RemotePROEmployee

REMOTE VS. OFFICE WORK

How is remote work potentially different from office work for each of these competencies?

Focus

The extent to which an employee is goal-oriented, has a high sense of drive, strives to improve, sets goals, and then tries to meet or exceed them.

- The remote work environment is less predictable— more external factors the employee has no control over (barking dogs and noisy neighbors); making it harder to stay on task to achieve a goal.
- Most employees don't have the equivalent of a quiet conference room at home they can work from when they need to get something done.
- The virtual environment may present many distractions which are easy to succumb to – television on in the background, household chores, and children asking for attention.
- Virtual employees may be open to more interruptions like phone calls from friends, household deliveries, and pop-in visits.

Adaptability

The extent to which an employee adjusts quickly to change, handles uncertainty, and embraces new ways of doing things.

- A process designed for the office might not work as well when applied virtually; the more adaptable employee is better able to identify parts of the process which can be tweaked, re-ordered, or done a different way.
- A highly adaptable employee is more likely to see a move to virtual as an opportunity to improve on a process, rather than maintain the status quo.
- Remote workers needs to be adaptable, flexible, and take initiative to learn and grow. If they don't know how to do something, they figure it out.
- Virtual employees may need to adapt the work day/work week to accommodate work/life balance and surges in workloads or co-workers who live in other parts of the world.

Communication

- Virtual communication is less likely to be face-to-face; even when individuals can see each other through video conferencing, the technology is less than perfect. There is more burden on employees to make sure their words and meaning are being understood and that they are tuning in to others.
- We tend to underestimate the importance of body language —when that information is missing, there is more room for misunderstanding, filtering and hurt feelings.
- Effective remote workers think about what needs to be communicated to who and choose the most appropriate tool (i.e., email versus chat versus a phone call).
- In the virtual world, it is much more difficult to build and maintain relationships. There simply isn't enough time during work meetings to build a solid foundation – so informal communication is critically important.
- It can be difficult to determine the ideal balance of the amount of communication in a virtual environment—too much detail can lead to information overload; and a desire to be efficient can lead to under-communication. Both can be time wasters.
- In a virtual environment, the normal pace of communication is disrupted– for example, muting and un-muting on the phone and delay from back and forth emails.

Collaboration

- A virtual work environment makes it harder for colleagues and team members to develop and nurture strong working relationships. Apart from in-person task-based meetings and conversations, the office environment allows for more informal and social interactions that help individuals feel they know each other, increasing team cohesion.
- Creative solutions to problems sometimes come about via spontaneous conversations that are more likely to happen in an office environment. Collaboration in a virtual environment tends to be more structured—i.e., pre-arranged phone calls and meetings.
- To succeed in a remote work environment, workers need to proactively connect with others, gather feedback and reach out to teammates.
- It is harder to celebrate victories, or "the team" in a remote environment, shared experiences which lay the foundation for close-knit future collaboration.
- To be most productive in a virtual environment, an employee needs to be able to effectively use collaboration software and other technology tools.

Self-Efficacy

Accountability

The extent to which an employee is comfortable operating independently with minimal direction, and deals well with task ambiguity and complications that arise when completing tasks.

The extent to which an employee is dependable and reliable in completing assigned tasks and responsibilities on time.

- Remote work requires employees to solve issues for themselves, while in the office there are likely to be resources available to turn to. For example, figuring out problems with their personal technology.
- An employee who prefers to work with very specific guidelines and directions can flounder in a remote environment where a supervisor or colleague may not be as readily available to answer questions or help solve a problem. This may not be immediately obvious to the supervisor, or to the employee him or herself.
- Remote workers are responsible for managing themselves, their work, work/life balance, and mental health.
- Remote employees need to be able to get their work done without anyone looking over their shoulder and checking up on them. To achieve this, they need to have the ability to identify their priorities, plan the steps to complete their tasks, estimate the time to dedicate to these tasks, and execute them.
- Remote workers often need to advocate for themselves when it comes to being assigned stretch projects, career advancement, or relaying accomplishments.

- An employee may be able to procrastinate and become distracted from the task at hand in a virtual environment without his or her supervisor being aware.
- An employee low in trustworthiness will have more opportunities to "game the system" in a virtual environment than they would in a traditional office environment.
- Virtual employees need to be transparent about challenges and set-backs that may not be visible to the rest of the team.
- Lacking body language cues and in-person relationship building, remote employees have to give others the benefit of the doubt and not jump to conclusions.
- Staying on track and meeting deadlines can be especially important in a virtual environment, where projects are more likely to be structured sequentially, with one team member handing off to another after completing a task.

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