




# Sustainability in a Virtual World

## Work Practices


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1. **Goal Clarity:** Agreeing on clear, ambitious goals for what someone's going to accomplish is critical for success.
    - Manage: Agree on and then check in on your team member's progress against those goals regularly.
    - Manage Up: Ensure that you and your supervisor are clear on what goals and expectations are, and check-in with them on progress towards those goals, so that you can move forward having a clear direction.
  2. **Getting to the information you need:** Asking the right questions can ensure that you get what you need from your conversations.
    - Manage: Ask questions that get underneath the surface, and create better opportunities for you to understand and support. (How are you handling X [a specific element]? What seems to be working well? Why do you think that's working? What could go wrong? What are you most worried about? How else can I best support you with this? What else do you need (from me) to make that work? How is this work impacting you / your other work? Is there anything I'm doing in this process that's not working for you?)
    - Manage Up: Ask questions that ensure you're getting the support you need, and your supervisor is getting the information they need. (When you've dealt with this challenge in the past, how have you handled it? Do you have any concerns about this plan / draft? What are your concerns? What's the bigger picture context I should be keeping in mind as I work on this?)

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3. **See them in action – and close the loop.** Find ways to see one another in action, whether it's joining a meeting, going on site visits, or observing a presentation, etc. It helps you understand what's happening "in the field" as well as giving you a reference point.
    - **Manage:** Be clear before you "show up" on the purpose of your observation; don't surprise them! Make sure you close the loop and discuss what you observed, being prepared to comment on ways you saw the person be successful and effective.
    - **Manage Up:** Invite your manager to observe your work, particularly if there are dynamics you are finding challenging, work that you're particularly proud of, or feedback that you would find useful.
  
  4. **Develop communication system & expectations:** Establish a clear system for communicating and be vigilant about sticking to it.
    - **Manage:** Make sure you are clear about your accessibility – how can someone best reach you for what? What are your/your organization's communication systems and which system is used for what (chat vs video call vs phone call vs email, etc)
    - **Manage Up:** If there aren't clear expectations about communication channels, ask your manager for clarity and/or suggest a team conversation for setting up norms while working virtually.
  
  5. **Keep everyone looped in:** Make sure no one is left out of communications, especially if information used to be shared in person informally.
    - **Manage:** Be vigilant about ensuring that everyone knows what's going on, particularly if you have a hybrid office/remote team.
    - **Manage Up:** It can be hard to be working remotely if you have other colleagues who are working in-person. Be proactive about checking in – even if it's sending a quick message to your supervisor



or team at the end of the day asking if there's anything you should know.

6. **Build trust & community:** Create opportunities for building trust and getting to know each other.
  - Manage: Try setting up virtual lunches or approximating other ways for people to connect.
  - Manage Up: Set up 1:1 virtual lunches or breaks with your colleagues
7. **Manage your expectations:** Make sure you're aligned and realistic, and adjusting as needed.
  - Manage: Look at your team's goals and work plans for the next few months and consider what can be adjusted and what absolutely needs to be prioritized, asking your staff for their input. Make the necessary adjustments. Revisit.
  - Manage Up: Be clear about what is realistic and what is not and how you are being affected by the current situation.
8. **Check in about working remotely – again:** In order to have realistic expectations, you have to understand what impact the logistical and ecological impact working remotely – and the pandemic(s) are having on you and your team. This is a rapidly evolving environment, and this conversation needs to be regularly revisited.
  - Manage: Ask, don't assume, whether your team member has everything they need to work successfully. Make sure you understand what challenges they are navigating – childcare, reduced income, limited digital access – and make adjustments or provide support.
  - Manage Up: Given that this is an evolving situation, and there are particular vulnerabilities for us and our communities, it's important



to share when and how working remotely is working or not working, and seek specific support.

9. **Focus on Outcomes and Priorities:** Focus on impact and outcomes over activities.

- **Manage:** When you emphasize results over activities, you're showing that you trust your staff to manage their own time and workload.
- **Manage Up:** When you discuss what you're doing, make sure to communicate the priorities you're working – and ask for the support you need if there's anything getting in the way.

10. **Respect work hours:** Setting and respecting boundaries around time is the key to maintaining trust and balance while keeping the work going.

- **Manage:** Be flexible and don't expect that people's work hours will be the same as when they were in the office. It is very easy for work to bleed into everything else when we're working from home. Staff and volunteers were already navigating these blurred boundaries – it becomes even more essential for us to be vigilant with the folks we supervise and work with that we are respecting boundaries
- **Manage Up:** Be clear about your work hours and communicate ahead of time when you have changes.

11. **Schedule Check-Up:** Your schedule is a moral document; it shows where you invest one of your most important resources: time.

- **Manage:** Audit your schedule. Do you have supervision scheduled with each of your direct reports regularly? Is there anyone you end up canceling with more than others? Do you set aside time for you to prepare for those meetings? What is your schedule communicating to your team about healthy boundaries and the



ABC's (awareness, balance, connection) necessary for preventing burnout and promoting joy?

- Manage Up: Audit your schedule. Do you have regular supervision? Do you take the time to prepare for supervision in order to ensure you get the most benefit of that time? Does your schedule simply empty your vessel, or does it ensure that you have opportunities to replenish it?

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