**Independent Banker**

**Portfolio — Leadership at all Levels**

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**Managing remote employees**

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As life settles into a new rhythm, you may find that some team members continue working remotely permanently, or that they shift to a hybrid model in which they can work remotely at least some of the time. What are some best practices for managing this new distributed workforce?

[subhead] **Communicate expectations clearly, early and often**

Making sure lines of communication are open means you’re more likely to be on the same page, so it reduces the need to micromanage. Set expectations like core working hours, appropriate attire and a professional, distraction-free work setting.

[subhead] **Get organized**

Set up a digital system for accessing bank policies, procedure manuals, templates and forms, and establish protocols for when files need to be shared. Given the sensitivity of bank information, make sure to set the proper security standards. Look into project management tools to keep track of productivity, and don’t forget to have training available in digital format, too.

[subhead] **Embrace all methods of communication**

Find out what works best for each remote worker. Some prefer Zoom, others Microsoft Teams. While texting may seem like it crosses a work-life boundary, some employees actually prefer it. From time to time, you may even want to pick up the phone and have a good ol’ catch-up.

[subhead] **Be time conscious**

It can be challenging for remote employees to set boundaries. Give them a hand by scheduling meetings with their time zone in mind and tightening up meeting lengths when possible. Do your best to send emails only during core working hours. Encourage them to close the door to their office, if they have one, and power down their computers at the end of day. This can help set boundaries and prevent burnout.

[subhead] **Establish regular check-ins**

These will vary based on employee preferences and schedules, but best practice is to meet at least once a week. Some workers may prefer more frequent check-ins, and that frequency may change over time. Use this time to check for any sense of isolation or other challenges they may be facing.

[subhead] **Be intentional with face-to-face time**

Plan office visits periodically. During those meetings, take some time for the team to reconnect socially, too. Water cooler conversations don’t happen in a remote environment the same way they do in an office. This is also a healthy opportunity to keep your community bank’s culture front and center to all teams.

[subhead] **Be inclusive**

Keep the remote employee’s perspective in mind so they don’t feel left out when you make decisions, make big announcements or celebrate major milestones. The pandemic was a great equalizer in that Zoom put everyone’s face on the screen at once. Keep giving everyone equal boxes and encourage connections with others, perhaps by using a buddy system.

[subhead] **Keep talking**

Remote work isn’t for everyone. As challenging as it may seem, make sure to keep track of how each team member is doing and allow them space to be honest. And if they ultimately decide they’d prefer to return to the bank, be open to that, too.

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