



*Bewell*  
TIPS TO ENGAGE STAFF

The coronavirus pandemic has caused unprecedented changes for many industries. As social distancing practices and stay-at-home orders are encouraged, it can make engaging with staff both in-person and remote difficult. With this guide, we wanted to provide tips and ideas for leaders to continue engaging their staff.

## 5 WAYS TO TRULY CONNECT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

A recent Gallup poll found that companies with the most engaged workers are 17% more productive. Having engaged employees produces better business outcomes, no matter the company size, industry, or current economic climate. Gallup's data shows that only 15% of full-time employees say that they are engaged at work worldwide.

So, how do you get people more enthused and passionate about their job? Here are some of the best ways to forge and develop a real connection with your employees so that they feel truly committed to Penn State Health.

### **Make Sure Your Employees Feel Heard**

Employees who feel that their opinion is valued are more likely to feel invested in their jobs and motivated to work hard. Moreover, employee's ideas and feedback can be highly valuable when it comes to work processes.

On top of regular performance reviews, specify regular times when employees can talk to you freely. This will only work if you really listen to your employees and don't criticize their feelings and responses. It's vital to make it clear that employees will never be penalized for disagreeing with you.

### **Keep Everyone Informed**

Nobody likes to feel they are the last to learn about a new business development. When your employees know how the business is doing, they can see the impact of their efforts on the company's success.

### **Be Transparent**

Proactive honesty is key in every relationship, including business ones. When your employees trust you to be open and forthcoming with them, they will be more willing to follow your lead, even in situations where you don't have the time or ability to share every detail.

### **Recognize and Acknowledge Your Employees' Efforts**

People need to feel that their work is impactful and appreciated. Expressing your appreciation for a worker's efforts, both on an individual and a team level, goes a long way towards building engagement and motivation.

### **Make it Personal**

Your employees aren't just workers, they're people. Each employee is an individual, with plenty of things going on in their lives. When you make a personal connection by encouraging employees to get to know each other better, you show that you care about them on a human level.

By sharing posts related to their hobbies, employees can find out that they have hobbies in common and inspire each other. It's not always easy to put time into building these personal interactions but it makes a big difference to your employees' sense of engagement.



## HOW TO ENGAGE REMOTE EMPLOYEES

Here are five steps that can help keep employees engaged while they work from home.

### **Prioritize Communication**

Remote employees can often feel like they're left out of the loop. As such, it's important for managers to communicate on a daily basis. Consider scheduling a daily check-in to see how employees are doing with this new working arrangement and if you can do anything to help them perform their work. Be sure to communicate any important news as it presents itself, too.

Remember that communication is a two-way street and be sure to listen to any concerns employee may have. The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation and many employees may be feeling overwhelmed or anxious. If they express concerns along those lines, evaluate whether there's anything you can do to help mitigate those feelings. Additionally, remote employees may start to feel isolated, so it's important to remind them that they're not alone, especially during these uncertain times.

Penn State Health's Employee Assistance Program, ComPsych, is available 24/7 for all employees. ComPsych representatives can help with a variety of situations including: stress, anxiety, depression, relationship counseling, family care, substance abuse, etc. For more information, call 866-465-8935 or [click here to go to ComPsych's website](#). If you're registering for the first time, click "I am a first time user" and the Web ID is PSHMC.

### **Set Clear Expectations**

Be sure to communicate your expectations of your employees while they work from home. Employees who are aware of what your expectations are will be more motivated to meet those expectations. If you want employees to be on-line during specific hours of the day, communicate that. If you want a daily report of what they are working on, be sure to ask.

With that being said, you should be mindful that not all employees may have an ideal telecommuting setup while daycares and schools are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, be patient and understanding with your employees. Encourage them to take paid time off if they need it during these times to tend to their other responsibilities.

### **Recognize Good Work**

Recognizing and rewarding employees for their hard work is a key factor in boosting engagement among your telecommuting employees. Employee recognition can take many different forms, but the main goal is to incentivize continued productivity and dedication from your employees.

For example, you could send out a team-wide email detailing what an employee did and why it was exceptional. If you want to offer a reward for their good work, consider sending [Paws Up!](#) points.

