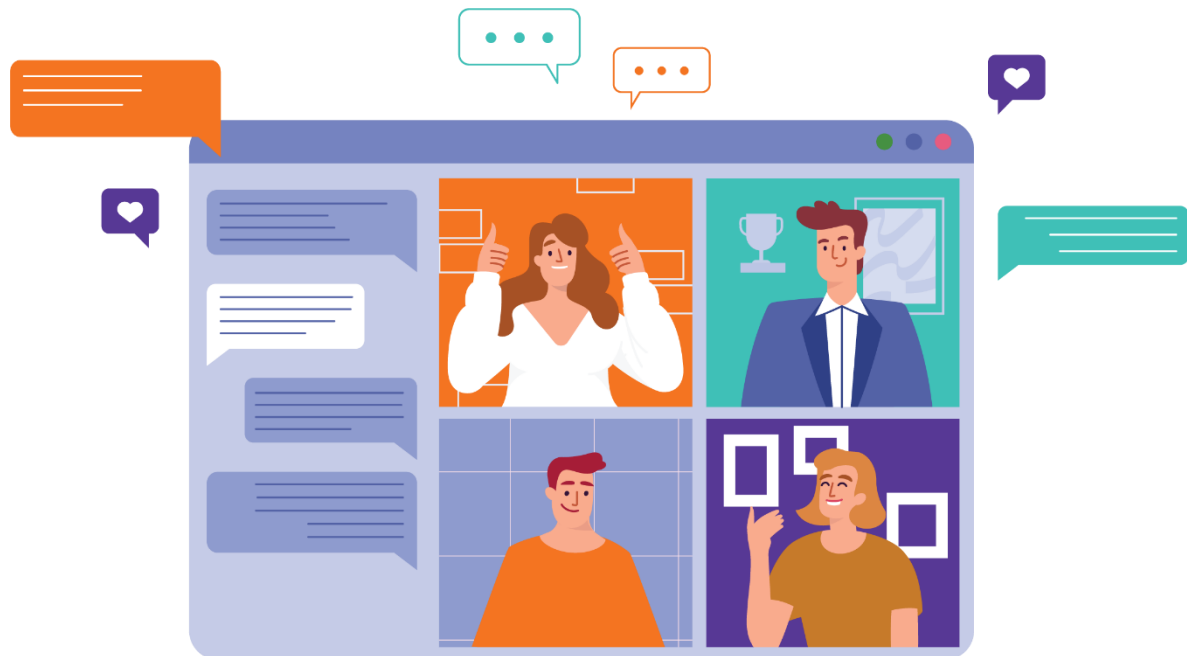




In-Service training course for VET professionals

HR Professionals Training





Authors: CCSI & SUD CONCEPT

Project Title: VIRTUAL TEAMS: *supporting collaboration, productivity and wellbeing in virtual teams and remote workers*

Project Acronym: *Virtual Teams*

Project Number: *2020-1-FR01-KA226-VET-095203*

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of contents

Overview of the training	5
Estimated duration	5
Module 1 – <i>Human Resources’ role in teleworking</i>	7
Short overview of the module	7
Estimated duration of the module	8
Objectives of the module	8
Learning outcomes of the module	9
Module Content	9
Handouts and activity sheets	21
Module 2 – <i>The necessary equipment for effective teleworking</i>	25
Short overview of the module	25
Estimated duration of the module	25
Objectives of the module	25
Learning outcomes of the module	25
Module Content	26
Module 3 – <i>Wellbeing and engagement practices in teleworking</i>	37
Short overview of the module	37
Estimated duration of the module	37
Objectives of the module	37
Learning outcomes of the module	38
Module Content	38
Module 4 – <i>Assisting virtual team leaders managing for teleworking benefits</i>	50
Short overview of the module	50
Estimated duration of the module	50
Objectives of the module	50
Learning outcomes of the module	51
Module Content	51
Module 5 – <i>Skills and tips for productivity in teleworking</i>	55

Short overview of the module	55
Estimated duration of the module	55
Objectives of the module	55
Learning outcomes of the module	56
Module Content	56
Module 6 – Tips for health, resilience and well-being while teleworking	61
Learning outcomes of the module	61
Assessment tools	69
Bibliography	71
Appendix	74

Overview of the training

Remote work and hybrid working models are skyrocketing in popularity after the COVID-pandemic, leaving management and HR professionals having to deal with situations they have not encountered before and have not been trained for.

The main focus of Human Resource (HR) departments in teleworking, remote working and hybrid working business models, is making sure the company employee care remains at least comparable to in-person working models, that the employees feel engaged and connected and are provided with the assistance, support, training, management and compensation they need. On the other hand, HR departments offer various groups within-organization the needed support to help change working processes, facilitate change and accommodate e-working.

The following training aims to establish the role of HR professionals in guiding employees and managers in the implementation of telework. Their role is usually underestimated, but it is crucial to ensure the cohesion and well-being of the team, as well as the safety and health of employees.

Through this, you will acquire all the skills and knowledge necessary to be an essential element of the efficiency of teleworking coworkers. You will be able to provide comprehensive support to your employees and virtual team leaders by answering the following questions:

- What is the role of human resources in telework (Module 1)
- What equipment is needed for effective telework and why (Module 2)
- What good practices should be adopted to ensure the commitment and well-being of virtual teams (Module 3)
- How to assist team leaders in managing their virtual team (Module 4)
- How to ensure the productivity of teleworking teams (Module 5)

Estimated duration

18H

Learning outcomes of the complete training

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
MODULE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and describe the 5 main focus areas of HR professionals in supporting their organization's working processes and aims Know and understand the important role of HR professionals in a teleworking environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate between various work process solutions for various situations of various employees or various organizations based on their characteristics Identify crucial skills and abilities of e-workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List various roles HR professionals have in supporting e-working
MODULE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn what is an effective teleworking Understand HR professional roles in teleworking Understand the effect of teleworking on the health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context Create teleworking employees equipment strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist employees to be the accommodate their workspace Create a relevant online work environment Take care of employees' health and wellbeing
MODULE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the well-being of the teleworking environment Understand the engagement of employees in teleworking Know how to define 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context Learn how to engage employees in teleworking Create teleworking employees' well-being strategy Know how to be a support to virtual teams Know how to ensure employee engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist employees to be the accommodate their workspace Create a suitable online work environment Take care of employees' health and wellbeing Set an action plan to ensure well-being and engagement.

<p>Module 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the challenges managers might be facing when working with remote or hybrid-form teams and be able to find ways of supporting these managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify crucial processes in which team leaders/managers /supervisors might need support in providing the necessary support to their remote team members • Identify crucial processes in which team leaders /managers /supervisors might require support in their position and coping with the management of a remote team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>MODULE 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways in which HR professionals can help team leaders/managers /supervisors, based on their needs for support in their position and coping with management of a remote team to boost productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply various techniques and interventions in e-working teams to establish and nurture a healthy, efficient and safe working environment
<p>MODULE 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of well-being in teleworking • Understand the health and security management in teleworking • Understand HR professional roles in teleworking • Explain how to have a resilient virtual team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context • Learn to ensure health, well-being and resilience • Learn to reinforce team spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist employees to be the most effective online worker • Create a relevant online work environment • Take care of employees' health, well-being and security • Ensure the productivity of the virtual team.

Module 1 – Human Resources' role in teleworking

Short overview of the module

The main role of Human Resource (HR) departments in teleworking, remote working and hybrid working business models, is making sure the company employee care remains at least comparable to in-person working models, that the employees feel

engaged and connected and are provided with the assistance, support, training, management and compensation they need. The processes behind these roles are talent management, employee benefits and compensation management, education, training and development, HR policy-making and compliance, as well safety in workplace provision. This module is dedicated to an overview of the role HR professionals carry in each of these processes to support e-workers.

Estimated duration of the module

5 hours

Objectives of the module

- Providing an overview of the various roles HR professionals have in supporting employees, managers, and the whole organization in establishing work-processes that support e-working
- Identification of the employee's needs for support in e-working and hybrid forms of working
- Overview of employer working processes to be changed/upgraded/re-established to offer support to e-working

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
MODULE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and describe the 5 main focus areas of HR professionals in supporting their organization's working processes and aims Know and understand the important role of HR professionals in teleworking environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate between various work process solution for various situations of various employee or various organizations based on their characteristics Identify crucial skills and abilities of e-workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List various roles HR professionals have in supporting e-working

Module Content

Remote work and hybrid working models are skyrocketing in popularity after the COVID-pandemic, leaving management and HR professionals having to deal with situations they have not encountered before and have not been trained for.

The main focus of Human Resource (HR) departments in teleworking, remote working and hybrid working business models, is making sure the company employee care remains at least comparable to in-person working models, that the employees feel engaged and connected and are provided with the assistance, support, training, management and compensation they need.

Human Resource departments have various main roles in any given business – as they manage a business's most valuable asset – people/employees. HR departments vary in size and task allocation, however, generally speaking, HR management departments have 5 main focuses:

- Talent management
- Employee benefits and compensation
- Education, training and development
- HR policy-making and compliance

- Safety in workplace

The level of adjustment needed in all these areas in relation to teleworking or remote working, varies, depending on whether the organization opts for e-working in total or hybrid remote working systems, whether all employees are employed remotely or the degree to which the employer can be flexible with organizing their work processes remotely (e.g. an industrial production company might be very limited here due to a large portion of their employees being needed on site on a daily basis, while an IT solutions company might be able to opt for e-working alone without the need of any of the employees being present on site). One of the basis to which these processes are adapted is also both in the sense of HR professionals managing employees through e-working as well as HR helping e-workers and e-managers in effectively managing their job remotely.

Keep in mind that working remotely can be (more) effective if put into practice correctly and with care – but that does not mean working remotely is the best solution for every situation of every employee or every organization. Meeting the organization and the employees needs should be at the forefront of HR decisions and courses of action in all of their processes, including in dealing with e-working. Also bear in mind that while there are a number of companies that still employ only in-office workers and a growing number of fully-remote companies, there is also a growing number of companies who employ both kinds of staff, or staff in various combinations of remote working. This, of course, influences the HR professionals endeavors, as each of these types have specific needs in their organizational processes.

We will be looking at each of these areas to learn how HR professionals can help e-Workers by providing organizational structure and effectively managing the employee lifecycle.

We will cover employee relations (also called employee support or talent retention) separately – although it is generally considered part of talent management. This is due to the role of HR professionals in this field being quite significant, diverse and broad.

TALENT MANAGEMENT

“Talent management” is an umbrella term of various distinct areas of HR management, all dealing with talent attraction, recruitment, hiring, development, workforce planning, employee relations, labouring relations, and so forth.

The role of HR here starts at the very beginning and is significant throughout the process. The first step is talent attraction – the ability to attract the right people for the organization. This includes various tools and tactics – such as employer branding, recruiting marketing, company culture and benefit representation – all of which need to be adapted to various generational differences, economic and sociological trends as well as up-and-coming trends in the world of work, to allow for competitive advantage. One of these trends that seems to be persisting, especially after COVID-19, is working from home, e-working and remote working. For the HR talent attraction to be significant, a clear vision of teleworking, e-working, remote working policies, processes, wants and needs has to be established, bearing in mind the specifics of the working environment and processes in the organization. HR can help the organization develop these policies in collaboration with high executives, management and supervisors, as well as all other employees – more on that topic will be discussed later in policy-making and compliance part of this process.

