



TOP TEN TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR REMOTE WORKFORCE

*Meeting the Challenges of
Engaging Remote Workers*



TODAY'S PRESENTER



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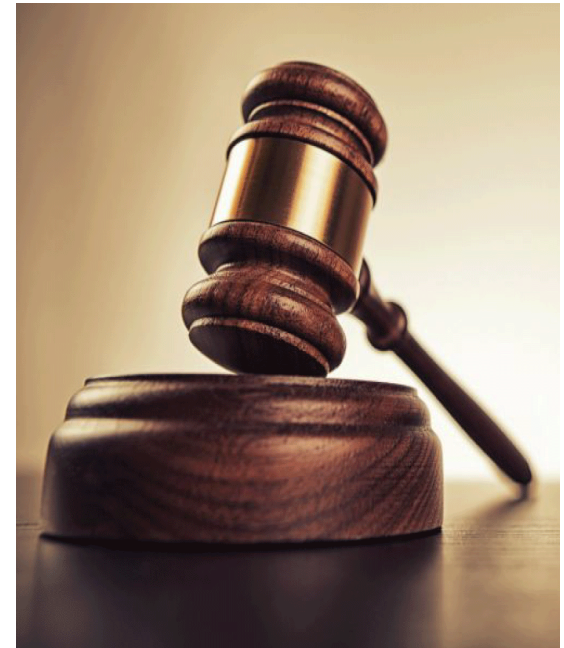
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Steven G. Meilleur, Ph.D. is a Sr. Vice-President and Risk Services Consultant for Poms & Associates, specializing in human resources and employment matters. He has more than 40 years of experience in HR management, Risk Management, and Organizational Development in the public, private for-profit, and private non-profit sectors. Among other positions he has held, Dr. Meilleur has served as the HR Director for the City of Rio Rancho, NM.

