Best Of: Remote Work HR Insights

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Managing Employees Who Struggle in the Remote Environment

As many organizations are adapting to newly remote teams, leaders are challenged with addressing the challenges of the remote environment. Remote work remains a relevant topic for employers, and it will continue post-coronavirus. Many managers find themselves tasked with effectively leading remote employees and helping their teams adapt to the virtual workplace.

While many employees thrive in a remote environment, you may find that some members of your team struggle. While leaders often can keep an eye out for social or performance queues effectively in person, monitoring employee performance can present new challenges in the virtual environment. By thoughtfully monitoring employee performance and behaviors, you may be able to notice employee struggles and help provide necessary support.

How Are Employees Adapting to Remote Roles?

Though remote work has been a growing trend even pre-coronavirus, the pandemic has pushed many organizations to expand their telecommuting practices. While numerous studies show that expanding telecommuting options can offer benefits for both employers and employees, findings show that not all employees adapt to the virtual environment equally. The Harris Poll conducted a study on behalf of Zapier to see how employees are transitioning to remote work. Results show that:

- 66% prefer working in the office or workplace.
- 42% miss socializing with co-workers.
- 27% report working more hours.

The same study found many positive attributes of expanded remote work—but this insight indicates that not all employees are adapting with ease.

Challenges of Managing Remote Employees

Remote employees face unique challenges. While numerous studies show that remote employees can achieve levels of productivity that are the same as or higher than their non-remote peers, obstacles do exist. According to the Harvard Business Review, common challenges remote workers face may include:

- Reduced motivation
- Lack of face-to-face interaction
- Social isolation
- Limited or lack of access to necessary information
- Distractions within their home

Many employees can overcome these challenges, and often even thrive when working remotely. However, you may find this won't easily be the case for all. Managers can focus on identifying issues their team members may be having, and create a plan to address them.

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Identifying Employees Who Are Struggling to Work Remotely

When physically present, leaders often can identify an instance of when an employee's performance or well-being seems to suffer. In the remote environment, there are cues leaders can look for, and topics to consider:

- **What if a high performer's motivation disappears**? When an employee who is known to be an eager, high-performing team member has a sudden drop in productivity or is struggling to meet deadlines, consider whether there has been a recent change:

  - Has there been an organizational change?

  - Has there been a change in their personal life?

  - Has their workload or responsibilities changed?

  A decrease in performance could be due to a variety of reasons—these may be some clues for managers to use when uncovering an unforeseen issue one of their team members may be encountering.

- **What about your organization or team is worse than before?** A remote work environment can bring issues to light, such as a process that could use improvement. Consider whether an employee's struggles may be part of a broader structural, leadership or organizational issue.

While some issues may be unavoidable, leaders can be proactive by establishing clear expectations and accountability for each employee. As problems are encountered, be prepared to not only support employees in need but also evaluate and change structural issues.

Managing Employees Who Are Struggling in the Remote Environment

Managers can take steps to help employees. Considerations include:

- **Schedule one-on-one check-ins with each team member**—By gauging how each employee is doing, leaders can evaluate how to meet the unique needs of each employee. Asking open-ended questions can allow employees to speak their minds. Leaders should focus on being good listeners and providing appropriate support.
- **Offer empathy, but avoid lowering expectations**—Ensure that each employee knows they are a critical member of the team. Acknowledge their current struggles and create a plan to get back on track.
- **Challenge employees to make an impact**—Consider how workload adjustments—including assignments that include problem-solving or experimentation may reengage an employee who, though may be talented, is struggling in the current environment.
- **Meet individual needs, but don't show favoritism**—It can be a fine line between supporting individual needs and avoiding perceived favoritism that may cause others on your team to feel remorse. Consider how establishing team policies and expectations might benefit the whole group.
- **Offer support**—A decrease in performance can be a failure of both the employee and leadership. Take accountability in the situation and offer solutions for how the employee can be better supported.

Remember, each employee is unique. Some employees may adapt well to a remote environment, while others may need individual support to achieve a high level of performance and personal well-being.

Empower Success in the Remote Workplace

Every business is different, so there isn't one right way to best lead remote employees. Create practices and expectations that work best for your team. Contact StoneTapert Insurance Services for additional resources regarding best practices for utilizing the remote workplace.

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Boosting Self-motivation for Remote Employees

Many organizations are expanding remote work options to more employees than ever before. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has led to many employers expediting use of this practice—sometimes out of business necessity.

