

GUIDE TO PEOPLE MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19



GUIDELINES Working Remotely

At Converse, we understand the increasing demands that faculty and staff members face in their personal and work lives and recognize that their career is just one of the many aspects of their life. Finding ways to accommodate these demands, especially for the vulnerable population identified by the CDC and families in need of childcare, helps create an atmosphere where we can thrive personally and professionally.

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GUIDELINES FOR WORKING REMOTELY



Converse College provides work alternatives through flexible work arrangements and telecommuting. Employees and supervisors have worked together to find creative ways of meeting business needs while providing greater flexibility than traditional work arrangements.

Employees who request a temporary flexible telework arrangement are still bound by all policies listed in the Administrative and Staff or Faculty Handbook located on my.converse.edu. There is a section designated on myconverse to policies and resources that specifically support working remotely: COVID -19 “Policies and Resources – Working Remotely.”

Please note that temporary work alternatives approved during this period will expire when the college returns to normal operations. At that time, we consider requests for continuing flexible work arrangements in the future.

The College reserves the right to limit flexible work arrangements based upon the operational needs of the College. Teleworking arrangements may be amended or ended at any time, based upon the reasonable judgment of Converse. This policy and/or a supervisor’s approval of a teleworking arrangement does not constitute a contract and all employment and employee work arrangements remain at-will.

GENERAL PROCEDURES:

- Flexible work arrangements are entirely voluntary.
- An employee must request a flexible work arrangement to his/her immediate supervisor. The supervisor will review and consider the request in conjunction with the appropriate Dean or Vice President. The supervisor will forward the approved schedule to Human Resources. Vulnerable populations should request a workplace adjustment through the Office of Human Resources. Documentation is required.
- Employees remain subject to Federal laws dealing with overtime compensation that require payment of time-and-one-half for all hours worked in excess of forty hours in the

college's established workweek (12:01 a.m., Sunday through 12:00 midnight, Saturday).

- If an employee works more than 6 hours in a day, a one-hour lunch break is assumed; however, a minimum of a one-half hour break is mandatory. The lunch break cannot be eliminated to support a flexible work option.
- Non-exempt (overtime eligible) and exempt employees are ineligible for more than 8 hours of holiday pay per holiday. If the holiday falls on the employee's regularly scheduled workday, the employee will be credited with 8 hours of holiday pay for that day. Employees may use leave to maintain their hours of pay for that day or they may opt to work additional hours sometime during the work week.
- Employees who miss work while on a flexible work agreement must record missed time based upon their flex schedule. For example: an employee who misses work on a compressed four 10- hour day schedule must account for 10 hours of work missed on a work day, not 8 as if on a regular schedule.
- Approved flexible work arrangements may be discontinued at any time if the arrangement is determined to be ineffective, detrimental and/or unsatisfactory, based on the needs of the department.
- If an existing arrangement is rescinded, the employee will normally be given a minimum of two- weeks' notice of the change.
- FLSA requires all nonexempt employees to record hours worked. Please be sure to record hours worked in iSolved the same as done when working onsite. Overtime guidelines advise employees to notify the supervisor prior to entering into overtime while working remotely.
- Be sure to communicate with your supervisor to understand expectations for workload, performance, and overall communication channels. Inability to observe day-to-day workflows



TODAY'S Challenges

The challenge of focusing on work

The uncertainty about our health, jobs, the economy, friends, family, and the world in general results in an incredible amount of stress.

A threat in our environment makes us vigilant and still productive, but creativity is limited.

When that threat is at our doorstep, we become cognitively impaired – it is even hard to read emails. The threat levels now for the population at large are comparable to what marginalized populations experience on a daily basis.

The challenge of managing a remote team

As we navigate this crisis together, a number of common concerns have surfaced that we'd like to spend some time discussing. Many managers have shared feelings of uneasiness around the areas below...



**INABILITY TO
OBSERVE DAY-TO-DAY
WORKFLOWS**

TIME DIFFERENCES

BUILDING TRUST

**NEW
COMMUNICATION
REALITIES**

INABILITY TO OBSERVE DAY-TO-DAY WORKFLOW

This inability can cause us as managers to ask “What does my team do on a day-to-day basis?” or “Is the team still positively contributing to the goals of my department or the greater campus?”

These questions exemplify the differences between an “input” style of management vs. an “output” style of management.

Not being able to see employees every day forces us, as leaders, to set strong performance goals and expectations for work outcomes vs. measuring how long someone is “on the job”.

