

Managing a distributed workforce

Rethinking approaches on how productivity can be achieved alongside physical and mental well-being

INTRODUCTION

A guide to rethinking the management of your distributed team

While a flexible approach to working can provide a better work/life balance and bring improvements in employee well-being by increasing employee satisfaction, it poses several challenges

Working from home has quickly become the new normal for a lot of companies due to COVID-19 and we expect this trend to continue going forwards. Businesses around the world have had to quickly shift their ways of working to facilitate employees working remotely, manage the disruption to daily routine and ensure teams remain connected. Digital communication and collaboration online have become essential to keeping organisations in touch and productive.

RETHINKING MOTIVATION AND SUPERVISION

How do we as managers and organisations supervise this distributed workforce? While this flexible approach to working can provide a better work/life balance and bring improvements in employee well-being by increasing employee satisfaction, it poses several challenges. You must rethink how you can manage your employee's performance and productivity even if you cannot see them, while respecting their privacy. It is also vital that the physical and mental well-being of your employees is maintained.

With the increase risk of cyber-attacks, particularly where your employees are accessing sensitive information, organisations must continue to effectively manage data protection and privacy. Without being monitored in person, fraud can also go unnoticed.

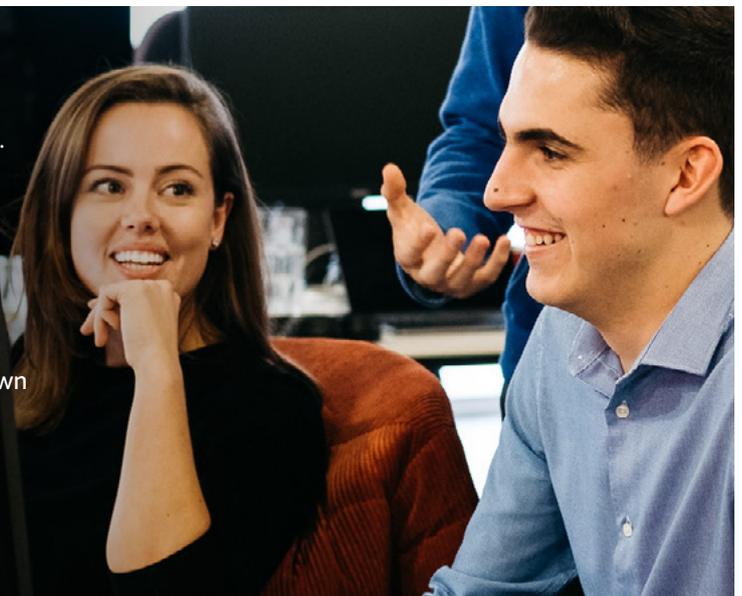
THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

It is essential to continue to train your employees on the risks associated with these challenges. Organisations should rethink how they distribute this knowledge to their teams in order to ensure staff enhance productivity while reducing the likelihood of activities such as fraud.

It is important to encourage this dialogue across the organisation including security teams, data management, HR and IT.

We have put together some useful tips and advice to help your organisation rethink the response to these challenges. This includes the following sections:

- ▶ Manage performance and productivity whilst respecting privacy
- ▶ Promote physical and mental well-being while working remotely
- ▶ Positive Mental Health Tips: Helping Cope With Lockdown
- ▶ Managing fraud risks
- ▶ Managing data protection and privacy



MANAGE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY WHILST RESPECTING PRIVACY

With a rapid movement to remote working some employers may have been left wondering how much work is going on.

