Managing a Business Day to Day

How to Get the Most Out of Your Employees and Maximize Operational Efficiency
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KEYS TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGING A REMOTE WORKFORCE
Today’s growing remote workforce has transformed our way of working and created a new normal that’s far from ordinary. This shift in how we work has created the need for new strategies and tactics for effectively reaching and engaging employees remotely.

As some companies claim remote working is here to stay, workforce leaders and business managers must develop and hone remote workforce management skills, identifying and refining ways to ensure employees feel supported and can continue working effectively outside the office.

**Understand your employee base and communicate accordingly**

Remote working isn’t a new concept, but the broader shift to remote working caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is unique. Employees who are accustomed to working from home or enjoy remote working will thrive during this time. Others will struggle to successfully navigate their new work environment.

Show grace to employees and colleagues who you know are struggling to adapt. As a workforce leader, it’s your job to ensure employees feel supported and are poised for success, regardless of their unique situation. Avoid taking a one-size-fits-all approach to communication.

Regardless of communication style and preferences, schedule regular video and/or phone check-ins with your team and employees. Face-to-face communication is more important now than ever before. Video conversations with employees you might not see face-to-face, whether that’s because you sit in different offices or your workstreams don’t frequently overlap, can help you forge strong relationships across your entire organization.

**Provide resources to meet employee needs**

Understand your team’s needs and put resources in place to help meet them. Host virtual town halls, consultation sessions and webinars on important issues impacting both your organization and the world. Whether that’s celebrating diversity to promote unity or offering support for working parents, do your best to provide the right resources for employees.

In addition to identifying specific needs, remaining cognizant of the work/life balance is crucial. Share what you’re doing to maintain a healthy work/life balance. Suggest outlets for your team to relieve stress and disconnect, whether that’s through exercising, meditating, reading, cooking, painting or volunteering.

Knowing they have your support in maintaining a definitive work/life balance — even if that means taking a break during working hours — is key to positively impacting your employees’ mental and emotional well-being. Although more employees are working from home and many travel restrictions are in place, you should also encourage your team to fully sign off by using their vacation days (as available and in line with company policy).
**Maintain open lines of direct communication**

When working remotely, it’s important for employees and colleagues to know that you’re available even though they can’t come to your office or meet in a conference room. Communicate the times of day you’re typically available and your preferred methods of virtual communication.

I’ve developed a system with my supervisor: If my boss sends me a text message, the ask needs to be addressed immediately, while an instant message is less urgent. If I want to schedule an ad-hoc meeting, it should be scheduled for early morning. Communicate to employees the best time and ways to reach you, and be virtually available when you say you will be.

This goes both ways. At a time when homes have become home offices, developing an understanding of your employees’ schedules and demonstrating your support will go a long way. Is there a window of time when their child is napping and that’s when they prefer to schedule meetings? Do they like to unplug in the afternoon, perhaps to take a walk with their dog?

Work to understand your employees’ schedules, and do your best to support them.

**Employee management through effective communication**

Managing a remote workforce effectively comes from truly knowing your employees and working hard to meet them where they are. During this tumultuous time, when possible, keep it light. Share a piece of good news, a poem, story or quote that’s meaningful to you. Look on the bright side and encourage employees and colleagues to do the same.

Being a constant in your employees’ lives, communicating with them, listening to them and building real connections is key to successful leadership today and every day.

https://yhoo.it/2RBLzU3
4 STRATEGIES TO BOOST EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY WITHOUT MICROMANAGING
4 Strategies to Boost Employee Productivity Without Micromanaging

When you first launch your company, you have to micromanage to some extent – there’s little or no team infrastructure and, since you’re building a company from the ground up, every decision builds and shapes the future of the company. As you scale your business, however, there comes a time when micromanaging actually damages your organization. It also makes running and working in your business a lot less fun.

Assuming you have the right people on the bus in the first place, real growth comes in realizing when to nitpick and when to simply let go and delegate. I believe a dedicated individual delivers far more value performing in an environment of freedom than when someone is continually looking over her/his shoulder. So as my company has grown, I’ve had to learn how to be an efficient boss who lets his employees take the reins and, thus, grow personally and professionally, leading to happier employees and an overall enhanced team performance.

In my opinion, the most effective management style is summed up in the words of Shunryu Suzuki, a Zen Buddhist expert and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. In his book, Suzuki suggests that the best way to control people is to give them a great deal of space, allow them to mess around, and then just to watch them. He says, “To ignore them is not good; that is the worst policy. The second worst is trying to control them. The best one is to watch them, just to watch them, without trying to control them.” Suzuki’s suggestion may seem oversimplified or silly, but I’ve found that it’s dead on. If your employees feel like they have freedom to be themselves and your confidence, all they need to know is that you’re watching them. This, combined with some basic structure, will lead to the best performance.

