How to Develop a Work From Home Strategy That Works

s your team suddenly working from home due to COVID-19?

And, if you had to rank your team's current approach to working remotely out of 10, what would you say?

Success when working from home can vary wildly, and your answer to the above question all depends on your planning and how you put in place the right strategy.

If implemented poorly, the change may seem like an insurmountable threat to your team's cohesiveness. But if done correctly, it can actually result in great productivity.

In this guide we will walk you through the four key parts that should make up your strategy. You can implement these to make sure the change to working from home is successful for you and your team.

1. Manage your team and communication

At times like these, there is a lot of information that needs to be communicated - often and clearly - to your team.

This is where maintaining a regular dialogue with each of your workforce is crucial. There are several ways this can be achieved.

> **Communicate the importance to your team of maintaining a regular work structure:** Devise common, fixed start and end times each day so that everyone is structured, aligned, and can get in touch with each other when required. This also helps avoid people in your team working over-time and allows them to retain separate 'work' and 'life' parts of the day.

> **Schedule specific touchpoints with your team:** For example, daily morning or afternoon wrap up meetings. Having a regular 9am huddle, gives you the opportunity to stay in touch with everyone in the team, provides your team with the chance to go over current issues, and reminds your staff that they're still part of a team that can work through challenges together. A huge component of successfully working from home is being able to maintain a team dynamic. By being physically removed from the rest of your team, it's easy to start feeling isolated. But you don't have to work in isolation just because you're no longer working out of the office.

> **Develop a set format for group meetings:** This will allow you to continue to lead your team and ensure everyone gets an opportunity to be heard. Don't just have random video conferences with one or two team members, or the occasional phone call with others - find a group format that works and is inclusive.

> **Make sure you still have one-on-one meetings:** It can be easy to assume that because you've had a team meeting, everyone in your team has the answers they need. It's still important to check in with individual members who may prefer one-to-one communication. Check in on work tasks, and be sure to ask about their mental health and how they're doing in general.

> **Implement interest groups:** Naturally in an office situation, we gravitate towards people who have similar beliefs or hobbies. That's hard to do online. Software like [Microsoft Teams](#), or messaging platforms like [WhatsApp](#) and [Facebook Messenger](#) can allow different groups within your organisation and team to join together and continue enjoying the things they love together. For example, the dog enthusiasts in your team can still share cute stories and pictures - via a dedicated group!

2. Implement the technologies you need

You and your team can't maintain close collaboration, or provide a great customer or client experience from home without the right tools and technologies.

You should be thinking beyond the basic desk, laptop, monitor, stationary set up and be thinking about the online tools needed.
Thankfully there are now a variety of great video conferencing, collaboration, and productivity software products available.

> **Video conferencing:** Video conferencing has come a long way recently, with several platforms offering seamless high definition audio and video for as many team members as you'd ever want to be talking to at one time. Platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, BlueJeans, GoToMeeting, Skype, and Google Hangouts offer a great user experience and include a variety of productivity boosting features such as screen sharing, transcriptions, recording functions, and Microsoft and Chrome integrations to facilitate scheduling.

> **Project management, or collaboration software:** If your team regularly uses Slack or Jira make sure that continues. You should be looking to recreate the office experience as much as possible, while encouraging additional communication wherever needed so that people can stay in sync and feel connected. If your team doesn't already use these tools, consider implementing them to encourage collaboration while everyone is working in different locations.

> **Productivity apps:** Platforms like Monday or Onenote can be used to help keep projects on track and team communications more organised. Crucially, you must make sure that everyone is using the same product suite.

Don't forget to ensure that people have remote access to all the data that they might need. For security, there are usually restrictions on remote access to data so ensure the IT department has implemented any changes necessary to make sure people aren't excluded from what they need to get their job done from home.

3. Ensure you and your team continue to learn and develop

Without office collaboration and face to face contact, continuous learning and upskilling naturally becomes harder as people lose regular access to mentors or senior staff. However, there are various approaches that can be taken to keep learning continuity or to even give staff the opportunity to develop whole new sets of skills:

> **Online learning platforms:** Such as Udemy and Skillshare offer an enormous range of low cost and free training. These span business, technical, digital, technology, practical, and creative areas so your staff can learn almost any new skill. Be sure to lock in a specific time where your team can feel free to engage with a course and consider having a call the next day where everyone can share learnings.