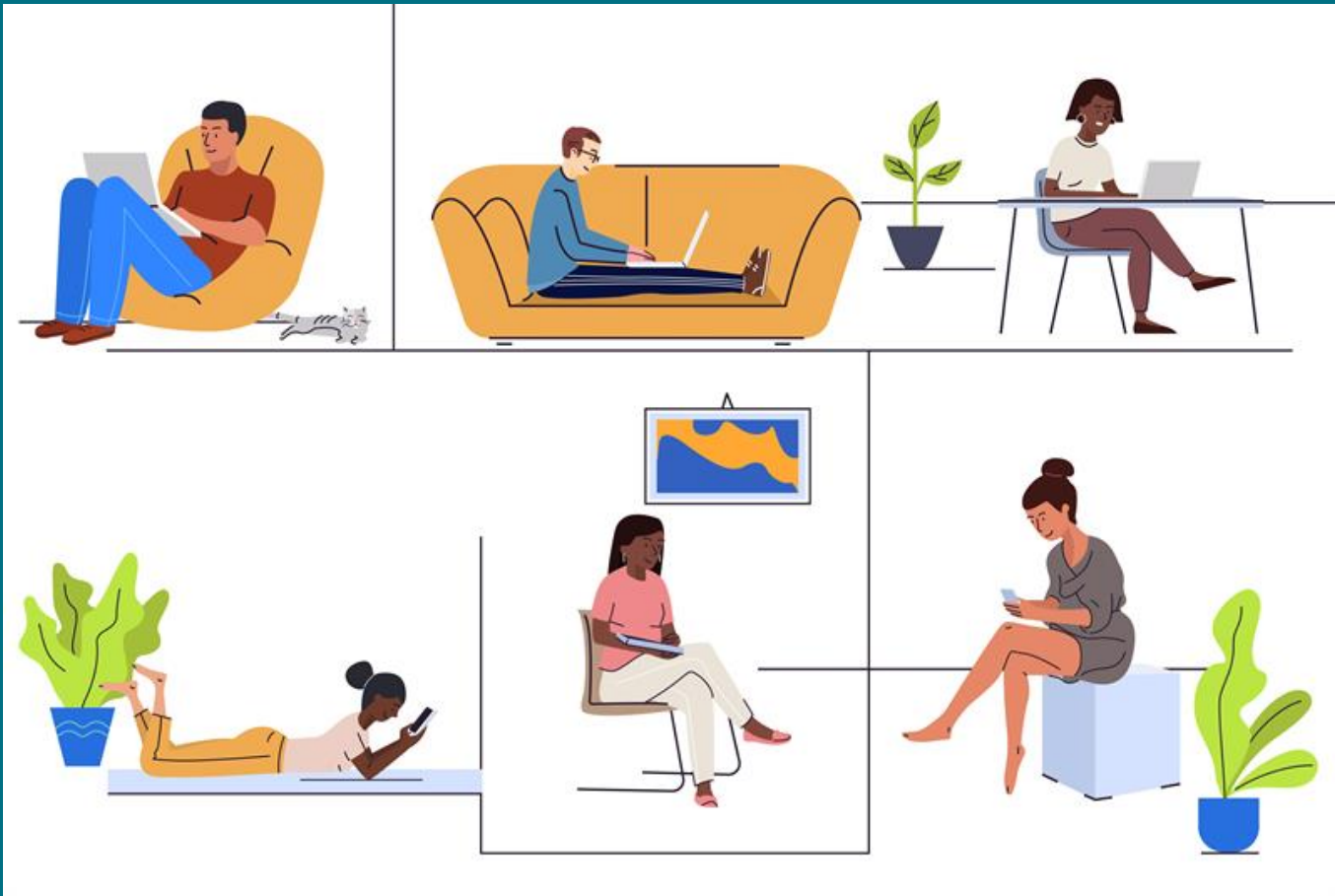
His experience in HR management is in the public, private for-profit, and private non-profit sectors, having served in executive and other management positions. He received his BA in English Literature and Education at Bucknell University, and his EMBA & Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico. He is also a Lecturer on the faculty of the UNM graduate School of Public Administration, teaching in the areas of human resource management, leadership, organizational behavior, strategy and change, and NPO management.

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REMOTE WORKERS: WHY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT



THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

Remote work overnight has presented us with a number of challenges:

- Resources and tools to enable remote work
- Organizing and optimizing work
- Connecting and collaborating as remote teams
- Developing a natural rhythm for work from home, given teaching from home, family is around, etc.
- Being alone all of the time with little outside contact
- We welcomed new work teammates with four paws



ENGAGING REMOTE WORKERS

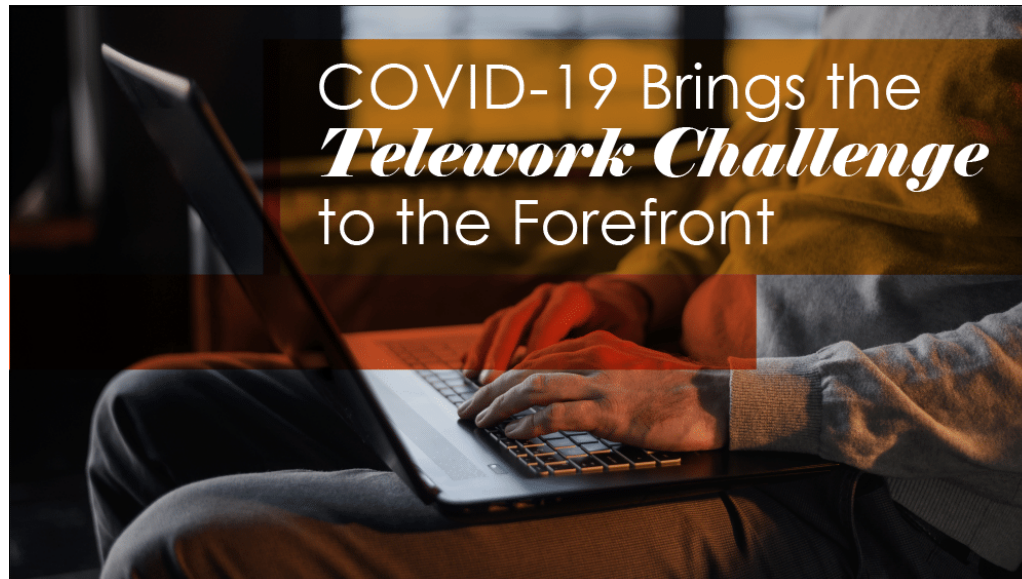
- Sudden change from office-based work to complete remote work can cause employees to experience a drop in their job performance and engagement.
- Planning for implementation of remote work options, and maintain engagement for morale and productivity in face of challenges
 - Stress of self-quarantining, homeschooling children etc.
 - Less communication with colleagues, supervisors
- Make the remote worker feel supported as valued member of the team
- Being mindful of potential risks associated with remote work
 - Wage and hour – FLSA and other employment law issues
 - Workers Compensation
 - Safety and Ergonomics
 - Cyber Security