Before expanding remote work options, employers often first address obstacles such as establishing expectations and ensuring all employees have the technology they need. Once initial challenges are addressed, employers have an opportunity to plan for best use of the remote workplace—including how to boost self-motivation for remote employees.

Challenges of Managing Remote Employees

Remote employees face unique challenges. While numerous studies show that remote employees can achieve levels of productivity that are the same as or higher than their non-remote peers, this isn't without obstacles. According to a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review, remote employees were less motivated than employees who work in an office, while employees who did not have a choice in their work location were found less motivated than those who had a personal choice of their location.

Other challenges remote workers face may include:

- Lack of face-to-face interaction
- Social isolation
- Limited or lack of access to necessary information
- Distractions within their home

Leaders can take steps to address these challenges and partner with remote employees to boost motivation.

Motivating Remote Employees

To boost self-motivation for remote employees, leaders can consider the following practices:

- **Empower employees to solve meaningful problems and experiment**—According to the Harvard Business Review, employees who are allowed to solve meaningful problems or experiment report higher motivation—regardless of where they are working. Consider how to find ways to engage employees with high-level contributions.
- **Measure motivation**—Communicate to employees that self-motivation is the desired outcome. Set goals and measure accordingly to reach them. This could be completed through productivity measuring tools—or even through surveys completed by employees.
- **Allow employees to showcase their achievements**—Employees take pride in their work—when in remote locations, natural opportunities to showcase and discuss accomplishments may be scarce. Find ways to let remote employees talk about their achievements, such as during team meetings.

Supporting Each Employee

Motivated employees can lead to effective and productive remote teams. Leaders can consider how to best support their remote employees. Considerations include:

- **Schedule one-on-one check-ins**—By gauging how each employee is doing, leaders can evaluate how to meet the unique needs of each employee.
- **Provide emotional support**—Asking open-ended questions can allow employees to speak their minds. Leaders should focus on being good listeners and providing appropriate support.
- **Establish expectations**—An increased level of ambiguity can stress remote employees out—by establishing clear goals and objectives, employees can stay on the same page with their manager.

Remember, each employee is unique. Some employees may adapt well to a remote environment, while others may need individual support to achieve a high level of performance and personal well-being.

Empower Remote Employees to Succeed

Every business is different, so there isn't one right way to best lead remote employees. Create practices and expectations that work best for specific teams and individual employees. Contact StoneTapert Insurance Services for additional resources regarding best practices for utilizing the remote workspace.

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Conducting a Remote Layoff

Conducting a layoff is never easy—and conducting a layoff virtually adds new challenges for employers. While difficult for both the employer and employees effected, employers can improve this process by utilizing best practices. Effective remote layoffs can ease this difficult time for laid-off employees, while avoiding risk for the employer.

What Are Layoffs?

Layoffs are mass firings of employees, sparked by a need to cut expenses to save an organization in crisis—not typically due to employee performance. However, layoffs are permanent. Unlike furloughed employees, laid-off employees no longer have access to their employee benefits. However, they are typically entitled to unemployment assistance.

Expansion of Remote Work—and Remote Layoffs

A survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management and Oxford Economics found that 64% of HR professionals report having salaried professionals who are working remotely. Though remote work had been growing prior to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, more employees are working remotely than ever before.

This same survey found that 32% of employers are planning on reducing their headcounts—through actions such as layoffs. Given current economic conditions, cost-saving measures such as layoffs are a reality for many employers. Unfortunately, in-person layoffs aren't always feasible, and employers should prepare accordingly.

Conducting a Remote Layoff

When creating a process for remote layoffs, employers can consider including the following practices:

- **Set up a meeting**—Ensure varying time zones are accounted for, as participants may be joining from various locations.

- **Include HR, and the employee's manager**—Including both HR and the employee's manager can eliminate the need for multiple conversations.

- **Use video platforms if possible**—Though the layoff won't take place in person, using a video platform can allow for a face-to-face conversation. If video is not an option, consider a phone conference rather than an email.

- **Be detailed**—Include critical information such as the termination date, and benefits and compensation information.

- **Create expectations**—Be transparent about next steps for the affected employee—including the return of company-owned critical assets.

- **Prepare to answer questions**—Support the laid-off employee by being prepared to answer clarifying questions that he or she may have.