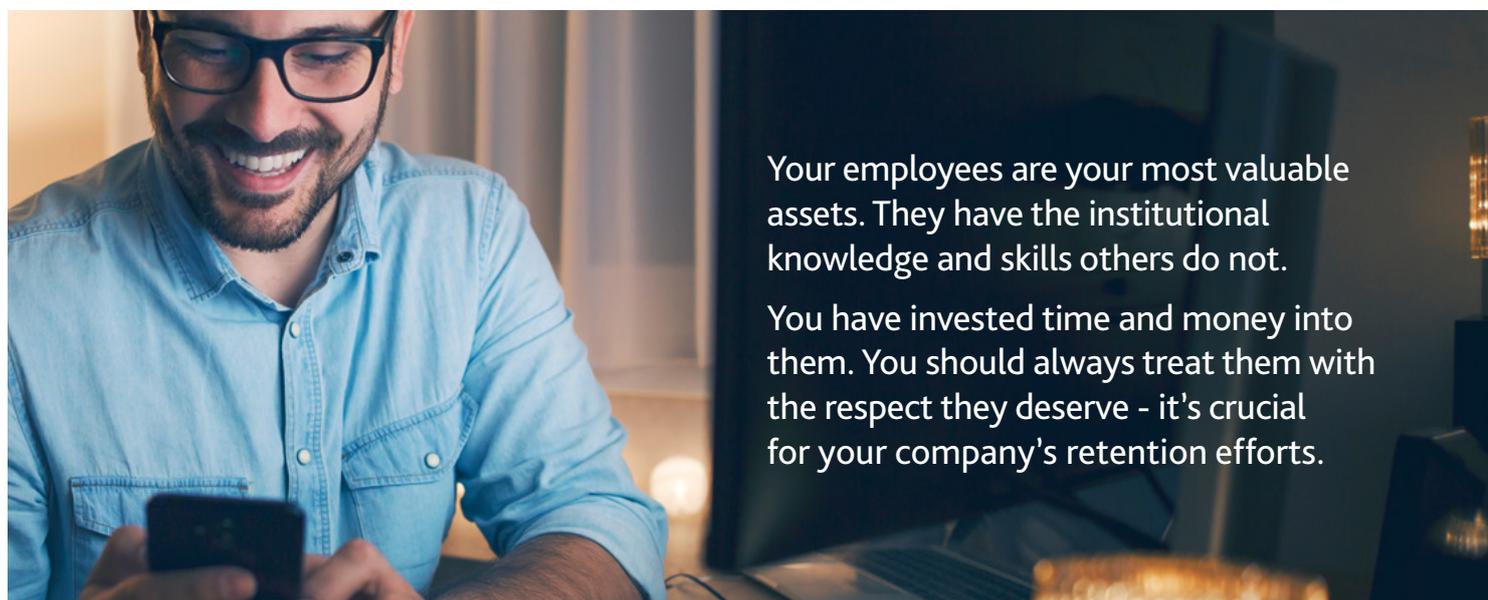
CORPORATE SURVEILLANCE

The fear of productivity losses, mingling with the horror of massively declining revenues, can encourage many managers to increase their employee monitoring efforts.

There are several tools for 'corporate surveillance'. These include stealth monitoring, live video feeds, keyboard tracking, optical character recognition, keystroke recording, or location tracking. However, while managers may want to understand their workforce's productivity, this surveillance can erode trust between employee and employer. There have been media reports of employee backlash against measures and negative publicity.

It is, therefore, important to build a culture that encourages your team to remain productive even while working from home. This can be achieved through the following:

- ▶ **Reward productivity:** Rather than oppressive surveillance tactics, reward your team based on overall performance and outputs.
- ▶ **Be transparent:** There may be times and places where employee activity should be monitored, however you are legally required to be transparent about what data you are collecting and why. This can give the opportunity for employees to offer feedback and to buy into this system.
- ▶ **Choose your metrics carefully:** Choose metrics that will be insightful to monitoring productivity and performance to ensure they do not break trust with your employees.
- ▶ **Accept that a very good employee cannot do good work all the time:** These are exceptional times and performance under these conditions may be difficult for some. Employees may be stretched extraordinarily thin due to a lack of school and childcare options, for instance. Ensure you are transparent and agree with employees and your clients expected turn around times to queries.



Your employees are your most valuable assets. They have the institutional knowledge and skills others do not.

You have invested time and money into them. You should always treat them with the respect they deserve - it's crucial for your company's retention efforts.

