**CHART Virtual Training Forum (VTF) – Notes on Best Practices**

*Note: Updated information and resources gathered since these VTF notes were taken can be found on* [*CHART’s COVID-19 Resource Page*](https://www.chart.org/training-tools-and-resources/covid-19-resources.html)

**Managing Remote Teams**

Thursday, April 16, 2020

**The Biggest Problems People are Having Managing Remote Teams:**

* Communication – balancing too much or too little
* Making sure people are following up – without micromanaging and damaging trust
* Setting expectations for schedules of teams working from home
* Maintaining connections and a bonded team

**Managing Communication:**

* Go over basic email protocols with teams. [Note: See [Past CHART Webinar](https://www.chart.org/trainer-development-and-events/webinars/past-webinars.html) April 8, 2015 on “Email – The is a Right Way to Use It” for some tips to share with your teams]. Spend some time telling them that “Thanks” emails should not go to all, subject lines should be specific, etc.
* Talk to your team about who should be cc’d on what, to be sure they include the right people but avoid cc’ing everyone.
* Not every communication requires an email. Instead of email, you may want to use team messenger features of another platform, Slack, Textedly, What’s App, etc. for day-to-day communications that you don’t want clogging up email.
* If using multiple platforms, reply to the thread in just that platform so it is easier to find later.
* Advise people to check emails every hour. You want them to check in regularly but encourage them to turn off email notification pop-ups which are a distraction.
* Pick up the phone and call people sometimes.

**Trust v. Discipline - Understanding what people are doing with their time, and knowing what is and is not getting done, without making people feel like we don’t trust them.**

* Require timesheets or keeping track of time.
* Utilize project management software where people can post when they finish tasks or where they are on things. (Eg. Wrike). Allows others to check and see that work is getting done without having to constantly ask where people are on things.
* Spend time explaining to people what is and is not OK with working from home – Ok to throw in a load of laundry, not OK to binge-watch a series on TV.
* Be very clear on what is expected when working from home. Your team will be much more transparent if everyone understands the expectations.

**Managing Work Schedules when People are Working from Home**

* Cannot expect everyone to work same business day schedule when working from home and have children to care for or just have different times for productivity, but this can cause delays when people are waiting on each other for answers to complete their own work.
* Now people are shifting their own schedules but leads to unrealistic delays in responses.
* Again, have a candid conversation with your team so you know what limitations they have one their work from home schedule, and work with them to find a plan so that team members know what they can expect from each other.

**Keeping Team Cohesion and Bonding**

The novelty of working from home has worn off. Zoom happy hours are getting old. How do you keep the team feeling connected?

* Team zoom meetings are still crucial. Better to have them shorter but more often.
* Wellness Emails – communications focused on helping them through this weird time, nit just on getting work done.
* Scavenger Hunt – competition and everyone sends pics when out walking
* Disney Celebrity Disney sing-a-long – copy the idea for team?
* Book Club
* Random questions – if everyone was in the office together, they would be communicating about random things other than work that help them bond and get to know each other better. Water-cooler banter. Try to recreate this with random questions now and then. What is everyone watching? Best signage they have seen on stores. 30 Day Song Challenge (Just found it on internet – see below)
* Online bingo game with eGift-cards for winners, or online Pictionary (scribbl.io)
* Themed Happy Hours or meetings, just to make them a little more fun – Hats with a story, T shirts with a saying on them, Show and Tell, Favorite Memes, etc.

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