



From Pandemic To Productivity Challenges

performance employees pandemic

Summary: While productivity doesn't seem greatly affected by the dramatic shifts necessary due to the pandemic, employees still face challenges in the current environment. Helping them through some of these challenges, including stress, time management, and social withdrawal, will help them stay engaged and committed and keep productivity levels high.

Hard to believe that the board game, Clue, has been around since 1947. Colonel Mustard, Miss Scarlett, and Professor Plum have seen millions of mysteries solved in the hall, conservatory, and kitchen with the candlestick, wrench, and rope since then.

It is no mystery that the working world has changed in the last 12 months. Gone are the days of the standard eight-hour workday. In its place is a new reality where people have a hard time disconnecting from work, especially as many still work remotely. While 83% of employees don't believe working remotely affects their productivity, and 94% of employers concur, employees still face challenges when working from home. In reviewing and addressing some of these ongoing challenges, community financial institutions (CFIs) could proactively ensure that productivity levels stay high, regardless of the location of their employees.

Stress. Working in a home setting with multiple family members, pets, and uncontrollable external influences like noisy neighbors, traffic, etc. can create more stress for employees. In fact, as much as [65% of Americans over 18Ys identify work as one of their main stressors](#). Not only that, The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) figures that stress adds up to \$190B in annual healthcare bills. While this may be gradually changing with the vaccine rollout, the immediate well-being of your remote employees is still important.

Further, there may be some positions that remain remote even after herd immunity is achieved. Look for signs that your staff members are feeling the long-term effects of stress. These signs could include more sick days, a change in temperament, or simply appearing more tired. Having wellness sources available for your employees is important as well as managers checking in not just professionally but personally with their team regularly.

Multitasking and time management. Forbes reported that multitasking can diminish productivity by up to 40%. With children and elderly parents potentially needing more attention at home or managing pets and household duties can cause several interruptions in the workday. Trying to do more than one thing at a time actually slows the brain down and makes it less efficient. Some employees may have a very specific process to their workday, especially frontline staff. But, for those that are more project-driven, one effective way to manage the to-do list more effectively incorporating the 1-3-5 rule. This is where you work on the most difficult tasks first, then the next level of difficulty, and finish the day with the easiest tasks.

Social withdrawal. With social distancing, some have felt a sense of social withdrawal too. There have been fewer opportunities to get together both for [team building](#) and for connecting more broadly within the community. Exercise classes, book clubs, birthday celebrations, and more have been pushed to a virtual venue.

These are adequate substitutes for some, but having a digital platform can make it more difficult to connect, especially those over 50. In a 2020 study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, those over 50Ys have a greater chance of experiencing the risk factors associated with social isolation and loneliness, such as living alone, losing family and friends, and experiencing chronic illness. Reaching out personally may be more difficult, but little steps can ease some sense of loneliness. Sending a thoughtful gift via physical mail to your employees to remind them you are still connected even if you can't celebrate someone's birthday in-person is just one way.

No matter what you do, knowing what the continuing challenges are for your employees helps you address them ensuring that your employees feel engaged and appreciated so that they stay productive.

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