However, it should be noted here that on the basis of these policies, HR professionals need to establish a clear vision of the expectations the organization has of any workers working remotely (or hybridly), so that they know the qualities and characteristics of people they are looking for when trying to bring in the talent. E-working is typically preferred by younger employees, however that is not the criteria HR should be looking for. Instead, there are certain characteristics and skills HR need to bear in mind from the very start of employee acquisition – the total hiring processes – to ensure they choose an employee that will work well in a remote or hybrid working environment. Namely, these are:

- **Communication and collaboration skills**

Communication in e-working is very different than in-office, therefore anyone who is to be working remotely must be effective at staying in constant, appropriate, efficient and effective communication with their colleagues, business partners, clients and all other potential stakeholders via e-mails, instant messaging, video chat, or any other ways of communication the organization uses. The employee also needs to perform his tasks in a way that builds on and compliments the effort of their colleagues and teammates, therefore effectively contributing to meeting the organization's needs.

- **Independency**

While this may seem in opposition to the previously mentioned skill set, it is actually complimentary. An e-worker needs to be able to be comfortable working on their own, staying motivated and productive throughout their work

day and work week, without external control and limitations (e.g. boss or supervisor present throughout their process). They also need to be content to be working alone on a daily basis – and some people simply need the type of social interaction a physical workplace environment offers.

- **Ability to work with little direction**

As remote workers typically have less immediate contact and oversight of their colleagues, supervisors and managers, they need to have a very clear vision of their role within the organization – specific goals and objectives they should be pursuing. They need to know exactly what needs to be done and how it should be done, and be able to carry it out with less direct supervision and support from their colleagues.

- **Time management skills**

While balancing their free and office time is often one of the reasons individuals pursue working remotely, setting up their own schedules or adjusting as much as possible to their personal lives and personal needs, this also means an effective e-worker needs to be able to properly manage their time when working. This means that they need to be available when they need to collaborate with others and their schedule needs to coincide with the organization's needs (and rules).

- **Technological skills**

Remote working and hybrid ways of working have evolved due to the technological advances that have enabled workers to be in contact with co-workers or clients at any time and have made working from a different location a viable possibility for a large number of positions. Some employers have even closed traditional offices and instead run their businesses absolutely remotely or out of coworking spaces that accommodate their largely e-working employees. Being technologically skilled enough to use the right solutions and be able to pick up new technological skills, adopt to new programs, applications and tools, is therefore of vital importance.

- **Curiosity, resourcefulness, inquisitiveness**

An office environment typically provides employees with various amenities; however, e-workers don't have access to these amenities (at least not at any given point in the work time). This includes operational-and-technological amenities as well as the social advantages the employees have in a centralized

workplace (e.g. off-the-record conversations with coworkers from various departments). E-workers therefore need to be proactive in the reach out to colleagues that they do not work directly with, to become acquainted with them and their work, as well as having to be able to figure out how do be effective at their jobs in their own environment, while trouble-shooting and problem-solving on their own. HR professionals can, in this regard, support them with proper policies and trainings.

- **Focused**

Motivation and focus to work in a traditional centralized is generally easier to achieve and maintain, as there are fewer outside distractions (such as TV, internet, anything else an e-worker's home environment might entail). That being said, traditional office workspaces have their own share of distractors that need to be managed.

- **Passion about your company's vision** – and not simply working conditions (e-work)

The flexibility of e-working or remote working can be very appealing to various individuals – perks such as not having to commute, flexibility of schedule, better work-life balance, to name a few, can be powerful incentives for candidates to apply for a position that offers e-working or hybrid variations of remote working. While that might be a great employee benefit, liking the idea of working from home is not enough for a candidate to be eligible for a given position. A candidate that understands your organization's mission, shares your vision and is excited about being part of the team of helping achieve your company goals will make a unique contribution to your organization.

It should be noted that these skills and characteristics, while vital for a successful e-worker, are not enough to make a good employee – a candidate needs to tick off the rest of the “must-have” boxes on the HR professional's check-list in order to make the cut.

Additionally, the organization's expectations for an e-worker in terms of quality of work they produce should never differ from those the organization has towards in-office workers. Simply put, the organization should not expect more or less from remote workers than they do from in-office staff, whether that be quality of work (great work is just as great done from any location), time-management (deadlines



apply to all workers) or compliance with company rules (workers in various locations are still bound by the same rights and obligations).

HR in the role of recruiters is responsible for the total hiring process, including setting up job posts and availabilities, sourcing candidates through various forms of headhunting, social media, job fairs, being first-line contacts for applications, running background checks or screenings of candidates, selection of candidates at various levels, conducting (initial) interviews, coordinating with the person responsible for making the final selection of the candidate, and facilitating the process of employment of an individual, such as drafting contracts, collaborating in obtaining all relevant information and proof, making sure everything is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, institutions and internal acts.

When hiring a worker for an e-position or a hybrid form of working, HR professionals can adjust for an e-worker friendly approach to all of these processes – for example, including e-job fairs, offering various means of applications and contact with potential candidate, flexibility in direct contact with candidates (e.g. type of communication channel to be used, flexibility of time schedules), conducting e-interviews and e-testing, ...

It should be noted that talent management also deals with workforce and planning and management – meaning succession planning and employee retention efforts. These professionals supervise, plan for, and manage situations such as resignations, retirements, termination of contracts, employee absenteeism or presenteeism, workforce fallout due to sickness or death, and so on. Companies that are fully remote or have a vision of strengthening the amount of their workforce who work remotely/in any hybrid version of remote working, need to incorporate that into their succession and employee retention plans as well. For example, if an employee that is currently working in-office is to retire and be replaced by a strictly remotely-working employee, this will change the job position itself in terms of work-planning and process of work, as well as affect all of the workflow of processes this individual employee has direct or indirect influence on.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Employee relations or employee support is a field of talent management that deal with strengthening the employer-employee relationship in all ways possible.



This support begins with the first time the employee is starting their employment within the organization – called onboarding processes – and lasts throughout their time with the employer, ending in the ending of the employment at the organization – the offboarding process. Throughout the lifecycle of an employee's employment time within the organization, HR professionals help with studying and managing job satisfaction, employee engagement, promotion and incorporation of company culture, and resolution of workplace conflicts. In a company with a unionized workforce, HR professionals also work on labor relations, including negotiating collective agreements, creating managerial responses to union organizing campaigns, and interpreting labor union contract questions.

Remote employee care is specific in the way that certain parts of these processes, which come more naturally to on-site workers due to immediate immersion into the company's organizational climate, direct contact with coworkers from various departments and direct support and supervision of managers, are harder to achieve or remote workers. This means that HR professionals need to realize this gap and support a digital, e-worker friendly solutions.

For onboarding processes this means getting new employees to interact and communicate with various other employees as soon as possible, and help them create a sense of belonging to the organization. New remote employees often deal with a sense of impostor syndrome, feel isolated and confused by the new organizational culture. It may be useful to provide them with a digital employee handbook to get them acquainted with company culture. In collaboration with their managers and team members, an individualized remote onboarding plan with specific ways of communication and goals to be met can be provided. Encouragement of collaboration and engagement is crucial, and providing for means, technology, and ways of incorporating and initiating their professional development and personal growth from the start of their employment is crucial.

The offboarding process for e-workers have their own specifics as well. However remote technology lacks for physical presence, HR professionals and team managers should still opt for a virtual possibility as close to face-to-face setting as possible – namely videoconferencing. All those conducting the meeting should be prepared to be able to answer some common questions about employment termination (such as, when will the employee receive their last payment, what does that mean for their health insurance and unemployment benefits eligibility, potentials of future collaborations or recommendation letters, ...). Clear communication is key, and the meeting should be followed up with outlines of all the details and next steps. The next

phase is informing and supporting remaining team members – including potential disruptions or changes to their working processes, transferring responsibilities or replacement employee hiring. Depending on the ways and means of the employment termination, setting up a virtual goodbye party or virtual goodbye card within the organization. Some HR professionals also conduct exit interviews – for e-workers these might be targeted or discussed in more detail in the context of their working environment.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION

It goes without saying that one of the roles of HR professionals is to oversee and manage employee benefits and compensation. This includes collaborating with the top decision-makers, the financial department, and the legal department in establishing and regularly re-evaluating the compensation structure an organization has in place. This is typically done by researching and evaluating pay practices of competitors or other companies similar in given characteristics to make sure the company compensation policy is in accordance with the laws and regulations, competitive in a given business market, and viable for the organization itself. The setting of remote work compensation usually takes into account all the same requirements when compensating traditional in-office/on-site workers, those being competitive salary, benefits, and pre- and post-tax deductions. However, there might be some e-workers specific challenges in compensation strategies that HR professionals can help the company sort out.

When considering compensations, one thing to consider is the scope of your remote working, especially in terms of geographical locations of your employees.

If you employ workers that work remotely only part-time and are expected to be present in-office at least in part, or if you are including the option of working remotely as only part of the workload an individual existing employee has, these will generally be employed within a respectable geographical vicinity of your workplace. Generally speaking, in these occasions, companies opt for (or are compelled to provide for by local/regional/national laws) to provide compensation for using one's own means, funds and assets for work. These might, depending on applicable legislature, include everything from office supplies, electricity, heating, ... and extend to using various forms of technology. One of the focal points in this regard is provision of compensation via usage (e.g. the company covers agreed upon bills provided by the employee), flat rate or lump sum (agreed upon amount of money per day/month of remote working)



or any other combination that is viable for the organization, the employees and the applicable laws.

Provision of needed technology also falls within this category. Some companies opt for providing company technology (computers, mobile phones) to their employees, while some allow or even encourage the use of personal technological equipment. In any case, a clear set of rules regarding use of technology should be set in place (especially if it is company-owned devices), that define ownership, conditions of use, property rights, GDPR settings and so on.

Potential issues that might arise from an employee using their own laptop might be lack of control of said device by the employer – including cybersecurity threats, access to data and documentation, as well as the ability to set up company approved programs and apps. Potential issue on the side of the employee might be the costs of upkeep of the device in question, privacy issues, and property rights.

When a company issues a device to an employee, that is considered property of the company, as is any information on the device. Thus, a clear boundary is set that what employees do on the device is not their property, but the company's. The company is also able to monitor and keep log of all information usage inside their organization, therefore being able to identify potential threats or hazards and respond to them quickly and appropriately – including cybersecurity, data theft and workflow monitoring processes. However, a growing amount of employers allow for use of company devices for personal use.

All of these issues can be clearly defined in a company's policy. The role of HR professionals in this aspect is multi-fold: convey clear information about the needs and wants of employees to the employer and co-creating company rules on device usage; and provide the employees with the proper framework, deliver proper trainings to ensure company-rules-compliance, and provide suiting compensation.

