Continuing the Adventure of Working Remotely
How to keep your employees engaged and connected

As Managers:

1. Communicate regularly

- Check in frequently and be proactive. Managers who lead remote teams/supervise employees working remotely need to make themselves available. Frequent check-ins with remote workers is a great way to help them overcome challenges that come with remote work.

  - Waiting for an employee to speak up may be too late. In fact, many of them will never decide to raise a problem themselves. Frequently ask a simple question such as "How can I help you be more productive and feel more connected?"

- Schedule a group check-in. Turn on your camera and say hello in real-time, type a welcome message to your team, or have an all group meeting to start or end the work week.

- Implement standing office hours so people can dial in and discuss whatever topics are on their mind.

- Reiterate that your virtual office door is always open: Keeping your virtual office door open is more of a mindset and something to say, but it's worth keeping in mind. Make sure colleagues feel comfortable cold-calling you or asking for help, rather than being worried about 'bothering you,' conversely.

- Encourage staff to share short and long-term concerns or questions via a shared document or in 1:1 or staff meetings. Talk through responses on team calls or in small groups; offer support where possible.

- Keep notes on items discussed/issues shared to make it easier to track, refer to/check back in with staff.

2. Champion health and wellness:

- Take 10 minutes out of your day to walk and talk as a team (could be on a group call).

- Chart an at-home exercise program and other ways to stay healthy.

- Conduct a steps challenge.

- Keep a virtual shared collection of recipes and ideas for healthy, tasty meals and snacks.

- **@UMass** *Click on these links:* Virtual Campus Recreation Fall 2020, well-being workshops, self-guided learning.

- Share what you are doing to pay attention to your own well-being and encourage others to find methods that work for them.

3. Connect with the human-side

- o Host a virtual coffee or lunch break with everyone bringing their beverage or food of choice to a video chat room.

- o Develop creative team engagement challenges on a regular basis – such as workspace photos, recipe sharing, themed doodles or themed dress days. Consider a small prize for "winners" as voted on by the team.

- o Ask your team members if they would be open to having virtual tours of each other's workspaces (works better for smaller teams) to build empathy so everyone can see what it's like for colleagues to work remotely (less privacy, interruptions from family members or pets, etc.).

- o Start a virtual book club that meets once a week.

  - ▪ **@UMass:** Participate in a Learning Community Book Group

- o Set up a "virtual water cooler" discussion board/chat room where people can spend a few minutes engaged with their colleagues in casual conversation.

- o Start meetings on a positive personal note, and commit it to tradition: Begin meetings with a, "Today I…" or "I just ate a…" to bring to mind that you're all human first, and remote workers second.

> **Giving employees a sense of belonging is even more critical during this time of COVID-19 and working remotely.**
>
> A study by The Wall Street Journal suggests that one of the crucial factors that separates successful companies from others are those that give employees a sense of belonging.

4. Define goals for remote workers

- o Set clear and measurable goals for remote employees; be clear about their duties and responsibilities.
- o Check-in on progress, provide recognition, and give feedback as needed.

5. Encourage continuous engagement

- o Encourage your remote employees to stay engaged with the UMass community and join conversations and events even if they are not physically there:
  - **@UMass** *Click on these links:* Events Calendar / Events related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

6. Offer professional growth opportunities

- o Foster professional growth for your employees which will help them feel engaged and productive.
- o **@UMass** *Click on these links:* Free employee Workshops, Classes, Self-Guided Learning, Online Courses.

7. Additional Ideas

- o Watch this video for more creative ways for remote teams to stay connected.
- o **What ideas do you have? What ideas does your remote team have?**

Adapted from PwC, How to stay connected when working remotely and
Smarp, Remote Work: 20 Ways to Engage and Connect with Your Remote Employees