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Remote Collaboration
Facing the challenges of COVID-19

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Content

We at Deloitte have extensive experience with working remotely. As our clients and their needs are at the heart of what we do, we would like to share our insights in the form of this practical guide with you. We offer this ready-to-use summary, invite you to share our experience and best practices, and will make it available to a broader audience. Additionally, we offer to conduct interactive sessions for you to experience the interactive guide together with your team.

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2020 Deloitte

Understanding the stressful situation, employees think differently
Remote working is the current normal for specific workforce segments

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In response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic a wide range of companies
decided – or will soon decide – to transition to remote working

The impact of COVID-19 : Working environments as well as daily life are changing for the employees

The spread of COVID-19 has led to unprecedented measures, first by governments and now businesses, as they try to limit the spread of the virus. In addition to *restricting travel* and *canceling large events*, a growing number of companies are now *rethinking their ways of working*. While production workers as well as system-relevant workforce such as medical staff are still working on-site, a majority of the remaining workforce in Germany has been encouraged or even mandated to work remotely.

Working remotely under these circumstances means *adapting to a new environment, battling a new set of distractions* as well as *experiencing an unprecedented fusion of work and private life*. In order to continue working efficiently and creating value under these new circumstances, organizations need to understand, accept and support their employees' specific situations and needs.

The following personas should help employers to understand their workforce and intend to visualize some of their *specific situations and needs*. However, there are some aspects that all of these personas have in common: they all face a *multitude of information about COVID-19, need to re-arrange their work and personal life* and therefore might experience a *stressful phase*.

Personas transitioning to remote work   **Personas continuing to work on-site**

Tina
…works in Accounting and has been working from home occasionally. However, she has *two young children* and now has to manage childcare and work simultaneously

Patrick
…works in IT and is very *familiar with digital applications* and hardware. However, he dislikes collaborating in bigger groups

Marie
…works in Marketing and is a true team player. She fears that working from home will make her less productive and will *disconnect her from her colleagues and leaders*

Rainer
…works as an R&D head. As his wife and his children, who are studying economics, are now *all working remotely* they need to divide their home into new working areas for each family member

Ayla
…works in a hospital and cannot perform her work remotely. She often works overtime due to a high number of patients and is *curious* about the medical implications of the current situation

Thomas
…works in a production site and since demand decreased significantly, he is *afraid* that he will soon be transitioning into "Kurzarbeit"

Re-think remote working-environment, leadership and collaboration

Understanding the stressful situation, employees think differently
Known challenges and Lessons Learned

Building on our own experience with remote working and our insights into the challenges and best practices of our clients

Frequent challenges…

- Working remotely / from home means battling a new set of "distractions" e.g. a child wanting attention, a dog barking

- Lack of commitment, as meetings, workshops or labs are "only" virtual

- Technical issues may prevent some employees from getting their work done, logging in to a specific technology or using all features of virtual meetings, workshops or labs tools

- Screen fatigue causes the attention span to shorten, as starring at a laptop screen is more exhausting than face-to-face interaction

- Team members cannot engage directly with their colleagues and leaders and may feel disconnected, less creative or less productive

- Working remotely / from home often results in a fusion of work and private life and some employees may have difficulties to disengage at the end of the work day

- Encourage everyone to set up an organized and quiet workplace and embrace "distractions" that cannot be avoided under the current circumstances

- Establish buy-in from everyone and focus on the benefits of virtual meetings, workshops or labs (e.g. real-time visualization and note-taking)

- Ensure everyone is familiar with the technology and tools, communicate ground rules (e.g. mandatory tech-check, everyone logs in via laptop) and provide fast support to solve unexpected technical issues (increasing server capacity and support via help desk might be necessary under the current circumstances)

- Schedule compact sessions, use breakout sessions, frequently check-in with colleagues if they are still able to focus, schedule breaks accordingly

- Encourage video calls and do not forget about socializing with colleagues and leaders to avoid a social disconnect

- Support employees to maintain an appropriate work-life balance

…Good Practices

Setting-up the "office" for remote work

Practical guide: Balance individual needs, an effective working environment and collaboration requirements when setting up the "new" office

Develop a *daily routine*: When are you working? When are you off? Make sure *to schedule breaks!*

Use *available tools and technology* and do not hesitate to *try something new!*

Make your choice whether you prefer to *communicate via phone or video call.*

Dress comfortably and appropriately, reflective of your company culture as well as your personal preferences.

