



Hiring & Managing a Team

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

We're Here to Help

I hope you are all well and adjusting to the new realities and challenges of this unpredictable time. Our first focus is to try and ensure the health and wellbeing of all our people and to follow official guidelines in order to come through the COVID-19 Pandemic safely.

Within Cpl, we will maintain our working from home approach and hope by sharing these insights we will help you and your business do the same.

There is a great requirement for resilience and flexibility globally and how we respond to these challenges will be critical. We are here to help. Let's stand strong together and give all the support we can.

Stay safe and please do get in touch if you have any concerns or challenges - covidqueries@cpl.ie



Anne Heraty
Chief Executive Officer.



Managing a Newly Remote Team

The rapid adjustment to remote working has created a new set of challenges for companies and managers who still need to support and engage with their newly remote, team.

Here are some of our learnings and tips for managing a remote team during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tips on How to Manage Remote Workers

1. Trust team members and provide clear communication

The most important part of remote working is trust and communication. Trust your people to do their work as normal and provide clear goals and expectations so each team member knows what their daily priorities are.

It should be made clear that you are available if a team member has any unprecedented issues or stressors as a result of remote working. For example, parents who are balancing childcare and working from home.

2. Develop and implement clear remote work policies

All businesses should have clearly defined policies to address virtual work concerns and best practices.

A good remote working policy will clearly outline how employees should manage their working time and location around business

needs and balancing commitments, which for some will be challenging in the current circumstances.

Other things that should be clarified include any potential security issues, home working technology guidelines and best methods for effective communication.

3. Equipment

Employees should have all the hardware and software they need to work properly, for example laptops, screens, chargers and phones or a tool like Skype for Business.

Once your team is set up it's also important to ensure everyone knows how to use any new technologies.

4. Provide a good communication platform

Along with having the right equipment having the right communication tools in place is

imperative to remote working success. Using tools such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, Slack or other video conferencing tools enables better engagement and a more 'normal' team dynamic. These tools will also enable your team to communicate with clients or customers and can include helpful organisational features.

Tips from inside Cpl

"Within Cpl, we use Microsoft Teams as it comes with other benefits that suit our teams. These include file sharing, online chat and group video conferencing. It's not restricted to internal communications either which allows us, or your business, to add external parties to a conversation also.

This is particularly useful when holding interviews or meetings as there is no requirement to install software on their laptops, they simply need to click a link. There is also a useful mobile app available."



5. Engage with your remote employees daily

A quick daily conference call/video meeting can be helpful to assess workloads and discuss any issues. This could be as simple as routinely checking how employees feel and asking if they need any extra support.

When contacting colleagues, you should also be conscious of different time zones or if remote team members have different working hours.

Some good ways to engage with team members daily include:

- Conference calls
- Chat groups
- Email
- Telephone calls
- Applications such as Skype or Slack

6. Be empathetic & encourage social breaks

In a co-working space such as an office, there's room for a bit of banter and idea-sharing, which is a crucial part of any company culture.

Small things like coffee break chats can help colleagues build and maintain working relationships.



Maintaining a good company culture will boost productivity, morale, and engagement.

Alongside regular communications and check-ins, consider how to foster virtual coffee breaks or more casual conversation to keep your company culture alive.

Keeping your Company Culture Alive - Tips to Encourage Team Morale

Good morale is crucial to keeping teams engaged and positive during these times. Take time to promote team bonding by allowing time to share some personal information such as holidays, hobbies, etc. on team calls.

Make Time for Down Time

You can do this by either setting time aside for small talk before or after meetings or encouraging virtual celebrations, like job anniversaries or birthdays.

If you don't have a specific reason to celebrate, try a weekly "coffee morning" or encourage the sharing of positive news and ways to keep entertained. For example, Netflix recommendations, recipes, music or other good online resources. If you have a large team consider a competition and offer a virtual prize for the best suggestion.

Use video calls if possible as eye contact, proximity, tone of voice, and body language are vital in these instances. Having a virtual space for breaks and chat can also be valuable. This can be a dedicated channel on the communication platform you use where team members can share non-work-related anecdotes and stories.

If your company doesn't have a dedicated intranet or platform for this form of communication a WhatsApp group can be just as effective.

Embrace Diversity

Team members will have different cultures, values, homelives and ways of working. This can become a challenge as each person follows their own way of working and interacting with others.

