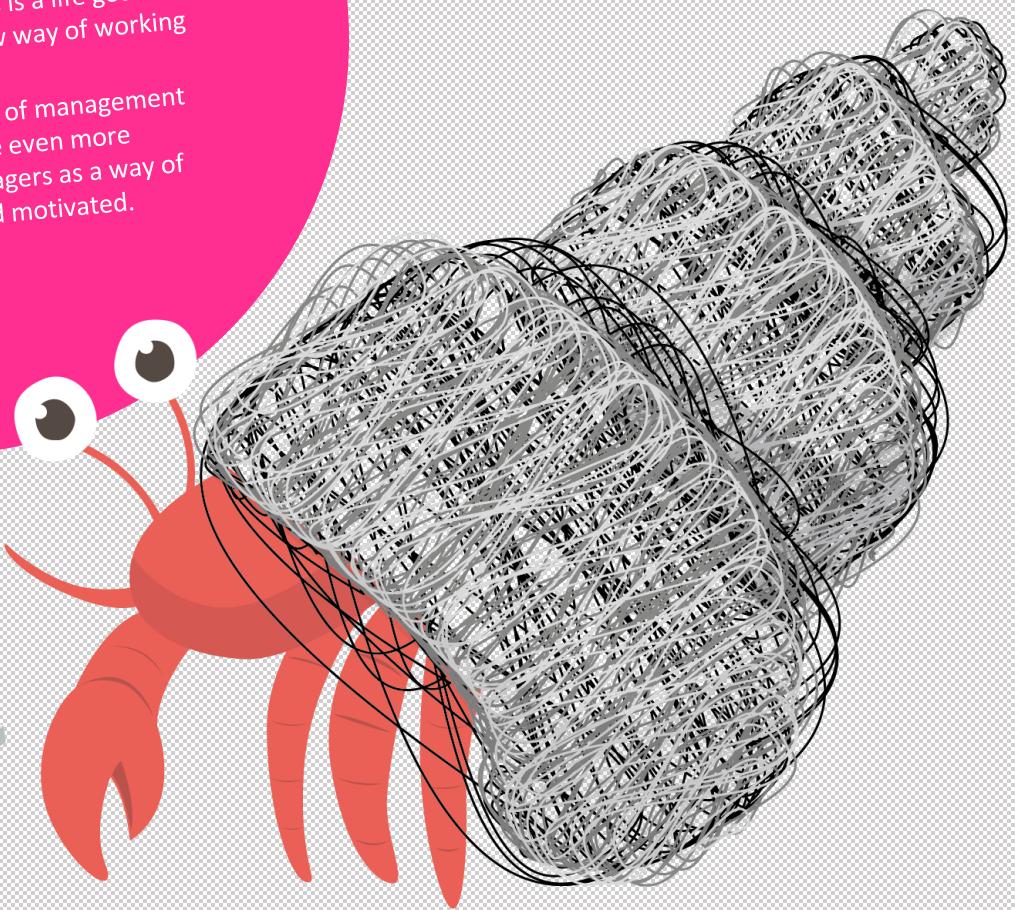


MANAGING REMOTELY – ONE-TO-ONES

Decentralisation is a growing trend. Hot desking, flexitime, remote teams and WFH are becoming normal working practices. While Zooming in the kitchen in pjs is a life goal for some, for managers this new way of working presents challenges.

One-to-ones are a vital part of management and team support. They are even more important for remote managers as a way of keeping teams focused and motivated.



MANAGING REMOTELY – ONE-TO-ONES

THE SAME RULES APPLY

Conventionally, one-to-ones are intimate face-to-face meetings, held in person. They are important opportunities for managers and their people to connect and share feedback and ideas. For remote managers, in-person meetings are not always practical. But virtual one-to-ones should be no less effective if you remember the fundamentals. The same rules apply online. Good managers create safe spaces for open discussions. They ask the right questions, listen and challenge constructively. Teams need to trust you enough to share experiences and ask for help. Make sure if you have a one-to-one booked in, you give it your full attention with no distractions.

GET THE PRACTICALITIES IN ORDER

- Attention spans reduce in the virtual realm, thanks to distractions like *Homes Under the Hammer*. So, split your time. Turn an hour session into two half hours.
- Remote and international teams may work at different times. Schedule one-to-ones to make sure they happen.
- Time flexibility places the emphasis on outcomes. Be clear about expectations. If need be, set deadlines and arrange times when teams are expected to be contactable. Everyone should know what is expected of them and trust should be built on both sides.
- Be open to talk through non-work challenges. Team members might have children at home, or they might be carers. This is the starting point for conversations. The foundations need to be in place. Check-in before you start a conversation and make sure it's the right time to chat.
- Block out time in your diary for open chats each week. It might be 45 minutes over a few days or a couple of mornings. Once you get in this habit, you'll find formal online meetings will decrease, as people will chat to you when they need you, freeing up more of your time.

GIVE IT A GO

Your role as a leader is to balance the needs of the individual over the group. To help the team bond, arrange weekly group chats where people can ask questions.

Don't always wait for scheduled one-to-ones. Drop in informally on people digitally to see how they are. This could be as simple as an email, WhatsApp or a DM.

