**TEAM BUILDING AND WAYS OF WORKING IN A REMOTE ENVIRONMENT**

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COVID has forced many of us to learn how to lead and manage remote teams. Although now the definition of “remote” may not be across miles of ocean or borders but across the street in our own homes. While many of us will return to the office, some will remain remote as we adapt to a post-COVID normal.

**Tips for Leading and Managing Remote Teams**[Forbes Magazine](https://www.forbes.com/sites/brentgleeson/2020/08/26/13-tips-for-leading-and-managing-remote-teams/?sh=c3b8b54577b6) recently identified specific, research-based steps that managers can take to improve the engagement and productivity of remote employees. Some of the common challenges Forbes identified include:

1. Lack of face-to-face supervision
2. Lack of access to information
3. Social isolation
4. Distractions at home
5. Enhanced issues with already existing organizational boundaries

Forbes suggests managers do the following to lead and manage remote teams:

1. Schedule daily check-ins
2. Over-communicate
3. Take advantage of technology
4. Establish rules of engagement
5. Manage expectations
6. Focus on outcomes, not activity
7. Define the purpose of those outcomes
8. Provide resources
9. Remove obstacles
10. Encourage remote social interactions
11. Show flexibility
12. Exhibit Empathy
13. Mentor more than manage

For further information and discussion on each tip, please read the referenced article. Each of the tips above fall into the category of simple but not easy. They each require time, attention, and consistency.

**What has worked/not worked for you and your team?**A final thought on all of these remote meetings, technology, and social interactions is to use the full capability of Webex and the tools available to us. It is entirely reasonable that some people may not want to be “on camera” for all meetings. As mentioned in a previous article, a [recent Stanford study](https://www.morningbrew.com/daily/stories/2021/02/28/science-says-zoom-fatigue-real?utm_source=morning_brew) backs up that more video calls drive more stress.

A middle ground for Webex is to encourage your team to add a profile picture. When we return from remote work environment, it will help recognition when working together. In the meantime, it gives your team an idea what you’d look like if they met you tomorrow. [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/product-tips/tips-for-picking-the-right-linkedin-profile-picture#:~:text=%2010%20Tips%20for%20Picking%20the%20Right%20LinkedIn%2c60%25%20of%20the%20frame.%20Using%20a...%20More%20) offers suggestions that are valid here:

* Pick a photo that looks like you
* High resolution image
* Face is 60% (or more) of the frame
* Be the only person in the picture
* Get someone else to take the picture
* Choose the right expression
* Avoid distracting backgrounds
* Wear what you’d wear to work
* Soft, natural light
* Use filters wisely

A photo is a key component of branding your unique self. The often-quoted statistic is that people form an impression about others within seven seconds, but it may be shorter than that. [All the details matter](https://www.amazon.com/Lose-Resume-Land-Gary-Burnison/dp/1119475201).

To summarize, managers need to understand factors that can make remote work especially demanding and address them. Otherwise high-performing employees may experience declines in job performance and engagement when they begin working remotely, especially in the absence of preparation and training. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine how working remotely impacts their level of engagement, performance, and connection to the mission.