Be conscious of this and work to find common grounds between different team members. For example, certain meeting times might not work for parents.

Celebrate Accomplishments

Celebrate successes together as a team, even when members are dispersed. Why is celebrating success so important? The idea of working towards one goal is a motivator for employees, as is feedback and recognition. Share positive feedback from customers or from across the business, good news and reassurances.

More than anything else, virtual employees at this time need to know they're not alone. They need to feel that they are part of the team and that you support them and understand their challenges.



How to Hold Online Meetings Effectively

An online meeting should follow the same process as a regular meeting. Firstly, decide on what channel is most appropriate, if the meeting is one to one and doesn't require much detail or time, consider sticking to a phone call. If you have a large number of people, or the meeting will be longer, a video conference call works well.

Follow normal meeting guidelines and schedule meetings the same as you normally would. Include call or conference details as well as an agenda and any resources that will be needed.

During the meeting, as organiser it is your role to keep to the agenda and ensure the meeting doesn't run over time. Just because employees are working remotely does not mean their time is not as valuable.

Remember to speak clearly and make the session more interesting by asking questions, sharing news and encouraging collaboration.

If you are using dedicated video conferencing software, you'll be able to screenshare which can be very valuable.

After each meeting, if follow up is needed or actions need to be addressed, follow up with an email that makes it clear who is responsible for what.



A Note on the Importance of Flexibility

During the current situation flexibility will be invaluable to ensure employees can work productively while managing families or other care needs.

Contact team members who you think may require extra support or guidelines and make it clear that you are there to advise. Meanwhile, don't make assumptions – team members without children may have similar challenges in caring for a family member or a complex living situation.

Shift work or adjusted working hours can be good solutions. Once a solution has been arranged, be sure to check in and see if the new arrangement is viable. Again, video calls or a regular phone call can be invaluable and much more effective than an email in these cases.

Working from Home Tips

Working from home every day alongside family members or friends can be challenging.

To recreate a 'normal' working environment and maintain productivity advise your team to:

- **Maintain a Routine:** Keeping a set routine will help maintain motivation. Advise team members to set up a designated workspace and to take regular breaks, as they would in an office setting.

- **Stay connected:** Working alone at home can be isolating. It's essential to maintain communication with colleagues and clients from a collaborative and social point of view. Schedule regular calls or video chats and don't rely on email where misunderstandings can happen. Also, appear online via your group email/chat program so your colleagues know you're available.
- **Focus on results:** Ensure all team members know what their priorities and goals are each day. Quality of work and impactful results, rather than quantity of tasks, should be encouraged.





Tips from inside Cpl

“Within Cpl we use Microsoft Teams as it comes with lots of other benefits, from file sharing and chat to a secretary ‘bot’ which helps our recruiters find suitable times for meetings. It’s not restricted to internal communications either which allows us, or your business, to add external parties to the conversation.”

Other widely used video technologies include:

- Hangouts by Google
- Jabber by Cisco
- Zoom
- BlueJeans



If you don’t have access to a bespoke platform WhatsApp video calls or Facetime can also be effective. All these tools have similar functionalities and are excellent ways to video conference or have video interviews when in-person job interviews aren’t possible.

Some of these have free versions but in the long run you might need to pay for richer features like screen sharing and multiple attendees.

Costs range from around €10-15 per month and set up is quick allowing you to begin video interviewing or conferencing as soon as needed.

As a show of solidarity both Microsoft and Google have announced that their enterprise versions of their software will be free to use for an extended period while unprecedented levels of people are working from home.

Tools and Technologies to Enhance Remote Working – Recommendations from our CIO

There are lots of tools we can use that will help us conduct video interviews and even hire online. Even better, almost all of us have the necessary technology in our home office or our pockets to do just that.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of technology with Skype being the first to be widely adopted. In 2011, Microsoft bought Skype and has been incorporating the technology into their own offering since, first with Skype for Business and then with Microsoft Teams.

This is particularly useful when holding interviews or meetings with candidates/ clients as there is no requirement to install software on their laptops, they simply need to click a link. There is also a useful mobile app available.

Hiring Online via Video & Phone

Video and phone interviews will help you minimise disruptions in your hiring process during this time. Most employers are now familiar with phone interviews. They are a quick way to vet candidates and are advisable before moving on to video interview stage.

