



What's affecting your team's productivity and how can you help them stay motivated?

The Covid-19 crisis is affecting everyone differently.

We've all seen the posts on social media from those highly productive people – baking their own bread, starting businesses and even running marathons in their back garden. But for most people, maintaining motivation can be difficult right now, particularly while trying to adapt to different working environments with with no idea of what our 'new normal' will really look like.

As a line manager, you play a critical role in helping your team stay motivated and productive so it's important to understand the key factors which may be affecting their motivation and what you can do to help. Within this article you will find tips and guidance to help engage and motivate your team.

Factors which may be affecting motivation

There are many issues which affect motivation in a 'normal' working environment, but our current circumstances are likely to be adding additional factors into the mix.

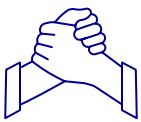




1. Help mitigate the uncertainty

There are so many unknowns right now – when will we return to work? How will the economy be affected? Will the virus be seasonal? We naturally look to our leaders for answers, but the truth is that right now, nobody seems to have them. You can help your team to deal with this by providing certainty where you can:

- Discuss any company-wide communications that are issued and give your team the opportunity to ask questions. Reading between the lines can lead to wrong assumptions being made.
- Be transparent and share information where you can (e.g. meeting minutes) or explain the decision-making process and drivers behind the decisions that affect your team.
- Plan ahead – you don't know what the future will look like, but you can start planning for different outcomes. What if we have to work from home permanently? How can we maintain social distancing in the office? Seek the team's feedback and encourage them to come up with solutions by holding brainstorming sessions. [Click here](#) for our Top 10 Tips for Virtual Brainstorming. Having some possible answers to the 'what ifs' can help to alleviate anxiety about the future position and seeking feedback can make your team feel valued by demonstrating that their opinions matter.
- We are aware that many of you will already be planning ahead for when restrictions are lifted which is why the next edition of the Working Well Toolkit will focus on supporting you in managing change.



2. Keep everyone connected

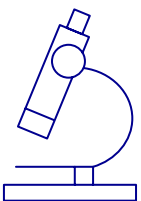
It's important to keep everyone connected to each other and to the bigger picture. It can be easy to feel isolated or left-out when working from home, which can act as a de-motivator.

- Encourage socialising and collaboration as much as possible to ensure everyone still feels part of the team.
- It's easy to lose sight of the company's objectives at the moment and for employees to feel like they are 'treading water', but keeping your team connected to the bigger picture and giving them a shared sense of purpose can help them to understand how their contribution matters. You could set goals that align to the company's strategy and keep them updated on progress so they can see the impact of their efforts.



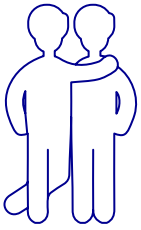
3. Give credit where it's due and share successes

It's easy to underestimate the power of a 'well done' or a 'thank you', but simple acts of recognition (either public or private) can act as a motivator for many. It might not be easy to reward your team for their efforts at the moment but there may be some ways to do it at low or zero cost, e.g. give someone an extra hour's lunch break or an early finish, send them a virtual thank you card or some sweets for a job well done. This would probably happen naturally in a face to face setting, so you might need to remind yourself to make the effort.



4. Don't micro manage

It might be tempting to check up on team members or ask for updates more regularly when they're not sitting right in front of you, but this could make some people feel pressured or untrusted. It helps to create trust if you can find a balance and empower your employees by giving them autonomy over their work. And if you do need to chase activity, pick up the phone – you might feel it's more efficient to send a one-liner "where are we with this", but the person on the receiving end might interpret it as impatient or frustrated, and there may be reasons you're unaware of which are causing work to be delayed or incomplete.



5. Empathise

Some of your team may be facing significant challenges with their new working environment, particularly if they have childcare responsibilities which can't be jointly shared. It's natural for feelings of frustration to creep in when some team members can't do as much as others, but if you unintentionally make these feelings known by being offhand or irritable, it can compound the problem by making them feel like no matter what they do, it isn't enough. A little bit of empathy goes a long way and demonstrating support and understanding can help them make the best of a bad situation!

The same goes for employees struggling to maintain their mental health at the moment. Showing empathy and understanding can help these individuals to keep going. You could consider putting support measures in place which allow them to contribute to the best of their ability, even if that isn't 100%. We will be covering this topic in more detail in a future edition of the Working Well Toolkit, so keep your eye out for further guidance and tools to assist you.



6. And finally – prioritise your own health and wellbeing

We all know the aeroplane analogy (put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others) and the same principle applies here. If your own motivation levels are diminished, then it will be ten times harder for you to try and motivate your team. Use the support network available to you if you're struggling, whether that's your own line manager, HR team or colleagues. Managing people can feel like a thankless task sometimes and it's easy to get overwhelmed. Do what you need to do to keep your energy levels up and be careful of working beyond your scheduled hours. Not only will this cause fatigue, but it might also make your team feel like they should be doing the same. If you are struggling, be honest. Your team will trust you more if you communicate with them openly.



Useful links

- [AXA PPP Webinar – “Managing a remote team – maintaining motivation and momentum”](#)
- [Top 10 Tips for Virtual Brainstorming](#)
- [Edition 1](#) and [Edition 2](#) of the Working Well People Manager Toolkit