INDICATORS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- An engaged workforce provides benefits to an employer:
 - increased productivity and profitability,
 - higher retention levels and lower absenteeism.
- Characteristics of engaged employees:
 - Have clear sense of purpose
 - Are enthusiastic, and focused
 - Are willing to put additional effort into projects
 - Have clear understanding of goals and objectives
 - Feel supported by supervisor and co-workers, & support them
 - Actively work together as a team - collaborative

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

- Employees who telework even in “good times,” face challenges to maintaining engagement and connection with their organizations.



ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

1. COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- Employees may perceive a lack of support from their organization or their supervisor
- Often, employees must deal with obstacles that make communicating and collaborating with their teams more difficult.
- Difficulty with communication and collaboration is cited in surveys as remote employees' top problem.

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

2. ISOLATION

- Easier to feel connected and part of a team when in the office – sharing ideas, socializing
- Sudden switch to telework – feeling disconnected from co-workers, team, and organization
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation = lower morale, performance, productivity; depression, etc.
- Survey by Lexis XpertHR – 24% of remote employees said loneliness and isolation is their #1 problem

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

3. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Many managers feel that employees do less work when teleworking ... but
- Research indicates the opposite is true more often:
 - Employees can't separate work from home
 - Tied to desks, check email, work on projects at all hours of the day
 - Lines between work and home life are blurred, with negative impact on emotional health, and productivity

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

4. DISTRACTIONS AT HOME

- Home provides ample opportunities for distraction
 - Television
 - Pets
 - Refrigerator
- COVID-19 presents new challenges
 - Childcare, Homeschooling
 - Getting groceries and supplies
 - Caring for family member diagnosed with COVID-19
 - Stress, anxiety, and depression

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

5. INVISIBILITY

- The maxim "out of sight, out of mind" encapsulates a fear of those teleworking.
- Employees may perceive a lack of support from their organization or their supervisor without regular, frequent communication.
- Remote workers may feel disconnected from their co-workers and the organization.
 - This is especially true if working from home is new to an employee (e.g., suddenly implemented because of a pandemic, COVID-19).

ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

- Front-line supervisors can help employees to meet the challenges and remain engaged.
- First and most important point of **CONNECTION** for employee
- Managers and supervisors play critically important role in **COMMUNICATION**
- Establish a climate of **TRUST**



ENGAGEMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

EIGHT VALUES THAT BUILD TRUST

- 1. RESPECT:** I respect people for who they are and what they bring to the table
- 2. RECOGNITION:** I appreciate what people do
- 3. RECEPTIVITY:** I solicit others' thoughts, ideas, and opinions
- 4. DISCLOSURE:** I share my thoughts and opinions with others
- 5. STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS:** I am direct with people
- 6. HONESTY:** I am honest and ethical
- 7. KEEPS COMMITMENTS:** I do what I say I will do.
- 8. SEEKS EXCELLENCE:** I will always do my best.

