



working together

whilst working remotely.

How to handle the challenges and reap
the benefits of managing a remote team.

home is where the work is.

Despite gyms reopening, salons being back to business and soft play areas sprucing up their ball pits, a large number of office workers are still being urged to work from home where possible.



But how will this affect your organisation?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's become apparent that there are many benefits to working remotely, not only for the employee but for the employer too.

Employers need to not only consider the cost savings that come from having a remote team but also the mental well-being of their staff.

With working from home now comfortably the new normal for many previously office-based workers, it is now up to employers to ensure they create a fully-functioning and engaging remote working dynamic that everyone can benefit from.

how home working can benefit your team.

It's no secret that employees appreciate a company that allows the flexibility of remote working.

Our [2020 employer brand research](#) highlighted that the most attractive non-monetary benefits desired by employees are centred around flexibility, with flexible working hours and being able to work from home being two of the top three key drivers.

Less commuting.

Research from the TUC revealed that getting to and from work every day is taking the average commuter almost an hour, that equates to more than 450 hours a year for most full-time employees.

With this huge chunk of hours now back for former commuters to play with, work/life balance is on the up. Not only has the stress of battling through the rush hour traffic to make it into the office been diminished, for those with rigid hours, they can now make the transition from work life to home life in a matter of minutes, with the added bonus of reducing their carbon footprint.

An important counterpoint, of course, is that you may need to actively encourage some team members to keep an eye on that important separation between their work self and their domestic life.

Not having to commute on a daily basis is also a substantial saving for employees.



Working hours that suit them.

Whether you've got a 'get up and crack on' or a 'just one more coffee before I start' kind of person in your team, working from home means not having race to be at their desk at a specific time. No more yelling at traffic lights, worrying if the wind is blowing in the right direction for the train to be on time. Work can be completed when employees are at their most productive.

[Working from home as a parent](#) is challenging, with many stating that they work twice as hard during the hours when they're at their desks, without so much as a tea break or a chat around the water cooler, however, not having to physically be at the office means a routine can be established to suit the whole family.

Fewer distractions.

Okay, so the dog may be barking, the children may be running riot but ultimately, you are the master of your own universe, colleagues won't appear at your desk to discuss weekend plans and you won't need to attend that colleague's leaving lunch whose name you can't quite remember. Most virtual meetings will be pre planned so you can organise the chaos around you beforehand.

You are free to fill the room with whichever sounds you choose, be it classical music to keep you focused or a bit of drum and bass to get the creative juices flowing. You could even listen to your favourite podcast or step away from your desk and do some breathing exercises or stretches, after all, who's going to stop you?

benefits of home working for your company.

Managing a distributed workforce has its challenges.

Whilst we understand it's important that employees see the advantages of remote working, it's worth factoring in how employers can also reap the benefits.



increases in productivity.

With fewer distractions, less commuting and a better work/life balance studies suggest that having a remote team increases productivity.

Research by Nick Bloom, professor of economics at Stanford University, California revealed that working from home even just for one day a week can [increase productivity by 13%](#).

Approximately 4% of this increase in productivity was due to workers being able to complete more tasks because of fewer distractions.

The remaining 9% was attributed to employees working for longer because commutes were eliminated, lunch breaks were shorter and fewer workers took sick days.

Click here to listen to the BBC Sounds '[Curing Our Productivity Problem](#)' podcast where Professor Bloom discusses his findings.

[Further studies](#) conducted by [Finder.com](#) revealed that:

- 65% of workers said they would be more productive in a home office than a normal office.
- 75% of workers say they will be more productive due to reduced distractions.
- 83% of employees feel they do not need an office to be productive.
- Two-thirds of employers report increased productivity for remote workers compared to in-office workers.



What workers want.

By the year 2025, 75% of the global workforce will be made up of millennials - which means this group will occupy the majority of leadership roles over the coming decades. They will be responsible for making important decisions that affect workplace cultures and people's lives.

After an attractive salary and benefits, [work/life balance](#) is a very close second when it comes to what employees, specifically millennials, want in the UK, so it's important that it remains high on the agenda for employers too.



reduced sick days.

