How Does the Cloud Work to Neutralize Remote Workers' Feelings of Isolation?

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Working remotely is becoming more popular both among businesses and their employees. One reason is that remote worker productivity is better than many people realize. According to Computer Business Review, 77 percent of employees say working remotely boosts their productivity. Remote workers often feel more fulfilled as a result, too. However, there's a pitfall they sometimes run into that can compromise their job satisfaction and productivity: feelings of isolation. How does the cloud work to help remote workers feel less isolated and more meaningfully connected to the life of the company?

Why Remote Workers Experience Feelings of Isolation

Working from home is not the same as working in an office. There's no water cooler where a remote worker can keep up on the latest office news or chat about the latest episode of "Game of Thrones." A remote worker's office buddy isn't available for an in-person pep talk or coffee walk on a rough day. Managers sometimes forget to loop teleworkers into important announcements. As a result, employees
working from home may feel they've fallen out of sight and out of mind. They may even begin to wonder whether anyone notices their contributions to the company.

There are other more subtle factors that can add to remote workers' feelings of isolation. The gestures and nonverbal cues colleagues rely on to understand the nuances and subtexts of conversations are a lot harder to come by when one of the colleagues is sitting behind a glowing screen, far from the life of the office. Email just isn't a replacement for a face-to-face chat, particularly when it comes to sensitive matters such as performance reviews or other high-stakes discussions. Teleworkers, knowing they have to deal with a geographical barrier their office-based colleagues don't face, can occasionally feel the playing field isn't so level after all.

How Does the Cloud Help Remote Workers Feel More Connected?

How does the cloud work to counterbalance this sense of isolation teleworkers may feel? First, cloud-based communications platforms offer video conferencing, which is incredibly useful to people who work from home. All those small gestures they couldn't see in an email, such as Joe from accounting's sarcastic air quotes, come across just fine in a video chat. If a remote worker needs to ping a colleague for a quick question like they would in the office, presence information lets the teleworker know whether the coworker is available for a brief messaging session or phone call. Remote workers can also seamlessly collaborate with their fellow team members on a document in a web meeting, should they need to.

When remote workers have access to the same communications tools everyone else at the company does, they no longer feel left out. Instead, they feel like a valued member of the team. As a practical matter, remote workers can more efficiently reach their managers and colleagues if they are all using the same cloud-based communications platform to begin with — for example, there will be no fumbling around with one web conferencing app to collaborate with the San Francisco office and a separate video chat app to talk to the marketing team at corporate headquarters.

Top BYOD Trends & Best Practices

BYOD is another key benefit of unified communications.
How Managers and Business Owners Can Help

Managers and business owners can make a big difference in addressing teleworkers' feelings of isolation. First of all, managers should schedule regular video check-ins with remote staff. This will keep communication flowing more smoothly in general, but it will also prove especially valuable if sensitive conversations come up. The manager should also consider team dynamics, particularly if most of the team is based in an office and one or two members are remote. Team meetings and company-wide meetings should also be held via video conference so that remote workers can participate.

Business owners can also help prevent teleworkers from feeling isolated by making sure everyone in the company uses the same cloud-based communications tools. Otherwise, teleworkers may find themselves hanging out on a communications platform all by themselves wondering if there's anyone there, which is a lonely — and inefficient — way to work. Business owners and managers should take extra care to keep teleworkers informed of major company announcements and recognize their accomplishments. It's also a good idea for businesses to consider forming working groups of teleworkers to provide feedback on their experiences and suggest improvements.

Although it's common for remote workers to feel a bit solitary as they silently work from home, far away from the buzz of the company headquarters, they don't actually have to be isolated from everyone else. With the right cloud-based communications tools and a proactive plan for collaboration, businesses and their teleworkers can enjoy greater productivity and a vibrant, more connected work environment.

Contact Vonage Business to learn more about how cloud-based communications can help remote teams.