Guidance note

**Communicating effectively when working remotely**

**Team communications**

1. Have a daily virtual huddle. This is essential for keeping connected and a chance for the team to check in on everyone’s physical and mental well-being, be open in discussions and mention any problems.
2. Be kind. Remote conversations can easily be misinterpreted as it’s harder to read body language, tone of voice and other visual and audio cues. Stay mindful of this when delivering difficult messages or feedback. Challenging times call for greater sensitivity and kindness.
3. [Remain visible within your team as you work from home](https://breakoutiq.com/2020/03/18/8-work-from-home-tips-for-first-time-remote-employees-breakoutiq/#1)_Remain_visible_within_your_team_as_you_work_from_home) – this can help recreate the office culture.
4. Foster relationships. Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact.
5. Set up group chats in Microsoft teams that can remain on to communicate between the team. This includes the option to attach pictures and emoji’s.

**Management Communications**

1. Communication is key, when working within a remote team. This isn’t just about ensuring the team know what they need to do – it’s also about maintaining regular, clear communication too. Communication is also a two-way street. Not only do you need to be focused on effectively communicating your expectations, your team need to be able to do the same too.
2. Minimise stress. People managers should set clear expectations about the way employees should deliver their work and provide clear communication throughout the working day. This will help alleviate pressure and anxiety.
3. Keep employees up to date with any corporate information and responses to the COVID pandemic. Check they have read the corporate bulletin and if they have any questions. Be positive in the delivery of key messages.
4. Set up a clear process for how you communicate with the team. Communication isn’t just about each of you communicating clearly, it’s also about setting clear guidelines on how you’ll communicate with each other too. What are your preferred methods of communicating with each other? Do you prefer email, phone calls or instant message? Guidelines need to also include turnaround times for responses, as well as communication hours.
5. You should also set guidelines of what is and isn’t appropriate relating to profanity, explicit language, and subject topics.
6. Stay in regular contact with the team. Keep too agreed dates and times for contact, don’t be late. Communication isn’t just about contacting your team when you have instructions or need answers. It’s about making them feel valued too. Face-to-face video conference calls are a great way of making someone feel part of a team. However, it’s also important to agree on set schedules too. Stick to regular days and times for your communication, as well as what happens if anyone has questions or queries outside of the normal contact hours and days.
7. Make use of the available technology for your team updates. Having everyone working from one agenda or to-do list is an option too.
8. Plan what information you are providing – don’t duplicate if a senior manager has already communicated a message for example.
9. Listen! …it is easy for a manager to ‘talk at’ teams. Try listening and using prompts to gain information, employees will want to talk to you as they may not have spoken at all that day. Plan to listen at least half the discussion. Often it is more important to just ‘be there’ for staff.
10. Mix it up – present information in different ways. It is easy to screen share on Microsoft teams. Use this function to present information differently in diagrams, PowerPoint presentations, new ways of working etc.
11. Over communicate with your coworkers while you’re working remotely. Don’t be afraid to talk about everything that you would at the office, and more. Share pictures of your lunch, your dogs, or your kids. People are going to be really looking for a human connection.
12. Presenting ideas – it is more difficult to convey the same energy, body language and voice control online. Use a professional PowerPoint presentation to visually show employees new ideas and thoughts with eye catching slides. Encourage employees to do the same or to screen share work.
13. Praise! Praise good work, recognise contributions however big or small, ask your manager to attend to give positive feedback, send a Hive 5. Introduce positive recognition.

**Making those calls more interesting with quick fire team building**

Some team building ideas to introduce into calls

* Dress up Friday calls – hates, scarfs etc
* Snack of the day – what are you eating today?
* Mini ted talks – share a topic that you are passionate about
* Come dine with me rated lunches
* Quizzes – ask one question each and see who has the fastest answer
* Sales pitches – choose a product and sell it to the audience – find out what price you get!