Recognition doesn't need to be formal or grand for it to be effective. A personal thank you email or message can go a long way in making employees feel valued and engaged while they work from home.

### **Encourage Work/Life Balance**

Remote employees may have difficulty establishing a healthy work/life balance right now. Because there may not be a physical separation between their workspace and their personal space, employees may feel like they need to be available for work 24/7, which can lead to unnecessary stress and eventually burnout.

As a result, you should communicate to your employees the importance of creating boundaries. Suggest that they work their normal hours and then step away from the computer until it's time

to start working the next day.

### **Demonstrate a Collaborative Culture**

Employees tend to be more engaged when they feel like they're part of a team. When they're working from home, it can be hard for them to buy into that mentality. As a manager, it's your responsibility to make sure employees understand that even though you may not be in the office together, you're all working together toward the same common goal.





## IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK

One of the most essential steps a manager can take is to structure ways for employees to interact socially (that is, have informal conversations about non-work topics). Use these ideas to build morale and foster a collaborative culture amongst your team.

### **Play Pictionary with Zoom**

To use Zoom's whiteboard, you'll want to click the share screen button located in your meeting toolbar, select the whiteboard and click share. You should then see annotation tools that will let you use your mouse to draw as you would for Pictionary. You can take turns sharing the screen's whiteboard depending on who's turn it is and you can put someone in charge of keeping time for the person who is drawing. [Click here to go to a Pictionary Random Word Generator website.](#)

### **Live-Stream Games and Puzzles**

Merriam-Webster's website offers a variety of free games daily including crosswords and Sudoku. Screen share with the team so that everyone can participate. [Click here to go to Merriam-Webster's website.](#)

### **Trivia Games**

[Click here to go to the random trivia generator website.](#) This tool produces various questions at the single click of the button which helps you focus on the game rather than focusing all your attention at the source of your next question. Your friends can even opt for different categories depending on their preference.

### **Zoom "Happy Hour"**

Schedule a recurring meeting once a week where the team discusses non-work topics.

### **Heads Up!**

Heads up is a great mobile game that can be played with friends and family. The game requires you to place your smartphone face-first on your forehead. It will then display random characters and events based on the category you chose along with a timer.

This will be visible to your friends on Zoom who can then try and help you guess the term or character in question by passing you hints. You can choose from a wide variety of categories including movies, celebrities, popular trends, songs, artists and more.

### **Walk-About Wednesday**

Setup a time to take a 15-30 minute walk over lunch with your team. Share things that you're seeing to bring you joy.

### **Virtual Birthday Party**

Have a team member who is having a birthday during quarantine? Schedule a last minute meeting and have the birthday person join slightly later. You can send virtual gifts (the upside is there's no dollar limit) and have the team member share their screen while they open their presents.

### **Guess Who?**

The leader of a designated group sends an email at the beginning of the week with 10 interesting facts about a person. Everyone discusses throughout the week. Virtual meeting at the end of the day Friday, guesses are made, and the person reveals themselves.

### **Tune Tuesday**

Every Monday morning, an email goes out with the "theme" for the week. Your weekly zoom meeting opens with each member either playing a portion of their song, or just stating the name of the song and a quick "why I chose it".

**Gratitude Cards**

Send an authentic note of support and appreciation with a handwritten thank you card.

**Employee Spotlight**

Collect employee fun facts from staff who participate and distribute them over time via email or during a team huddle.

**Friendly Competitions That Tie into Company Metrics**

Who can get the most positive feedback from a patient or colleague, who can do X with the least number of errors, etc. Monthly or weekly winners for Paws Up! points.

**Shadowing Opportunities**

In order to connect employees to the mission of the organization, develop a program where a staff member can cross-functionally shadow or collaborate with another area that they support.

**Create Sincere Relationships**

Get to know your employees by grabbing coffee and maintaining social distancing guidelines. Discuss their unique goals, wants and desires so they know you're invested in their life inside and outside of work.

**Public recognition**

Congratulate employees for a job well done by sharing their success stories in a team meeting.