

Managing Offsite Employees

Staying Connected with a Dispersed Workforce

Benefits of Working Offsite

- **Employees:** Save money and time by no longer commuting. Have more flexibility and independence and a better work-life balance.
- **Managers:** Can select the best people for a job, no matter where they are located.
- **Organizations:** Save in office expenditures. Decrease employee absenteeism and turnover. Increase morale and retention.
- **Country:** Reduce traffic and gas emissions.

The Right People, Situation, and Tools

- ✓ Offsite arrangements tend to be more successful when both employees and their managers have certain characteristics and abilities.
- ✓ Not every job can be done offsite, such as those that involve frequent in-person interaction with the public or others in the organization.
- ✓ Offsite employees require specific tools to do their jobs effectively, including access to the organization's systems and help desk.

Establishing Mutual Trust

- Be trustworthy—do what you say you will do. Keep your actions consistent.
- Trust offsite employees to do the work.
- Provide support, feedback, and encouragement.
- Have an open-door policy—be available to help.
- Establish a check-in or reporting procedure.
- Communicate clearly and often. (Watch your tone.)
- Share sensitive information face-to-face.
- Don't make it personal when things go wrong.
- Treat them fairly; they should have the same guidelines and opportunities as onsite employees.

Keeping Remote Workers in the Loop

- Make sure they have easy access to relevant data.
- Select most appropriate type of communication for the situation. (Accommodate their communication preferences when possible.)
- Ask specific, open-ended questions.
- Hold regular meetings (one-on-one and team).

- Create opportunities for face-to-face contact.
- Use technology for casual contacts.
- Have regular in-person meetings, if possible.

Setting Up Offsite Employees for Success

- To get them off on the right foot, provide:
 - ✓ An orientation to the organization and introduction to team members.
 - ✓ Clear policies and guidelines.
 - ✓ Clear performance goals.
 - ✓ Training in time management, setting goals, and other relevant subjects.
- Establish two-way communication immediately. Check in often during the first few weeks.
- Find out what they need and expect from you. Tell them what you expect from them.
- Consider helping them find mentors.

Common Challenges for Managers

- Keeping information secure and private
- Juggling differences in time zones and work schedules
- Avoiding employee burnout
- Handling conflict among dispersed team members

Best Practices to Follow

- ✓ Make sure employees and their jobs are suitable for offsite work.
- ✓ Provide remote employees with the tools they need to do the job well.
- ✓ Establish and maintain mutual trust.
- ✓ Prepare offsite employees thoroughly.
- ✓ Work with them to develop achievable goals.
- ✓ Clarify expectations.
- ✓ Communicate clearly and often, and make sure that other team members do the same.
- ✓ Help offsite employees feel they are a vital part of the team and organization.
- ✓ Provide ongoing support and feedback.
- ✓ Address problems early, before they escalate.