This may be a new or different way of engaging with your team, but once perfected, it will help you to be highly effective.

TIME DIFFERENCES



It is a universal truth that it’s harder to share ideas and collaborate when you don’t work at the same time or run into each other in the hallway.

This is compounded when everyone on your team is juggling both the personal and professional requirements of this crisis.

While technology allows us to be forever connected, it’s not realistic to think that answers can be delivered as quickly as if you could just pop by someone’s desk to ask them a question.

BUILDING TRUST

It’s more difficult to build trust when individuals are working in remote environments. Compound this with high stress levels and the quick action that is necessary when responding to change, and it’s no surprise that misunderstandings can (and will) occur more frequently.



Trust is at the heart of every relationship, and it’s especially critical in the workplace. In fact, the primary factor affecting employee turnover is whether or not there is a trusting relationship between a manager and their employees.

Trust is critical for engagement, creativity, and commitment, and therefore is something we must foster in this time of crisis.

To participate in an online trust course, contact Human Resources at Converse.

NEW COMMUNICATION REALITIES

While we do have numerous tools at our disposal to interact with each other during this crisis, it isn’t the same.

Have you noticed that you feel exhausted after a Zoom meeting? One reason for this is that when you’re in person, your eyes tend to look in the direction of one person and your brain is very good at blurring things happening in your peripheral vision. This allows your brain to translate the data in your direct line of site.

In group Zoom meetings, you’re not only concentrating on the one person who is speaking to you, but your brain is subconsciously trying to make sense of all of the data it’s receiving from other participants, the chat window, the reactions, etc. All of this overstimulation can cause us to miss subtle clues that we may more easily pick up in one-on-one or face-to-face conversations.

WHERE DO WE START? As managers, we must...



Ask. Listen. THEN do. Or, in some cases, listening is enough.



Recognize that each individual has varying capacities to “perform.”



Use this time to challenge your assumptions and judgments. This vulnerable mindfulness practice is challenging, yet critical to support others to the best of your ability.



Re-learn how those you supervise get the most out of appreciation. Demonstrate gratitude by asking your employees what they need to feel appreciated and doing your best to give that to them.



Take care of yourself so you are able to take care of your team. Demonstrate and show empathy for yourself and others while allowing for different reactions and self-care needs.



TRUST the team! Offer grace and allow yourself and others to have good moments as well as not so good moments. Be authentic and honest, acknowledge the downsides as well as the positives.

LET'S BUILD YOUR PLAN!

1. Prepare to communicate
2. Establish clear expectations
3. Actively offer support to your team
4. Set yourself up for success
5. Adjust
6. Continue to develop your team
7. Show appreciation

STEP 1 Prepare to Communicate

In times of uncertainty, people managers need to communicate, communicate, communicate. You need to share information, answer questions, admit what you don't know, and be transparent. This can be uncomfortable, and can be overlooked when you are being pulled in a number of different directions. But let's be clear, when there is a lack of information, false information often fills the void. Get ready to communicate by building agreed upon structures for sharing information. Check out this great manager guide for using multiple communication methods on page 13.

STEP 2 Establish clear expectations

Your next, and most important, step is to establish clear expectations that will allow individuals to be successful and teams to successfully collaborate in this new environment. Connect with your direct reports to understand their expectations for work, and create agreements for how the team will work remotely. Work with your team to establish team norms, including dos and don'ts, to guide you during daily operations and high-stakes moments. You should also work with individuals on your team to create and agree to individual guidelines around key work outputs, ensuring clarity on how each person fits into the bigger picture.

As you think about setting these group norms and individual guidelines, you may want to consider asking your team:

1. In your world, what are the benefits of working remotely?
2. How do you like to communicate? (Zoom/Google Meet, email, phone, gchat)
3. In what instances do you prefer which method(s) of communication?
4. What expectations do you have of me as your manager?
5. What working hours are best for you? How can we best keep each other updated regarding projects and development?
6. What would you like to try doing that you haven't had the opportunity to do in the past?
7. What interest do you have that I might not be aware of? Skills?
8. What concerns do you have about working remotely? Our remote-working relationship? Your remote-working relationships with the team?
9. What additional information would help me better understand your remote work situation?

REMEMBER

In addition to setting clear expectations, it's important to recognize that especially in times of uncertainty, goals and expectations should be dynamic, not static. You should be open and flexible to adjusting goals, as necessary, to respond to changing conditions and people's individual circumstances.

