

LEADERSHIP

5 Ways to Ensure Your Virtual Workforce is Productive During the Holiday Season



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The holidays are here which means in addition to office deadlines, managers must also navigate the exuberance of their employees. Virtual bosses can't "see" their staff and yet they need to know their employees are managing client affairs from

their home office -- and not from the sale line at the mall!

Here are five ways to keep your team productive and focused during the hustle and bustle of the season.

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1. Encourage time off.

This may seem counter-productive, because if you want your employees highly engaged, then why would you give them time off? Because it works. If you are generous with vacation time, requests for days and afternoons off or lenient during longer lunch hours for mid-day sales, your employees will feel less anxious about having to get everything done for the season, which helps ensure their time on the clock is productive.

Be creative during this very distracting time and maybe have rotating half-days off across work teams. This is one of the benefits of a virtual company: You can offer flexibility without sacrificing productivity.

2. Set specific goals for open-ended projects.

If you are like most companies, there are dozens of company projects that are in the works at any given time but often they exist without a clear-cut timeline. Try to set short-term, actionable goals to keep the projects moving forward. Even if the goals don't include project completion, breaking them down into bite-sized pieces will ensure employees don't lose focus.

Related: [5 Tips to a Stress-Free Holiday in Your Business](#)

3. Require a weekly report.

Many virtual companies already do this, but if you don't, this is a great time to

start. Requiring employees to submit weekly reports will help them stay on task and give yourself certainty during this very uncertain time. Items to include are:

- A detailed list of accomplishments for the current week
- Goals and tasks for the upcoming week
- Overall project status updates
- Any issues or delays they have experienced that week
- Requests for input on specific tasks and projects where they are feeling stuck

Remember, this is your holiday season too and employee reports will help you stay focused and organized to keep the business humming along.

4. Delay big projects until the New Year.

Productivity for most employees, remote or not, typically drops during the holidays. Big projects with long lead times leave a lot of open-ended time and with the demands of the season, it may just not be reasonable to expect huge accomplishments. Make your monthly focus on next year's planning and encourage brainstorming and discussions about how to improve the company in the New Year.

5. Don't forget about the year-end thank you!

Gift cards are great, but they should be personal in order to be useful in each worker's life. If your employee just had a baby or just bought a house find an online store that specializes in that. If you have the time, find out about shops, spas or restaurants near their home they can enjoy. For companies with low or no budgets give from the heart, which will be meaningful and perhaps more motivating. Give a voucher for extra vacation days, create a collage of their favorite things or put down all of your thoughts of appreciation in a hand-written thank you note. Nothing beats the effort demonstrated when a boss takes the time to write a personalized and thoughtful card for each specific staffer.

Embracing and navigating the holiday season will help reduce employee distractions and the goodwill generated may be even more valuable. Employees who feel appreciated and understood are far more loyal to their employer and work harder for the company all year long.

Related: [Not Just for Grandma: 6 Tips for an Unforgettable Company Holiday Card](#)