PROMOTE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

Managers have a responsibility to establish the topic of mental and physical well-being in their teams

Video team meetings have become much more common place, and this presents an opportunity to use this channel to support employees. It can be used for team building measures such as meditation classes that are also possible to hold virtually. The use of video meetings and the need to promote well-being also presents the opportunity to host meetings more regularly and in a more structured manner, improving overall communication. There are many other tools managers can use to ensure their teams well-being is being protected.

ESTABLISH CLEAR BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK AND HOME-LIFE

Employers should encourage employees to work their contracted hours, which could be as simple as telling them to put their work equipment out of sight at 5 pm. Alternative options could include banning online meetings between 12 pm and 1 pm to encourage employees to have a proper lunch break and try to get away from their desk.

These changes can help staff to understand the importance of separating their work and home life and as a result making sure that they give themselves time to do things that they enjoy. Although it may not be a priority to many, especially since you may not be able to fly anywhere, employers should remind employees to take some days off. No one can work non-stop and be productive, so taking time off work will give people the chance to recharge, recover and reduce stress levels.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Not everyone may feel comfortable speaking about mental health and how they feel. It has never been more important to listen to your staff to understand how they are coping during these unprecedented times. It can be difficult to start a conversation around mental health but normalising it can empower people to share their feelings and seek support if necessary.

While we work remotely, it can be harder to spot employees that are suffering with any mental health issues. It's vital that managers are proactive in offering support by letting them know where they can access help.

BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE

Employers should look at updating their current policies to factor in working from home. It's crucial to remember that everyone's home situation is different as some may be caring for small children who are running around all the time while others may be flat-sharing and therefore will not have an ideal workspace to work efficiently. If employers are aware of these factors, it will help them come to an arrangement with staff that helps to make working remotely easier for them.

When arrangements are agreed, it is vital to communicate these to the wider team and clients so that expectations of when work will be performed are clear and no undue pressure is put on employees to work outside of the agreed flexibility.

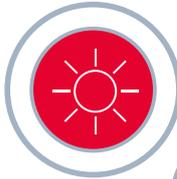


POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

Helping Cope With Lockdown

LIGHTING

On dark mornings wake up gradually with increasing light. Try out a SAD light or lumie bodyclock.



LIMIT NEWS

Limit the amount of time you spend on social media and checking news.



TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Plan time into your week where you can engage in activities that are relaxing. It is important to have time for yourself where you engage in some self-care.



STAY CONNECTED

Even though it might be difficult to see friends and family it is important that you stay connected to them on a regular basis.



COPING STRATEGIES

Identify some positive strategies you can engage in that help you to deal with stress, worry or anxiety.



PLAN YOUR WEEK

Organise your week and plan in activities that provide you with a sense of pleasure and achievement.



POSITIVE HABITS

Write down a list of 5-10 positive mental health habits you can engage with on a regular basis to maintain your mental fitness.



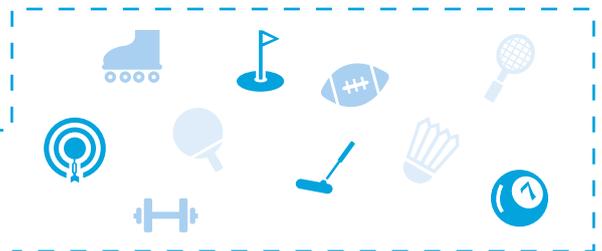
CONNECT YOUR VALUES

Re-connect with things that are important to you and try to engage with them on a regular basis.



STAY ACTIVE

Throughout the day, try and be active. Take a break from your work and walk around. Regular exercise can also be great for reducing stress and boosting mood.



ASK FOR HELP

If you notice yourself struggling, reach out to family, friends, your doctor or a local mental health charity for help.



HELP OTHERS

Whether it is helping at home or supporting your colleagues, helping others can help provide you with positive emotions.