A whole different set of questions might arise when trying to work out compensation for remote-only workers, especially if these are based somewhere outside the organization's typical geographical scope. Potential issues that might rise are whether or not the salary of such employee should be location dependent or independent (i.e. adjusted to local salaries), whether it is a full-time position, part-time position, freelancing, fixed-contract, project-based or any other type of employment; how does payroll work and what comprises a salary when hiring outside of your country, what kind of pay rates should apply (i.e. national rates, abroad rates, local rates), and so on. HR can help co-create a comprehensive fair compensation strategy that will allow for

fairly-paid, content and motivated workers while keeping the company's vision (and budget) in check. As remote workforce continues to evolve, the approach to remote workforce compensation evolves as well – the key for HR professionals (and companies themselves) is to be creative, be flexible and keep up with trying to find the best solution.

HR POLICY-MAKING AND COMPLIANCE

A pivotal, key component of all and any HR professional department is legal and regulatory compliance. Keeping up to date with all employment and labor legal frameworks is important to HR professionals as well as other employees – but HR professionals tend to be the ones in the role of conveying these laws onto the employees.

Labor laws are highly complex, ever-changing and adapting, however, they have not all been adapted to or adjusted for the various types of e-working and remote working that the organization have seen a rise of, especially after COVID-19 pandemic.

Some companies have opted for very clear definitions of e-working, building upon and detailing in the existing legal frameworks. These are typically internal company acts and guidelines, which should all be part of all-company policy (“the employee guidebook”). HR professionals co-develop all of these company policies and are entrusted with conveying them to all employees – new employees via collaboration in onboarding process, and existing employees via all possible means of in-company communications. You can read more about this in the topics of Education, training, and development, as well as Employee relations.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Different kinds of laws, acts, rules and regulations at various levels of legislation (international [e.g. EU], national, regional, local, union, or in-company) mandate the employers provide a safe working environment for their workers. For HR professionals an important focus is developing and supporting safety training, maintaining various types of logs, certificates, records and data, and intervention in the event of injuries or fatalities that happen at work. Closely related to both policy-making and compliance, as well as employee benefits and compensations, as education, training,



and development, HR professionals work together with all levels of employees to manage and provide for a safe working environment.

Remote working comes with its own set of risks and hazards for the employee and the employer. It is the company's (and therefore the HR professional's) responsibility to ensure they comply with all legal requirements for remote workers as well as their on-site staff. It is also important to bear in mind the employees that work both remotely as well as in-office.

HR professionals should therefore be in charge of setting up a remote working health and safety policy that should be clear about expectations regarding safety precautions and procedures, but at the same time be flexible enough to not become a source of unnecessary tension, both for the employer as well as the employee. The goal is to provide guidelines on the safety practices the employees need to respect, while not demanding the impossible. The important part is setting clear boundaries and expectations to ensure everyone knows what their rights and obligations are. One of these issues, for example, is reporting of injuries – workplace accidents when working remotely often go unreported because employees might not realize they have been injured or do not know how, who and if they need to report the injury to their employer.

Workplace safety can be managed and trained for remote workers in various ways. As this is an important issue it is important to include workplace safety policy training from the very beginning of an employee entering the work process in the organization – HR professionals can do that by having an onboarding course ready to be studied by the employee before starting at their work. Of course, only training the new comers or those who switch from one way of working to another (e.g. in-office working to hybrid working) is not enough – safety policy refresher courses need to be regularly taken by the employees. Periodical follow-ups will ensure they fully understand the company's safety policies and procedures, including all potential changes due to, for example, new technology being set up. On top of this, trainings need to be position-specific. Safety policy trainings need to include (at least) workplace physical safety (even if that workplace is remote – even the employee's home), workplace area safety (see previous comment), workplace equipment safety, and social safety.

There are various potential hazards employees working from home might struggle with, including, but not limited to, ergonomics, electrical hazards, chemical spills, fire hazards, ... or even poor air quality and issues with room temperature adjustments. Some common issues that should be considered could be: working space set up and



work environment, comfortableness of chair, proper back support, computer setup, sufficient lighting in the environment, brightness of the screen, air conditioning, moving fans, proper posture and positioning, and so on.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

HR professionals are in charge with providing all employees with the necessary tools to succeed and thrive within their working environment to provide they best possible work for the company. Therefore, HR professionals provide them with an array of educational programs, training and development – such as new employee orientation, manager training, leadership programs, personal and professional development programs, and so on.

Although it is most common in Millennials, employees of all ages see re-skilling and up-skilling as an important part of their workplace experience, and it is often one of the deciding factors when considering new job opportunities and job offers.

To build and retain a learning culture within an organization, HR professionals need to involve all levels of the organization. By actively including all levels of the organization, aside from assuring the entire organization is involved, HR professionals also make sure they have support from high-executives and decision-makers that understand their view and will help explain why learning is a critical value of the organization to the rest of the employees; ensure managers and supervisors pass this message on to their teams and make sure they remove work-process related learning barriers, such as making sure team members have enough time in their work-schedules to take part in learning, development and training programs, as well as increase employee engagement in the trainings, education and development programs by involving the employees in their own learning decisions.

The first step is assessing the skill-competency gap by conducting a skill or competency-based assessment to establish a baseline. Other relevant information might be gathered alongside these evaluation, such as potential differences in employees availability for learning programs, learning styles, learning preferences, desired investment, and so on.

The next step is for a company to find opportunities on how to incorporate change into the identified areas that need improvement – the identified skill-competency gaps. This is the basis for the company to set clear goals that they want to achieve.

These should be as well defined as possible, to allow for a clearer plan for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is important for a company to set realistic goals that they can achieve (even if it takes a lot of planning and vast changes), specific and well defined (what exactly is the change they want to incorporate), achievable and have realistic deadlines for implementation, as well as evaluation.

This leads to the creation of a clear plan for implementation of these goals – trainings that lead to raising the employee competence level. The implementation plan defines the required outcomes, the person(s) responsible for these outcomes, actions to accomplish the desired goals, clear definition of budget, roles, and measurements that will be implemented in the organizational processes, and define a monitoring, tracking and evaluation system. This system includes ways of assessment as well as a comprehensive timeline for implementation of the monitoring and evaluation. Especially for e-workers, e-learning in various different platforms has been a continuous trend in employee education, training, and development.

However, it should be noted that they should be provided with accessible technology that takes into consideration the specifics of the e-worker characteristics and processes employed. For example, if the training is to be provided to a number of employees that reside in various countries or time-zones, an on-demand learning content would be more suitable than live-webinars. An e-learning environment where content is easily and readily accessible even after the official part of a training/educational program can be beneficial, it also poses certain risks that HR professionals need to tackle – such as employee’s loss of motivation to participate actively during the course of the program by relying on accessibility of the program outside of the official schedule for training.

Flexibility is always crucial, however it is worth having a plan on motivating the learners, monitoring and evaluation of learning processes and so on. This can also be done by posting regular updates to learning content (uploading new content), creating an engagement calendar of virtual classes, or integrating the learning technology with other remote team engagement software, programs, and technology.

Handouts and activity sheets



Activity 1

For each of the HR processes, identify ways the crucial challenge, risk or setback your organization might encounter, then write down ways in which you could contribute to a positive change.

<i>HR role/process</i>	<i>What do you perceive to be the greatest or crucial challenge, risk or potential setback your organization might face in this field?</i>	<i>Your proposed solution to tackling this challenge, risk or potential setback</i>
<i>Talent management</i>		
<i>Employee benefits and compensation</i>		
<i>Education, training and development</i>		
<i>HR policy-making and compliance</i>		
<i>Safety in workplace</i>		



Activity 2

Putting yourself in the role of the person in charge of hiring a new employee, write down suggestions on how to screen for the skills and abilities that make up a good e-worker that were discussed in the module.

Alternatively, as these are also the skills and capacities employers need to build up in their existing employees to allow for a seamless transition to e-working, write down suggestions on how to improve existing employee's skills.

Skills and abilities	Suggestions for screening in candidates/ capacity building in existing employees
Communication and collaboration skills	
Independency	
Ability to work with little direction	
Time management skills	
Technological skills	
Curiosity, resourcefulness, inquisitiveness	
Focus	
Passion about your company's vision	



Suggested reading

- [The Qualities of a Successful Remote Employee](#)



- [5 Tips for Onboarding and Managing Remote Teams](#)
- [The Benefits of Remote Workforce Training and Development](#)

Module 2 – *The necessary equipment for effective teleworking*

Short overview of the module

The following module proposes to define all the equipment necessary for effective telework. Indeed, telework cannot be improvised and if we want employees to be efficient at a distance while preserving their health and well-being, it is important to help them define the necessary environment to work properly.

The module is divided into 4 sessions: Session 1 defines what an effective workplace is. Session 2 highlights the health risks of telework and the need to have the necessary equipment to preserve it. Session 3 defines the contours of the ergonomic workstation and session 4 will give you all the advice you need to help your team set up their workstation.

Estimated duration of the module

3 hours

Objectives of the module

The module aims to improve the skills of HR professionals in supporting their employees. It aims to develop their skills in remote team management, particularly in staff support, ergonomics, well-being and preservation of employee health. HR professionals at the heart of remote team management must ensure the health and safety of their employees.

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
MODULE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn what is an effective teleworking Understand HR professional roles in teleworking Understand the effect of teleworking on the health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context Create teleworking employees equipment strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist employees to be the accommodate their workspace Create a relevant online work environment Take care of employees' health and wellbeing

Module Content

“Existing HRM and leadership approaches have provided little insights into how to deal with these challenges (e.g. Klebe et al., 2021). For instance, high-performance work practices (Appelbaum et al., 2000) are designed to increase employees’ abilities, motivations, and opportunities to perform, but not to cope with threats to employees’ health or a lack of orientation during times of a crisis¹”.

Teleworking is becoming more and more common. If at the beginning of the health crisis, everyone improvised to work as comfortably as possible, many people have since understood the importance of organising their teleworking space well. To achieve this, we suggest you discover our advice on how to choose your teleworking equipment.

At the European level, telework is regulated by the Framework Directive and other directives on working conditions (such as the Working Time Directive) and occupational safety and health (OSH). Despite this, there is no single, specific piece of legislation in the EU directly related to telework. Instead, it is regulated at the national level through statutory legislation, social dialogue and collective bargaining.

The core of the European approach to telework, however, is the European Framework Agreement on Telework, an autonomous agreement between the social partners formulated in 2002. This document defines telework as "a form of organisation and/or performance of work, using information technology, within the framework of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be done on the employer's premises, is carried out away from these premises regularly". In addition, it provides a clear, albeit general, overview of the pre-pandemic responsibilities of employers towards teleworkers.

These responsibilities include ensuring that the teleworker has the same rights as on-site workers while taking into account the particularities of telework. The agreement also underlines the fact that the employer is responsible for the safety and health at work of the teleworkers, especially concerning working conditions and the use of tools.

¹ Günther, N., Hauff, S., & Gubernator, P. (2022). The joint role of HRM and leadership for teleworker well-being: An analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 36(3), 353–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23970022221083694>

The agreement specifies that teleworkers have the right to request inspection visits, to ensure that their workspace is suitable and ergonomic. It also sets out ground rules on aspects such as work organisation, training, data confidentiality and equipment.

Although the conversation surrounding the right to work from home has been gathering pace for several years, with countries such as France, for example, introducing a legal right to disconnect in 2016, the new circumstances following the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting wave of teleworking lead to a review – and tightening – of teleworking regulations. By March 2021, five countries had implemented legal changes (Italy, Luxembourg, Latvia, Slovakia and Spain) and many others were reviewing their national legislation on the topic, including Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Germany, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia. In the Netherlands, the Flexible Working Act was under evaluation by law, and this review therefore also considered changes to teleworking regulation brought on by the circumstances of the pandemic.