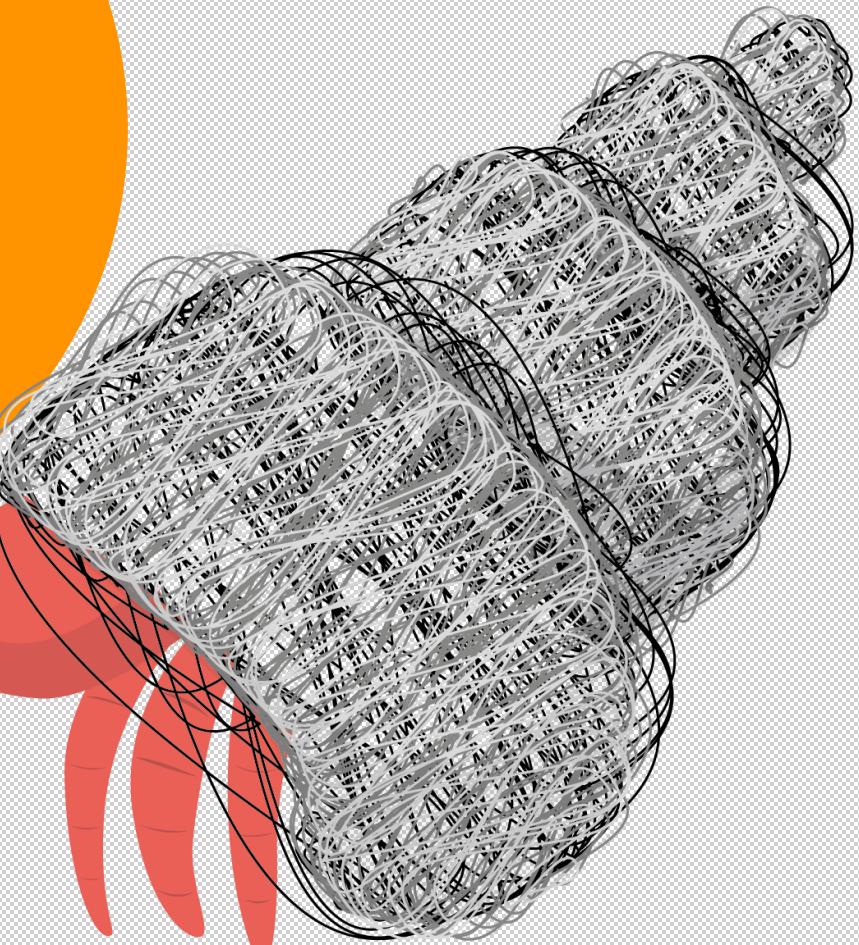
Develop an accessible weekly schedule that everyone can add too. There is software that can collate this, or you could create a simple spreadsheet to send to everyone and ask them to add in their own availability.

Always make sure people are okay to chat first by asking 'Is now a good time to chat?'. If it's not make sure they're okay with everything else and respect they need some time to work. Boundaries help people feel safe and support positive working structures.

WORKING REMOTELY: COMMUNICATING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Workplaces are no longer central locations with set hours. Increasingly they are decentralised, sometimes international and often virtual. This means employees can kiss the commute goodbye and embrace new ways of working.

Technology has allowed this paradigm shift. Generally, it is a wonderful enabler. Used effectively it makes remote working a seamless experience.



WORKING REMOTELY: COMMUNICATING WITH TECHNOLOGY

BECOME YOUR OWN TECH GURU

Technology bridges the gap between you, your colleagues, your manager and your employer. It is the channel through which communication is funnelled. One size does not fit all, so familiarise yourself with the systems, platforms and software your people use. Make sure you have the basics: a phone or tablet, a laptop, the right software and Broadband.

LET THE MEDIUM MATCH THE MESSAGE

Everyone has their own preference, be it phone, video, WhatsApp or text. The choice should depend on what you're doing. If it's a quick catch up with a small team, a group WhatsApp can work. If it's a larger team, you could set up a Facebook group. If the task is more involved, for example delivering learning, then platforms like Zoom or Skype are more functional. They are also easy to set up and use. Zoom is reasonably priced and has a range of features for larger groups. Here's some ideas

- Catch ups with team members = Skype
- Sending gossip and gifs = WhatsApp
- Official team talk and engaging teams for comms = Facebook group
- L&D = Zoom
- Collaborating on a project = Microsoft Teams
- After-work social = House Party

Try keeping online meetings and chats to around 40 minutes or less and practice responsible WhatsApping or IMing in team groups. Remember that some platforms are public. Twitter, for example, might not be the best place to give open feedback or raise grievances. Constant monitoring of Twitter can also eat into your time and hoover your mood (especially if you follow Piers Morgan).

HAVE A GO

If you work in an organisation where colleagues also work remotely, it is likely that people will work at different times, particularly if the organisation is international. Develop a weekly schedule and share it with others. Encourage them to do the same, so you all know when everyone else is available.

Set up a team WhatsApp group or workplace (facebook for work) page dedicated to helping each other with technical problems. Peer to peer support is a great way to problem solve and you can share tips and advice.

Many organisations advise their people to use a VPN (virtual private network) when working remotely, especially if you are working over public wifi networks. Ask your organisation for advice, do some research and find out the best VPN software for your purposes.