



# Guide to Leading Remote Teams During Covid-19

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We understand that moving to remote working will have its unique challenges. More than ever, your team will be looking to you for leadership and guidance. This practical guide focuses on what you can do to support your people during this difficult time. This guide has been designed as a series of actions for you to take, and revisit on a regular basis.

## New channels of communication

As a leader of a remote team, you won't have the luxury of face to face communication and will be relying entirely on technology. You'll need to use multiple communication and collaboration platforms including; videoconferencing, instant messaging, chat channels, team boards, shared whiteboards, collaborative documents, e-mail and even the telephone.

## What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Check what technology is available at your agency and any policies for using external tools. i.e. Skype may be convenient but does not comply, chatroom conversations may be subject to OIA requests.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure your team has access to appropriate technology at home; this includes internet access that can support your communication plan. i.e. video uses a lot of bandwidth.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Run test meetings to iron out issues before having a planned meeting. Some of your team might need assistance using new technology. Consider nominating a technical 'coach' in your team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree with your team on when, and how, you'll use technology to stay connected e.g. morning stand-ups are in a chat channel, team meetings are via video and project meetings are done via phone and shared whiteboards.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

## Read more

**How to collaborate effectively if your team is remote**

[www ldc.govt.nz/link/remotet1](http://www ldc.govt.nz/link/remotet1)

# Communicating with your team as a group

A more deliberate focus is required by a leader to ensure good communication and collaboration is maintained in remote teams. Meetings may take longer as the team adjusts to working and meeting in a virtual environment. Remember your team has lost the opportunity to ‘bump’ into each other collaborate in the moment and respond to non-verbal cues.

## What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with your team to agree expectations and ground rules for good virtual communication and meetings. Be prepared to adapt these as the tools become more familiar.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan time at the start and end of meetings for social or ‘watercooler’ moments to occur.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decide with your team, who will chair virtual meetings. Having a chair helps ensure that the meeting is inclusive of all participants. i.e. doing a round-robin to ensure everyone can share their views.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure all meeting slides, handouts, etc are shared prior to meetings. People working remotely may not have the equipment to view content and partake in the conversation at the same time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

## Read more

**10 Strategies for Virtual Meetings That Win**

[www ldc.govt.nz/link/remot2](http://www ldc.govt.nz/link/remot2)

# Connecting with individuals working remotely

When teams work from home on a regular basis, you won't have the opportunity to spontaneously connect with them as individuals. Team members may not feel comfortable approaching you informally in a virtual environment. As a leader, you will need to be more deliberate about maintaining the relationship and connection with your people.

## What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree with individuals what regular contact they would like or expect from you. This may be different for each team member i.e. a daily 'logon' message, twice weekly catch-ups.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make time to ask about your team member's current home environment and how you can best support them. Ask about their responsibilities, commitments or challenges. These could be cultural, social, relational or around accessibility. e.g. hearing or vision difficulties, language, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with individuals to agree the flexible hours that allow for personal situations whilst ensuring there's an agreed time when everyone is in the 'office' to connect and share.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book shorter but more frequent check-ins and 1:1 development conversations. Allocate 'open door' time so your people can connect on an ad hoc basis.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

## Read more

**How to Build Strong Relationships in a Remote Team**

[www ldc.govt.nz/link/remote3](http://www ldc.govt.nz/link/remote3)

## Team bonding in a remote environment

Sometimes when people work remotely, they can feel isolated and disconnected. Not interacting in-person means we miss out on the spontaneous and informal interactions that help us feel we belong. A 2019 study of remote workers found that 19% were affected by loneliness, and it made them feel less motivated and less productive.

### What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Book or roster time to socially connect, individually and as a team, where work isn't discussed. e.g. do the 5min quiz together, roster virtual lunches, virtual happy hour.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure you continue traditions as you would have in the office. e.g. celebrate highlights, birthday shout-outs, share gratitude, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up non-work-related team challenges or competitions to foster a sense of team spirit e.g. crazy hat or dress-up competition, best visual baking competition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up a rotating buddy system where people connect socially for a 'virtual tea break'.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

### Read more

#### 5 Virtual Team Building Activities That Work

[www.ldc.govt.nz/link/remot4](http://www.ldc.govt.nz/link/remot4)

# Delegating to your team

Working remotely may change the way you delegate and check the progress of your team’s work. Additionally, in the Covid-19 context, work priorities are likely to change and momentum and clarity may be lost. In a virtual environment there will be a balance between providing the clarity they need to deliver to expectations and trusting your team to get the work done.

## What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Decide how your team will to share the status and progress of their work. e.g. project boards, daily/weekly check-ins.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss how both the wider team and smaller working groups will use technology to collaborate on pieces of work. Be explicit with your team and ensure that your communication is clear and concise.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be open and honest with your team about how and why work is being reprioritised. Schedule time to talk about how they feel about work that has been postponed or shelved.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use multiple channels to continue to clarify scope, direction and expectations of delivery to ensure everyone is on the ‘same page’. e.g. follow-up verbal discussions in writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

## Read more

**Delegate Successfully: Assigning Responsibility to Your Remote Team**  
[www.idc.govt.nz/link/remot5](http://www.idc.govt.nz/link/remot5)

# Supporting positive wellbeing and resilience

Approach remote working with empathy as the change may have a significant impact on your team’s mental wellness and ability to cope. When working remotely, the lack of social interactions and changes in our physical workspace will impact on how people feel physically and emotionally. Your team may also be feeling anxious and distracted by the current situation.

## What do I need to do?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal situations could change rapidly, intervene quickly if you’re concerned about a team member. e.g. reassessment of workload, sick leave, EAP.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate shared H&S responsibilities. Promote wellness by encouraging regular mental and physical breaks. e.g. remind people to stretch, move, hydrate. Continue to check to ensure their physical working environment is still suitable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss ways for your team to start and end their day. Suggest ways to step in and out of work mode and switch off. e.g. recreate the commute by walking around the block before/after work, changing clothes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay extra attention and care to your team’s wellbeing. e.g. be curious and ask people about their self-care and how they are looking after themselves.
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What else do I need to do/plan?

## Read more

**Supporting Remote Employees’ Wellbeing During COVID-19**

[www.idc.govt.nz/link/remot6](http://www.idc.govt.nz/link/remot6)