Do not forget about *socializing with your colleagues,* consider virtual lunch or coffee dates if these are part of your routine.

Touch base with your clients, peers and other working groups constantly and respond to inquiries in a timely manner!

Stay in *close contact with your senior team* to ensure your tasks are clear and your impact and performance are visible!

Be (easily) *available during working hours* and keep your (Outlook) *calendar up-to date.*

Define a *dedicated tidy and organized workspace.*

Do not forget to *disengage at the end of the work day* and try to maintain an *appropriate work-life balance.*

Remote working-environment: Setting-up the "office" and re-thinking meetings

5 phases for conducting efficient meetings, workshops and lab sessions

Practical guide: Balance individual needs, an effective working environment
and collaboration requirements when setting up the "new" office

Know your objective and group

Know your Objective
- What is your objective?
- What is the content that has to be shared?
- What is your deliverable?
- What is the main outcome?

Know your participants
- How many people will participate?
- Who are the participants?
- Where are the participants located?
- What is their situation and connectivity?
- What are the time zone differences?

Choose a format and technology

Know your format
- What format to use in order to reach the objectives and engage the participants? (e.g. meeting, workshop, lab)
- Technology features
- What are the core features required? (Double check, if the available infrastructure is adequate before suggesting the use of new tools)

Know your tool options
- Does it offer audio and video?
- Does the tool work alone or does it have to be combined? (Keep in mind that too many different tools can be overwhelming)
- Does everyone have access and know how to use the tool?
- How to set up the virtual space?
- How can information and results be documented afterwards?

Translate methodology

Design inclusive activities, processes, and flow
- How do the objectives translate into virtual activities?
- How can they be time-boxed? What is the process and length, breaks, etc.?
- How to create power-hours to maximize productivity?
- How to integrate breakouts effectively (individual /group work vs. in person/virtual)?

Increase engagement
- How to facilitate virtual collaboration?
- How to handle limited verbal communication?
- How to visualize processes?
- How to distribute the agenda / pre-read and assign pre-work?
- How to set up templates and dashboards?
- How to introduce the tool?

Deliver the virtual session

Interactive introduction
- How to kick off?
- How to make introductions?
- How to orient and onboard?
- How to energize/warm up?

Compact main part
- How to explain activities?
- How to facilitate breakouts?
- How to share and discuss work?
- How to conclude?
- How to ensure focus and sense if it is time for a break?

Actionable wrap-up
- How to conclude?
- How to take decisions?
- How to create an action plan?
- How to reflect?

Follow-up

Share results
- How to summarize the virtual meeting, workshop or lab?
- How to document and download the virtual meeting, workshop or lab to share results?

Turn momentum into action
- How to follow-up?
- When to meet again?
- How to create commitment?
- How to create and manage an action plan?
- How to capture feedback?

For different purposes different formats need to be considered

Practical guide: Differentiate formats and technologies depending on the objective, complexity of the topic as well as skills and preferences of your audience

