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5 ways to ensure remote teams work smoothly

BY ANJALI VENUGOPALAN, ET BUREAU | JAN 29, 2019, 07.53 AM IST   Post a Comment

1. PROMOTE SELF-MANAGEMENT

"No one appreciates a looming manager," says Raj Kumar Rishi, managing director, Xerox India. Leaders need to ensure the team develops a self-managing system, he says. That's why it's critical for managers and leaders to create teams which can independently follow the company's strategies and goals. "A team that works on similar principals tends to also follow the same focus and vision."

2. OVER-COMMUNICATE, IF NECESSARY

"We pick up body language when we're working next to someone," says Shiv Agrawal, managing director, ABC Consultants, a recruitment consultancy. In the absence of this, it's necessary to have a structured communication plan. "There needs to be a rhythm to discussions—maybe a review call every morning." WhatsApp groups too are useful. Video conferencing should be preferred over telephone calls. Otherwise, it's hard to know whether you have the full attention of your teammate, he says.

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3. INVEST IN THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

"Be more than just text on email!" says Rishi. Investing in the right collaboration technology is critical to increase focus and productivity at work, he says. Agrawal says that companies need to ensure that employees have the proper infrastructure in place, like Wi-Fi and access to the company's systems. Employees, in turn, have to make sure they're in an environment conducive to work and free from distractions.

4. EXPECTATIONS MUST BE CRYSTAL-CLEAR

"When teams are present in person, a lot is discussed over a coffee or during a break," says Agrawal. Employees need to be clear about what exactly is expected of them when they're working remotely. "It is essential for all team members to have the same understanding of goals, aided by regular milestone checks that are both verbal and well documented," says Rishi.

5. FACE-TO-FACE TEAM MEETINGS

"Employees can feel alone when they're working from home or remotely," says Agrawal. That's when social connect becomes important. If possible, teams should meet in person from time to time to create a sense of bonding and togetherness, he says. "If distances span international borders, do meet virtually," says Rishi. A group video-conference call can be the second-best alternative, concurs Agrawal.