Manager Tips for Managing Flexible Work Arrangements and Telecommuting

Set Expectations Early and Often:

Provide guidelines, set boundaries, clarify priorities and performance goals for each team member in advance of the new telecommuting schedule. Managers should outline and track each employee's availability to ensure they can be reached by team members, customers, and campus constituents while not on campus. Communicate consistently about standards for accountability, quality, and timeliness.

Monitor Performance:

Managers need to make sure that the work of their department is being accomplished in a timely manner and with solid results. Managers need to determine whether the work that is being done can be accomplished in just an as effective (or more effective) manner by the utilization of a telecommuting arrangement. Employee performance must be continually evaluated, as well as reliability and work styles in order to continue arrangement. Should performance deviate, managers should begin a dialogue with impacted employees. Do not ignore performance issues.

Emphasize Communication:

It is crucial to communicate often with employees to keep them appraised of deadlines, available resources, work-related challenges and expectations. However, managers should resist the urge to micromanage all aspects of the employee's tasks. Set up reoccurring 1:1 meetings, or periodic staff huddles to communicate information and keep a pulse on employees. This will ensure communications goes both ways.

Remember to Listen:

The most successful managers are good listeners, communicate trust and respect, and inquire about workload and progress without micromanaging. Ask for feedback regularly and commit to utilizing that information to enact valuable change.

Provide a Way to Collaborate:

Consider creating a shared document on drop box to track work activities and projects that affect the team. Also, agree as a team on acceptable behavior for virtual collaboration. For example, to ensure timely responses when busy, it is appropriate to send a quick message to colleagues and customers to say "I'll call you back, currently in a meeting" or "I received your email, I will respond as soon as possible". The purpose is to ensure collaborative continuity similar to that of working in office together.

Build Connections and Be Available to your Team:

Managers are encouraged to make themselves available to team members at all times within the core business hours. It is even more important to ensure timely responses to urgent requests, or just be available to brainstorm real work scenarios. Establishing an individualized connection with team members can have a huge impact on the morale of employees and enhance the telecommuting program's effectiveness.