[Research](#) suggests that remote workers are not only happier but they are also healthier than their office based counterparts, taking an average of 2.4 sick days a year as opposed to the 2.6 days taken by office based employees.

This could be for a number of reasons, open plan offices, shared workstations and face to face meetings are all contributing factors when it comes to spreading germs.

Or it could be that remote workers are happier to carry on with their work duties from the comfort of their own home despite not feeling well.

Why not take a look at your own team, during the height of the pandemic in April/May 2020, when most office based staff were working from home, were there fewer sick days recorded than there were in 2019 during the same time-frame?



Working from home sick pay.

Obviously there will be times when a member of your team does need to call in sick, if so, they are entitled to sick pay, the same as office based employees.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak the [government recently made announcements](#) relating to statutory sick pay (SSP). Those affected by coronavirus and those who are self-isolating are entitled to statutory sick pay.

widening the talent pool.

Thanks to the advances of technology with video chats, conference calls and remote software the need for a physical office has greatly decreased.

This means your employees do not need to live within a commutable distance to any given address.

The remote working model also raises the question - 'can we [hire outside of the UK](#) now?'.

With such reliable digital communication platforms, this can easily be done if there is appetite to. With access to an instantly wider talent pool, ambitious businesses may start shifting to this method of hiring.

Employers can now recruit from further afield, using a recruitment agency such as Randstad, with 39 offices dotted around the UK and over 2000 pre-vetted candidates ready to work within your sector, finding talent has never been easier.

With the search term 'working from home' seeing a massive increase on Google trends over the last few months, it's obvious that there is a need for employers to strongly consider this option during the hiring process.

How to attract the right talent and skills.

To widen your talent pool even more so, it's important to ensure your organisation has a strong diversity and inclusion policy in place.

Diversity and inclusion strategies and the roles they play are increasingly seen as key to attracting the right talent. Diversity in the corporate boardroom continues to be the topic of many conversations, conference panels and studies.



Despite more companies today having diversity and inclusion strategies and training in place, not all companies are as active as they could be in their commitment to workplace diversity.

Many companies are taking steps to improve inclusivity. The Top 50+50 survey found that 96% of firms have a diversity or equality policy in place, yet when it came to having a dedicated diversity director, currently only 28% of firms have such an individual.

McKinsey and Company's report revealed that businesses with a good gender mix are 15% more likely to see financial returns above their national industry medians, while those in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to outperform the average.

Money matters.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) pay strategy (EHRC, 2017) identified significant economic benefits to decreasing pay gaps. It notes that closing the gender pay gap could add £600 million to the UK's gross domestic product (GDP); improving the employment rate and workplace progression for people from ethnic minorities could contribute £24 billion per year; and raising the participation of disabled people could reduce the annual £100 billion cost of people being out of work.



cost savings.

When you think about the amount of pens, post-it notes, tea, coffee and milk for the communal kitchen that an average office goes through each year, it must equate to a healthy five figure sum.

That's not even including the standard outgoings such as getting the air conditioning and photocopier serviced.

Although as an employer you have a duty of care for your staff, further savings can be found in the fact that desks and chairs are typically not the responsibility of the employer.

With a good basic pay still being the most sought after element for the majority of jobseekers, we're seeing requests for working from home allowances, equipment and utility bill supplements and greater flexibility overall. While this change may at first seem impossible due to the current economic climate, employers could look to repurpose these funds due to savings made in other areas.



Remote work and pay.

Remote working isn't new, it's something that tech-driven companies have been doing for more than a couple of decades.

Complexities can potentially arise however, when it comes to pay. Should a developer based in San Francisco, where there is a higher living cost, be paid more than a person in the same role in Birmingham for example? They are doing the same role at the same level, but have totally different lives, cultures and outgoings. This requires global benchmarking and international data to support an informed decision.

Although, as previously mentioned, hiring managers have a greater choice of suitable candidates, highly skilled individuals will start to expect greater benefit packages.

mental health and your responsibilities.

