

Tips for Supervisors – Motivating your staff during difficult times

Communication is Key

- **Supervisors play a very important role right now.** Things are changing by the minute, and leadership is making strategic decisions. You may not even know all the changes that will occur, but it is imperative that you remain flexible, positive, and transparent. Communicate about things you're doing, such as evaluating future targets and work goals. And be clear and upfront when you make changes, such as shifting your strategy.
- **Make sure you're passing information along to your teams as you have it.** Organize a daily or weekly department meeting where you check in with each other. This is a good time for you to pass along information, gather questions, and ask how others are doing.
- **Point out the greater purpose.** Look for any upside and share that perspective. Is this work helping others? Preventing future problems? Helping to keep your office operating the best it can? Are they doing the best they can under the circumstances? Keep positive and help employees see the value in their efforts
- **Tailor your communication styles as needed.** If you have team members who are more extraverted, they might be struggling with the reduced in-person contact. Reach out to these individuals more frequently.
- **Take the time to ask how your team members are doing outside of work.** Everyone is stressed right now; some people are scared, and others are sick. That sort of empathy can go a long way. Make sure they know they can reach out to you when they need help, or even just a listening ear.
- **If team members have kids at home while trying to work full-time, work with them.** Have a conversation with these employees about what you need from them and what they're able to do. Be supportive if they need to flex their work time or modify their work schedule.

Lead with Confidence and Clear Intent

- **Honor regular one-on-ones and team meetings.** Avoid the temptation to treat a one-on-one meeting with your team member or a more formal touch base your whole team as optional or easily changeable. To establish a sense of structure and routine, treat recurring meetings with remote workers as set in stone.
- **Establish virtual drop-in hours.** Use Google Hangouts Meet or Zoom to establish a virtual meeting room that allows people to pop in and out of live conversations with you in a way that resembles in-office stand-ups or drive-by chats. By making yourself accessible to your team in a more informal way, you can get all the productivity-boosting benefits of working side-by-side without being in the same physical location.
- **Make a concerted effort at engaging your employees.** Schedule time to blow off steam. People may be going stir crazy right now, unable to leave their homes and faced with limited social interactions. Encourage them to connect with each other: schedule virtual lunch or coffee dates, virtual game nights, etc. Social distancing does

not mean socially disconnecting. Stay engaged with each other.

- **Recognize your role as a role model.** Staff automatically take their cues from the leader, so you must model the behavior you expect. If your staff is working long hours, pitch in and help out where you can. If you expect them to meet tight deadlines, be sure you do the same. And to minimize griping, don't be a complainer yourself.