Formats	Key Considerations	Illustrative tools*
Virtual Facilitation	• In times of remote work the need for brainstorming, planning, decision making, alignment, voting, etc. remains • Practical implications: more interaction with virtual whiteboards, polls, etc. help to structure the meeting and ensure effectivity	MURAL, retrium, MS Teams, klaxon, miro, STORMZ
Virtual Communication	• Sharing information to different audiences as well as receiving feedback in a structured way becomes even more important • Practical implications: Video conferencing, group chat, virtual reality tools allow two way communication	Skype, zoom
Virtual Presentation & Meetings	• Meetings will continue to be an effective alignment instrument • Practical implications: Consider performing established meetings virtually and consider introducing new formats like stand-up and status updates with modern and agile tools, using Q&A features and whiteboard templates for interactive lessons learned and reflections	Conceptboard, workplace, slack
Virtual Project Management	• Sharing documents remains a challenge and key success factor in times of remote work • Practical implications: File sharing and collaborative report writing should become part of the DNA of every meeting	Teamwork, Confluence, Jira, Basecamp, Trello, asana, N
Virtual Team Building	• Unbundled teams will continue to collaborate and need to build and keep their spirit • Practical implications: Install virtual coffee and networking dates and use gamification apps to foster a joint learning spirit	Kahoot!, TEAM MOOD, Dr. Clue, donut
Virtual Events	• Although we all know the challenges of small virtual meetings, the need for conference formats will increase over time • Practical implications: Start now to choose technologies for virtual conferences, exhibitions, congresses, etc.	Meetyoo, HEXAFAIR, ENGAGE, VIRTUALIST
Virtual Reality Formats	• Remote work has the potential to become a catalyst for virtual reality based formats • Practical implications: Avatars make collaboration more tangible in the remote office and team-building activities might become more real	Rumii, horizon, Arthur, vr on, MeetinVR, we are

6 Technology use cases

Practical guide: Use technologies answering your requirements with relevant features

1 **Web-conferencing with Skype**

Skype was already in place before the transition to remote work. However, a lot of the offered features were not leveraged to their full potential in the past. Therefore, a quick guide was developed to explain and showcase the additional features besides audio/video calling and live chat: polls/voting, whiteboard functionality and a Q&A function.

2 **Collaboration with MS Teams**

There was only a basic collaboration platform in place, which **did not** fit the requirements for collaborating entirely remote. MS Teams was selected, as it provides a virtual hub to organize and prioritize projects in an easy way. It does not require set up, is rather intuitive to use, integrates all MS Office tools and offers a chat function.

3 **Web-conferencing with ZOOM**

The existing solution was not fit for the current remote working situation, therefore ZOOM has been chosen as a pragmatic ready-to use technology. Any internal and external meeting can be performed for up to 500 participants, and interactive formats such as whiteboard, voting and break out rooms are available.

4 **Virtual facilitation with MURAL**

After transitioning into remote work, there was the need for a tool with advanced features to replicate the activities conducted in a workshop or lab. Mural has been chosen, because it offers a virtual whiteboard with sticky notes, methodical templates, a voting tool and a time keeping functionality. It is easy to use and comes with a detailed facilitator guide.

5 **Brainstorming and ideation with miro**

The existing solution did not support agile principles when working from home, therefore Miro has been chosen to create user stories, mood boards and iterating on prototypes remotely. The tool enables virtual ideation, brainstorming, research, design, mapping and diagramming while supporting agile workflows.

6 **Project and Task Management with Trello**

There was no tool in place that supported remote project and task management efficiently. Trello was selected, because it provides flexible Kanban boards to organize and prioritize projects in an easy way. Moreover, it offers templates for many use cases, a mobile app to track status and integrates with MS Teams.

Remote Leadership: Offering guidance and security
The leader's role for business continuity, continued support and trust of the workforce

Practical guide: Address leadership expectations and offer guidance

1 Availability and approachability

In "cases of emergency" quick and appropriate reactions are essential to maintain trust

Define and communicate approval loops and how to escalate in "cases of emergency", while allowing leaders to follow their heart …and their head

2 Positive perspective

In uncertain times it might be difficult to focus on the positive

Help leaders to recognize the benefits of each situation, embrace the long view and use the current normal for the future

3 People remain priority

Balancing productivity and well-being can be challenging in turbulent times

Allow leaders to focus on addressing concerns and make well-being a priority, while stabilizing productivity under the current circumstances

4 Work life balance

The fusion of work and private life can be challenging for employees as well as leaders

Establish trust and allow leaders to practice and encourage authenticity and empathy as well as maintain an appropriate work life balance for leaders and employees

5 Decision making

Fast decision making and real-time information sharing may be difficult when working remotely

Enable centralized decision making and encourage leaders to aim for speed over elegance while defining their own approach within company guidelines

6 Value navigator

Unprecedented developments can be challenging even for experienced leaders

Develop an overall strategy, define the "non-negotiable" for your organization and leave room for leaders to tailor it to their teams

Remote Leadership: Offering guidance and security
Leadership tensions and challenges