Employers have a 'duty of care'. This means they must do all they reasonably can to support their employees' health, safety and well-being.

Maintain a positive work/life balance and encourage your team to do the same.

As previously stated, it's more likely that employees will be working longer hours and taking fewer breaks working from home. Encourage your team to put reminders in their diaries for when they plan to finish work and to make sure they're taking regular breaks.

Have virtual catch-ups with your team.

For some, working from home can be isolating; ensure you have regular catch-ups with your team. Find an online tool that works for everyone, whether it's Google Hangout, Microsoft teams a conference call facility like Zoom, or by phone. It's good idea to use a range of technologies so you're not always typing or looking at a screen – switch things up with a telephone call so you can walk up and down the garden or video call so you can see someone face to face. Make sure these regular check-ins are scheduled in advance with your team members to avoid any unnecessary stress.

Create a Wellness Action Plan.

This is an uncertain and worrisome time for many and your team may need additional support. Suggest to your team that they complete a Wellness Action Plan and encourage them to share this with you. This can be looked at and kept up to date during one-to-ones.



Time to review home working self-assessments.

Even if you have already asked home working staff to carry out an initial health and safety self-assessment when the lockdown started, now would be a good time to review the suitability and accuracy of the checks.

Two months after the hurried setup of a home workstation, staff will have evolved their setup. Workers may have changed desks, moved rooms or otherwise adapted in the weeks since the first assessment.

If your business didn't have home working procedures in place before lockdown, it's also likely that the self-assessment was generic. Now would be a good time to work with remote staff to tailor a self-assessment to reflect the specific needs and hazards of their work. Examples include:

- If a worker is typing for long periods, their assessment should include a focus on wrist support, correct posture and regular breaks.
- If an employee spends long periods on the phone, or using a headset, noise-related risks should be covered.
- If a worker requires the use of many paper files or document boxes, guidance should be given on manual handling injuries and organisation to reduce the risk of trip (and fire) hazards.

employees' mental health at randstad.

We teamed up with anxiety expert, Dr B, to create and share an exclusive one-hour support webinar.

Having trained at the Royal Free Hospital, London, Dr Barbara Mariposa has worked internationally, in general practice, psychiatry and public health. She's a renowned thought leader in the field of workplace well-being, emotional intelligence and mindfulness. In this session, Randstad invites Dr B to cover everything from kindness to anxiety. There's simply no better time to watch Randstad's expert video.



[click here to view the Dr. Barbara Mariposa workplace well-being video](#)

keeping the team spirit alive.

When managing remote workers it's vital that you keep in touch with your employees, not only to ensure goals are being met but to check in on their well-being and to keep that all important sense of belonging to a team.

To keep the team spirit alive, here are some useful tips:

Agree ways of working.

Make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you keep each other updated, and how frequently. Remind your team about the big picture and how their work fits into it. Review short-term goals regularly and adjust as needed. If some members can't carry out all their usual work, consider other skills they can lend to others to meet team goals.

Set expectations and trust your team.

Be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on without micromanaging. Focus on results rather than activity.

Ensure team members have the support and equipment they need.

This includes any coaching they might need to use online systems or work remotely. Keep your calendar visible and maintain a virtual open door.



Keep communicating.

Having regular one-to-ones will maintain a sense of structure and continuity for all. Having a daily or weekly virtual huddle is essential for keeping connected as a team, to check in on each other's well-being and keep workflow on track. Share information and encourage your team to do the same, without those 'water cooler conversations' opportunities to pick up information in passing are more limited. It needn't be long, but regularity is key. It's also important to make time for social conversations. This increases rapport and eases communication between people who may not meet often. It also reduces feelings of isolation.

Listen closely and read between the lines.

Not being in the same room means you don't have extra information from body language or tone to get the sense of what people are thinking or feeling, particularly in more difficult conversations. Home in on what's not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation.

People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account when talking or writing. Communicate regularly, not just when things go wrong, whether it is information, praise or criticism.



get in touch.



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managing a remote workforce
or to recruit for specialist roles,
click here to get in touch with
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