With dynamic, clear expectation setting as your foundation for success, let's prioritize your remote coaching and supervision approach:

- Reach out to individuals more often just to check-in
- Avoid check-ins that feel like micromanagement
- Celebrate small daily progress and wins
- Create opportunities for team/community building by hosting meetings where no work is discussed, optional coffee chats, happy hours, online games - be creative and involve the team in planning what they do/don't want to do
- Develop a remote communications strategy
 - Limited hours when people send and receive emails
 - Schedule sending emails
 - Embrace asynchronous communication
 - Set crossover meeting time (for a 1 hour slot, start at :05 or :10, end at :50 or :55)
- Set new norms, such as creating goal-based outcomes vs. hours-based work

STEP 3 Actively offer support to your team

In ordinary times most people look for competence first in their leader. During periods of stress, many people start to look first for caring and empathy, and then for competence. In these unprecedented times, your team is looking to you for support more than ever. Because of this, you have the opportunity to lean-in to leadership in essential ways:

Flexible work schedules

In many cases, supervisors, managers, and their teams have the ability to update normal working hours to allow employees to adjust to this crisis. You should start the discussion with your employees about their schedule by asking them what they need to be most successful. Some alternatives to consider include changing their “shift” from 8 to 5 to: early morning hours, late day hours, or working four 10-hour days. For represented employees, be sure to make changes within the parameters of the contracts and collective bargaining agreements which apply. In many cases, the union must approve proposed scheduling changes before they can occur. A general best practice is to reach out early and often to Human Resources with questions.



Ergonomics

Ask your employees how they are set-up for working from home and encourage them to get the equipment they need.



Mental health days

Employees can use accrued paid time off for mental health days. We encourage you to be open to these discussions by asking employees how they are doing, and reminding them that if they need a break, it is natural, acceptable, and will not come with negative repercussions from you or other campus leaders.



Lead equitably

Marginalized and underrepresented communities are suffering even more during this crisis. They are more impacted in terms of who is getting and dying from COVID-19; the inequities in our healthcare system are real, as are the financial repercussions, food insecurities, and lack of social support. As a leader at Converse, you need to be particularly aware that you may have staff members dealing with these situations, and they may be reluctant to share their concerns.

- Recognize and respond to each person’s unique circumstances and needs
- Acknowledge differential impacts
- Be compassionate



STEP 4 Set yourself up for success

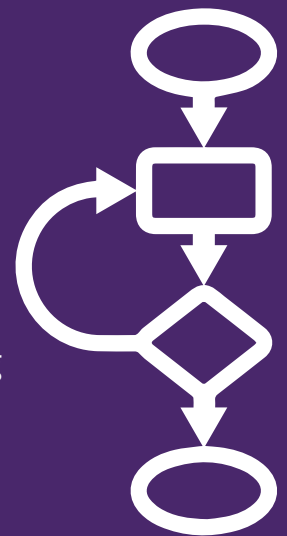
Create routines or use objects to put your brain in “office mode”, e.g. create a work playlist, remove “work” objects from sight when it is not work time.

Limit distractions, when possible.

Learn your chronotype (early bird vs. night owl) and work during your peak performance hours.

Don't always be “on” and practice good digital hygiene by setting limits and having designated off-time.

Set up a “Focus Sprint” consisting of 60-90 minutes of focused, uninterrupted work.



FOCUS SPRINT STARTER PACK

Block calendar time each day for your Focus Sprint

» Close email & Zoom, leaving open only what you need to move your project forward

» Reduce distractions in your home by suggesting that the entire family Sprint at the same time

» Listen to music in a language you can't understand (or instrumental) so your brain can focus instead of trying to task-switch (which is the correct way to qualify the misnomer of “multi-tasking”)

» Reduce distractions in your home by suggesting that the entire family Sprint at the same time

Take a cognitive break after your Focus Sprint

Pause processing information • Move around • Get sun • Distance from the internet/social media
This allows your brain to physiologically prepare to do more and not become mentally fatigued

STEP 5 Adjust

Realize that the typical speed of change in our everyday life causes us to make mistakes, and that's OK, as long as we use the experience to recalibrate, adjust, and move forward. The ability to learn from past experience and experimentation to solve new or first-time programs is called Nimble Learning. This, in addition to the training courses available through the Office of Human Resources at Converse will help you grow your skills and be successful today and in the future. If you wish to participate in an online training course, please let us know.

