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Corporate America is taking quick action to keep their employees safe from COVID-19 (Coronavirus). However, a new survey from VitalSmarts shows that recently adopted work-from-home policies may lead to significant challenges as employees are ill-equipped to handle the changes. According to the March study of 1,097 adults, a third of respondents say their organizations have a plan in place they are confident about and 43 percent have a basic plan—even if it is "hastily assembled". Most plans center on remote work and travel restrictions. Specifically:

- Twenty-eight percent of respondents say their organization has already revised its work from home policy;
- Forty-three percent of organizations have revised their travel policy;
- Thirty-three percent of respondents report having more online meetings; and
- Seventeen percent have a new plan for video-based meetings and sales calls.

And yet, while these actions ensure employees' safety and health, they synonymously pose a risk to the vital signs of the business. Specifically, more than 1 in 5 (21.19 percent) employees don't feel their team members have good enough collaboration habits to work effectively from home. They also say 1 in 5 leaders are either very unprepared or unprepared to manage remote teams. Overall, 65 percent are concerned COVID-19 will influence their company's operations.

Justin Hale, a productivity expert and researcher at VitalSmarts, says that managers play a particularly important role, especially in times of uncertainty. He shares the following best practices for managing remote teams—skills that can help a leader mitigate the risks inherent in workplace changes brought about by COVID-19.

1. **Frequent and consistent check-ins.** Check in frequently and regularly with remote employees. The cadence of the check-ins can vary from daily to bi-weekly to weekly but should always be consistent and entail a standing meeting or scheduled one-on-one.
2. **Face-to-face or voice-to-voice.** The most successful managers insist on some face time with remote employees. If in-person meetings are not possible, at a minimum use video conferencing technology or pick up the phone to ensure colleagues occasionally see one another's face or hear one another's voice.
3. **Exemplify stellar communication skills.** You cannot overemphasize the importance of general, stellar communication with remote teams. The most successful managers are good listeners, communicate trust and respect, inquire about workload and progress without micromanaging, and err on the side of over-communicating.
4. **Explicit expectations.** When it comes to managing remote teams, be clear about expectations. Managers who are direct with their expectations—especially when the "rules" of work have suddenly changed—have happier teams that can deliver to those expectations. People are never left in the dark about projects, roles, deadlines etc.
5. **Always available.** Successful managers are available quickly and at all times of the day. They go above and beyond to maintain an open-door policy for remote employees—making themselves available across multiple time zones and through multiple means of technology (IM, Slack, Skype,

Email, Phone, Text etc.). Remote employees can always count on their manager to respond to pressing concerns.

6. **Technology maven.** Successful managers use multiple means of communication to connect with their remote workers. They don't just resort to phone or email but are familiar with video conferencing technologies and a variety of services like Skype, Slack, Zoom, GoToMeeting and more. They often tailor their communication style and medium to each employee.
7. **Prioritize relationships.** Team building and comradery are important for any team and remote teams are no exception. Good managers go out of their way to form personal bonds with remote employees. They use check-in time to ask about their personal life, families and hobbies. They allow team meeting time for "Water cooler" conversation so the whole team can create personal connections and strengthen relationships.

SOURCE: www.vitalsmarts.com

Welfarenews; Surveynews