



MANAGING THE REMOTE WORKFORCE



E-brochure from the Tangent Intelligence Unit

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the New Normal

With the outbreak of Covid-19, the need to have a self-sufficient and motivated “at home” workforce has become an essential factor in an organisation’s search for success. It is too easy for managers to use the current pandemic as an excuse for poor performance and cultural drift. Leaders that learn to adapt will ensure their business succeeds and will most likely create new ways of working that will motivate their staff, leading to a sustained, competitive advantage in the long term.

Tangent has helped organisations recruit and retain remote teams for over 20 years, and we recognise there are several common problems organisations encounter in this endeavour.

To help organisations overcome these issues, Tangent has collaborated with some of our most successful global clients to understand what practices and processes are working for them and even leading to increased productivity.

Main Authors: Kristian Martin and contribution from leaders in technology and communications globally.



PRODUCTIVITY

The Case for Effective Remote Working



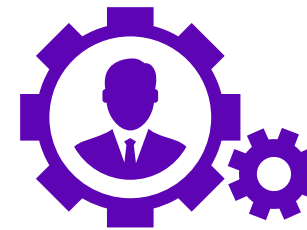
Research calculated that home workers were 13% more productive than on-site ones.



The typical company in the U.S. spends upward of \$12,000 per employee per year for office space.



Workers, freed from the constraints of office life, report higher levels of satisfaction and greater productivity.



Employee attrition decreased by 50 percent among the telecommuters, they took shorter breaks, had fewer sick days, and took less time off.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Loneliness and the negative effect on Mental health

Humans are not alone in their need for social interaction, it is a trait shared by almost every animal in the world, studies have concluded micro - organisms including bacteria need social interaction (Science magazine, 2008). Young (2008) concluded that the need for social interaction is hard wired into our brains.

Working from home naturally limits our ability for social interaction which can lead to minor and major mental health issues therefore decreasing productivity.

Furthermore, working from home with families present introduces employees to new routines that existed at home that they were never part off. It is natural to want to have some involvement in these routines, however this encroachment can cause friction making the individual feel more of a burden and subsequently having a detrimental effect to the individual's mental health

Distractions at home

Whilst home routines can lead to negative effects as documented above, they can also lead to distractions. If the worker integrates



too far with the home routine their productivity will naturally decrease.

Access to information and technical support

Finally basing someone from home can be only half the battle. Ensuring the organisation provides the proper process & systems to successfully carry out the job is an often-forgotten necessity. Leaders and managers often take for granted the ease of accessing information and support when working in the office.

Whilst cloud-based systems offer a solution, ensuring the existence of an effective IT support team is essential. Wherever possible having defined super users within the organisation that can act as first level support will improve the productivity of everyone involved.

Solutions that work

In collaboration with customers and candidates from around the world we have collated some of the most effective practices that will help drive the productivity of the home-based workforce.

“
The need for social interaction is hard wired into our brains.
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Stacy Chevront, VP of Human Resources, at WinShuttle recommends:

My focus as a manager has been on keeping routines normal, having fun and ensuing to make time to just catch-up as a team; examples: hosting virtual happy hours and Whatsapp chats with the global team members.

Our focus as a company has been extremely focused on over communication (hosting all hands meetings, building CEO update pages, department update communications, and COVID-19 tracking sites) to keep the global team connected. We have also been building in many ways for employees to connect in fun ways (examples spotlight video's of employees on how they are surviving COVID-19, Kahoot game challenges and virtual happy hours and coffee breaks).

I stack ranked importance of the items you highlighted in your below message:

1. **Trusting your teams** that they will deliver and not be distracted
2. **Promoting work based habits** like getting dressed for work and ensuring there is a specific place of work at home to go to
3. **Providing structure** for remote workers through meetings, regular appraisals etc
4. **Promoting social interaction** through video conferencing including out of work events like quiz nights and hosted gym sessions!
5. **Providing training and support** to promote personal well being and energy

Overall, my biggest recommendation to managers is to use video and keep your routines normal. Employees need predictability and connection with their manager to stay grounded and effective.



PROMOTE ROUTINE

As well as social interaction, humans crave routine. It starts from when we are born and continues until we die. Routine is proven to improve Mental health as well as productivity.

There are a few areas you can focus on to promote good routines with the at home workforce.

Get dressed for work – Working in your pyjamas or gym kit will not maximise performance. Your teams need to feel like they are going to work everyday in order to activate the behavioural traits that have been built up by years of employment. How they look is a key part of this. Try to promote “getting dressed for work”, this will help with routine

Have a work area – Short term working from home arrangements, like the ones many businesses are utilising now mean the employees do not necessarily have a designated work area. As a leader try to promote your teams to have a specific area in the house they go to work.