These agreed or proposed changes to national regulations concerning telework can be grouped into four main categories:

- the legal definition of what telework encompasses
- the right to telework (including duration and frequency of teleworking)
- the right to disconnect during periods of rest and the ability to ensure a healthy work-life balance while teleworking
- specific OSH provisions, including the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the teleworking station is ergonomic and helps to prevent the development or aggravation of a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD).

SESSION 1 – WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE TELEWORKPLACE?

Teleworking is not something you can improvise. It is not sufficient to sit down at a table in your living room and start working. Teleworking, to ensure productivity, requires the right environment to be in place.

One of the most important issues for optimal conditions for teleworking is the equipment at home to match the comfort of working in the workstation.

The European Directive 90/270/EEC of 29 May 1990 on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment defines a workstation *as a set*

of equipment with a display screen, equipped, where appropriate a keyboard or data input device and/or software determining the man/machine interface, optional accessories, attachments, including the diskette drive, a telephone, a modem, a printer, a document holder, a seat and a table or work surface, as well as the immediate working environment; To recreate ideal working conditions, it is best to be equipped with the best possible equipment² .

The workstation must therefore contain all the equipment necessary to ensure effective work. Telework has the particularity of being part of the private sphere. To create an environment conducive to work, the teleworker should consider setting up a workstation which combines both the private sphere and the requirements of telework.

The arrangement of a workplace must be taken seriously by the worker as well as by the leaders or HR team. The workspace must allow for comfort while being fully productive. A physical workstation is generally designed in an ergonomic way to prevent or minimise the health effects of office work.

A workstation can be defined as a workstation adapted to the working environment and the needs of the worker, in particular through the use of specific tools and equipment. *The main hazards to the health of teleworkers are: the unavailability of ergonomic work equipment³*

In a telework context, the main ergonomic principles to be respected to preserve health and safety as a worker are:

- Adopting a neutral position, i.e. adopting a correct posture to perform your work. This includes: having the lower back resting on a chair back, having the shoulders and neck straight, having the feet on the floor or a footrest, etc.
- The screen should be at eye level or slightly below.
- The workspace should be organised, i.e. you should have access to all the items you need to do your job (mouse, keyboard, pen, etc.) Items and accessories used occasionally should be away from the main work area, but accessible without having to make large movements.

² DIRECTIVE DU CONSEIL du 29 mai 1990 concernant les prescriptions minimales de sécurité et de santé relatives au travail sur des équipements à écran de visualisation (cinquième directive particulière au sens de l'article 16 paragraphe 1 de la directive 89/ 391 /CEE) (90/ 270/CEE)

³ Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. and De Sio, S. (2021). Health and Telework: New Challenges after COVID-19 Pandemic. *European Journal of Environment and Public Health*, 5(2), em0073.
<https://doi.org/10.21601/ejeph/9705>

- When teleworking, avoid distractions around you

The choice of workspace goes hand in hand with its arrangement. You can have an ergonomic workstation without having an adequate workspace. This will not only affect your concentration but also your productivity.

The workspace should be practical without intruding on your private space. The space should be small enough to accommodate a desk, as well as various business documents and files.



Tips to enhance concentration

- Choose a place that is quiet and isolated from the various disturbances that can occur during the day.
- Maximise natural lighting (avoid rooms without windows), without it being too bright (use curtains or blinds). It may also be necessary to use an extra lamp.
- Choose a quiet space, away from sources of noise and distraction (children's play areas, washing machines, traffic, etc.).
- Choose a space that provides thermal comfort. Avoid a place that is too hot or too cold or too damp when working in a sedentary office.



Activity 1: Analyse your telework environment

Please complete the following table to analyse your working environment.

TOPICS	MY CURRENT TELEWORK ENVIRONMENT (Describe here what your current environment looks like)	MODIFICATIONS I CAN DO (Write here the modification that you could do to have a better work environment.)
Places (bedroom, living room, dining room...)		
Temperature (hot, cold, temperate, etc...)		
Noise (quiet, TV, children...)		
Brightness (bright, dark, extra lamp...)		
Equipment (do I have all the necessary equipment to be productive?)		

Comfort		
---------	--	--



Activity 2: *Following your reading of the above and your reflection, how to ensure that your team has a correct workplace and work environment, to be productive?*

SESSION 2 – PHYSICAL HEALTH RISKS

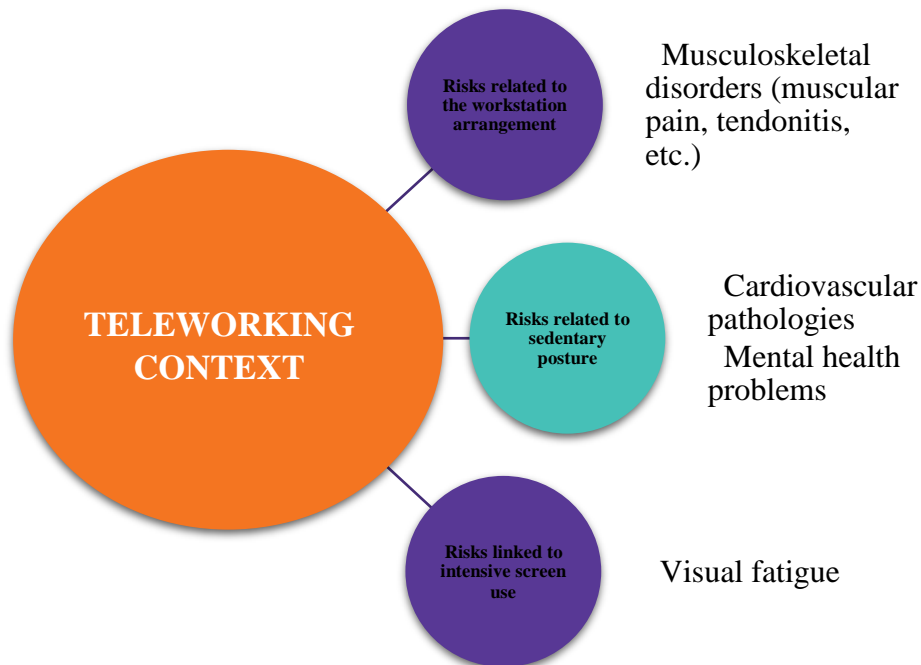
The benefits of telework for workers are well known (better productivity, autonomy...). At the same time, the effects on health have materialised and are now well known. Indeed, telework, if carried out without ergonomic precautions, favours various physical for the worker, thus modifying his productivity.

Sedentary office work is known to promote many specific physical problems related to posture. Physical pain such as Visual discomfort, and musculoskeletal pain are the main physical causes identified (Aarås et al., 2000). Other aches and pains are also recognised as a stigma of sedentary work. Moreover, a non-ergonomic workstation favours the development of these physical ailments and problems, in particular upper limb disorders, lower limb disorders and back pain (Hoe et al, 2012; Jensen et al., 2002; Wahlström, 2005).

Over the last few years and with the Covid-19 epidemic, the risks associated with telework have increased such as awkward postures, repetitive movements and the long period of continuous work; telework reduces the physical activity of professionals and promotes sedentarism which contributes to different diseases and chronic

illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), obesity and hypertension (González et al., 2017).

There are 3 categories of physical risks to consider when teleworking:



1. Risks related to the workstation arrangement:

When a workstation is not, or is inadequate, adapted to computer work, it can generate postural stresses in the upper limbs and spine. Indeed, prolonged static posture can lead to muscular fatigue due to the permanent strain on the muscles ensuring support.

The main consequence of such a posture is the development of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) of varying intensity and manifesting themselves in the form of discomfort, muscular, tendon or even joint pain that can lead to injury. For example: back, neck or shoulder pain.

2. Risks related to sedentary posture:

The arrangement of the workstation can lead to the frequent and prolonged adoption of sedentary postures. These correspond to the maintenance over time of a sitting posture and a very low energy expenditure. Sedentary posture is known to contribute

to the risk of cardiovascular pathologies (hypertension, heart failure, etc.), mental health problems (depression) and MSDs.

3. Risks of visual fatigue linked to intensive screen use:

First of all, it should be mentioned that it has not been demonstrated that computerised work can cause visual pathologies. However, it has been shown that working on a screen for a long time can lead to visual fatigue. Visual fatigue is a phenomenon that affects the functioning of the eye temporarily due to prolonged effort. The permanent accommodation mechanism, which is carried out by the lens and the eye muscles to adjust the focus of the image, can lead to eye fatigue. It is manifested in particular by physiological changes, a drop in visual performance, redness, temporary myopia, etc.



Activity 3: *Here is a list of physical and psychological ailments that can develop with an unsuitable workstation when teleworking. Try to identify the necessary equipment that could alleviate these ailments.*

SESSION 3 - AN ERGONOMIC WORKSTATION: WHICH EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED FOR TELEWORK?

Back pain (lumbar):

.....

Headache/ migraine:

.....

Backache/neck pain:

.....

Dry eyes:

Wrist tendonitis:

.....

In the previous two sessions, you have seen the importance of creating an ergonomic workstation that limits the physical and psychological risks of teleworking. For this, certain equipment is needed for effective telework.

1. Desk/worktop

The choice of your work table or desk is important. It defines the posture you will adopt. For this reason, favour a desk with a straight edge and large enough to hold all your work tools. You should take into account the tasks to be carried out and the equipment to be positioned (number of screens, files, etc.). You should also take into account the space you have available. It is advisable to have a desk at elbow height when sitting on a chair.

Ideally, place your desk perpendicular to the windows to limit reflections and prevent visual fatigue (by direct or indirect glare).

2. A computer

The computer is the most important tool for teleworking. Whether fixed or laptop, it is essential to allow you to access all the information, resources and work tools necessary to carry out your assignments. It allows you to stay in touch with your team through various communication tools, participate in meetings, carry out your tasks, etc.

A good work computer also includes a good screen. Your computer screen must allow you to work without constraints, with a good resolution and guaranteed visual comfort. Criteria for a good monitor:

- Size adapted to the computer and your needs
- Visual comfort: HD or full HD resolution to avoid visual fatigue.
- 1 or more screens if necessary,
- At eye level

A keyboard and mouse are also two other essentials for using your computer. Wireless keyboards and mice are more practical and avoid the problems of connection. There are ergonomic tools that fit the shape of your hands to improve comfort.

3. Video conferencing headset

A video conferencing headset is also necessary, especially if you have online meetings or are taking online training courses. The headset can also cut out ambient noise from your home (spouse in a meeting, children shouting, noisy neighbours, etc.) which can pollute your concentration. There are noise-cancelling headphones on the market (closed headphones with active noise cancellation) that can cut you off from the world around you to a greater or lesser extent. This is a good buy if you have concentration problems when teleworking.

4. Office chair

Your choice of seating is important because you spend a lot of your working time sitting. You need an ergonomic chair that provides comfort and seating for a long time. A bad chair will encourage bad posture and pain (especially back pain). Ideally, it should be adjustable and rotatable, and it should provide maximum relief for your back and neck.

5. Computer support

A computer stand is a tool for adjusting the height of the laptop, in particular, to raise the height of your screen.

