why it is equally important to listen to as many coworkers as possible when you work remotely, without losing sight of achieving a clear outcome (Change the Lens).
- We are already seeing more members of staff model accountability – and they must continue to take ownership on a basis of trust (Own it)
- Due caution is advised here to ensure that messages get through on virtual platforms. It can help to verify repeatedly that your message was understood (Say what no one else will)

Our multidisciplinary team of experts is looking forward to supporting you in these challenging times.

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