Prepare for Follow-up Steps

When conducting layoffs—there are necessary steps to be completed. To ensure that loose ends are tied up, employers may consider the following:

- **Proactively involving IT**—Before conducting remote layoffs, communicate with IT about removing the laid-off employee's access to internal networks. As you won't be able to collect equipment immediately, it will be necessary to conduct IT tasks remotely. Let IT know of any required actions in advance to ensure that tasks can be completed in a timely manner while avoiding missteps.

- **Creating specific follow-up actions**—There may be follow-up actions that need to take place—don't hesitate. Follow-up actions may need to be completed not only by the employer but by the employee being laid-off. Employers will want to plan for follow-up actions, including:

    o Mailing or shipping necessary materials
    o Providing necessary resources

  Employers should also ensure to provide the laid-off employee with guidance and resources to complete any required tasks. These may include:

    o Returning any proprietary documents or information
    o Requiring signatures—completed via next-day delivery, or electronically

Effective Remote Layoffs

Laying off employees can be a necessary reality for many employers. More work functions, including the process of laying off an employee, are often beginning to take place remotely. Be using best practices, employers can minimize risk for the organization and ease the transition for affected employees. Laws and guidelines related to terminations may vary—when updating practices, employers should consult with local legal counsel. For additional remote workplace resources, contact StoneTapert Insurance Services.

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Establishing Company Culture in the Remote Workplace

Many organizations take pride in their company culture—often, it can be a core competency and a competitive advantage. As employers expand remote work opportunities to more employees than ever before, organizations may want to consider how their culture can stay intact through an increased virtual workspace.

What Is Company Culture?

Company culture is the personality and environment of an organization. Defined by more than just a mission statement or organizational values, company culture encompasses the unwritten norms of how individuals act with one another. While poor company cultures can be detrimental, a strong company culture and positive employee morale can positively impact recruitment efforts, retention and the bottom line of an organization.

The Society for Human Resource Management breaks down company culture into three broad categories:

- **Social**—How individuals act, and how authority and influence exist between different roles and teams

- **Material**—How people in a group make or achieve something, and the ways people work with and collaborate with one another

- **Ideological**—How values, beliefs and ideals establish how individuals exist and interact

Company culture has long been associated with the way interactions take place. In the absence of face-to-face conversations, that same company culture translates through interactions taking place via communication channels such as email, phone, video, instant messaging, employee intranets and more. As utilization of remote work expands, employers may want to consider how their culture is translating into the virtual workplace.

A Strong Company Culture

Company culture should align with the mission statement and values of an organization—this will vary from workplace to workplace. According to Glassdoor, positive company cultures have common themes that matter in today's economy. These include:

- Agility
- Collaboration
- Customer focus
- Diversity
- Execution
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Performance
- Respect

Many organizations take pride in their company culture, and expanded remote work doesn't mean that culture can't exist in the remote workspace—but employers will want to consider planning ahead.

Company Culture in the Remote Workplace

Effectively expanding company culture into the remote workplace is about more than just creating policies and adjusting business practices—the actions and behaviors of employees will continue to define a culture, just as in any work location.

Within the remote workplace, there are ways that employers can help expand positive attributes of a culture to those engaging in remote work. Options for employers to consider include encouraging behaviors, implementing practices and rethinking employee engagement, while keeping the following tips in mind:

- **Focus on the why**—An organization's mission statement, purpose and objectives can be a source of meaning for many employees. Ensure that these goals remain at the forefront of communications.

- **Prioritize collaboration**—As in any workplace, employees are engaged when they are collaborating and feel as if they are part of a greater cause. While employees will be spending a significant amount of time alone, be intentional about facilitating collaboration with projects, goals and objectives.

- **Rethink communications**—Company culture lives through the actions of employees and how individuals communicate with each other. While word-of-mouth can no longer be the primary medium for engagement, be strategic about how different communication channels are used, such as employee intranets, social networking tools and video.

- **Create opportunities for social engagement**— When employees are able to engage with each other virtually, it can help build camaraderie. Many effective video platforms exist, and non-work conversations can help build team chemistry and facilitate an environment for positive interactions to take place in a remote environment.

Encouraging Behaviors

While employers can implement policies and document expectations, it will be the choice of employees to buy in. Encouraging positive behaviors will take more than just policies or guidelines—actions can have an immense impact. Leaders often have significant influence—and when management is living out expected behaviors each and every day, employees will feel comfortable reciprocating.

Facilitating a Strong Remote Culture

While company culture will be defined by the way in which individuals interact, organizations can take steps to help facilitate an environment where a positive company culture can be established in the remote workplace.