The stand ensures the comfort of the use of the laptop by allowing it to keep an upright posture. The use of a laptop without a stand forces the user to move his head downwards in order to be able to look at his work screen correctly. This movement of the head pulls on the neck and nape of the neck, which can, in the long run, lead to pain and other posture-related problems.

6. Others

Footrest: The footrest is an indispensable ergonomic accessory that allows for comfortable body positioning. The footrest is particularly useful for people whose feet do not touch the ground or those who are in an awkward position. The footrest helps to prevent problems related to bad posture.

Webcams: The webcam will allow you to be visible during meetings or other online events. Thus, a good quality camera, good resolution, and frame rate will allow you to remain accessible to your interlocutor. Choose HD or full HD cameras which will provide a clear image. The camera is particularly useful because it allows you to keep

a semblance of link in the exchanges by giving you the possibility to see your interlocutor and to be visible to others.

Docking Stations: The Docking Stations is a tool that will allow you to connect all your devices, especially if you use a laptop and want to use an external screen.

Data Backup and Recovery: We don't think about it enough but data backup and recovery are interesting and indispensable tools because they allow you to protect your data, especially the most critical ones. They will prevent bugs or other problems related to your computer equipment.



Activity 4: *As a result of your reading of the above and your reflection, is there any specific equipment needed for your work?*

SESSION 4: TIPS

Each worker has his or her problems and needs. The workstation must therefore be adapted to each person, depending on their needs and environment.

To limit the impact of teleworking on the physical body and mental health, here are some tips to ensure good ergonomics while teleworking:

Adjust the height of your work chair so that your thighs are parallel to the floor. Your feet should rest flat on the floor or a footrest. When sitting, you should not feel pressure on the back of your thighs.

Adjust the seat back: the lower back, i.e. the lumbar area, and the middle of the back should be well supported. Adjust the backrest height, angle and tension. These should be adapted to your body shape.

Your keyboard should be at the same height as your elbows, whether you are sitting or standing (e.g. at a standing desk)

Your forearms should be parallel to the floor. If necessary, adjust the stand on which the mouse and keyboard are resting so that the height is appropriate.

Your wrists should be straight, in line with your forearms.

Keep your elbows close to your body. Adjust the armrests so that the weight of your forearms rests on them.

Avoid bending your shoulders forward

Reduce uncomfortable neck postures by placing the monitor at or slightly below eye level (whether you are working while sitting or standing)

The computer screen should be located about arm's length away from your eyes. The distance should be adapted to the size of the screen. The larger the screen, the further away it can be from your eyes.

To reduce eye strain, take microbreaks by following the 3 x 20 rule: a 20-second break every 20 minutes, looking at something about 20 metres away.

Incorporate stretching into your work. Change your posture during the day. Place devices in such a way that you have to stand up (for example, the printer can be placed several metres away from your desk)

Make sure you have adequate lighting when working with printed documents and focused, diffused light for screen work. If your computer is placed next to a window, the window should not reflect directly on the monitor. Glare causes eye fatigue and dryness. Adjust the tilt of the computer screen to minimise glare.



Video: Here is a Youtube playlist with tips and advice on how to improve your teleworking environment. How to Work From Home | #WithMe :

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbpi6ZahtOH4_AOV4nGZZY1Uy5Uk709ty

Module 3 – *Wellbeing and engagement practices in teleworking*

Short overview of the module

The 3rd module of this training will provide you with a body of knowledge on well-being and commitment at work. The module will help you to understand and support teleworking employees and in particular to ensure their well-being and health.

You will have access to several tools and tips to maximize your support in setting up and implementing telework for your employees.

Estimated duration of the module

3 hours

Objectives of the module

The objectives of Module 3 are to :

- Strengthen the skills of HR professionals
- To provide the necessary knowledge on well-being in telework
- To open up the reflection of professionals on their practices
- To provide the necessary skills for HR professionals to set up and implement telework
- To define the role of HR professionals in safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of employees, especially in telework.

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
MODULE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the well-being of the teleworking environment • Understand the engagement of employees in teleworking • Know how to define 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context • Learn how to engage employees in teleworking • Create teleworking employees' well-being strategy • Know how to be a support to virtual teams • Know how to ensure employee engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist employees to be the accommodate their workspace • Create a suitable online work environment • Take care of employees' health and wellbeing • Set an action plan to ensure well-being and engagement.

Module Content

SESSION 1 – WELLBEING IN TELEWORKING

The term well-being is increasingly associated with the world of work, including teleworking. Teleworking has become more popular in recent years and well-being at work has moved into the private sphere.



Activity 1: *In your opinion and experience, what does well-being at work mean and what are the criteria to identify it?*

Telework has changed our relationship to work by moving traditional work into the private sphere. Like professional work, well-being at work is an important dimension influencing our relationship to work, its environment, our motivation and our productivity. Numerous studies have shown that employees attach great importance to well-being at work and also when they are teleworking. An employee who feels good at work will naturally invest himself or herself and deliver a better quality of work.

Defining well-being in telework or when working on-site is a vast project as it encompasses several dimensions and is perceived differently by all individuals. Telework well-being can be defined as a feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment in and through one's work. Thus, well-being at work can be observed in two places: physical well-being and psychological well-being. Indeed, well-being at work allows employees to maintain their mental and physical health. Conversely, ill-being at work presents numerous risks for both the employee and the company: illness, poor results, absenteeism, turnover, burnout, etc.

To go further and during the development of the Virtual Teams project, the partners defined well-being at work under 4 criteria⁴ :

⁴ Virtual Teams project (2022). Toolkit for Virtual Team leaders, HR professionals and Managers. Available at <https://virtual-teams.eu/>

Physical Well-being: The ability to improve the functioning of one's body through healthy eating, sleep and good exercise habits (Healthy Nutrition, Sleep management, Exercise).

Emotional well-being: The ability to adapt when confronted with adversity (resilience), manage one's emotions and generate emotions that lead to pleasant feelings (generate positive emotions, humour, spirituality, savouring, optimism, adaptability, self-compassion, mindfulness, mental health).

Social – well-being: the ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others and create one's emotional support network (gratitude, forgiveness, verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, acts of kindness, Mentoring, Diversity and inclusion, social connectedness at work, teamwork, team building activities, Interpersonal skills).

Digital well-being: Describes the impact ICTs (e.g., emails, instant chats) have on people's mental, emotional and physical health.

SESSION 2: THE ROLE OF HR STAFF IN TELEWORK

Even at a distance, the well-being of employees should not be overlooked. As mentioned above, well-being is felt both physically and mentally. With the advent of telework, working conditions have changed, and everyone is free to arrange their workstation as they wish, but musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and other occupational illnesses can occur if they are not supervised and made aware of the ergonomics of the workstation (see module 2).

From a mental point of view, the right to disconnect is more than necessary, at a distance, one can be more flexible in the organisation of one's working time but beware of overwork or abuse. It is important to redefine working and communication hours.

For example, in May 2020, IBM CEO Arvin Krishna created an eight-point work-from-home pledge⁵ to and for employees, to ensure their well-being and productivity:

- *"I pledge to be family first.*
- *I pledge to support flexibility for personal needs.*
- *I pledge to support "not camera ready" (on video calls) times.*

⁵ Arvin Krishna, I pledge to support my fellow IBMers working from home during COVID-19, 2 May 2020, LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/i-pledge-support-my-fellow-ibmers-working-from-home-during-krishna/>

- *I pledge to be kind.*
- *I pledge to set boundaries and prevent video fatigue.*
- *I pledge to take care of myself.*
- *I pledge to frequently check in on people.*
- *I pledge to be socially connected with my coworkers”.*



Activity 2: Describe the recommendations/ decisions/ actions taken to promote the well-being of your employees while teleworking.

How do I promote the well-being at work of my employees?

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

SESSION 3 - WHAT IS TELEWORKER ENGAGEMENT?

An online work environment that promotes employee well-being helps to ensure motivation and commitment to work. It is important to note that an employee's commitment does not ensure their happiness and well-being at work and vice versa.

Work engagement is a psychological state of motivation that corresponds to the attachment an individual feels towards a job and the practices associated with it⁶.

Commitment refers to the relationship between the employee and his or her organisation and the set of elements that promote attachment and the desire to stay.

⁶ Meyer, J. P. et Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. Human Resource Management Review, 11(3), 299-326.

It crystallises the employee's feeling of usefulness, pleasure, pride and accomplishment. It is a personal state based on personal feelings and sentiments.

A committed employee is satisfied with his or her job, with what he or she is doing and with the image of himself or herself that he or she projects. It is usually in the simplest, most basic and trivial things that the greatest satisfaction, pleasure and feelings of pride and purpose are found.

An employee's commitment to his or her work is essential to the smooth running of the organisation. This commitment is a prerequisite for the well-being and success of an organisation. An engaged employee ensures the proper execution of tasks and promotes motivation and investment. An employee who is invested, committed to his/her organisation and who feels considered and valued.

More specifically, remote employee engagement refers to the extent to which remote employees/off-site employees feel engaged with the team, their work, and the business. With work-from-home here to stay, remote workers often feel less engaged and connected with the company, which can negatively impact overall productivity levels and business performance.

The health crisis has shaken things up and put the role of managers and HR staff in understanding employee well-being and engagement into perspective. Commitment has become a challenge for employee well-being, not a quest for performance. Telework has led companies to promote engagement as a challenge for employee well-being, not a performance challenge. It has often been mentioned during the covid-19 epidemic that telework has led to a decrease in employee engagement. This has not been proven, but on the contrary, a global study (conducted by the Great Place to Work) has shown the positive impact of teleworking on employee engagement.



Activity 3: *What do you think are the characteristics of a committed remote employee?*

Remote employees who are engaged tend to?

...
...
...
...
...
...
...

Every employee is different and will express their engagement in different ways. However, some trends have been identified across all employees, including 3 main behaviours (Aon Hewitt) :

- Say: The employee talks about his company, and he knows how to promote it. He is an ambassador.
- Stay: The employee stays and wants to stay with the company. He is a loyal employee. They see a future in the company.
- Stive: They perform well and tend to go beyond expectations, beyond the goals set for them.

Commitment is linked to the relationship that the employee has with his work, his colleagues, and his superior(s). It is therefore important that this relationship is maintained at a distance in the same way as work at the office. It is therefore up to leaders, managers and HR teams to put in place and or reinforce the levers of professional commitment of their employees.

SESSION 4: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN REMOTE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

HR plays an important role in remote employee engagement in many ways. They have an important role because they can influence several factors to foster and strengthen employee engagement, especially in telework. It is important to consider the following

levers as drivers of engagement: (the list is not exhaustive but contains the main levers).

- **Good communication:**

This means setting up a communication system that allows for more exchange of each other's missions, and objectives, but also needs, professional ambitions, etc. As an HR professional, your role is to accompany the organisation in setting up this communication and to ensure that it remains healthy and benevolent.



Activity 4: *What actions can you implement in your organisation to foster this good communication? e.g.: annual professional interview...*

- **Putting employees in charge of the organisation:**

Employees need to feel that they have a role to play in the organisation and that their actions have an impact. It is important to show them that they are at the heart of the organisation's strategy.



Activity 5: *As an HR professional, what actions can you take with your employees to reinforce this sense of action and impact?*

...