STEP 6 Continue to develop your team

One way to show you care and to create some stability during this time is to continue to develop members of your team. At Converse, there are a number of free resources for growing you (and your team members') skills from our online database of resources. Contact the Office of Human Resources to explore what professional development opportunities are available.

STEP 6 Show appreciation

Another important factor in creating a successful remote working environment during this crisis is becoming more familiar with appreciation. There are a number of ways to show the members of your team that you appreciate them. Adapted from *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman, here are ways to show appreciation to your team:



Words of Affirmation

Personal and written communication



Quality Time

Focused attention and companionship



Acts of Service

Lending a helping hand



Tangible Gifts

Gift cards, treats, arts & crafts, etc.



Physical Touch

Consenting hugs, pat-on-the-back, etc.

AS YOU THINK ABOUT APPRECIATION, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

When have you felt appreciated by those with whom you work, how did that impact you?

When have you observed a colleague who did not feel appreciated, what did you see? How did it impact their work? Their team? The organization?



Now consider your team. By doing their job well, who on your team makes your life easier? What do they do (specifically) that you value? Commit to telling them what you value, and why, in your next one-on-one conversation. If you discover what form of appreciation resonates most with them, and provide it, you'll make an even bigger impact.

Additionally, now is an ideal time to encourage members of your team to appreciate each other. You can create forums and rituals for this to happen, such as asking for "kudos" and "bright spots" at the beginning of meetings.

QUICK-REFERENCE



This section takes your action plan to the next level. Use the in-depth, though quick reference guides for planning next steps, and for revising to refine your approach.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

First, check in with yourself. Are you okay? What do you need right now? Your team needs you to stay calm and grounded. Self-care looks different for everyone. Things for consideration:

- Are you getting enough sleep?
- Are you taking enough breaks through the day? Are you moving your body? Are you getting outside?
- Is there anything you need from your manager to feel more supported?

WELLNESS

Your priorities around self-care, exercise, work, and family have likely shifted. The same is probably true for members of your team. Help them refocus on self-care or find support while caring for others by:

- Becoming familiar with the wellness resources available on campus. A curated list of COVID-19 resources can be found on my.converse.edu.
- Encouraging mental health days using accrued paid time off
- Communicating with your team that working from home on a prolonged basis, especially under quarantine, can be a very isolating experience. Check in with your team members regularly to ensure they are doing ok, and when they are not, connect them to available COVID-19 resources can be found on my.converse.edu.
- Remind them (and yourself) to work in a way that is kind to their body. In other words, don't spend all day hunched over a stool at the kitchen counter, take regular breaks, and make sure to stretch!

TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEAM

As a leader, it is important to ask your direct reports how you can best support them. Get started here:

- How are you doing / feeling right now?
- What is one thing I could do to help you? (Check-out page 6, Step 2 - Establish Clear Expectations section for more ideas)

If you ask the above questions and don't receive a response, you may need to dig deeper:

- Offer a time to discuss, one-on-one, how the current situation is affecting them.
- Provide strategies for maintaining productivity. Before providing solutions here, ask them if they would like you to help them think through these questions and what helps THEM stay productive.
- Remind your direct reports of why we are doing the work we do; highlight some of the work they are doing, and that Converse is doing, to make a difference for people during COVID-19.
- Discuss personal and professional barriers or challenges that may make it difficult to perform at their best. Again, before providing solutions here, ask them if they would like you to help them think through these questions and make the suggestions about them, not you.

TEAM BONDING

Use this time as an opportunity to build or rebuild relationships. Here are some ideas you might consider, but start by asking your team what they might like:

- As appropriate, allow the first few minutes of individual and team meetings for small talk, jokes, and catching up on each other's lives before jumping into business. This is not a requirement; as the leader, create space for those to easily opt-out without drawing attention to them.
- Create informal and optional opportunities to connect: schedule a weekly virtual happy hour, coffee break, or lunch; make clear that the purpose is to catch-up / visit / chat or something else, not to work. Find a way to LAUGH with your team.
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small: Working from home doesn't mean you should forgo opportunities to celebrate the completion of a deliverable or project, wish someone a Happy Birthday, or generally find ways to celebrate the positives together.
- Consider hosting a recurring, ongoing Zoom meeting that people can dip in and out of – for example, a Zoom room that your team members can jump in and out of to create a “water cooler” spot for the team to have a break.
- Allow space to conduct deeper check-in meetings with your team members so that you can hold space for their concerns and needs.

