Five ways to improve teambuilding among virtual employees

By Hicks Crawford   12 Feb 2016

The current work environment

The workplace no longer exclusively means a space where everyone comes together five days a week, and sits at assigned desks or reports to their offices. The traditional workplace included a shared space which made things like holding meetings, communicating in person, and collaboration and teamwork much easier.

Today's work environment includes remote employees and virtual teams who may work from their homes a few days a week, or may even be from international locations. Employees might never be in the same location throughout their time working for a company, but it's still important to maintain a sense of teamwork and cohesion. How do you achieve that in a modernized work environment where virtual settings are increasingly becoming the norm?

1. Hold weekly virtual meetings

One of the reasons virtual settings and work environments are becoming prevalent is because technology is widely available to facilitate these shifts in how we do business. Use that technology to your advantage not just to work with employees, but to build stronger teams. Hold weekly video meetings where teams can come together, share their thoughts, brainstorm and just have some regular face time with one another.

2. Maintain set schedules and work hours

When managing a virtual team, collaboration can go by the wayside when everyone is working at varying hours of the day and night. Working their own schedule maintains the concept of being an independent contractor, rather than part of a team. It can also lead to fatigue and burnout as virtual employees push themselves to be available constantly. Create a set work schedule as would be seen in a traditional work environment, so everyone is collaborating at the same time whenever possible.

3. Provide recognition and acknowledgement

Recognising employees goes a long way in improving engagement as well as a sense of teamwork, and it's not something you have to forego when managing virtual employees. Many software solutions provide opportunities to recognise workers' efforts and also team successes within a virtual work environment, which will lead employees to feel like they're part of something greater and foster a team-centric culture.

4. Use instant messaging technology

One of the ways many office-based employees bond is through everyday conversations and the ability to share ideas and work together in an informal, conversational capacity. Foster this through the use of instant managing software, which is often built into more comprehensive collaboration solutions.

5. Utilise gamification

Games and friendly competition tend to bring employees together and nurture a sense of fun and unity. Just because you can't gather your team in the breakroom to play a game doesn't mean you can't take advantage of their benefits. Use virtual or online gamification technology to foster teamwork through competition.

Embracing a team spirit in a technology-driven workplace

There are tremendous advantages to virtual employees, including lower overhead costs, higher levels of productivity and the ability for companies to recruit top talent not otherwise available. With these advantages come challenges, including how to build strong teams that work with one another, but with the use of planning, creativity, and innovative software solutions, it's certainly possible to build a strong, unified virtual team.

ABOUT HICKS CRAWFORD

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