Every organization is different and has a unique culture. Create practices and encourage behaviors that best work for your organization and are accommodating to remote and non-remote employees alike. Contact StoneTapert Insurance Services for additional resources regarding best practices for utilizing the remote workplace.

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Effectively Leading Remote Teams

Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, more employees are working remotely than ever before. As management is challenged with leading effective remote teams, organizations may consider internal best practices and question whether any adjustments would help these teams succeed. By addressing the unique needs of employees in the remote workplace, employers can set the stage for effective and productive teams.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an all-time high of employees telecommuting, remote work had previously been growing steadily, and likely will continue to expand in the coming years. While many of the same principles of leading effective teams remain in place, organizations can take steps to ensure that remote teams are performing at a high level and employees are feeling engaged in their remote roles.

Challenges of Leading Remote Teams

Managers should be prepared to face a set of challenges that are unique to remote teams. According to the Harvard Business Review, challenges remote employees face include:

- Lack of face-to-face interaction
- Social isolation
- Limited or lack of access to necessary information
- Distractions within the employee's home

Managers should acknowledge these challenges and develop solutions to help employees overcome them and take advantage of the potential benefits of working remotely.

How to Effectively Lead Remote Teams

Effectively leading remote teams begins with defining objectives and creating clear plans to attain them. By outlining details of roles, responsibilities, timelines and expectations, employees will feel less stressed about what's expected of them. To best lead remote teams, leaders can consider the following practices:

- **Schedule daily check-ins**—This could be an individual or team check-in—either way, employees will be comfortable consulting with managers if daily meetings are part of a scheduled routine. Daily check-ins also make sure that all team members are able to share their ideas and stay on the same page.
- **Utilize different communications channels**—Video calls can provide benefits when working remotely, such as minimizing isolation within teams. Consider how your team can use video, instant messaging, project management tools and more to both stay on track and build engagement.
- **Don't always keep it professional**—Creating virtual events for non-work conversations can help build team chemistry and replace water cooler or happy hour conversations.

Providing Support for Remote Employees

As employers consider how scheduled meetings, virtual events and new technologies can be introduced, managers can also think about how they can best support their teams as a resource. An effective management strategy should include offering emotional support and providing encouragement to both individuals and teams. Asking open-ended questions to employees will allow them to speak their minds, and managers should focus on being good listeners. While it may be easy for a manager to pick up on social queues in the office, even the most effective leaders remain more distant in the remote environment. While these challenges persist, being intentional about providing support to employees can help remove any barriers.

Boosting Productivity for Remote Teams

While, in some cases, remote work is being adopted out of necessity, many employees feel confident in their abilities to fulfill their roles remotely. The Harris Poll conducted a survey on behalf of Glassdoor among nearly 1,000 employed adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results indicated that 60% feel confident in doing their job efficiently from home, even if it means doing so indefinitely. The same survey also revealed that 50% believe they would be equally or more productive working remotely.

When utilized effectively, remote work can provide advantages for both employers and employees. These can often include:

- Boosted productivity
- Increased flexibility
- Increased retention
- Reduced greenhouse emissions
- Broadened talent pool

Remote work presents advantages and challenges to the way companies do business. With increased utilization of telecommuting, employers can plan ahead for how they can best accommodate remote teams and increase productivity.

Plan Ahead for Remote Success

Every business is different, so there isn't one right way to best lead remote teams. Create practices that work best for

your organization and are accommodating to remote and non-remote employees alike. Contact StoneTapert Insurance Services for additional resources regarding best practices for utilizing the remote workspace.

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Monitoring Remote Workers

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, more employees are working remotely than ever before. And, even as businesses begin to reopen across the country, remote work will likely remain popular for the foreseeable future. While remote work arrangements help keep employees healthy and safe in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, they create unique challenges for teams and managers.

One of these challenges involves monitoring remote workers. Employers across the nation are leveraging various technologies and tools to monitor employee productivity, and active and idle time.

While these tools can help employers ensure employees are working while they're at home, they come with their own set of legal risks. Moreover, the practice of using such tools to monitor employees may create tension between employees and managers, as employees may feel like they're not being trusted.

There are benefits and drawbacks to monitoring remote employees, as well as a host of legal considerations. This article provides a general overview of the pros and cons of monitoring remote workers and outlines general best practices for doing so.

