

## 6 Tips for Keeping Remote Employees Motivated and Engaged

Written by: Jason Orloske | October 20, 2016



The dynamics of the global workforce are changing as more and more employees are working from home and remote offices. This change has benefits for both employees and employers, as well as a unique set of challenges associated with managing remotely. Based on first-hand experience, it is not uncommon for remote workers to feel isolated or disconnected from their departments or organizations, challenging management to find ways to keep remote employees motivated and engaged in the absence of face-to-face interaction. The following six tips offer some guidance. **Form Relationships and Build Trust.** Whether you are a newly assigned manager, project or program manager, or a new team lead, getting to know your employees, both personally and professionally, is an absolute necessity. Take the time to learn about employees' hobbies, families, and preferences. In the process, be open and share about yourself as well. These conversations will build rapport and trust that strengthen the manager-employee relationship. **Schedule One-on-Ones and Don't Cancel Them.** One of my biggest pet peeves is having regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with my boss that are erratically cancelled. This makes me feel like I am not worthy of the time or that my work is not important. When conducting a one-on-one, begin each meeting with some small talk to connect with the employee on a personal level before moving on to business. Additionally, inform and engage employees in

conversations about what is going on inside the company to help them feel connected.

**Recognize Employee and Team Efforts.** Employees and teams thrive on recognition which can be delivered in a variety of ways. I recognize employees individually during scheduled one-on-one meetings by acknowledging their contributions and documenting them in their personnel file. I also recognize employees and teams in meetings so that others are aware of employee accomplishments. And, I recognize employees and teams publicly with the executive team, the board, and outside the organization, particularly when the accomplishment has an enterprise impact. I once wrote an article for publication by the Project Management Institute to recognize the outstanding work that was performed on a project. However, before going public, be sure to get approval from your corporate communications department. Employee recognition is not restricted to management; it can also come from a colleague or team member. I once managed a dispersed IT team where an employee took an old high school bowling trophy, named it the “Codification” award, and sent it to individual team members to acknowledge the completion of a complex task or resolution of a major issue. The recipient would take a selfie with the trophy, email the picture to the team, and then forward the trophy to whoever was worthy of it next. This was a unique way for a remote team to recognize accomplishments and stay motivated.

**Maintain Open Communication.** When [globally dispersed employees](#) don't regularly connect with their managers or co-workers, engagement suffers. Technology can facilitate individual and group interaction via video conferencing, web meetings, and conference calls. For example, a remote team I manage uses the video chat application, Skype. We keep a Skype thread running to keep team members apprised of what is happening with a current initiative. Document sharing with SharePoint or Google Docs is another useful tool that creates a document registry to ensure all team members are working with the same information. **Meet Live When Possible.** Nothing beats live, face-to-face communication to engage remote employees. While technology may enable interaction, it falls short on large group discussions and fails to pick up on non-verbal clues. Two types of face-to-face meetings that I use are small team gatherings (to complete a specific project phase) and large group meetings (to discuss departmental changes, improvements, etc.). These meetings incur employee travel costs but are justified by the benefits they provide. **Be**

**Flexible in Your Work Arrangements.** Managing a global team requires flexibility to accommodate employees, vendors, contractors and more. Working across time zones may require availability during early mornings, late nights, and weekends to provide information, resolve problems, or keep a project moving forward. When unavailable, have a designated back-up to avoid delays. Remote work continues to grow and evolve. By employing the six tips provided here and adapting management and interaction styles, leaders can achieve success in motivating and engaging employees working outside of traditional settings around the globe.

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## About the Author



### **Jason Orloske**

I am a seasoned project, program and portfolio manager with over 15 years' experience in the healthcare, retail, legal, and regulatory sectors. I believe that a successful project is more than just delivering on time, scope, budget and quality. It starts with a solid understanding of the requested project and ensuring it aligns with organizational goals and market needs. Through a governance process, I have worked with executive teams so only the right projects are approved, as well as agreement on priority. I have created a culture of success with project teams through well-defined processes, open communication with and among team members, and continual stakeholder engagement. I'm a clear communicator who can interact with executives and their teams about technology, business and financial topics.