It is too easy to sit on the sofa and log onto your laptop, doing this will only increase the chances of distractions at home as we have discussed.

Have regular team meetings – Video technology is clearly a vital tool whilst working from home, ensuring you have regular team meetings will promote social interaction and begin to build a “natural flow” to the day for your employees, furthermore it will provide you with an opportunity to both praise and motivate.

Being recognised is one of the key drivers for performance for employees, with remote workers you must ensure you work even harder to recognise good work and celebrate.

The most common meeting schedule is one just before the day starts at circa 0830 and one just before it ends. These meetings do not need to last long, but it is a chance for everyone to catch up.



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To begin with, while working remote you won't always have immediate access to your team so unless we are putting processes in place where those kind of moments don't happen or at least happen rarely we can't work properly. It's all about doing proper planning to make sure everyone knows what's coming.

Secondly, If you're used to working in a busy office environment, switching to a work from home schedule might get to you and you run the risk of feeling isolated so by organizing social interactions through video conferencing will take that part away and dramatically improve every technique from how you present ideas to how you voice frustrations about a coworker. All good things.

Finally, performance appraisals will increase employee productivity and improve areas of weakness.

*Vinay Sharma, Core Department Manager
Digicel PNG*

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The Ideal Remote-Working Routine

We've compiled an ideal routine for working from home, it allows for the reality of home-working while still promoting well-being and productivity:



Neda Nia, VP , Product Experience Contentserv, recommends:

Summary:

COVID is testing each industry, company, and individual. It has not been easy, and things may never be back to the norms we were accustomed to pre-COVID. Working remotely is one of them. Yes, some of us do miss going to the office and being co-located but at the end of the day, this may be one of the positive side effects of COVID, promoting the culture of working from home.

Think about the impact of that on the environment, cutting commute time, and lowering cost of living as folks will not have to reside in super expensive places just because they are close to work. I am an advocate of working from home and strongly believe, if you hire the right people, create a result driven work culture, your remote team will outperform the teams who are not the right fit, they don't like what they do but are present in a physical location called office.

Providing Structure for Remote Workers

Personally, throughout my career, using the agile methodology has helped me in managing remote teams. I know agile is based on co-location but besides that, it offers amazing processes like daily scrums (scrm: daily sessions held at the same time). During these sessions, each team member would share: what I did yesterday, what I am working on today, what are my impediments. This way, I can address impediments for my team on a daily basis and pave the road for them.

It's interesting because Contentserv U.S. has been a remote team for over a year now. That means, we already had gone through the forming, storming, and norming stages of the team building and we were already fully performing as a unified remote team prior to COVID. After COVID and with everybody being remote we realized the real value of taking that time upfront and working on our remote communication processes.

Promoting Social Interaction

Contentserv is a global team and we constantly have meetings with different locations, so being on a conference call for us was a norm. What was a bit changed with COVID was that fewer people were opposed to the idea of turning their cameras on. I thought that was such a nice personal touch added to our communication style. It felt we were becoming even closer compared to pre-COVID time. We started having "Zoomtini" sessions, of course we never actually ended up having Martinis over Zoom, but it was a weekly check in to just make sure we are all doing well.

Promoting Work-based Habits

With COVID we are all on the video calls constantly and some of them are being recorded and will be online FOREVER, this has forced us to find the place that we can take our calls/meetings from. Some of my friends find their closets the most peaceful and soundproof place at the moment.

Dressing up and being work ready is important. It actually helps with the work-life integrated lifestyle that we are living in. When you change to your home clothes, you really are sending a signal to your family and yourself that you are done working and ready for some fun family activities, whether that's crashing on the couch and binge watching Netflix (cough... tiger king .. cough) or getting out and chasing the butterflies with your kids.

Providing training and support to promote personal well being and energy

I am blessed that our U.S. Contentserv team thrives on success and right now with the challenges that COVID has introduced to our customers, we are constantly reading and researching and sharing our findings with each other. We see this as a challenging puzzle that we are all tasked to solve together! That has really helped with our team spirit, energy, and vibe.

I am also constantly in touch with the team and if there is any sense of burning out or running low on energy we work on some flexible working hours to make sure people do take the time and rest. Some of us even have built a home gym and take our calls while walking outside or inside on a treadmill. We all have the tendency to be a bit workaholics but I blame that on loving what we do.

This question is inspiring me to get the folks subscription to some online fit app to promote personal well being. Thanks for the idea! Always learning.

Trusting Your Teams

We focus on hiring the right people and really creating and maintaining a safe and trusting environment. With clear deliverables defined on a daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly basis for each regional team and with a very clear strategy defined by the leadership we are confident our team will deliver and they will not be distracted.