TOP TEN LIST FOR MANAGING YOUR REMOTE WORKERS



THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#1: OWN THE COACHING ROLE WITH EMPLOYEES

- Train supervisors to rise to the challenge of leading and coaching remote workers and teams effectively and efficiently.
 - The same skill sets needed to manage an on-site team
- The leader's most important job is to help their people to be successful – to help employees to overcome challenges.
- Kouzes & Posner: ***5 Practices of Exemplary Leadership***
 - Model the Way
 - Inspire a Shared Vision
 - Challenge the Process
 - Enable Others to Act
 - Encourage the Heart

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#2: ESTABLISH CLEAR GROUND RULES WITH EMPLOYEES

- The successful remote supervisor must:
 - Know your employees – skills, strengths, weaknesses, and goals
 - Understand work requirements – planning and prioritizing
 - Provide clear, consistent guidance
- Ground Rules should include, but not be limited to:
 - Setting hours when team members are expected to work
 - Determine and schedule when meetings are mandatory
 - Establish team etiquette and how to deal with conflict
 - Criteria for prioritizing issues and tasks
 - Process for making team decisions
 - Determine distribution of workload
 - Define clear plan for communications

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#3: ESTABLISH CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Managing a remote team is more about WHAT gets done, rather than HOW it gets done – focus on performance and results
 - Work with team members to collaborate on setting goals and objectives;
 - Work with individual employees to set their goals and objectives;
 - Develop objectives related to each goal – quality and timeliness
 - Determine steps to reach objectives;
 - Establish a timeframe for monitoring each objective;
 - Seek input regarding obstacles that may prevent team members from meeting goals and objectives;
 - Brainstorm how to overcome any obstacles; and
 - Develop an action plan.

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#3: ESTABLISH CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (Continued)

- A team-planning approach to developing the action plan can establish a vested interest and commitment from team members in the successful outcome of projects and goals.
- Action planning for a remote team requires using group collaboration tools, such as a shared file system. These tools can:
 - Notify team members via email or instant messaging (IM) when updates are posted;
 - Overcome barriers of time zones and distance;
 - Organize team projects; and
 - Allow team members to ask and answer questions.

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#4: IDENTIFY AND OBTAIN NECESSARY TECHNOLOGY

- Use appropriate collaborative technology to facilitate remote work and team work
 - Remote workers need proper tools to stay connected and work with their colleagues and team mates, and with customers/clients
 - Videoconferencing tech (such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex or GoToMeeting);
 - Team communication platforms (such as Slack or Microsoft Teams);
 - Computer equipment, headsets, etc.
 - Ensure proper cyber-security precautions
 - Provide training, access, and support for these tools

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#5: ALLOW FOR FLEXIBILITY

- Understand the need for flexibility and allow employees to adapt to changing circumstances during the current health crisis.
- In addition to work demands, employees may also be juggling the need to provide care and education for school-aged children, assisting older family members and sharing space and equipment with a spouse or partner who also must work from home.
- Managers and supervisors can boost morale and reduce stress by allowing remote workers to:
 - Schedule work into intermittent blocks of time throughout the day;
 - Helping employees to prioritize their work assignments; and
 - Extending deadlines where possible.

