



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Distant Cousins

The changing nature of work today, with managers and employees being located at different facilities or even different states has necessitated many organizations to decentralize operations. Multinational companies even expect executives to oversee staff in remote or overseas locations. Today's work place itself is being redefined to include arrangements such as telecommuting, flexible working hours and job sharing.

The US Department of Labor reveals in its report, "Future work: Trends and challenges for work in the 21st Century" that approximately one in 10 workers fits into alternative work arrangements, with nearly 80% employers offering some form of non-traditional staffing arrangement. About 47% employees do some amount of telecommuting. Organizations are increasingly empowering their employees to work more independently by giving them the authority and autonomy to act in the best interest of the company.

HR managers should attempt to make employees, who are always with clients at distant locations feel special as they never see them and know nothing of their needs, frustrations and successes. HR recognition needs to be more of a conscious and planned act, as there are not many spontaneous opportunities to acknowledge an employee's hard work and accomplishments. The key to success of a workplace is to ensure that employees stay motivated, happy and productive.

Some guidelines for recognizing employees stationed away from the headquarters:

Allot time. To build trust in relationships managers have to allocate some time for employees working from different locations. Managers can schedule their work so as to be present in the office when these employees are also present. This time can be utilized to discuss issues of concern or to communicate information.

Create a sense of teamwork. Managers who create time to know their employees and make them feel important and part of the team motivate them better. Managers could take a proactive role in fostering a sense of teamwork by involving employees in all team meetings through teleconferencing, e-mail and chat rooms. They must also include some form of recognition by recognizing and appreciating their work. Increase communication. The greater the distance between the employee and the managers, the greater should be the effort from both sides to keep in touch. This can be done through updates and frequent meeting and visits.

Use technology. Technology can be used as a communication tool and not just as a means to dump work on employees. Managers can utilize the Internet and company Intranets to reward and recognize employees working off-site.

Keeping remotely located employees motivated to do their best and make them feel integral to their jobs is a challenging task. Managers should take time to recognize and reward them with so that they feel valued and remain loyal.