

Will it Fly?® Educational Brief

Module: Managing Remote Employees

Section: Provide Collaborative Tools

Since “trading up” from inferior equipment can be expensive, if the set-up is part of their work/compensation package, keep your remote worker happy and choose high-quality computers, devices and furniture at the outset. Providing faster internet access, a dedicated mobile phone/landline, and a good office chair may enhance productivity and make the family/office boundary more distinct. For employees who must travel, such as salespeople, be sure they have the latest, lightest laptops with enough battery backups for their longest flights. Rapid access to the company’s online tools can save sales staff headaches and your bottom line. Provide excellent technical support.

With communication so essential, investigate the tools/technologies that make the most sense (depending on your budget and set up) for how the remote employee would work. Also determine the appropriate levels of security, accessibility, user-friendliness and cost. Evaluate this information along with the remote employee’s feedback. In addition, provide the reasoning for selecting these dedicated technologies (to ensure compliance), along with the ground rules for their use.

You and the employee will be sharing information, via typical shared objects such as Word documents, PowerPoint, Google docs, encrypted messaging, etc. Cloud-based or not, the applications chosen should be able to interact with each other, as well as with audio and video tools if need be. Security, confidentiality and usefulness, along with the remote employee’s work practices need to be considered here as well, so that data sharing takes place as effectively as possible.

The choices are plentiful for app- and browser-based tools that allow for real-time conversations, in addition to dedicated videoconferencing equipment. When putting together the set-up, consider the type and quality of the basic components that you will both need, including: user interface, video

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cameras, microphones, video display, speakers, sound dampening, backgrounds and lighting.

High-speed access is at the heart of running an effective remote operation, and allowing these workers to use virtual private networks (VPNs) can help them stay in the loop by providing company intranet access, etc. Regardless of how good the connection though, both you and the remote employee should be prepared for more frequent problems with the internet and network access due to set-up glitches and increased traffic. In addition, keep in mind the type of connectivity required, security requirements, location for connectivity (client site, airport, hotel), and Wi-Fi options.
