

## Managing Virtual Teams

Leadership is increasingly happening virtually. According to Gallup's State of the American Workplace study, 43 percent of U.S. employees work remotely all or some of the time.

Whenever you use your computer or smart phone when you are not at the office, you are a remote worker. For full time employees in an office, the flexibility to work remotely some of the time does not significantly change the way interaction happens. Virtual employees who are located in geographically dispersed offices a lot of time have limited or no opportunity for face-to-face interaction. Strong leadership skills are a necessity with remote workforce.

The Gallup report states that, "Regardless of all the changes in the workplace, people remain the core component in an organization's success or failure." Gallup's CEO, Jim Clifton, says that two of the ways to transform culture are to move "from old command-and-control to one of high development and ongoing coaching conversations" and "switch from a culture of employee satisfaction — which only measures things like how much workers like their perks and benefits — to a coaching culture."

Here are 5 ways to improve your management skills no matter where or how you interact with others.

**Trust** – Remote team members are more at risk of feeling isolated. Getting to know remote employees on a personal level builds trust and familiarity. Encouraging colleagues to get to know each better builds a stronger team. Try spending 5 minutes at the beginning of meetings making small talk to keep relationship building an ongoing process. Conduct regular team building exercises or activities as part of your meetings. Developing a "can do" attitude among remote team members will help them pull

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together and put in the extra effort to find solutions when obstacles arise.

**Communication** – Nuances of meaning through body language and word stress are lost in written communication. Create an open line of communication with more visual and audible interactions. When face-to-face meetings are not possible, schedule regular phone or video calls. Using a headset during those calls makes a difference in call quality. When on a video call, make eye contact with the other person by looking at the camera instead of the remote person. Intentional contact with remote workers is key to ensuring they feel in the loop and a part of the team.

**Engagement** - The job market has tightened to one where companies are increasingly competing for most qualified employees. Gallup found that actively disengaged employees are twice as likely as engaged employees to search for a new job. Make sure remote employees do not feel "out of sight, out of mind" by giving them visibility within the company. Cultivate a strong company culture by including them in celebrations and milestones to make them feel part of the organization.

**High Emotional Intelligence** – Human interaction is the basis of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness and self-regulation need social interaction for increased empathy and motivation to happen. The less you see someone, the more important it is to provide real-time feedback with regularly scheduled meetings. During those meeting, model how to be a productive participant by setting the tone and asking more questions than statements. Don't forget to make time for career growth conversations with your remote employees.

**Collaboration** – Brainstorming virtually has more barriers to success than tactical collaboration. A large team needs more structure to ensure they communicate efficiently. The more complex the initiative, the smaller the team needs to be to be foster sharing of information. Adjust the structure of the team to match the needs of the

team. Set standards and expectations for communication and decision making to increase shared knowledge. If some people are meeting together and some are calling in, normalize the experience for everyone by taking advantage of the new video conferencing tools such as whiteboard, text exchange, file sharing, media sharing and screen sharing.

Having the flexibility to live and work where they want will continue to play a major role in employees' decision to change jobs. Gallup reports that, "Employees are willing to look and keep looking for a company that's mission and culture reflect and reinforce their values." The report goes on to say that employees, especially Millennials, aren't "going to acclimate to the status quo." To be successful, leadership needs to adapt to engage and retain the new modern workforce.

A successful manager taps into talents and resources with the purpose of supporting and bringing out the best in the individual and team. An executive coach can help you maximize the human talent present in your company regardless of where they work. If you're interested in exploring a coaching relationship contact Bill Burtch at Harmony for a consultation at 901-272-7390 or [bburtch@harmonycc.net](mailto:bburtch@harmonycc.net)

## *Schedule of Public Courses*

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
<b>The Coaching Clinic</b>	Oct. 16 & 17	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	<a href="#">Register Now</a>



1650 Faxon Avenue  
Memphis, TN 38112

Tel: 901-272-7390

[bburtch@harmonycc.net](mailto:bburtch@harmonycc.net)

[www.harmonycc.net](http://www.harmonycc.net)