



Flexible, Remote and Online Working guide

Part 3: Team workload

Making the move to remote working gives us a chance to rethink how we do things, something that has never been more important than while enduring the shockwaves of Covid-19.

C19 has hit organisations in lots of different ways. Some of us are working harder than ever. Some are doing exactly the same work on completely new platforms. Some have already stood down staff. And others are working hard to keep their teams employed, even though they have less work for them to do.

Part 3: Team workload

Giving our teams more flexibility and refocusing their work on outcomes rather than hours may not only provide long-term culture and efficiency benefits, but also free up staff time to direct to other areas.

Business as usual

Those of us whose workloads look pretty much the same have to remember that it's still not business as usual. Remote working isn't about copying our offline workplaces and pasting them online. We need to work out what can and can't take place remotely, and what needs to be put on hold while we wait to see the shape of the world that will emerge. And see Part 1 and Part 2 of these guidelines (on planning and protocols respectively) for more about the logistics and culture of managing teams online.

Business development

Those of us who have team members with some extra time to spare may want to think about how to pivot our work into non-traditional business areas.

This doesn't need to be a dramatic change. Not all of us can switch to making hand sanitiser. Rather, it's about taking some time to think laterally about our work, our workers and ways of doing things to identify if/how we can use our existing skills and services in new ways.

For example, instead of doing consultation work with communities, you could run online training to help other people consult with communities more effectively. Instead of running live events, you could start hosting them online - or set up a stage-for-hire with digital streaming capabilities to help others do the same. Instead of selling your usual products or services, you could sell gift-cards for your patrons or supporters to use in the future (while showing their support right now). Instead of producing large-scale artworks, you could produce smaller prints or greeting cards. Instead of marketing your services to your usual industries, you could think about to adapt them to the essential businesses still running (such as healthcare, manufacturing or IT).

Training, research and development

Extra time can also provide the opportunity to catch up on (perpetually-neglected) staff training, research and development. This may include:

- External training: Redo your skills matrix to work out what skills your team might need in this brave new business world. If you don't have much money, think about potential partners who may be interested in a skills swap between organisations. (\$)
- External coaching: With uncertainty and stress at an all-time high, one-on-one virtual coaching may be a particularly helpful resource right now to help team members re-articulate their goals and adjust to new ways of working and being in the world. (\$)
- Peer-to-peer training: Ask team members who are proficient in particular areas to develop short demonstration or training packages that can be presented to their peers online. Set up a shared server for training resources. And schedule training sessions that allow for all team members to participate, depending on their working days.
 - Work-specific training: Think about the internal policies, procedures, equipment and/or software that would be good for team members to learn (including your new remote working protocols, for example).
 - Work-related training: Think about the knowledge or skills that team members possess that could benefit others, such as sharing anecdotes of epic failures and what can be learned from them, sales skills, time-management, how to write better emails, how to use personal social media accounts in ways that support the company, etc.
 - Other training: Don't forget, training and development opportunities don't have to specifically relate to workload to be beneficial for your team or your broader workplace culture. Peers could share stress-management techniques, tips on how to set up a work-from-home office space, or even lockdown-related activities like how to make bread, etc.
- Research and development: Dig through your list of 'maybe-one-day' projects to see what can be pushed forward. What research can you do during this down-time to help you bounce back better than ever when it's done?

Pro bono work

If your team has extra capacity, there are plenty of people who could use it. We're all in this together, after all. Increasing the pro bono component of your workload is an easy way for your organisation to play its part, enhance team members' skills, and bring in positive promotion. This may include:

- Reaching out to your communities and asking them what they need.
- Opening your internal training program to external participants.
- Donating your facilities, skills or products to affected individuals or sectors.

Please note: these pro-bono suggestions are specifically for those organisations looking for ways to keep their existing teams occupied. We should *never* ask small businesses, small-to-medium sector organisations, freelancers or independent practitioners to work for free – and right now, they need our support (and our cash) more than ever.

An enhanced duty of care

A legal, logistical and ethical issue, duty of care is a common law principle found in Occupational Health and Safety or Negligence legislation (which varies from state to state). It is sometimes called the 'neighbour principle', which means that we all have a responsibility to the people around us.

As employers, board members, team and project leaders, we have a duty to create safe environments for our teams, clients and communities. During times of crisis, this duty of care is enhanced, not diminished. It cannot be transferred. It cannot be delayed. Choosing not to act isn't an option. Choosing not to act is a failure in our duty of care.

Doing our duty may include:

- Asking team and community members how they are and what they need. Listening to their answers. Responding appropriately. Checking in regularly.
- Planning. Preparing. Identifying and managing risks.
- Thinking about the tone and content of our communications.
- Being clear and consistent. Protecting ourselves and our teams by writing things down.
- Being professional and holding our teams to the same professional standards.
- Being flexible and dealing with things that change calmly and with good humour.
- Acknowledging our mistakes, apologising, and being accountable when things go wrong.
- Celebrating successes often and well.
- Modelling good practice by taking care of ourselves too.

About the writer

Kate Larsen is a Non-profit & Cultural Consultant with more than 20 years' experience as a leader and senior executive in the non-profit, government and cultural sectors in Australia, Asia and the United Kingdom. She has particular expertise in the areas of workplace culture and wellness, online communication and communities, and increasing access for marginalised groups. This includes experience managing remote-working teams at a state and national level.

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