Here are four strategies we use at my company, HUMAN Healthy Vending, to boost employee productivity without micromanaging:

1. **Create a system to share “crucial results” across the company.** Employees and managers must be able to share their daily and weekly goals. First, create a way for your employees (managers, too) to share the most important action items they have for the week and have them list, daily, what they are going to accomplish in order to achieve those weekly goals. This provides a way for employees to be accountable to their own goals, allows managers to see what their direct reports are doing (and provide adequate feedback and guidance), and provides a way for teams to track progress toward shared goals. The key here is to also go over these goals in a quick huddle every day to ensure that the goals chosen for the day and week are actually the most valuable to each department and to the company as
a whole. While there are software programs like Asana that make it easy to share goals, I have found that a shared Google spreadsheet works just as well. Each employee at our company is on the same spreadsheet, though for larger companies it may make sense to break it down by department. At the end of each day, employees color-code each daily goal — a green highlight signifies the task has been completed and a red highlight signifies the task was not completed.

2. **Start the morning with a huddle.** Morning “huddles” have consistently proven to be a great way for companies to energize their team and make sure everyone is set up for success. Broken down by department, each team member has 30 seconds to list his or her number-one most important objective of the day, share any big wins, and let others know if he or she needs help or guidance on a specific issue or problem. This way, everyone is on the same page and feels aligned, and potential problems are solved much sooner than they otherwise would be.

3. **Conduct weekly “direct report” meetings.** Just like professors have “office hours,” managers should have an ongoing timeframe where employees can come to speak to them about specific projects. I have a recurring weekly appointment with each of my “direct reports” (employees who report to me) to discuss progress on goals and to provide feedback. This helps cut down emails since my staff knows that they have a recurring appointment to discuss action items, questions and problems in person. I always ensure that I have an agenda for each meeting, at least a day in advance, since this ensures we make the best use of our time. Recently we’ve been using the software 15Five to lead these meetings, and serve as a kick-off point for our conversation together. Having a set template for each meeting, and reviewing action items from last week, is absolutely essential.

4. **Have a company-wide email policy.** It is one of my personal policies that email does not dictate my actions or my schedule; instead, I prefer to use my time to create, rather than react. It would not make sense, however, for me to have this constrained email policy and for the rest of the company to have a free-for-all email policy. So, our office-wide policy is that we are all “mindful emailers.” We do not allow internal emails to the entire team before noon each day. This helps us ensure that the most vital hours for productivity (the morning hours) are reserved for “crushing it.” This is especially useful for a team with a sales staff, and ensures that people’s crucial results are handled early in the day rather than at the end.

If you’re running a startup, chances are you have your hands in everything. This is fine and necessary when you’re in the early stage of your business. But you can only scale your growth if you hire and train employees to take over certain aspects of the business so that you can stick to your high-leverage activities. There’s a fine line between being an engaged manager and a micromanager. The above steps will help you discover where it is.

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HOW BUSINESS AGILITY SAVES YOU DURING TURBULENT TIMES
How Business Agility Saves You During Turbulent Times

Is your business agile enough to survive through times of volatility? Here is how your small business can adopt a more agile business model to keep growing through market disruptions.

A Greek philosopher once said that change is the only constant in life. Heraclitus of Ephesus knew that this was true for all life – and business too. Experts have been speaking about disruption as the new normal for nearly a decade. We’ve known for some time that huge upheaval is part of the deal.

For many small businesses, the COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the need for organizational agility. Moving forward, your business will benefit from the ability to enact rapid and drastic change in these increasingly volatile times.

Let’s investigate what business agility is, why it’s important and how you can move towards a more flexible model that will help you survive any changes or disruptions in the future.

What is Business Agility?

Business agility can be defined as a company’s ability to adapt and respond to changes in their immediate competitive environment. If a business can consistently identify and capture opportunities – no matter the economic climate – then they are successfully agile.

For a small business, agility is related to your ability to orient, adapt and change in a fast-paced, ambiguous and often volatile market place.

This ability was tested when the recent global pandemic forced businesses to close, and people to work from home.

According to a recent McKinsey Global Survey, organizational agility is far less common than it should be in today’s unstable economic climate.

For a business to be agile it must have two things – a stable foundation, and the ability to respond quickly and decisively to change.

Why is it Important Right Now?

There are specific reasons why business agility is important for your business right now. These take a major paradigm shift into account, and the various changes happening all over the world.

- The digital evolution has brought with it the fundamental requirement to adapt to disruptive change. Without agility, a business will not be able to compete with new technologies that are being released. Consider AI and machine learning for example.