Phone interviews should be kept relatively short (15-30 minutes) and simple. If the call goes well, candidates can then be moved on to a second-round video interview.

Video Interviews

A video interview should follow the same basic principles as a 'regular' interview. If you're working with a recruiter, they will help organise & conduct this for you.

Even without the current imperative for social distancing, they can be an extremely powerful tool to:

- Avoid costly travel
- Involve numerous people in the interview process
- Interview international candidates

Within Cpl we use Microsoft Teams as it is particularly useful when holding interviews or meetings with candidates/clients as there is nothing for them to install on their laptops, and simply an app on their mobile.

If your company is unsure of how to set up video interviews or video hiring procedures please do get in touch, we'd be happy to advise over the phone, email or of course a video call.



Online Onboarding Advice & Guidelines

If you are hiring, it's important to retain a proper onboarding process. Once again, technology and regular communication are vital during this period. Here are some key steps to implement a successful virtual onboarding process.

Before a New Employee Begins

Organise and deliver any technology they will need. Ensure equipment has been tested and is properly set with any applications or programs your employee will need. Provide a point of contact and reassure your new hire that you are excited to have them on board, even if circumstances aren't ideal.

'Face to Face' Welcome

A normal meeting in-person meeting is likely to be unsuitable. Instead have a virtual one to one welcome meeting via video call. Check in with them daily and provide useful contacts along with clear expectations and tasks so that your employer knows what is expected of them.

Cover the Basics

Walk through the necessary organisational systems and procedures and prepare forms relating to payroll, time off, insurance, and taxes. By following normal practices your new team member will feel more settled and part of the organisation.

Introduce your Team

Introduce employees virtually and provide visual aids such as an org chart to make things easier. Hold a virtual coffee meeting for a chat so they can meet the team in a relaxed environment. For other members of the company your employee will need to contact, introduce via email and open communication channels this way.

Evaluate and Adjust

Monitor and evaluate your new online onboarding process. Ask for feedback and adjust as appropriate. This is an unprecedented time and feedback and open communication will be vital in ensuring processes are effective.





Minding your Mental Health & Looking out for your Team

Social distancing and adapting to working from home will have different challenges for different people. You must look after your own mental health and be conscious of your team's wellbeing too.

Regular check ins via phone or video will help with this. Below are some further tips to look after yourself and to share with team members.

- **Keep your workspace as healthy and germ free** as possible. Don't forget to regularly clean your keyboard, mobile and landline phone, they are a breeding ground for bacteria.
- **Minimise your intake of news.** Excessive monitoring of updates can cause undue stress and anxiety. Only read or listen to reputable sources, such as the HSE, and limit intake to once or twice daily.
- **Water helps your physical and mental** performance. Aim for 8 glasses of water a day and add some fresh lemon for extra nutritional benefits.

- **Take breaks, stand up, stretch and move around** every 30 minutes or so. Get some fresh air daily while maintaining social distancing guidelines and check in with friends and family members. If you're isolating at home, try a home workout or meditations. There are lots of these on YouTube. Just 10 minutes can have great benefits.
- **Good nutrition is the foundation for any healthy** lifestyle. Replace sugary snacks with seeds, fruit and nuts and avoid processed foods, alcohol and smoking where possible.
- **Sleep is restorative. It's the time when your** body repairs itself from the damage of mental stress, physical strain and infection. For some people, the blue light emanating from laptops/iPad can make it hard to fall asleep. Turn off or reduce this light by visiting the settings on the devices.

Be particularly mindful of team members who are self-isolating or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. The World Health Organisation stated to avoid referring to people with the disease as "COVID-19 cases", "victims" "COVID-19 families" or the "diseased". Employees should be treated as individuals, not as numbers or cases.

"Healthy employees are engaged employees and engaged employees are good for business. In the current climate, maintaining engagement is challenging but critical."
Elysia Hegarty, Cpl Workplace Wellness Lead





We're Here to Help

Overall, it is an undeniably uncertain time, but our consultants are still available and can be contacted remotely.

Email covidqueries@cpl.ie and one of our specialists will be in touch.

If you have concerns about unemployment benefit payment, illness benefit or shorter working time for employees you can view our guide to government support schemes [here](#).

You'll also find regular advice and updates on our LinkedIn page and on cpl.com