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#6: PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT TO REMOTE WORKERS

- Workers new to remote work may feel overwhelmed as they forgo familiar routines and work processes. Supervisors can provide guidance on how to telework effectively. Tips can include:
 - **Have a dedicated space for work** - a room that can be used solely as an office with equipment and away from distractions.
 - **Maintain a regular schedule, and work routine** – set a regular, but not restrictive schedule – consistent time for work.
 - **Step away from work for breaks and meals** – not healthy to focus on only work – get up and move around, eat elsewhere.
 - **End the work day** – Close up shop – be with the family
 - **Ask for help** – employees shouldn't hesitate to communicate

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#7: ASSIGN PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK

- Working with a team has been shown to almost double employee engagement levels
- Work assignments should involve communication and collaboration with coworkers - whether across functions or within the same team.
- Working on teams reduces the sense of isolation and provides opportunities to connect with colleagues for a mutual objective.
- Hold regular meetings, where remote teams can:
 - Brainstorm
 - Provide Progress Reports
 - Keep up to date on new developments
 - Celebrate successes - socialization

THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY



THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#8: DON'T FORGET THE WORKERS "LEFT BEHIND"

- Don't forget to consider what happens to employees who
 1. must remain on-site to continue working; or
 2. don't need to work at all now that most of the team is out of the office.
- Neither group should feel like they are second-class citizens in your company. How you deal with them will obviously be affected by your workplace policies and culture
- One of the most difficult parts of moving to a complete telework model is that some employees will be temporarily unnecessary if there is no physical location for them to work.

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#9: HOLD INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSIONS AND COACHING

- Hold one-on-one dialog with each remote worker, both formal, and informal - build connection and belonging
- Five key elements of coaching-focused communication:
 - **Listening** - Really hear what they are saying, both through their words and their actions.
 - **Asking questions** - Ask open-ended questions to understand their concerns, follow-up questions to help with solutions.
 - **Descriptive feedback** - Provide descriptive, rather than judgmental or evaluative, feedback - lay groundwork for moving forward and focus on improvement.
 - **Empowerment** - Empower employees to do what is needed, either through motivational strategies, building confidence and/or competence, providing support ensure employee's success.

THE TOP TEN KEYS TO MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

#10: FOCUS ON TEAM-BUILDING AND SOCIALIZATION

- Use appropriate collaborative technology to facilitate remote work and team work
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**THIS ISN'T JUST ANY OLD
TOP TEN LIST ...**



memegenerator.net

THIS ONE GOES TO ELEVEN

#11: COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

- Communication is the most critical factor in the success of remote workers and remote teams.
- Supervisors of remote workers and teams must intentionally create opportunities to communicate.
- Communication with remote workers takes up more time than when working with a group at a single location.
- Communication between remote workers and their supervisor can be difficult and ineffective when not given proper attention.
- Supervisor should take into consideration:
 - Lack of availability of nonverbal visual cues, such as facial expressions and gestures; and
 - Difficulty in measuring engagement of team members, such as distractions and eye contact.

THIS ONE GOES TO ELEVEN

#11: COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE (Cont.)

- To make distance communication between remote workers more effective, the supervisor should:
 - Check in often to monitor progress and provide feedback;
 - Be proactive in communications so employees do not feel isolated and lonely;
 - Respond to remote workers in a timely manner by utilizing an established schedule for checking and responding to messages;
 - Provide socialization time before starting team meetings to help employees to feel connected
 - Encourage all participants of a conversation to participate fully;
 - Use proactive listening techniques; and
 - Verify employees' understanding of messages and expected actions.

THIS ONE GOES TO ELEVEN

#11: COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE (Cont.)

- Hold periodic end-of-day and end-of-week conference calls to connect to remote workers
 - Discuss what is working, what isn't working, how to improve remote working situation, and so on.
- Use technology for scheduled Face-to-Face Communication, to:
 - Establish and build team trust;
 - Deliver sensitive news; and
 - Provide performance feedback.
- Hold regular meetings with the team, and with individual workers
 - Use standard practices for good meetings (agenda, time, etc.)
 - Involve each participant in the discussion
 - Take notes and distribute action items after the meeting

DID YOU KNOW?

Because remote workers often have trouble feeling like part of the organization or team, research recommends that a supervisor provide specific and meaningful recognition to employees at least every seven days.



WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?



**Feel free to contact the instructor
following the session if you have
additional questions.**

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