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that might impact morale, be it a communication breakdown or employees feeling disconnected and isolated. Here are 8 tips for boosting team morale from a distance.

Paul McDonald • May. 19, 2020



Most successful accounting teams are powered by high employee morale. That's why good managers place so much stock on keeping their teams engaged and motivated, and on fostering a cohesive, supportive office environment.

But what if the office is closed? In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, accounting departments across the country have morphed into remote teams, with many employees working from home.

In this new reality, managers need to be mindful of issues particular to remote work

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level and state of mind.

2. **Encourage virtual socializing.** The [working relationships between your employees](#) are more important than ever when your team can't meet in person. To help maintain these bonds (and fend off stress), make space for nonaccounting conversations, whether it's creating a Slack channel for sharing jokes and memes or encouraging virtual lunches over video calls. A regularly scheduled — but optional — video conferencing call, with “no shop talk” as the ground rule, can also be a time when team members share a laugh and catch up on each other's reading or video-streaming recommendations.
3. **Stay positive ...** As a manager, your energy can set the tone in the office, and it's no different in the virtual arena. [Lead by example](#) with positive messaging, optimistic language and a dash of humor.
4. **... but also empathetic.** Staying upbeat and positive doesn't mean you should ignore or downplay the challenges your team is facing. On the contrary, you may need to deliver bad news, making empathy a powerful tool. The more workers understand how everyone is struggling to some extent, the more likely they are to bond. If some team members are working on notebooks perched on ironing boards, this isn't the best time to show off your fancy standing desk. Instead, talk about some of the challenges you have faced, and just as importantly, how you overcame them.
5. **Impose structure.** Suggesting guidelines about the workday is smart management that will help remote staff maintain a healthy work-life balance. Tell your team you are keeping normal hours and you expect them to shut down at the end of their work shift. Propose plenty of room for flexibility — some people will need to work odd hours at a time like this — and the team will appreciate you are looking out for them.

6. Be workload watchful. [Employees with too much work](#) on their plates will

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meeting or sending a thank-you note doesn't take much effort but has a powerful energizing effect on workers, especially whose morale may be flatlining.

8. Paint the big picture. A sense of accomplishment and pride in the organization are two of the key factors underpinning worker happiness. Remind your staff of the critical role accounting professionals play in a company's ability to navigate the current COVID-19 outbreak and resulting economic downturn. If possible, share with them examples of how their team or individual efforts are contributing to the company's resiliency.

Times are tough for everyone right now, but shared experiences, however difficult, can have a way of bringing people together in unexpected and lasting ways. Support your workers through this challenging period, and it could be you return to the office with a more cohesive team.

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Paul McDonald is senior executive director at [Robert Half](#), the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 35 years in the recruiting field, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.

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