BE FLEXIBLE AND SHOW EMPATHY

Remember that people are not machines

- Many of us are feeling anxious and distracted. Many of us are scared and worried about our well-being or the well-being of our loved ones. Expect a decline in productivity and focus. Gently remind people that a decline in productivity is normal during a time of crisis and encourage them to practice compassion with themselves and each other.

Discuss flexible work schedules

- Discuss work schedules with each of your direct reports. Making room for this discussion shows them that you care for their time. Be mindful that their work schedule might be different than it normally is, and may change as needs require. Be especially mindful of people who are balancing work and providing care for others at the same time.
- Managers of non-exempt / hourly employees should give them clear direction on when / when not to work, and remind and encourage them to take their regular breaks.
- For represented employees, be sure to make changes within the parameters of the contracts and collective bargaining agreements which apply. In many cases, the union must approve proposed scheduling changes before they can occur. Reach out early and often to Human Resources with questions.

Support caretakers

- Especially during uncertain times, encourage your employees to take sick time, Paid Administrative Leave, and/or family leave instead of taking vacation days when they need to care for themselves or their families, communities, and/or networks.

Be present

- Prepare for meetings by creating and reviewing materials, documents, and agendas ahead of time.
- Don't multitask; give your direct reports the same level of respect and attention when remote that you would in a face-to-face meeting. It's difficult to create empathy and trust with your team if you are not fully present.

EXCHANGING FEEDBACK

Actively solicit feedback

Actively make more space for feedback. It's important that you don't assume that your direct reports will feel comfortable sharing. Ask what more you could be doing to support them.

- What could help you to meet your current commitments and responsibilities?
- What roadblocks are you facing?
- What remains unclear on expected outcomes, and how might you get there?
- What help do you need prioritizing work and/or deliverables?

Actively give feedback

Provide feedback often, in quick soundbites to help your team members course correct quickly. As much as possible, feedback should be delivered over Zoom, not over email, to ensure understanding and the opportunity for members of your team to ask for clarification as needed.

YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER

Set expectations early and clearly

Being clear with your team will keep everyone focused and working towards the same goals. Set clear expectations for: work hours, availability, communication, timely meetings, key projects and deadlines, scheduled meetings, responding to email, and boundaries.

Ask direct reports...

- What concrete directions do you need to move forward on your current projects?
- How do you feel about your capacity and workload?
- What clarity do you need on your priorities for this week?

Be flexible

For many employees, this will be their first time working remotely. Their current home environments might not be conducive for remote work. As a result, during team meetings and one-on-ones there may be children playing or crying, and/or noises, dogs barking in the background, etc.

Have an agenda

When scheduling team meetings and individual check-ins, be sure to put together an agenda or context verbiage and add it to the meeting invite in the notes section. This helps to ensure preparation and clarity for everyone. At the beginning of the meeting, quickly review the agenda and check to see if any pressing matters have come up that need to be addressed; adjust accordingly.

Create and honor boundaries

Set work schedules and boundaries together to support work-life balance and avoid burnout. Show your team that you care, trust their work ethic, and remind them on a regular basis that remote doesn't mean that they need to be online or available 24/7. Encourage your direct reports to take breaks. When working from home, it can be difficult to create space to stop working. Model this behavior by taking breaks yourself.

USING MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



USE MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Shared Online Database

- Collaborative work
- Discussion threads
- Idea sharing

Email

- Progress updates
- Non-urgent questions
- Individual or team accomplishment highlights

Instant Messaging

- Urgent questions
- Informal discussions
- Real-time information sharing

Telephone

- All sensitive or urgent issues
- Any situation where tone is key
- Real-time information sharing (brainstorming, decision-making)
- Formal discussions regarding progress or projects, development needs, and recent successes.

Video Conference

- Delivery of difficult messages (when in-person meetings are not an option)
- Formal discussions regarding progress on projects, development needs and recent successes
- Monitoring team morale
- Team meetings



MANAGER TIP

Vary the communication style you use for different situations. For example, a non-urgent question doesn't necessitate a video conference, but you certainly want to use video to discuss difficult messages.

QUESTIONS?



The HR team is committed to delivering quality service to each employee with the highest standards of respect and integrity. Please contact us with any questions regarding the COVID-19 Policies and Guidelines.

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