

Employee Guidance-Working Remotely

The challenges presented by Covid-19 are unprecedented and continue to evolve. In order to cope with these challenges, many universities and are exploring ways to help their employees work productively from home. However, the shift from face time management to virtual management is not straightforward or simple. Virtual teams are profoundly different from regular work teams. They cross boundaries related to geography, time, and organization and use technological means to communicate and collaborate. These differences can be overcome with planning and intentional management. This resource is designed to help you navigate this shift while maintaining productivity, trust, and communication.

It is essential that employees know campus systems to continue working effectively and efficiently in performing their work duties, even virtually/remotely, on a daily basis. These employees should also be cognizant of the changing dynamics. Here are some suggestions for virtual employees:

Recognize and Learn Campus Systems:

- ✓ **VPN**-Do I need a VPN? **Maybe**- A VPN (Virtual Private Network) is an encrypted connection that "tunnels" through our campus firewall, allowing you to access online resources as if you were on campus. In order to access systems and the SHARED drive this is a must.
- ✓ **Zoom**-video conferences for meetings.
- ✓ **Teams**-chat, share documents, schedule meetings and so much more!

- **Be prepared for meetings and participate.** Login to the meeting on time with information prepared for your update. Remove distractions as much as possible. While your fellow dog-loving colleagues may be happy to see your puppy in the background, barking dogs can be deafening in a virtual meeting. Wear headphones if possible. It is easy to disengage during a virtual meeting, so brush up on your listening and communication skills. Take notes and write down questions to be asked later.
- **Be a self-starter.** Everyone should be focusing on working somewhat independently. This may mean creating a system of organization that is different than what you would have in your physical office. It also may mean sticking to structures or schedules, so you have focused, dedicated time.

- **Pay attention to your stress and emotions.** Many people see working from home as a pathway to greater work-life balance, but it can be hard to adapt to the isolation you may feel. You may also feel disconnected from members of your team who are still working in the office. If FOMO (fear of missing out) gets too intense, know when to ask for some face time with your manager or members of the team. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out for help. For more information and help with stress please [Employee Assistance Program](#).
- **Nutrition**-Remember to hydrate and eat during your workday.
- **Be flexible and empathetic.** As other members of your team make the transition to virtual work, they may struggle in different ways. Some may need to learn new technologies. Some may not be as self-directed, and some may have accessibility concerns. If technology hiccups happen, be prepared with a backup plan, and be patient as the kinks get worked out.
- **Be prepared for different ways of approaching accountability.** This may mean more detailed or different documentation of your work and time than you typically do, given the physical distance between you and your employer. **This is an opportunity for you to upskill and expand your capabilities.** Log in to the [My UMassD website](#) using your UMass Dartmouth email and password to get started.
- **Abide by the expectations set for the team.** Whether this is related to work hours, technology tools, or communication processes, the expectations that were set collaboratively with your team and there to ensure that the virtual work environment is productive for everyone. Discuss with your manager individually if you are having trouble following a specific expectation.
- **Create a professional homework space.** Keep in mind that you will likely be logging/calling into meetings or may be having video chats often. Set your workspace apart from other activities and clear as much clutter as possible. This doesn't require setting up a home office, but an open wall behind you and a table to set your computer on during meetings will help create a sense of professionalism. Pay attention to professional standards of appearance as necessary for your work obligations [i.e. don't arrive for the video call in your pajamas!].

Skills of Effective Virtual Team Members

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Ability to work independently
- **Strong communication** and interpersonal skills
- Ability to think locally and globally
- Listening skills
- Initiative and self-management
- Enthusiasm
- Consensus building skills
- Collaborative skills
- Patience and empathy

- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Cultural harmony

Training for employees

- Microsoft Teams (Linked in Learning)- [How to use Microsoft Teams Training Video](#)
- Zoom (Linked in Learning) -How to use Zoom (video conferencing) [How to use Zoom Video Conferencing](#)

Resources

- Forbes: [The Art Of Working Remotely: How To Ensure Productivity](#), March 12, 2020
- The Verge: [How to work from home](#), March 11, 2020
- Remoteyear.com: [8 Remote Working Tips for Beginners](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: How to Work from Home, the Right Way](#), March 12, 2020
- Mindful.org: [Zoom Exhaustion is Real](#), Aril 6, 2020

Please contact the Office of Human Resources at humanresources@umassd.edu with any questions.