> **Collaboration and brainstorming sessions:** These are great for problem solving as well as team building. You can participate in webinars or choose to run your own summits where you can bring employees, customers, or clients together where they can discuss any key issues.

> **Connect with your network and reshape old relationships:** Everyone is online right now. And everyone is looking for human connection. Reaching out allows you to learn from each other, discover ways to do business together, think innovatively, and reconnect with old colleagues or contacts.

> **Encourage your team to upskill in something apart from work:** Like yoga or playing the guitar!

> **Find a mentor (for you and your team):** This can be for you to learn effective work from home strategies or for your teammates to learn from. A peer or mentor can help you much faster than you can on your own and offer connection, communication and sometimes advice around the same issues and challenges you're facing.

4. Help your team build resilience and manage stress

One of your major tasks in the early stage of the transition to working from home should be to focus on helping to build resilience within your team. This will help them manage the stress loads associated with the current challenging situation and the sudden transition to what is, for many, a whole new way of working.

Becoming more resilient involves boosting your ability to overcome challenges, deal with difficult feelings in a constructive way, and recover from tough circumstances. There are various strategies that are proven to improve people's resilience and stress thresholds including:

> **Connecting with other people:** Having a good network of social support and contacts makes a big difference. While people's mobility might be reduced, encourage your team to regularly phone or [Skype](#) friends and family.

> **Maintaining a daily routine:** Establishing set routines reduces stress because it reduces the number of decisions that need to be made. Consistency helps.

> **Looking after diet and health:** It's more important than ever to take care of yourself through a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly. Encourage everyone to continue with regular exercise even if that means trying something different like yoga, stretching, walking, running, or cycling around the local area.
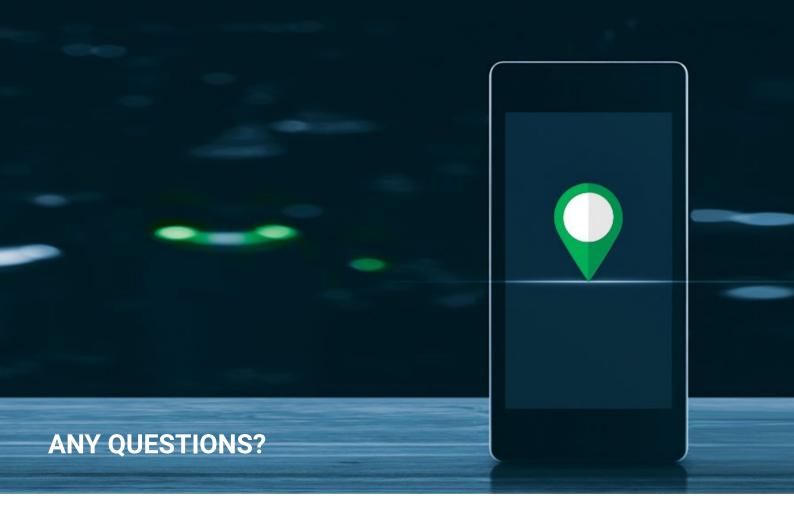
> **Keeping perspective:** Even in tough times, it's important to remember that this situation is only temporary and that things will eventually return to normal. This difficult time will form only a small part of everyone's life. With the right mindset, overcoming difficult challenges can set people up to bounce back even higher as it encourages a refocusing on the most important things in life.

A final word...

The sudden transition to your entire organisation working from home can be jarring. It can also cause unexpected challenges or difficulties beyond what might seem obvious from being able to work every day in your pyjamas.

But with the right approach and clear strategies that are communicated to your entire team, it's very possible for everyone to stay productive and rise above the issues and difficulties to keep your company on track and thriving. In fact, it can help team members build new healthy habits (like using the technology you've been trying so hard to implement, or to get on the phone when they need help instead of writing an ill-received email!)

If you're looking for help, [please get in touch with FinXL.](#)

ANY QUESTIONS?

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