...

...

...

- **Taking care of the mental and physical health of employees even at a distance:**

It is necessary to create a healthy remote environment and to have a well-being strategy. The role of the HR professional here is to build and foster this environment. He/she is in charge of accompanying employees to find the necessary solutions to their malaise (redirecting them to specialised professionals, accompanying them in conflict resolution, etc.).



Activity 6: *What is your organisation's well-being strategy? And what is your role as an HR professional (in a few words)?*

- **Recognise the work done:**

It is important to highlight the positive achievements of your employees and this can be done by recognising their work orally, in writing or through certain material benefits.



Activity 7: *Have you, in the last two months, valued the achievements, performance or actions of an employee? If yes, how? If not, what could you have valued?*

- **Feedback:**

Allow employees to provide feedback on the organisation and listen to their positive and negative comments.



Activity 8: *What digital tools can you use to collect feedback from your employees?*

...

...

...

...

SESSION 5 - HOW CAN WE ENSURE THE WELL-BEING AND COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYEES?

The link between well-being and engagement is quite close, as one influences the other. Thus, actions taken to promote one will have an impact on the other. Therefore, this session deals with practices that enable well-being and employee engagement at the same time, without differentiation. There are, of course, some specificities that will be mentioned, as their impact will not necessarily be the same.

Session 4 highlighted the role of the HR professional in engaging remote employees. Session 5 proposes tools and activities to be implemented to engage employees and promote their well-being at work.

1. Strengthen team spirit, the feeling of inclusion within a group.

There are many tools available to strengthen team spirit and enable everyone to find and take their place in a remote team. Most of these tools are available in the form of team-building activities that strengthen camaraderie, communication and leadership skills. The whole team comes together online in a setting that strengthens team relationships and makes collaboration more effective.

Here is a selection of videos containing several team building/teamwork activities that you can easily implement with your team(s).



Videos with other activities:

- 5 Zoom, Virtual, or Team Building Activities: [IDEAS FOR VIRTUAL OR REMOTE TEAMS]: <https://youtu.be/-KfIXKhN2Uc>
- Example: Quick Virtual Team Activity - You Rock! <https://youtu.be/kfmI14IcI7w>
- Best Virtual Team Building Activities | Simple Team Building Activities for Remote Work https://youtu.be/gSXX32_H2SQ

2. Setting up a structured online working environment

The management of an online team requires the definition of a framework of activities and the establishment of an environment that allows for the exchange and performance of employees. This is where the implementation of management and communication tools comes into play. To ensure the commitment of your employees, it is necessary to ensure that they have all the technical and practical means to carry out their missions and strengthen their performance.

This may involve:

- Choosing the most appropriate means of communication (email, Zoom, Microsoft teams, etc.).
- Defining the frequency of communication/meetings
- Setting up a space to exchange information and content...
- Etc.

This training is packed with tips to help you create a telework-friendly environment that promotes the well-being and performance of your employees. In addition, the Toolkit for Virtual Team leaders, HR professionals and Managers contains several tools to help you create the right environment for your team and your goals.

3. Encourage health and wellness (online sports session for example)

Your team's health should be a priority. If your employees get sick or don't feel well, they will perform poorly or not at all. Moreover, all studies show that a healthy diet and exercise are important for good health. As an HR professional, you can propose the setting up of online activities to promote healthy habits. This could be creating a wellness programme for your team (30 days of yoga, one month of daily walks, etc.), or creating a group moment such as an online sports session or cooking class.

These activities will show that you care about their health, and will also bring employees closer together while maintaining their health.

4. Offering online training and career advancement opportunities

Lifelong learning is a lever for commitment to work, enabling employees to be motivated and to build their professional future. To take into account the wishes of each individual and to align them with the company's strategy, it is necessary to conduct an HR policy that includes real talent management. Opening up the possibility of continuing education to your employees will strengthen their skills, which will be put to good use within the company.

Many online learning management systems allow you to put your training content online and distribute it to your employees or to access relevant training content. You can offer training according to the needs, wishes and requirements of your employees. A good, productive way to keep oneself occupied is to watch and finish any company-mandated training. This can allow your employees to advance in their careers in ways that will help them reach their goals.

In addition, your employees must know about possible advancement opportunities within the company. It's important to let employees know they can move up in your organization, whether they're located in the office or across the world. Remote working is not a barrier to career development and can even reduce employee turnover and promote engagement instead.

5. Allocate a budget to help spice up the home office

It is essential to provide work tools adapted to the tasks entrusted. A poorly-equipped employee knows in advance that he or she will not be able to carry out the task.

The list of things to think about to promote commitment at work :

- sufficient space,
- a comfortable seat,
- a functional desk,
- a computer that doesn't "crash",
- efficient software,
- etc.

6. Remuneration

Depending on the situation (recruitment or promotion), the management and the HR team may have a financial motivation lever:

- a raise,
- an attendance bonus or a bonus based on objectives,
- benefits,
- or any other type of bonus should be possible to offer an attractive and motivating package.

When an employee who is committed to his or her work achieves concrete results but sees his or her pay stagnate for too long, he or she may be tempted to apply elsewhere to obtain satisfaction.



Tips/Advice

Here are some examples of practices that can enhance employee wellbeing and engagement. This list is not exhaustive.

Do not hesitate to look for other activities, tools or actions to implement with your teams.

It is important to take into account the opinions and recommendations of your staff. They will be able to identify their needs and the activities required.

Module 4 – *Assisting virtual team leaders managing for teleworking benefits*

Short overview of the module

Managers and team leaders have found themselves in a unique position with the transition towards e-working and remote working. While there are some companies that work fully remotely, a larger portion of companies is opting for a mixed model of hybrid workplaces – combining on-site working and e-working for the same employees. Both of these e-working styles lead to specific needs of support from the HR professionals to team managers to help them support their teams of employees, providing the best possible working environment and allow for efficient completion of the company's goals.

This module will cover the needs and opportunities for HR support of team leaders and managers in adaptation of working processes to fit e-working, monitoring processes and performance of remote workers, workflow organization and the organization of remote employee and team's daily work, co-creation of company culture, employee engagement, motivation and productivity as well as team belonging and team spirit.

Estimated duration of the module

2,5 hours

Objectives of the module

- Providing a comprehensible overview of various processes, tasks and daily activities which contribute to successful e-working
- Identification of various ways HR can cooperate with and support managers, team leaders and supervisors in providing the necessary support to their remote team members
- Identification of the manager's/team leader's/supervisor's needs in HR professional support towards their own work and coping with management of a remote team

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...	
	Knowledge	Skills
MODULE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand challenges managers might be facing when working with remote or hybrid-form teams and be able to find ways of supporting these managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify crucial processes in which team leaders/managers/supervisors might have a need for support in providing the necessary support to their remote team members Identify crucial processes in which team leaders/managers/supervisors might have a need for support in their position and coping with management of a remote team

Module Content

There are companies that still employ only in-office workers and there's a number of fully remote companies, but there's also a growing number of companies who have both kinds of staff. This is a unique position for the managers, as it raises various questions of needs and expectations in connection to the process of working of the employee. Some managers are uncertain about what things are to be considered when working with a remote team or transitioning of various teammates or positions to a hybrid working environment.

Additionally, the organization's expectations for an e-worker in terms of quality of work they produce should never differ from those the organization has towards in-office workers. Simply put, the organization should not expect more or less from remote workers than they do from in-office staff, whether that be quality of work (great work is just as great done from any location), time-management (deadlines apply to all workers) or compliance with company rules (workers in various locations are still bound by the same rights and obligations).

Therefore, at least the basic of various fields of remote working should be clearly defined between the employer and the employee, including ways of communication the organization and the needs of various working processes demand, monitoring



processes of remote workers, workflow organization and organization of the employee's and team's daily work, ... at the same time, the company culture, team spirit and team belonging need to be developed, nourished and sustained through out.

All of these areas are areas where HR professionals can provide support to managers to help e-working processes run as smoothly as possible and provide for employer and employee benefits and satisfaction.

When it comes to supporting managers for e-working, HR professionals first need to identify areas where managers might need their help in performing their job. This generally includes ways in which e-working might differ from a typical on-site setting the managers have more experience in.

One of the ways in which e-working differs is the amount (and effect of) immediate contact and oversight remote workers have on the side of their managers. This means they need to have a very clear vision of their role within the organization – specific goals and objectives they should be pursuing. They need to know exactly what needs to be done and how it should be done, and be able to carry it out with less direct supervision and support from their colleagues. All of these need to be passed on to them by their managers (with support of HR).

When it comes to onboarding processes, managers might need support in collaborating with their team members and the HR professionals to come up with an individualized remote onboarding plan with specific ways of communication and goals to be met. Encouragement of collaboration and engagement is crucial, and providing for means, technology, and ways of incorporating and initiating their professional development and personal growth from the start of their employment is crucial.

In collaboration with HR professionals, managers and supervisors can also be trained to pass on various important messages, codes of conduct and company culture on to their teams and make sure everybody is in the loop. This also involves further managerial employee care, such as providing the necessary conditions for the workers to be able to actively participate in company endeavors, by, for example managing potential barriers, provide for a safe environment, and apply employee encouraging practices.

HR professionals can also help managers become able to identify key challenges for remote working, employ a plan and key practices, create smooth processes and set clear expectations to facilitate the team's remote work. These can be done via

managerial trainings or via one-on-one counselling, collaborations and personalized action plans, tailored to a specific manager in a specific team.

For the managers, some of the challenges they might be facing when working with remote or hybrid-form teams might be:

- Communication issues
e-working communication skills differ from those of on-site workers, and managers need to be able to be at ease with both. This encompasses dealing with lack of certain information in comparison to face-to-face communication, communication lags, video-call burnouts, availability issues, ease of (frequent) communication via technology, and so on.
- Lack of technology skills or experience
Some workers are more tech-savvy than others, and managers need to be able to support all of them to ensure the workflow is functional and the workload delivered. Managers themselves might not be at ease with tackling various technical difficulties. IT and HR departments might be strained in this regard as well, so it is crucial for them to support managers and all e-workers collaboratively in this regard, via setting up courses and/or taking up the necessary measures when incorporating new technology or new devices in the company's processes.
- Lack of personal contact
This is an issue both managers as well as workers might struggle with, and it might develop into feelings of isolation, decreases in feelings of belonging, lowering of work motivation and drive, negatively affects team engagement and dedication, ... To counter-act this, remote team-building activities and regular check-ins, even informal ones, should be set up.

The e-workers themselves might have difficulties with social isolation (loneliness, lack of in-office dynamic environments, struggling with feeling part of the company or part of the team), added stress and potential suboptimal working conditions at home (lack of adequate or dedicated office space, immediate working environment, distractions, ...).



Activity 1



How does team leaders/managers/supervisors work differ when working with on-site workers, e-workers or remote-workers, or even hybrid workforce variations, in your organization? Which is the most typical situation/combination of work?

What are the issues team leaders, managers, supervisors working with e-teams or remote-teams are struggling with? How do you know this (e.g. based on their own report, based on HR surveys, KPI scores, customer reviews)?

Where do you see potential areas where you as an HR professional can support your organization's team leaders, managers and supervisors in e-working? What are the ways in which you are supported by high executives and high management in order to do so?



