OUT OF SIGHT, BUT NOT OUT OF MIND

5 Effective Ways to Engage Remote Employees

Out of sight, out of mind?

The adoption of remote work by most employers at the onset of the pandemic has proved to be beneficial for employers and employees. Both ends have noted an increase in productivity, flexibility, and reduction in expenses.

However, while remote work can be a blessing, it also has its share of disadvantages. Despite the flexibility and freedom afforded to employees, employers face the challenge of keeping employees engaged.

Employee engagement is crucial in every business as it determines the level of commitment employees have for their job and for the organization. It is one of the factors that can affect your attrition rate and soon enough, your overall productivity and return of investment. With remote work, there is risk of detachment and a feeling of isolation from your employees.

Here are a few tips on how you can shape up your employee engagement in a remote work arrangement, so that while employees are out of sight, they are never out of mind.

1. Optimize Your Onboarding Process.

Imagine the anxiety that new hires feel on their first day or week of work. This feeling comes into their stomachs in different forms of butterflies. Will they fit in? What should they expect? Will they do well? Will their co-workers or boss gobble them up for making mistakes? Now, amplify those worries by a few notches.

Remote workers can feel double the nerves on their first day as it is harder to pick up social cues and to get a feel of the culture, virtually. That's why it's best to establish an onboarding process for your remote employees.

a. Keep Them Busy.

First day blues are worse when new hires are left with nothing to work on. Before their first day, setup schedules for their online orientations and trainings so they know what to expect. You can ask them for any additional internal training that they need and adjust their schedule as needed.

You can also give them learning materials for self-paced training and have them read up your company policies and guidelines.

b. Implement A "Buddy" System.

In medicine and nursing, they have preceptorship which is a mentored experience wherein a senior practitioner called the preceptor will guide, train, and give personal instruction to a newly hired nurse or medical student to build up their confidence and experience until they become independent practitioners.

This can be adopted in other industries by assigning a buddy for every new hire. These "buddies" can personally supervise and provide a more hands-on training experience to the newbies, help them settle in, and introduce them to people they'll be working with and who are vital for their work. Through this, they can have someone to lean on in case of any uncertainty.

If you want to know more, check out our article on employee onboarding here.

2. Create A Communications Plan.

Ensure that your remote employees are kept up to date on important company news, updates, and announcements, and provide a platform for them to communicate with each other. You can also put up an online forum where employees can ask questions or raise concerns.

a. Identify Your Platforms.

There are different types of communication materials which you will be releasing for employees so it's important to define where each of these will be published or available.

b. Lay Down Your Community Standards and Rules.

If you're using Facebook or any other social media site to create a group for your employees or if you're thinking of running an online forum, draft clear and concise community standards so that your page won't turn into a ranting space or create unnecessary unrest among employees. You can assign a moderator to ensure that your rules are being followed and that nothing unauthorized gets through "publish."
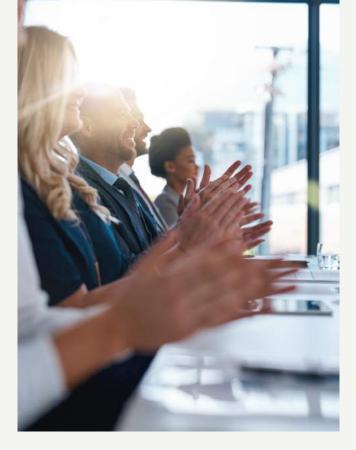
3. Provide Opportunities for Social Interaction.

Developing workplace friendships can help employee retention. CNBC, citing workplace experts and a Gallup research, posited that having a best friend at work can help curb the "Great Resignation" and stated that 63% of women who have best friends at work are more than twice as likely to be engaged.

However, in a remote work arrangement, it is hard to maintain relationships let alone start one with your co-workers.

To make up for this, it is good to provide employees with opportunities for social interaction virtually and on-site. You can organize regular online events or parties or set up occasional face-to-face gatherings for employees who live in the same area.

To address this, it is crucial to have an established policy and process for seeking and acting on feedback. Designate the people in charge, the turnaround time for resolution, and the procedure. Make submitting feedback, as easy and accessible as possible by creating an online form.

4. Set up An Employee Recognition Program.

While remote workers are proven to be productive, most of them may not feel that they're part of the team. Make them feel that their efforts do not go unnoticed by establishing a rewards and recognition program. You can have quarterly or yearly awarding programs for top performers and employees who have exhibited qualities that reflect your core values. It can also be as simple as a pat on the back (virtually) when they do an awesome job.

5. Institutionalize Seeking And Acting on Feedback.

A lot of employees are clueless as to who to approach when they have feedback, concerns, or complaints about how things are going for them, much so for remote employees. It's easy for organizations to say that they're open to feedback, but never elaborate on how the process works.

It takes great courage for employees to come forward and voice their concerns, but sometimes they're left with no closure as no response or follow through on how concerns were handled, are given by the management. Now you'll have employees bottling up their discontent because they feel like no one's there to listen.

With remote work arrangements, you may have a hiring advantage but your remote employees also have a multitude of opportunities to choose from. 16% of companies all over the world are remote, so it's you versus thousands of other businesses. If any, it may be you who'll be soon out of mind.

Talk to us today and we'll help you come up with employee engagement strategies for your remote employees. For more information on remote workforce recruitment and management, you can read these articles:

1. The Road Now Taken: Best Practices in Remote Workforce Recruitment
2. Productivity at Home: Remote Workforce Monitoring