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APCO's [Future of Work study](#), which looks at the perceptions and expectations of U.S. employees when it comes to work, found that a worker's setting can affect how they feel about their job. Employees who primarily work at home report feeling less passionate about their careers than those who work in offices.

With a significant number of employees now working remotely, how can organizations ensure that their people are productive, engaged and connected? Below we share some trends and best practices.

1. **Embrace online meeting tools.** To keep an ongoing thread of conversation and get collaborative juices flowing, consider funneling conversation into Zoom/Slack chat function. Emails are great for external communication, but internally they can create fragmented conversations. Start team chats or practice chats to keep everyone informed and up to speed on business realities, personal situations, and new opportunities. It will pay huge dividends in the long run.
2. **Be agile.** We've found that each week is creating new demands for information sharing. As many people emerge from their first or second week of working from home and home-schooling, and we hear discussion of longer-term school shutdowns, parents and caregivers need to consider how to prepare for the months, not weeks, ahead. We are putting in place regular check-ins through our parent affinity group in collaboration with HR, and daily touch-bases with managers.
3. **Turn on the camera.** Employees who are new to remote working may feel a lack of collaboration. Encourage employees to hold all meetings via video. Camera shy? Consider mandating that everyone wear a hat. It will help break the ice and ensure that no one shies away from joining because of a bad hair day.
4. **Get social.** Consider ways to use Zoom/Slack to build culture. This week at APCO, we instituted a daily 8:30 am meeting called The Morning Commute. We have it every day and use it as a chance to talk about things besides work. Podcasts, music, news, family, and wherever else the conversation leads. We've also had regional happy hours, featuring guest speakers, and posed trivia.
In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, we've seen several organizations start to Zoom meeting or Google hangout and leave it open all day for people to pop in and interact. Creating this virtual "water cooler" can be a great way to host informal coffee breaks or hold themed discussions, such as sharing favorite recipes, podcasts, movies, books, etc.
5. **Make it fun.** Employees are staying connected by holding virtual birthday celebrations, dance parties, happy hours, bake-offs, workout challenges, and video game competitions. Employees are also sharing photos and tours of their homes/kids, and even holding "Woofing Hours" where they show off their pets.
One interesting way to get employees involved is to start a dedicated Spotify playlist or daily "best song" competition. Employees can also participate in a "Wheel of Fortune"



competition on Zoom or Slack through the online tool [Wheel of Names](#), where the winner receives a lunch delivery or gift card.

6. **Recognize employees.** Employee recognition is an important part of team building and morale but can sometimes get lost when employees move to remote-working. Companies can introduce a weekly award for employees who are positively impacting colleagues, living the company's values, or doing great work and recognize those employees through Zoom/Slack or through email.
7. **Over-communicate, without micromanaging.** Research shows that managers can be an effective and welcome channel for communications. Employees want to hear from their managers, but they don't want to feel that they are being micromanaged. Managers should strike the right balance between being available and overly communicative, but giving employees some room to breathe. Establish daily check-ins to set clear expectations and provide updates with needed information.
8. **Provide Support.** Employees might feel overwhelmed during this period. Share information about where they can go for help and additional resources. For instance, APCO's Parents Affinity Group provided a list of resources for parents who are now juggling with homeschooling and working. Other organizations have shared tips for setting up a home office and best practices for working remotely. Many employees are starting to become concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their jobs and their financial situation. To the extent that it's possible, provide reassurance for employees and try to dispel rumors as quickly as possible. Consider establishing fundraising challenges or employee relief funds for employees to give to others in the organization who may be experiencing financial hardship or consider buying gift cards to small businesses where employees live.
9. **Collect Feedback.** Ask employees how they are feeling and what else they need. Consider a suggestion box via an email alias.
10. **Celebrate.** April 10th is Global Work From Home Day, a day of celebration of working from home for all employees around the world. Encourage employees to network and meet other fellow remote workers under the hashtag #WorkFromHomeDay.