Leverage Technology to Prevent Remote Worker Disengagement

Everyone has a bad day now and again. But when a usually productive employee begins to avoid interaction, contribute less, and react negatively, it could be a warning sign. While remote work brings many benefits, it also takes a toll on employee engagement. Smart companies actively look for ways to prevent remote worker disengagement.
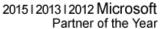
Challenges Remote Workers Face

For the State of Remote Work 2019 Report, remote employees reported the biggest challenges they face. Top responses included separating home life from work life, feeling loneliness and achieving collaboration.

The same study also showed that nearly all remote workers planned to continue working remotely and would encourage others to do so. Consequently, to attract and retain top talent, organizations must find ways to address the challenges inherent in a distributed workforce. Technology can play a significant role in this effort.

Create Digital Workspaces for Various Working Modes

The traditional office environment includes space for all sorts of work. An employee may close her office door to shut out distractions. Casual conversations around the proverbial water cooler can lead to key initiatives. And work groups benefit from the energy of a brainstorming session around the conference table.

Technology can help re-create those settings over distance. For instance, with a digital whiteboard, team members in different states can brainstorm in real time. As you design virtual workspaces, consider the different types of work modes employees need. These might include the following:

- Small teamwork mode – Colleagues working on a project together need collaboration space. Solutions such as Microsoft Teams provide a host of [collaborative tools](), from integrated chat to video conferencing, document management and real-time co-authoring.

- Ad hoc connections – During the workday, employees need to do the equivalent of popping into someone's office to ask a question. Apps that provide the ability to easily do a screenshare or seamlessly switch from messaging to voice or video can help. And solutions like Teams make it easy to see when a coworker is available to talk.

- Do not disturb – Distractions present a significant challenge to remote work. When a child needs to practice piano or a coworker schedules a surprise meeting, recovery from the disruption takes time. Noise canceling headphones and calendar apps prove essential.

- All-hands-on-deck meetings – Even with employees scattered across the globe, organizations benefit from company-wide meetings to pull everyone together. With Microsoft Teams, live events can include up to 10,000 attendees for up to four hours. Attendees can tune in via desktop, browser, and mobile devices.

- Water cooler moments – The chance encounter can prove the most difficult scenario to replicate in the digital world. Team chat apps like Yammer or a discussion area can help, and a little creativity goes a long way. For instance, co-workers can also host virtual clubs, schedule icebreaker sessions, or hold a virtual trivia night.

Optimize Video Communication to Prevent Remote Worker Disengagement

Ninety percent of communication happens without words. Consequently, video conferencing forms a critical component of engaging a remote workforce. When in doubt, opt for video over audio, email, or chat. It adds a human touch, allows participants to read nonverbal cues and helps to keep everyone's attention.

To get the most out of your video conferencing, ensure that all team members have the necessary equipment. They will need a strong internet connection, a camera or webcam and a microphone. While most laptops come with built-in cameras and mics, an external mic or quality headphones will significantly improve sound quality.
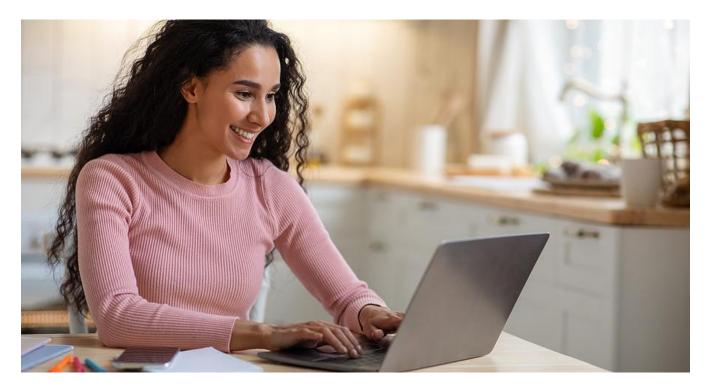
Additionally, take steps to ensure video conferencing privacy. Many conferencing apps will allow the host to lock a meeting after it starts, for example. Finally, make sure you establish and communicate video conferencing policies with your organization. These should include video etiquette, approved conferencing apps, policies for screen-sharing and so forth.

Supporting a Remote Workforce

Building the best infrastructure to support a distributed workforce can prove challenging. The remote worker technology experts at eMazzanti will help you design the right solution for your needs. Whether you plan to migrate to the cloud, strengthen your data security or learn how to get the most out of Microsoft Teams, we have the expertise you need to prevent remote worker disengagement.