MANAGING FRAUD RISKS

The mobile and remote workforce policy that most companies have been forced to adopt under COVID-19 restrictions holds potential new risks for management

COMPLIANCE IN A MOBILE WORKFORCE

Financial Services Providers continue to seek to meet their compliance obligations efficiently and effectively and this remains the case as remote working becomes more common. A permanently mobile workforce can increase the risk of fraud and the methods for measuring information security must shift. For example, in person controls such as Mandatory Time Away (MTA) must now also be mapped virtually.

THE RISK OF INTERNAL FRAUD

A standout risk area that has arisen from remote working is the risk of internal fraud and corruption. Both individuals and businesses may be under significant new financial pressures due to their changed circumstances, which may translate to uncharacteristic behaviours. In the most extreme cases, they may take higher risks leading to internal fraud, tax evasion, and other serious crimes.

THE THREAT OF DISENGAGEMENT

Remote working can also create an environment where staff feel disengaged and their actions may be subject to less scrutiny and over-sight. This can also make staff less vigilant to these threats. Employees may also find it easier to rationalise defrauding their company with no pay raises or bonuses becoming a reality.

FINANCIAL REPORTING RISKS

A significant area for internal fraud is through financial reporting. Employees may have the ability to digitally manipulate supporting documents used to prepare financial statements. The increase in market volatility may put pressure on employees to manipulate investment values to show a positive return/asset position. The change in the working environment has also changed the usual policies and accounting rules impacting revenue and expense reporting.



MITIGATING FRAUD RISKS

Adjusting Policies & Procedures



FINANCIAL REPORTING AND COMPLIANCE

It is vital to implement internal controls to mitigate Financial reporting and compliance risks

- ▶ Implement robust segregation of duties. Flexibility should be incorporated into existing review processes to provide alternative reviewers and authorisers
- ▶ Ensure fraud investigations and whistle-blowing teams remain active and appropriately staffed
- ▶ Reassess plans to remediate internal control deficiencies identified before this change in working patterns to ensure they are adequate and on schedule



REMOTE OVERSIGHT OF WORKING PRACTICES

It is important to undertake appropriate surveillance and monitoring while your employees work remotely

- ▶ Provide the necessary infrastructure to work securely from home, including secure connections to the organisation's network
- ▶ Implement appropriate monitoring of the content of calls, messaging and emails, especially sensitive data being sent outside the organisation
- ▶ Consider what additional monitoring and oversight is required for employees who historically did not have the option of working remotely
- ▶ While employees may be encouraged to work flexibly, organisations should keep track of employees working outside usual office hours to prevent potential abuse
- ▶ Use Microsoft tools that have been recently introduced such as the Insider Risk Module in MS365 which provides cost effective tools to monitor staff actions



SET THE RIGHT TONE WITH TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT

Reduce the risk of human error by considering technical controls and employee behaviour. Training, oversight and morale should be addressed with a tone of compliance set by senior management

- ▶ Ensure adequate training and oversight is provided to employees who are moved from their usual role
- ▶ Amend system access rights where employees have changed role within the organisation
- ▶ Maintain regular communications with employees to prevent individuals becoming disengaged
- ▶ Emphasise the need for errors, breaches and near misses to be reported without blame so that a clearer picture is gained of the effectiveness of the control environment

MANAGE DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

It is important to manage your data protection and privacy in an environment where people are accessing sensitive information in remote working environments

Technical controls are only part of managing this and your employee's approach is equally as influential. It is also important to implement policies, contract clauses and training to address the challenge of managing your employees behaviour.

RISKS

There are several risks now associated with remote working. There is an increased use of public wi-fi and home routers which may not be secure as well as more use of personal devices. Individuals may also be using more 'shadow IT' and ad hoc non-approved online service providers, devices and apps without supervision. Onboarding and offboarding can become more problematic remotely and there is more chance of data being stolen. Data can be easily breached in shared households where sensitive company data could be viewed. Lastly, blurring the lines between home and work can make staff less vigilant and more likely to make mistakes and fall for phishing attacks.