Pros and Cons of Monitoring Remote Employees

In addition to ensuring employees are remaining productive, there are a handful of other benefits to monitoring remote employees. These benefits include:

- **Improved management of employee burnout**—One of the most common issues remote employees face, especially if they're new to telecommuting, is maintaining a work-life balance. By monitoring employees' active and idle hours, employers can ensure that employees aren't overworking themselves.
- **Increased employee accountability**—If employees are aware that their work hours are being monitored, they're more likely to hold themselves accountable while they're online.
- **Improved insight into project timelines**—Employers can use the data gathered from monitoring to better assess project timelines and adjust for the future.
- **Increased insight into workplace processes**—Monitoring remote employees can clue managers into business processes that may or may not be working for employees. For example, this data could give insight into when employees sign on to work, when they're most productive and how much time is spent in meetings.
- **Added opportunity for recognition**—Through monitoring employees, employers may find that it's easier to recognize employees for doing a good job or meeting a tight deadline because they know what the employee is working on.

These are just a few of the benefits that monitoring remote employees can provide to employers. However, there are also disadvantages of monitoring remote employees that employers should consider.

Common disadvantages of remote worker monitoring include:

- **Increased feelings of distrust**—Employees may feel like their employer doesn't trust them to do their work from home if their employer is monitoring them. Additionally, employees may feel like their privacy is compromised. If not properly addressed, these feelings could lead to long-term negative effects like poor morale, low engagement and high turnover.
- **Added expenses**—If employers leverage new technologies to monitor remote workers, they often end up spending additional money to license or purchase such software.
- **Increased potential for micromanaging**—Certain managers may be more inclined to micromanage while monitoring remote workers. This can create inefficiencies because a manager is spending time micromanaging employees instead of working on other tasks.
- **Increased risk for legal pitfalls**—Monitoring remote employees comes with a unique set of legal considerations and risks. Employers should consult legal counsel prior to monitoring remote employees.

Employers will need to weigh the pros and cons of monitoring remote employees, and consult legal counsel before deciding whether its right for their organization.

Legal Considerations

Employers need to consider the legal implications of monitoring remote employees and consult legal counsel prior to monitoring such employees. Each employer will need to consider their unique risks and compliance obligations, and take state and local laws into consideration as well.

Generally speaking, employers face the same legal guidelines for monitoring remote workers' technology as they would monitoring the same technology in the workplace. However,

many states have laws that require advance notice of monitoring to protect employee privacy. And if employees use personal devices for work purposes when working from home, employers may face additional legal requirements for advance notice of monitoring and data storage. Finally, employers requiring employees to utilize video conferencing to conduct business may face legal issues surrounding the recording of images and voices of employees if they don't expressly give their permission.

Because of these inherent legal risks, employers should consult legal counsel and create a formalized written policy to document plans for monitoring remote workers, including how employers plan to protect employee privacy and data.

Best Practices

If you've decided that monitoring remote employees is the right move for your organization, there are a few best practices to keep in mind to ensure that employees and managers are on the same page. These best practices include:

- **Communicate your plans**—To avoid feelings of distrust and frustration, transparent communication about your company's intent to monitor remote employees is key. Giving employees a heads up about monitoring, including what will be monitored and what your expectations for them are while they're working from home, will go a long way.
- **Establish formal, written guidelines**—To ensure that managers avoid micromanaging employees, set clear guidelines for what will be tracked and how often managers should be reviewing such data. This will also help employees feel like their privacy is being respected, as managers should be focusing on specific aspects. All guidelines should be documented in a formal written policy that is readily accessible for employees to review.
- **Be open to making changes**—The data you gather while monitoring remote employees may point out inefficiencies in workplace processes. It could also reveal that employees are working more productively at home. On the contrary, if the data reveals that employees are struggling with a procedure or project, you may need to make

necessary adjustments. If the data reveals that there are changes that could be made to benefit the overall workplace, employers should be open to making those changes.

Again, monitoring remote employees may not be the best option for every employer. However, by keeping these practices and advice from professional legal counsel in mind, employers who choose to monitor remote employees may find success.

For More Information

For more information on remote work arrangements or best practices, contact StoneTapert Insurance Services today.

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Improving Virtual Meetings

There's no denying that virtual meetings have become a workplace norm. Several factors fueling that growth include access, price and need.

Most laptops, tablets and smartphones have built-in webcams and microphones so employees can dial in to a virtual meeting from anywhere and at any time. These technology advancements have created affordable and easy-to-use tools to help businesses—both small and large—stay virtually connected. Web-based technology will continue to advance to keep virtual communication attainable and meet business needs.