Suggested Reading

[How to Create a Good Remote Working Culture](#)

Module 5 – *Skills and tips for productivity in teleworking*

Short overview of the module

A variety of factors within any organization affect productivity and engagement in the workplace. The key issue for HR professionals is to identify key motivators and demotivators affecting e-workers and their managers in their work, and find opportunities, ways and means of providing incentives to productivity and tackling the organizational barriers.

In this module we will take a look at certain fields in which HR professionals can help boost the organization's productivity, among other beneficial influences, by implementing simple solutions within the organization's varied workforce departments and teams. These are mostly soft-skill based tips to establish and nurture a healthy, efficient and safe working environment.

Estimated duration of the module

1,5 h

Objectives of the module

Familiarizing learners with various tips and skills to provide for healthy, efficient and safe working environment that boosts productivity in teleworking, such as:

- creating a positive organizational culture, encouraging organizational climate, and supporting work environment; establishing and co-creating office culture;
- procurement of education training and development opportunities for all employees in various levels of the organization; provision of adequate and useful tools and technology; providing for a healthy working environment;
- provision of clear organizational structure by defining all company processes; setting clear boundaries
- employee wellness and wellbeing; clear, frequent, thoughtful and engaging communication through various channels.

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...	
	Knowledge	Competences
MODULE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways in which HR professionals can help team leaders/managers /supervisors, based on their needs for support in their position and coping with management of a remote team to boost productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply various techniques and interventions in e-working teams to establish and nurture a healthy, efficient and safe working environment

Module Content

There are various factors that affect productivity and engagement in the workplace. The key issue for HR professionals is to identify key motivators and demotivators affecting e-workers and their managers in their work, and find opportunities, ways and means of providing incentives to productivity and tackling the organizational barriers.

1. Creating a positive organizational culture, encouraging organizational climate, and supporting work environment

Help employees create a healthy work environment, where they can develop healthy work habits and contribute to creating a productive workspace.

To help build and retain a learning culture within an organization, HR professionals need to involve all levels of the organization. By actively including all levels of the organization, aside from assuring the entire organization is involved, HR professionals also make sure they have support from high-executives and decision-makers that understand their view and will help explain values of the organization to the rest of the employees; ensure managers and supervisors pass this message on to their teams, as well as support all workers to share and co-create the company culture, also providing for potential ways of improvement or change in the organizational or other processes.

2. Give employees on all levels education, training and development opportunities

These might include activities such as new employee orientation, manager training, leadership programs, personal and professional development programs, and various forms of re-skilling and up-skilling.

3. Provide organizational structure by clearly defining all company processes

Establishing clearly defined organizational structure and establishing effective, organized and efficient ways of dealing with all organizational and work processes will assure each individual as well as teams will work more productively, as they will have a clear understanding in the rules, roles, ways and responsibilities of each of the employees or employee structures involved.

4. Provide for employee wellness and wellbeing

Caring for your team members physical and mental health has become an increasingly important part of any organizational culture within the last years, and it has been only emphasized in the wake of the effects of COVID-19 pandemics, where individuals struggled with various issues, including threats to physical health (COVID, health risks of working in a suboptimal working environment from home) as well as mental wellbeing (stress, depressive moods, dealing with social distancing and isolation, dealing with uncertainty, job security, at-home conditions, child-care, ...).

Aside from developing and supporting safety training, maintaining various types of logs, certificates, records and data, and intervention in the event of injuries or fatalities that happen at work, creating a safe working environment that helps employee wellness encompasses more than compliance with regulations. Creating a wellness program, encouraging e-workers to put their welfare first and leading a healthier lifestyle will help create healthier and happier employees, boosting their productivity. All of these activities should be done considering e-working possibilities – such as providing an online physical activity course, offering wellbeing education and training, team building exercises, ...

5. Provide the necessary tools and technology

Technology has become an integral part of all working processes, but proper technology is even of greater importance in e-working. Accessible, supported, user-friendly, efficient, and easy-to-manage technological solutions should be at the forefront in the organization's managing e-working solutions. Technologies that facilitate collaboration and engagement are preferred for e-workers for their boost of employee engagement, while easily accessible, cloud-based technology that allow for "anytime, anywhere" e-working will allow for efficient time-management of the e-workers.

However, the best technology and tools alone do not boost productivity – the workers need to be properly trained to manage said technology and/or tools.

6. Engage in communication frequently and through various channels

While too much communication might lead to employees feeling overwhelmed, micromanaged and might even lead to communication burnout, frequent communication is key in establishing and maintaining various types of social bonds between employees and between employee and their manager. It is important to communicate informally, in addition to formal meetings. Varied communication channels are preferred, as employees differ in their preferences and communication styles, however, video interactions offer the most information about body language and expressions that can be a meaningful insight in understanding an employee's level of engagement and state of mind.

Speak to the workers individually to see how you can best support them. Often, not only official company avenues are the support they need, but instead small, internal changes can help them function better – such as perhaps moving a specific deadline a few days in view of a difficulty a worker might be going through (e.g. sick child).

7. Find ways of establishing, sharing and co-creating office culture

While e-workers are less likely to participate in physical meetings/in person, it is important to commit to sharing office memorable moments via videos and pictures or similar activities. This will help the employees understand office culture and be part of it, boosting their engagement and productivity. Get to know your people within their work setting.

8. Set clear boundaries

Establish a clear vision of the expectations the organization has of any workers working remotely and communicate this with the employee. This should also include ways of setting up communication channels, scheduling for meetings and video conference, limits and possibilities of their time-management to fit the needs and requirements of the organization and so on. Be mindful of possibilities of maintaining work-life balance – including carefully planning team meeting to fit potential time-zone differences, showing respect towards time e-workers time off. Clearly communicate when other team members, other departments and yourself can be reached – setting clear boundaries is a two-way street. When working remotely, the worker never gets to “go home”, so turning off their computer for the day might be difficult. Reassure yourself and your coworkers that you cannot solve every problem immediately, and that you all need time off.

9. Remember that we are all humans first

While there are certain ways working environment compels us to act to meet the expectations of various stakeholders – from other employees, managers, high-executives, to clients – at our core we are a human being first, an employee and company representative second. Make the effort to express yourself and let your personality shine through even within the working environment. Genuine and authentic ways of interacting with our colleagues offers ways of establishing trusting, meaningful and candid relationship – and as social beings, this helps boost our work ethic, morale, engagement and productivity.



Activity 1:

Out of the tips and skills covered in this module, choose three and prepare a small-scale action plan for intervention in your workplace environment. Bear in mind that the steps you take should be based on your specific work situation, needs of your e-workers and their managers, and be viable for execution within the existing tools framework of your organization.

TIP	DESIRED OUTCOMES	STEP-BY-STEP ACTION PLAN



Suggested Reading

- [Coronavirus Essentials: 9 Tips for Managing Remote Employees](#)
- [Performing the Core Functions of HR Remotely](#)
- [12 Things Remote Working Employees Care About the Most](#)
- [7 Creative Ways to Show Remote Workers You Care](#)

Module 6 – Tips for health, resilience and well-being while teleworking

Short overview of the module

Telework is not an option. To ensure the productivity, performance and commitment of its employees, the organisation (HR management and leadership) must support its employees to ensure their well-being, health and resilience. Beyond the work itself, the organisation needs to provide a supportive environment for its employees to engage, develop and move into the future.

This module explores tips to help you ensure the health, resilience and well-being of your employees. The module contains X activities that will allow you to reflect on and contextualise the tips. You will also have access to several tools to use in your daily life.

Estimated duration of the module

2 hours

Objectives of the module

- Understand the importance of health, well-being and resilience in telework
- Understand your role as an HR professional in supporting your employees
- To have a critical analysis of one's practices

Learning outcomes of the module

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
MODULE 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of well-being in teleworking • Understand the health and security management in teleworking • Understand HR professional roles in teleworking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to be an effective HR professional in the teleworking context • Learn to ensure health, well-being and resilience • Learn to reinforce team spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist employees to be the most effective online worker • Create a relevant online work environment • Take care of employees' health, well-being and security

MODULE #	After the completion of the training, the participants are expected to ...		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain how to have a resilient virtual team 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the productivity of the virtual team.

Module Content

Health, well-being and resilience are essential to the success of your employees' teleworking. It is important to define a strategy to preserve your employees' health (mental and physical), resilience and well-being.



Activity 1: *Before we get into the subject, it is beneficial to examine the situation in your organisation. What is your organisation's strategy for ensuring the health, well-being and resilience of your people?*

In telework, as in physical work, the organisation (employer and HR team) must ensure the health and safety of its employees. For this, it is important that telework is organised and that all the challenges it brings are considered. The role of the HR team is important here, as it supports the implementation of good practices so that telework is a source of well-being and quality of life at work for employees.

Telework has developed over the last few years, following the Covid health crisis, and this has led to many good practices being put forward to ensure that you meet your occupational health and safety obligations.

Here are some tips to consider to strengthen the health, well-being and resilience of your virtual teams.

1. Adaptation

Teleworking relocates the office space, usually to the employees' homes. However, although employees all have similar working conditions on the company premises, this equality is not true when everyone works from home. The conditions for all employees are not the same, certain aspects have to be taken into account such as noise, space, light, etc. Each environment is unique, and it is important to take into account the specific needs of each employee.

Each environment is unique, and it is best to discuss with each individual their situation and daily life, to propose the most appropriate solutions, and thus achieve certain equity or at least guarantee optimal working conditions.



Good practices :

- carry out a test period and collect feedback to adjust if necessary;
- create the ideal telework formula with the employee according to his/her situation;
- propose flexible working hours;
- collect training or equipment needs;
- carry out a psychosocial risk assessment.

2. Internal communication

Internal communication with and within your employees is important. It helps to maintain the link between employees and management, to share information and also to allow everyone to express themselves and to get involved in the life of the company. In teleworking, this communication must be organised to adapt to remote working. Companies must therefore support their teams so that they continue to communicate with each other, if not more.

Despite the distance, human resources and managers must ensure that employees keep the company's values and culture in mind. Team cohesion must also be maintained to avoid a feeling of isolation.



Initiatives to maintain the link within remote teams:

- Plan regular team meetings and stick to them to strengthen the team spirit. It is important to encourage regular communication between employees so as not to lose motivation.
- Offer one-to-one meetings to allow each employee to take stock of his or her situation and express himself or herself.
- Remain open to employees' requests and make sure they can speak out.
- Share information with all your employees: you can use group emails or a weekly newsletter, etc.

3. Time management – work/life balance

When employees work from home, it is very easy for them to be distracted, especially if the whole family is also at home. Those who are not used to teleworking often find it difficult to manage and organise their time.

To stimulate commitment and ensure that these employees manage their time properly, it is important to provide them with tips and tricks to help them get the most out of their time, including quick training.

A useful way to do this is to have one of your employees, who is used to working remotely, write an article on your communication platform to give time management tips to all their colleagues. It is also possible to include training videos or even individual training, coaching each employee on how to manage their time effectively when teleworking.



Good practices to adopt :

- raise awareness of the right to disconnect and define working hours
- Managers can work out a schedule for the coming week with each individual if they are having difficulty organising themselves and getting off work;
- Invite employees to put away their work equipment at the end of the day, especially if they do not have a dedicated room at home;
- set a good example by logging off at a reasonable time, not phoning, emailing or chatting outside of set time slots;
- cut off access to the network outside working hours.

