# MANAGERS TIPS FOR REMOTE WORKING REMOTELY

Patrick Lencioni, best-selling author of 11 books related to business/team management, states that the three most important things that leaders can do during this time of uncertainty are: 1) be exceedingly human, 2) be persistent in your communication, and 3) get out of your comfort zone and be creative.

The following are suggestions to help in that regard:

1. **Distribute leadership**
   a. Small teams, ideally 5-6, are easiest to manage online, so identify people you can trust and rely on to champion those small teams.  This will give you a core team that can help you build a culture of trust and support throughout your larger team.  It will also reduce the number of full team meetings that decrease productivity and increase frustration.
   b. Consider identifying an individual on your team to be the Remote Coordinator.  They may be able to help troubleshoot basic tech issues or bring forward tools that you might consider to help your team (GroupMe, Trello, Slack, etc.).
   c. Set very clear goals and expectations.

2. **Prioritize setting-up a communication strategy and OVER COMMUNICATE**
   a. It is **essential** that your team always knows how to reach you, especially in times of great uncertainty like we are facing with COVID-19.  If you can't be reached for whatever time or reason, you need to let them know who else they should contact. Don't let things sit unanswered or your team members may start second-guessing themselves or filling in their own backstory with regard to what they think is happening.
   b. Let your team know that you trust them. Don't expect immediate responses to everything, because if you set rigid rules, people tend to do the minimum to comply. Convey trust and the vast majority of people will demonstrate they are worthy of trust.
   c. Establish a predictable team meeting time and, if possible, stick with your original meeting times/schedule to help reinforce that the same work goals are happening but just in a new environment.
   d. Don't hold back on the praise and encouragement.  Your team may have more concerns than you even know related to things in their lives during these uncertain times.  As Patrick Lencioni stated, "No one will look back at this time and say, 'my manager was so annoying with all the encouraging emails checking in on me.' When people are isolated, over-communication is more important than ever."

3. **Establish norms**
   a. Expectations for communication
      i. Be clear about when to chat versus email versus call/video conference: constant pinging in chat can be disruptive to work particularly if things aren't applicable to the whole group; use @name to be clear about the audience.
      ii. Assume positive intent: chats and emails can make tone unclear; when in doubt pick-up the phone or jump into a video conference before issues spiral.
      iii. Be as transparent as possible: keep as much information accessible to the team as possible.
      iv. Decide what is urgent: not every decision has to be made instantly; set regular communication times to talk through most topics but convey what shouldn't wait between those times.
   b. Clear expectations are KEY:  if people aren't doing what you expect, loop back to them to ensure that things are clear.
   c. Use Google calendar and encourage everyone on your team to use it as well.  People can check there for availability to avoid disrupting one another.

4. **Embrace small failures**
   a. Address issues or challenges with a quick phone call or video conference with those involved.  Email can further misunderstandings, so be quick to jump on the phone/Google Meet when something isn't going in the right direction.  However, be as encouraging as possible. Miscommunications can happen in the office but sometimes even more when people aren't used to working remotely.
   b. Learn together during this time of high stress; embracing the small failures that are likely to happen will build trust and camaraderie.  Remember that you will ultimately need to all work together again in our traditional environment, so the time you spend building trust and camaraderie will continue to pay off long term.

5. **Focus on TEAM wins**
   a. Let the group know about the progress that they are making on things together. Working remotely, individuals might not always recognize how their piece fits into the larger picture, so your ability to make that clear will reinforce the importance of each individual in the team.
   b. Help your team understand how they are adding value to college-wide work at this time.  Consider offering "shoutouts" for individuals who are representing the team well in work outside the normal team responsibilities.

6. **Find ways to consistently support each other (reestablish the water cooler)**
   a. Consider scheduling a couple of 15-minute open hangouts during the week where there isn't an agenda but team members can just pop in to connect with each other.

b. Create a Trello board or use GroupMe or Slack for people to stay connected.  The CTLE can help you with these or similar tools if you are interested.  If we don't already have a training scheduled, we would be happy to create one, so just reach out.

c. Allocate part of your meeting to check-in with people in a personal yet still professional way.  For example, you might ask about the best exercising at home tip that each person has or ask about the best meal that people have enjoyed in the past week.  If you're concerned about potentially wasting someone's time, you can always preface a social transition with something like: "If you need to get off the call now, no problem but otherwise I'd love to hear about your weekend!"

d. Use Google chat for quick conversations.

e. Schedule weekly check-ins via video call with direct reports to answer questions and hear about challenges.  Video is important to pick-up on the non-verbals at least periodically, but don't require video for everything.  Some individuals may have bandwidth concerns related to technology, and having the option to turn off the video can save data.