The demand for virtual meetings increased as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic closed offices, introduced social distancing and halted business travel. As the COVID-19 threat shifts and offices reopen, virtual meetings will continue to be a viable way to conduct business with employees, customers and other stakeholders.

Virtual meetings require more planning than in-person meetings to be effective. This article explores common challenges and best practices to help meeting leaders drive attendee engagement, acceptance and commitment to action.

Common Challenges

Virtual or not, meetings can be hampered by problems such as insufficient planning, lack of engagement and insufficient follow-up.

Virtual meetings also come with their own unique challenges surrounding technology. Meeting attendees may have trouble accessing the meetings or using the platform. If the meeting leader is unfamiliar with features or capabilities—like screen sharing—they may waste meeting time while learning on the fly.

Technology and computer problems may be out of one's control. With any meeting, the facilitator should be flexible and have a Plan B. For example, your video conference call may have to become an audio call or be rescheduled altogether if video was vital.

Before the Meeting

Start right to end right. To ensure a successful and productive virtual meeting, keep in mind the following steps before the meeting even begins:

- **Choose the technology**—There are many web and videoconferencing platforms available, so find the right software and features to support your business. Choose one platform and stick to it. After attendees download the platform once, it'll be easier to join meetings later.
- **Create an agenda**—Attendees may have a full calendar, so be clear on the purpose of the meeting and provide a timed agenda with topics and assigned facilitators. This will help invitees decide their attendance if they have multiple meetings at the same time. Share this prework at least 48 hours in advance.

- **Establish ground rules**—It might be helpful to have an agreed way of working, such as stating your name before talking or muting when not speaking. This helps keep the meeting efficient and remove distractions.
- **Test the technology**—It's important to join the meeting at least five minutes early to test your connection, microphone and video.
- **Look professional**—If using video, present yourself with appropriate grooming, hygiene and attire. That means mirroring what you would wear in person and keeping in mind whether it's an internal or external meeting.

When it comes to virtual meetings, it's crucial to invest in preparedness. Setting expectations beforehand can go a long way and positively impact a meeting's effectiveness.

During the Meeting
Meeting hosts and attendees may have slightly different roles when it comes to facilitating the virtual gathering, but there are some general tips that can help everyone. Once it's time to dial in, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Choose a moderator**—This should be established in the agenda. The moderator will keep the meeting moving and engage attendees. If attendees don't know each other, make those introductions to help everyone feel connected and welcome.
- **Stick to the agenda**—The host should consider assigning a time checker to keep the meeting on track. When possible, end a few minutes early to give people time to get to their next meeting.
- **Encourage interaction**—Encouraging people to speak up, especially in a virtual setting, is not always easy. Everyone should actively be doing something to support the meeting's purpose and objective (e.g., talking, screen sharing, monitoring the side chat channel, note taking and running slides). This move transforms someone from an attendee to a participant.
- **Turn on video**—Video is effective and makes people feel more engaged because it allows attendees to see each other's non-verbal clues. That, in turn,

humanizes the virtual meeting room and strengthens personal connections.
- **Do not multitask**—A virtual meeting is not the time to check and respond to emails or text messages. The use of video could cut down on multitasking.
- **Expect (and accept) the unexpected**—In a remote work setting, it's not unlikely to have a crackly connection or interruptions from a barking dog or talking child. Approach those unexpected moments with empathy.

When wrapping up the meeting, provide attendees some time to ask questions or share concerns. That could help increase engagement and ensure that attendees are still present and listening. Every attendee should have an opportunity to speak, whether or not they were assigned agenda topics. Approach meeting etiquette as if the gathering was in person.

After the Meeting
Once the meeting is finished, it's important to check for understanding and share a recap of what was discussed. If the meeting was a casual check-in, there may be no need for a recap. However, if there are any outstanding action items or missing attendees, it could be helpful to send a recap to outline next steps and responsibilities. If this was a standing meeting, it might be an opportunity to share the next meeting's agenda as well to give attendees time to prepare. It's all about sharing a transparent record of work progress.

Other Considerations
There's no denying it's much easier to communicate when you can see someone's face. While it's usually recommended to always use video, if employees or other stakeholders are facing online meetings all day, a compromise can be to allow audio-only times so everyone can focus solely on what is said, and forget about how they look.

To learn more about improving virtual meetings, contact StoneTapert Insurance Services today.