4. Health and physical well-being

Your employees' well-being depends on their health. As an employer, you should encourage them to take sports breaks and eat a healthy diet. You can also arrange for fruit baskets or balanced meal trays to be delivered directly to their homes.

Another way of looking after the health of your employees is to offer video sports sessions. These sessions will help combat the lack of physical activity and stress experienced by teleworking employees.

In addition, to preserve the well-being of your teleworking employees, start by making them aware of the issue of workstation ergonomics. The positioning of the desk, the importance of light and the need for a comfortable chair are all tips that will help them to work comfortably. Spending long hours on a laptop increases the risk of back pain and eye strain. Provide your teleworkers with sufficiently large fixed screens, external mice and keyboards, and angled stands for comfort.

Ensuring that workstations are ergonomically designed will reduce employee fatigue and increase motivation and productivity.

5. Health and psychological well-being

Checking in and showing compassion. Checking in is about fostering interpersonal trust and connection. Remote work lacks opportunities for spontaneous connection and coaching. They need to be created. While checking in was popular in the initial days of the pandemic, it has gone down in importance and frequency over time, with managers feeling exhausted by the emotional drain it causes. However, check-ins are necessary for a remote working environment since most employees view their immediate managers as the most important link they have with their organization.

Managers, whether they like it or not, are often required to provide emotional first aid to employees in times of distress. Unskilled managers often end up making check-ins look like check-ups, making employees feel that they are being monitored. Others never show empathy and compassion and alienate the team. More sinister is the manager who shows fake flexibility. One study participant told me: "My boss called and asked me why I am not taking my summer afternoon off as per the company's new flexibility policy. I then frankly asked him, 'Okay, I will take off, but will you cut me some slack on the deadline I am supposed to meet?' He awkwardly suggested that I could still enjoy my Friday afternoon as long as I had met my deliverable by the following Monday morning." I call this fake flexibility.

Many participants were appreciative of their managers' ability to connect with them. A random text late in the evening saying, "I'm thinking of you and am grateful you are on my team" contributed a lot more to trust than any formal program. Likewise, employees were weary of forced fun — like Thursday night bingo — while appreciating beginning formal meetings by acknowledging someone's personal accomplishment or a birthday. Humanizing the remote workplace is a special art for the remote leader, and it happens in non-obvious but conscious ways.

6. Problem-solving

Conflict resolution in a telework context implies defining a mechanism for alerting to potential conflicts and a specific mode of conflict resolution online. The tensions are simply less visible and of a different nature. How to avoid escalation and play down the tension in a time of limited social interaction?

Tips :

- Prevent potential conflicts from a distance: This means that managers and HR professionals need to develop the ability to constantly scan and instantly know about vulnerabilities and obstacles;
- Identify the type of tension: relational conflict, business conflict, internal conflict...
- Create a favourable context for the expression of each person's frustration ;
- Maintain team cohesion remotely: create a free discussion space (Discord, WhatsApp, etc.), extra-professional activities at a distance (virtual aperitif, blind test, etc.)...
-



Activity 2: *You have had an online meeting with your team. During this meeting, you noticed that the communication between your employees does not seem to be satisfactory. Information is not being shared on time and this is starting to create some tension. Your team communicates mainly by phone and email. You have a shared space to exchange files and content.*

After reading this module, what could you put in place to strengthen internal communication and improve team spirit?

Some possible answers (non-exhaustive list)

- Define a method of internal communication that allows for a better exchange of information, such as setting up a weekly newsletter that would include all the essential information for the week. Each employee would participate (depending on the number).
- Set up a weekly meeting with the team so that everyone can share their activities and information. It is important to give all employees the opportunity to share their tasks and to create synergy within the team.
- Set up a team building activity to strengthen communication between employees, ease tensions and reinforce team spirit. For example, an online time's up via zoom or the online desert island game.
- Offer an extra-pressure activity such as an online aperitif or a relaxing moment with pets.

Assessment tools

1. To ensure a worker can work well in a remote or hybrid working environment, companies should educate, train, and develop certain employee skills and abilities. These include (select all that apply):
 - co-dependence
 - ability to work with little supervision and direction
 - good collaboration skills
 - communication skills
 - leadership skills
 - analytical skills
 - time management skills
 - project management skills
 - technical skills

2. True/False - Identify the true and false statements.
 - 2.1. The company has to ensure the safety and health of its employees.
 - 2.2. There is no point in setting up teleworking hours.
 - 2.3. Each employee should take care of his or her time management as long as the work is done.
 - 2.4. To prevent conflicts, it is important to minimise contact between employees.
 - 2.5. Cohesion between employees is less important online than face-to-face.

3. Some of the challenges team leaders and managers might be facing when working with remote teams might be:
 - A. lack of technology skills or experience
 - B. communication issues
 - C. lack of personal contact
 - D. all of the above



4. Complete the following sentences: [work-life balance, wellbeing, disconnect, ergonomics)
 - 4.1. In teleworking, HR professionals have an important role to play in the of employees
 - 4.2. Employees have the right to
 - 4.3. It is important to ensure the of the workstation.
 - 4.4. It is important to preserve the-..... of employees so that they avoid burnout.

Bibliography

Anderson, D. (n.d.). *The Qualities of a Successful Remote Employee*. Trakstar: Company Culture. <https://hire.trakstar.com/blog/the-qualities-of-a-successful-remote-employee>

Bonner, H. (2022, November 30). *Why You Should Never Allow Personal Laptops For Business*. Absolute Technology Solutions. <https://www.getabsolute.com/blog/why-you-should-never-allow-personal-laptops-for-business/>

Boquen, A. (2022, August 23). *The Employer's Guide to Remote Work Compensation*. Horizons. <https://nhglobalpartners.com/remote-work-compensation/>

Bosua R, Gloet M, Kurnia S, Mendoza A, Yong J. (2013) Telework, productivity and wellbeing: an Australian perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F0021-9010.92.6.1524>

Boyarsky, K. (n.d.). 7 Remote Employee Onboarding Tips and Checklist for Your Next New Hire. *OwlLabs*. <https://resources.owllabs.com/blog/remote-employee-onboarding>

Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. and De Sio, S. (2021). Health and Telework: New Challenges after COVID-19 Pandemic. *European Journal of Environment and Public Health*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.21601/eieph/9705>

Contreras, F., Baykal, E., & Abid, G. (2020). E-Leadership and Teleworking in Times of COVID-19 and Beyond: What We Know and Where Do We Go. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.590271>

Council Directive 87/ 391 /EEC of 29 May 1990 on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31990L0270&from=FR>

Durkee, C. (2022, December 9). 10 Steps To Build A Learning & Development Culture in a Remote Workplace. *Cooleaf*. <https://www.cooleaf.com/blog/10-steps-to-build-a-learning-development-culture-in-a-remote-workplace>

Günther, N., Hauff, S., & Gubernator, P. (2022). The joint role of HRM and leadership for teleworker well-being: An analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23970022221083694>

Harry Hertz (2020, September 15) Should Your Organization Have a Work from Home Pledge? *The Baldrige Cheermudgeon* <https://www.nist.gov/blogs/blogrige/should-your-organization-have-work-home-pledge>

Hedges, K. (2019, July 02) Making Sure Your Stress Isn't Contagious. *Harvard business review*. <https://hbr.org/2019/07/making-sure-your-stress-isnt-contagious>

Kelly W., (2020, April 28), 6 tips for building mental resilience while working from home. *Open Source magazine*. <https://opensource.com/article/20/4/mental-resilience>

Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022, 26 October) What Great Remote Managers Do Differently. *Harvard business review*. <https://hbr.org/2022/10/what-great-remote-managers-do-differently>

de Macêdo TAM, Cabral ELDS, Silva Castro WR, de Souza Junior CC, da Costa Junior JF, Pedrosa FM, da Silva AB, de Medeiros VRF, de Souza RP, Cabral MAL, Másculo FS. Ergonomics and telework: A systematic review. *Work*. (2020). *PubMed* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32925139/>

Montreuil S, Lippel K. (2003), Telework and occupational health: a Quebec empirical study and regulatory implications. *Safety Science* [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0925-7535\(02\)00042-5](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0925-7535(02)00042-5)

Nguyen, A. (2020, September 8). 13 Essential Qualities Of Successful Remote Employees. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2020/09/08/13-essential-qualities-of-successful-remote-employees/?sh=586132ab777b>

Parzych, D. (2020, March 11) Setting yourself up for success while working remotely. *Open Source magazine*. <https://opensource.com/article/20/3/remote-work>

Paycor. (n.d.). The 5 Main Roles in HR. *Paycor*. <https://www.paycor.com/resource-center/articles/the-5-main-roles-in-hr/>

Peek, S. (2022, August 12). Communication Technology and Inclusion Will Shape the Future of Remote Work. *Business News Daily*. <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8156-future-of-remote-work.html>

Teleworking regulations are changing – so what do employers need to know? – (2022, February 24). *European agency for safety and health at work*. <https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/media-centre/news/teleworking-regulations-are-changing-so-what-do-employers-need-know>

The Complete Guide to Safety Training for Remote Employees. (2022, February 22). *KnowledgeCity*. <https://www.knowledgedcity.com/blog/the-complete-guide-to-safety-training-for-remote-employees/>

The work of the future: ensuring lifelong learning and training of employees. (2022, July 4). *European Economic and Social Committee*. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/work-future-ensuring-lifelong-learning-and-training-employees>

Valjarevic, K. (2019, September 3). Remote vs Office Workers: Expectations and the Way of Work. *Insightful*. <https://www.insightful.io/blog/remote-workers-vs-office-staff-performance-expectations>

Werf, I. van der. (2022, October 30). How to Offboard an Employee Remotely: A Step-by-Step Guide. *Omnipresent*. <https://www.omnipresent.com/articles/how-to-offboard-an-employee-remotely>

Appendix

Here are the correct answers to the Assessment tools (CORRECT ANSWERS HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW)

1. To ensure a worker can work well in a remote or hybrid working environment, companies should educate, train, and develop certain employee skills and abilities. These include (select all that apply):
 - co-dependence
 - ability to work with little supervision and direction
 - good collaboration skills
 - communication skills
 - leadership skills
 - analytical skills
 - time management skills
 - project management skills
 - technical skills

2. True/False - Identify the true and false statements.
 - 2.1. The company has to ensure the safety and health of its employees. **TRUE**
 - 2.2. There is no point in setting up teleworking hours. **FALSE**
 - 2.3. Each employee should take care of his or her time management as long as the work is done. **FALSE**
 - 2.4. To prevent conflicts, it is important to minimise contact between employees. **FALSE**
 - 2.5. Cohesion between employees is less important online than face-to-face. **FALSE**

3. Some of the challenges team leaders and managers might be facing when working with remote teams might be:
 - A. lack of technology skills or experience
 - B. communication issues
 - C. lack of personal contact

D. all of the above

4. Complete the following sentences:

- 4.1. In teleworking, HR professionals have an important role to play in ensuring the **well-being** of employees.
- 4.2. Employees have the right to **disconnect**.
- 4.3. It is important to ensure the **ergonomics** of the workstation.
- 4.4. It is important to preserve the **work-life balance** of employees so that they avoid burnout.