- Disruptive technologies are constantly changing the world and the marketplace. Digital transformation as a cultural imperative is required to help companies leverage current strategies, technologies and their capacity to change at any given time.
• Climate change will slow global economic growth, and result in a number of challenges for businesses operating in certain areas. Consider the increase in floods, lack of natural resources, animal species extinctions, and the rise in global pandemics.

• As the economy faces disruption, a mini war for talent is taking place. The winners will be businesses who can offer creative and valued individuals both stability, and the ability to adapt to change. In other words, agile companies will be in demand.

5 Ways a Small Business Can Become More Agile

Your small business must make business agility a priority in 2020. COVID-19 is just the start of a long list of challenges that you could face. With an agile model, you will future-proof your company.

#1: Give Your Team the Tools for Change

The first step to organizational agility, is to adopt it as part of your work culture. Gallup recently conducted a study and discovered something interesting. On a list of factors that drove agility, co-operation and speed of decision-making took first place.

A change in mindset then, is the first way your small business can become more agile. Create a team culture that reflects your belief in an ever-changing environment. Train your people for change!

Give them the tools, processes and procedures that they need to make agile decisions, in response to market turbulence. Use how your team responded to COVID-19 as a starting point.

#2: Invest in Robust IT Infrastructure

The second way is to take a good look at your business’s infrastructure. Investing in robust, managed and easy-to-change IT infrastructure is a great decision in this climate.

To be more agile your small business needs a strong platform that provides stability and collaboration for your people during times of change. A business website, based on solid WordPress hosting and WordPress design can be that for your company.

• Always be in the cloud and work from anywhere
• Make fast amendments to your website
• Add or remove products and services
• Use collaboration tools to connect with employees and customers
• Save time and money while still being fully agile
• Track and analyze customer behavior

It’s the evolving architecture that you need to stay current, and it comes with an expanding list of tools for your team. Quickly add an online store, a blog, manage your new products and services – or host your live webinars onsite. WordPress enables small business agility.
#3: Learn to Listen and Create Opportunity First

It's important that your business learns to anticipate market needs so that you can quickly respond to opportunities as they arise. This means dialing into your niche, truly understanding your customers and having your ear to the ground at all times.

Ecommerce business owners that acted fast during the rise of COVID-19 are still benefiting from those quick reactions. Online stores that stocked up on PPE equipment, masks, gloves and sanitizing gear early in the outbreak made significant sales and profits.

In Rockridge, a clothing designer switched to making masks and sold 2000 of them in 24 hours. When your business is constantly listening and looking for opportunity, you benefit the most.

#4: Focus on Customer Relationships and Service

To become more agile you need to focus on customer service and the relationships that you have with your customers. Many small businesses realized the value of their social media presence when COVID-19 struck. Without a loyal, engaged customer base – they would have lost their revenue.

- Immediate communication
- Outstanding customer service
- Constant contact through website, chat and social media
- Support through gift vouchers, contests and discounts

Thanks to existing connections, these companies were able to quickly orientate their customer base on changes happening in their businesses. Agile customer support is an essential in times of uncertainty. You can retain and re-orientate income streams with strong buyer relationships.
#5: Stay Updated on The Latest Niche Developments

Whatever niche your business operates in, you need to become an expert in that niche. Stay updated on the latest trends and developments, and make connections in your field.

Business agility isn’t just about internal flexibility, it’s also about reacting to external influences in a way that can benefit your business. This means understanding technological developments that might disrupt your market. It means networking with innovators and collaborating with other teams.

And it means taking action to develop your products or services in a way that will keep you ahead of your competition. Stay relevant, stay in-demand and understand where your niche is going to get there first.

Agile small businesses can’t operate in a silo. First, you need a strong platform to act as a springboard for your agile team. This will be your business website.

If you don’t have a website that is managed by a professional and supportive team, Yahoo Hosting is an amazing platform that gives you the ability to be agile in the face of disruptive change. Once you have your platform in place, give your team the tools they need to respond to these changes.

Through training, listening and watching out for opportunities as they arise – your team will learn to be more agile over time. Focus on building long lasting connections with your customers so that they are willing to change with you, and continue their support.

Finally, always know what is coming next in your niche. Connect with others who may have insight into how to keep your products and services selling through turbulent times.

https://yhoo.it/35NQud4
3 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY MANAGING CREATIVES AT WORK
3 Tips for Effectively Managing Creatives at Work

On projects where novelty and innovation are essential to the bottom line, creative professionals – designers, writers, musicians, and artists – are an integral part of success. You manage business people every day of the week and twice on Sundays. But how do you manage creatives, who think the glass should be half full–of kumquats? As an effective manager, you will need to broaden your managerial skills to work with these individuals.

