

10 REMOTE WORK GUIDELINES:

1. Eligibility

First, companies need to determine what positions are eligible to work remotely, and state them in their policy. By analyzing their work and operating model, companies can decide which positions can and should be done out of the office, Gartner analyst Carol Rozwell said. She used herself as an example: “If I’m on the phone with you right now, doesn’t matter where I’m phoning from, doesn’t matter where you phoned me, right?” Some companies, however, may not have any jobs that can be conducted remotely. Companies without remote-compliant positions should state that from the beginning, eliminating any future requests or inquiries about remote work.

2. Availability

If a company does allow remote work, then availability expectations should be outlined in the policy. Whether it’s instating a blanket 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. work requirement, or letting employees to set their own schedules, either should be put in a policy, said Castanon-Martinez.

Setting schedule requirements from the start eliminates any possible frustration between employees based on time. If one employee is allowed to make their own schedule, but another is given set hours, that can create an unfair atmosphere.

3. Responsiveness

Castanon-Martinez also recommended implementing a specific rule on response time. Define whether or not a remote employee is expected to respond to a coworker immediately, and also specify what modes of communication should be used, he said. Organizing expectations around communication creates a healthy relationship between employees and supervisors—no one will have concerns about productivity expectations or be left in the dark.

SEE: [IT pro’s road map to working remotely](#) (TechRepublic download)

4. Productivity measurements

Speaking of productivity, remote work policies should specify how an employee’s productivity will be measured. Productivity can be measured in a number of ways, whether it be on the time spent on the project, number of cases resolved, amount of client interactions, and more, companies need to determine how they want to evaluate their employees.

“The key thing is to make sure that you can measure outcomes of work, as opposed to something like the number of hours,” Rozwell said. “So, if you can measure the outcomes after somebody performs the work remotely, and you got the desired result, then that’s a better situation than trying to measure people on number of hours.”

5. Equipment

Remote workers need the right tools to complete their work. Therefore, companies need to state what equipment they are willing to offer to these employees. If they expect employees to provide their own computers, for example, then they need to specify that. “Some organizations require you to have an internet service that meets a certain speed requirement,” said Rozwell. It’s important that prospective remote workers are aware of the technological expectations up front so they know if they can meet them.

6. Tech support

Along with equipment, companies need to specify if any tech support is offered to remote workers. Almost all major companies have on-site technology support, but not remote. Outline in the policy what remote employees are expected to do when having technical difficulties, that way there is a plan of action.

7. Rightful termination

Rightful termination is typically addressed in most company policies, but Rozwell emphasized its importance in a remote work policy. Companies need to plainly state that no employee will be terminated on the basis of working remotely. The reason this policy even needs to be stated is because many managers are uncomfortable with remote working because they can't see their employees, said Rozwell. This is also where communication comes into play. Open and frequent communication is necessary between remote workers and managers so that no one can question the work that is being done, she added.

8. Physical environment

If a company has a preference on the physical environment an employee works in, put it in the policy. Some companies prefer or require an employee's physical environment to be approved prior to working remotely. "It's a health and safety issue," said Rozwell. "If you think about an office environment, generally you could assume that the building is safe, that the company is monitoring things like CO2 levels, that they have a system that can detect a fire or a break in. The key is the fact that it's a healthy work environment."

9. Security

A big problem with remote work is security. Big companies work on secure networks, but when information is taken out of the office, security is not guaranteed. Employees need to be extremely careful when doing work in public places, said Rozwell. If companies have specific requests—for example if they don't want employees working on public Wi-Fi—then that should be stated in the policy.

10. Client confidentiality

Going hand-in-hand with security, client confidentiality must be addressed in a policy. Again, keeping information confidential is much easier in a protected workspace. For example, if you're having a client call in a cafe, you have to make sure you aren't discussing or sharing sensitive information in that setting, said Rozwell. Nothing could stop a remote employee from doing so, though, if it's not directly stated.



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