ENERGY & CONNECT

BUILD ENERGY

KEEP SOCIAL

Encourage techniques to increase energy

Promote social interaction

One of the benefits of working in the office is the energy social interaction creates, the buzz of the office helps us all keep motivated and energised.

As well as promoting work based social interaction to establish routines, successful organisations go one step further and try to encourage interaction.

Working from a room alone at home means we have no one to bounce off, no buzz of excitement to keep us energised, therefore your teams need to create their own energy.

Successful non-work activities our clients have implemented include:

During your regular meetings encourage teams to take regular breaks, celebrate wins, have some music on during their working day and ensure they stand up and move around as much as possible after all “motion creates emotion”.

- Quiz nights on Zoom or similar
- Employee hosted bootcamp or yoga (where employees host a 30-minute training session for all of their colleagues to join)
- Happy Hour or Pub Night where employees meet on Zoom, Odro or similar to have a drink together
- Cooking classes

The list of potential activities is endless, the important thing is to promote social interaction with colleagues, empower employees to come up with the activities and have fun with it.

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If our workers are not used to working from home, it is imperative that we keep them engaged and motivated at all times, so they continue to feel valued by the business. Whilst we may not be physically working together, we are still very much a team and daily calls and Open Blend (appraisal) sessions are key to keep this going. For example, I have a daily Team video call at 10am every morning. We sit and discuss the previous days events over a cuppa, and it's so nice to see their friendly faces each day.

Helen Kidd, Senior PM at Heathrow

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REWARDS & TRUST

SMART REWARDS

Be both smart and generous

Rewards and recognition need focus with a stay at home workforce, the practices and processes that work with the on-site resource won't necessarily work with the remote teams.

We discussed the importance of recognition but as well as ensuring you recognise good work, successful organisations think about other ways, they can reward their employees.

At Tangent we will often provide "Just Eat" vouchers to the teams if they have had a good week.

The ways in which we work are changing, successful organisations recognise that and adjust their rewards accordingly.

ABUNDANT TRUST

Learn to trust more

Finally, and most importantly, to maximise productivity successful organisations trust their teams.

As a leader you must be open to the fact that standard ways of working will be different with remote teams. You may lose thirty minutes here and there as employees are caught up with home life, but to maximise the psychological contract and drive productivity you must show you trust them to make up the time.

Almost every customer we work with allows a flexibility with home workers that results in increased productivity, in a recent study Stanford university calculated that home workers were 13% more productive than on-site ones.



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Trusting your teams that they will deliver and not be distracted

“I believe that trust is at the foundation of all relationships and is an integral part of the working relationship. In order to maximize productivity it is important for employers to be able to trust their employee's to deliver and not get distracted. In my experience people will generally live up to the reputation you set them and as long as expectations and standards are properly defined employee's will flourish in an environment where they are trusted.

The trust strengthens the working relationship as there is an expectation for employee's to deliver whilst also empowering them to take ownership of that delivery. As employee's feel more responsible for their work due to the additional freedom granted by a trusting relationship they become more engaged as they have more control and more decisions to make.”

Senior Business Partner, Novartis

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SUMMARY

ABOUT TANGENT

Tangent International have been established for over 40 years providing talent to the tech and communications industry in over 170 countries.

Our specialist recruiters have worked for Tangent, on average, for 7 years, which is one of the highest retention rates in the industry. And this experience means 80% of the talent we introduce to clients is passive - we can create never-before-seen talent pools for our clients to choose from.

To help our clients – like you – pivot to remote working in these extraordinary times, we've implemented two packages.

We are particularly confident these options will help, because we've road-tested them on ourselves. Tangent, like many companies, has gone through all the drama of joining up our global workforce, communicating via kitchens and spare bedrooms.

In addition, we have worked with remote working clients for a number of years developing and honing these methodologies – so we know they work:

1. Projects: Remote and on Track - avoid the delays and disruption of putting projects on hold with remote contract teams for three to six months. We have contractors ready to assist you with projects that will demand extra the impetus these teams and individuals can provide.

2. Hiring: Safe and Online - get ahead of the competition and recruit the permanent talent you need with our innovative video interviewing platform. Over 80% of the tech professionals we place are rare, passive candidates, so we promise to give you the talent you have never seen before that will provide a competitive advantage.





GOOD LUCK!

The above is a cross section of successful practices and process used by our customers from around the world, but these will only work if you communicate with your teams and individuals.

Some people will find it tough working from home, even with all of these ideas implemented, you need to recognise that and communicate with those individuals to help them prosper.

To view our video platform in detail click here>
bit.ly/tangent-tech-suite>

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