CONTROLS

The ideal is to implement a mixture of both technical and behavioural controls and that these two aspects complement each other. Policies, clauses and training should re-enforce, mandate and explain the technical controls. No control over data protection is infallible and there are always ways around things. Culture is crucial and organisations must engender an understanding of why these controls are important.

With the shift to remote working, technical controls may need to be increased and / or adapted to reflect this change. The technology controls that worked in the office may not be appropriate at home and as a result businesses must not become complacent. Businesses should aim to limit company liability and this can be achieved through the following:

- ▶ Mandate staff to sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- ▶ Consider not allowing Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) at all, or if you do, create a BYOD policy, setting out the scope and procedures of the processing of company data on personal devices and public/home Wi-Fi networks
- ▶ Put effective offboarding procedures in place (ensuring data is wiped from personal devices when employment ends, and that access to any third party software is also removed along with the corporate network.)
- ▶ Add contract clauses around compliance with the BYOD, AUP and offboarding procedures
- ▶ Implement regular mandatory security and privacy training.
- ▶ Use mobile device management software such as Intune
- ▶ Mandate email and hard drive encryption
- ▶ Undertake ethical hacking and false phishing to test staff
- ▶ Disable USB ports
- ▶ Go digital and remove the need for paper documents



ABOUT BDO

We understand that 'people do business with people' and therefore we have built a team that is extremely knowledgeable, refreshingly approachable and highly accessible

BDO GLOBAL

BDO is the world's fifth largest global accounting and advisory network. BDO's global organisation extends across 167 countries and territories, with 91,054 professionals working out of 1,658 offices. BDO endeavours to deliver truly exceptional client service through a tailored solutions approach, while partnering with our employees and clients globally.

BDO IN JERSEY

BDO in Jersey, as part of the international BDO network, has committed to provide our clients with exceptional service. BDO currently has over 280 staff delivering comprehensive business services.

Our multi-disciplinary capability enables a holistic approach to be taken when working with our clients as their trusted advisor, through all stages of the business lifecycle.

Our directors lead the delivery of services to our clients and are closely involved with them on an ongoing basis. These services include:

- ▶ Assurance
- ▶ Tax
- ▶ Advisory
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Business Services & Outsourcing

BDO RISK ADVISORY SERVICES

For large and small businesses alike, our Risk Advisory Service (RAS) Team has assisted companies in delivering enhanced corporate governance practices, including evaluating the performance of the internal audit function –from conducting a thorough assessment of risk across the organisation, to designing strategic internal audit programmes, to reporting findings to management, the Board and other stakeholders.

As well as identifying issues, we work with management to ensure that tailored solutions and appropriate controls are in place. At BDO, our RAS team is comprised of a group of dedicated and experienced professionals, enabling us to provide a wide variety of professional services including:

- ▶ Outsourced or co-sourced internal audit services
- ▶ IT security and digital services advisory
- ▶ Business Continuity advisory
- ▶ Regulatory & Compliance advisory
- ▶ Transformation & Change services
- ▶ Corporate Governance training
- ▶ Automation governance frameworks
- ▶ Data Privacy services



FOR MORE INFORMATION:



DAMON GREBER

Director,

+44 (0) 1534 633 733

dgreber@bdo.je



ANDY JARRETT

Head of Business Development

+44 (0) 1534 633 733

andy.jarrett@c5alliance.com

www.bdo.je

READ OUR OTHER GUIDES FOR BUSINESSES RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Business is having to learn fast how to cope with Coronavirus (COVID-19). Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference:

[Impact risk and response guide](#)

We have produced a guide providing a perspective on the impact COVID-19 may have on ISAE 3402 reporting:

[Considerations for ISAE 3402 reviews Factsheet](#)

Useful tips for people who need to work and meet remotely:

[Working from home and virtual meetings](#)

Are you still compliant with Cyber Essentials and GDPR now you have adopted home working?

[WFH & BYOD Security Factsheet](#)

Advice to support your business operations through this crisis, spanning technology, risk, regulatory & compliance, project management and training:

[Business Resilience Factsheet](#)

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