Practical guide: Balance own interests, tasks and empathy that lead to the right priorities

Key considerations for every leader

Act as role model while balancing…

Provide guidance for tasks and learnings…

…and give space to focus on results

…and strengthening the culture:

Be available for calls and be "present", even when not connected physically e.g. listen actively and take notes to stay focused	Be approachable, authentic and do not hesitate to address employee's concern as well as to share your own feelings with the team	Know and embrace the different personas in your team and their specific situation e.g. accept when a team member prefers not to use the video function in calls	Handle resource availability during slowdown times effectively and offer virtual learning nuggets as well as exchange formats to develop competencies required later
Provide clear guidance and establish a "new" and appropriate team meeting culture e.g. daily stand-ups to ensure business continuity	Challenge the widespread perception that "face time" or visibility in the office equals productivity or performance e.g. accept that you can not track each action of your team members	Focus on simplicity and practicability, use the current situation to test agile approaches and already prepare for the "new" normal after the "crisis"	Balance the interest to continue running the system and preparing the workforce for the future – both need to be addressed with individual solutions along business and persona needs

Moments that Matter remain valid during remote work (e.g. asking for feedback, supporting colleagues, etc.)

Practical guide: Reflect the situation of your counterpart and behave accordingly with 10 different attitudes

Walk in their shoes

- Start by "taking off your shoes"
- Then think through what is going on in another person's world:
  - Fears and vulnerabilities
  - Skills and strengths
  - Personal and family issues
  - Workplace pressure
- Imagine and consider the person's working environment

Show up

- Come prepared
- Listen actively
- Practice random acts of presence e.g.:
  - Check-in when there is no reason to check-in
  - Choose video call instead of a telephone call
  - Make time for 1:1 meetings

Tailor it

- Accept that there are different leadership types
- Know and embrace the different employee personas in your team
- Consider that even well-established teams, networks and partnerships may require new ways of leadership and collaboration under the current circumstances

Change the lens

- Engage and bring individuals together to get their different views and perspectives and unite them into one bigger picture
- Balance between re-thinking all aspects due to the current situation with applying well-established approaches and success factors

Bring a point of view

- Check the relevance of your point of view in light of the current situation
- Evaluate consciously when and how to share your point of view (e.g. leadership group, team meeting, 1:1 conversations)

Work it together

- Re-evaluate how to size work packages and what needs to be done individually vs. within the team
- Consider the different employee personas and use meeting formats as well as technology tools accordingly

Suspend self-interest

- Understand the situation of the persons you are talking to, because each and everyone needs to re-arrange their priorities in the current situation
- Respect that special situations require special attitudes that bring the personal agenda to the background
- Share your learnings

Own it

- Own the problem, delivery and solution - and remember the 99%=0% rule (accountability only counts when it is 100%)
- Take ownership for unclaimed tasks
- Resist the urge to make excuses

Say what no one else will

- Consider if and how it will be understood via telephone or video call (this is true for clients as well as colleagues)
- Re-ask if your message has arrived via video as well

Up their game

- Inspire by using formats that can engage and motivate while working remotely
- Give guidance on how to "be present" remotely
- Provide suggestions how topics can be further developed even under the current circumstances

Outlook: Using the current normal for the future

Using the current situation as catalyst towards new and efficient ways of working

Our learnings and quickly adapted behaviors can also be used mid-term to shape the culture

Supporting the "current" normal | **Activating the "new" normal**

Evaluate the possibilities of labor law and governmental support to navigate through the crisis ("Fördermittel")

Ensure transparency into working hours, work-life balance and vacation

Develop workforce scenario analysis in times of uncertainty, keeping in mind the entire workforce (incl. freelancing, etc.)

Use the experience to re-think collaboration culture and workforce flexibility

Develop a well-being strategy for the new normal

Adapt the landscape for remote working (IT-) infrastructure and re-think IT security, etc.

Continue competency development in times of remote work and free resources as well as re-think learning culture

Stay tuned for further topics and content and feel free to use our online resources: COVID-19 response

Deloitte.

Our integrated team of experts will be pleased
to support you with regards to these challenges

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