The most important aspect of managing creatives is understanding that their work process is not as linear or deadline-driven as other stakeholders. Giving these individuals the flexibility to find their own way while functioning within the larger organizational context may be your biggest challenge. To best advise you, we have suggestions from interviewees who are both creative workers and managers.

1. Start Off Strong

When you start a project with a cross-functional team that includes creatives, it’s up to you to create the right environment for them (and everyone) to flourish. Make sure the project brief you start with is just that – brief. While this may be important for everyone on the team, an accurate and precise project brief can give a creative the most scope for exercising the imagination.

Send the brief to your team members before the first project session, which will give everyone time to gather some thoughts. Then, at your first brainstorming session, encourage everyone, including the non-creatives, to participate in generating solutions. As Gaye Mulholland of Gaye Mulholland Design, a graphic designer and visual communications manager, observed, “Teams that are encouraged to collaborate produce better work than those that are forced to compete.” No one’s ideas should be shot down as impractical, silly, or off-plan. Good solutions will come up, but at this stage, the goal is to generate quantity, not quality.

When ideas come up at the brainstorming stage but the team appears to be divided, never pit workers against each other in a competition scenario to get “better ideas.” Mulholland said, “Eventually these people will have to work in harmony together on the winning solution. As a result, it can be very hard for a creative to put a full effort into something if they have been on a ‘runner up’ or rejected solution. Far better to challenge everyone to work together on finding a way of bringing elements of all good ideas to the final product.”

2. Keep the Ego in Mind

Shannon George, an animation producer and television script writer, noted, “My creative work is a reflection of who I am in a way that other work products aren’t. When a manager tells me that my script is ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ I take it subjectively and personally, but that doesn’t necessarily mean I know how to make it ‘better.’” As a result, she said, how you deliver criticism is essential to getting good results.
Sandwich negative feedback between two positives, even when there is little you like about the result. Instead of being blunt about the changes you need, indicate the problem and give the creative guidance in coming up with the solution.

Mulholland suggested that instead of saying, “Make the logo bigger,” a more effective approach might be to say, “Good job getting this done on schedule. What can you do to make the logo more readable?” This gives the creative worker specific feedback: Nothing is worse than “I don’t like it.”

Your team will collaborate better if they have some idea of what their creative colleagues do to get their jobs done. Demystifying the creative process and showing how labor intensive it is can help team members and project leaders be more understanding of each other’s needs and limitations.

3. Schedule Realistically

The schedule is not the creative’s problem. It’s yours, the manager’s. George put it this way: “The creative’s work is writing or design. The deadline is her manager’s problem.”

While the creative can produce on demand, what can be a problem for them is producing on a schedule not of their making. Regular check-ins (even throughout the day, depending on the stage of the project) can be effective, so you can be aware of when people are struggling and what measures need to be taken. Managers should take a flexible approach to scheduling creatives while at the same time staying within regular working practices and adhering to deadlines.

Being direct with the creative is essential, whether it is about scheduling, attitude, or output. Sometime it is worth letting the creative work overtime, but there comes a time when the creative has to be encouraged to take a break or even finish. A good manager, over time, will learn the appropriate things to do and say…and when to leave the creative alone to simply get on with the task.

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Our solutions
What does Yahoo Small Business do?

Yahoo Small Business empowers business owners to launch and scale their ideas online. From creating a website to promoting a brand, our products help entrepreneurs succeed.

The tools offered by Yahoo Small Business include:

- **Websites**: An easy-to-use, drag-and-drop website building tool. Choose from 150+ themes, customize, and publish in just minutes.
- **Ecommerce**: Online stores that come with shipping integration, inventory management, credit card processing, live insights, and apps to help your business grow.
- **Domains**: Choose from a huge selection of domain extensions with the industry’s most competitive prices.
- **Web Hosting**: We can host your website on our own servers. Our hosting system also comes with site building tools.
- **Wordpress Hosting**: Take control of your business listings on 70+ local directories from a single dashboard and be discovered by potential customers near you.
- **Business Mail**: Increase your credibility with business email that uses your domain name.

**Website Design**
Professional designers and writers are waiting to build your site. Get a team that designs, builds, and manages a website that grows your business.

**Business Maker**
Business Maker takes the guesswork out of starting your own company. Handle every part of your business from one easy-to-use dashboard.

**Localworks**
Localworks puts you in control of your business across 70+ online local listings. Being found has never been so easy.

Get Started
Get Started
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What’s next
let’s talk about the Resource Center

With well over 20,000 articles, videos, webinars, tools, news, and much more our resource center is a one-stop-shop for SMB information.

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