

# working from home during the pandemic best practices.

Like most of the world, you've probably heard about the COVID-19 outbreak we're facing. The coronavirus (officially named COVID-19) was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The virus has since spread to many countries around the world, including Canada.

Like other similar viruses, COVID-19 is transmitted through close contact with an infected person. It can also be transmitted by contact with non-disinfected objects. To reduce the spread of this illness this way, Randstad Canada encourages everyone to follow good hygiene practices as recommended by the World Health Organization. The most efficient solution to reduce the spread of the virus is to stay home and reduce contact with other people. If you are an employer, the safest option is to ask your employees to work from home to keep them safe.

## advantages of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic

Working from home has a lot of positives for both employers and workers. To determine if working from home makes sense for your workplace as the situation with COVID-19 continues to escalate, here are some things to consider. You'll have a better sense of whether working from home is something you should consider for your employees during this unprecedented time.

### it allows for social distancing

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, health officials recommend that Canadians practice social distancing to curb the spread of the virus. Social distancing involves reducing contact with other people as much as possible. Working from home is a critical piece of this. As an employer, you have a responsibility to keep your workers safe. If you are able to allow your workers to work remotely, this is the single best thing you can do for their health and safety during this unprecedented situation.

### there are no commute times

While the primary reason to work from home at this time is to ensure your workers' safety, there are other benefits of working from home. Working where you live saves time and the cost of transportation, including costs associated with car ownership, maintenance, and insurance. Science also backs up the claim that people who live close to their workplace are happier. You can't get much closer to home than working out of your living room!

### employee flexibility increases

Working from home also improves work-life balance during this difficult period, especially for families with young children. In most cases, as long as workers are able to complete their work, they can set their schedule. During the COVID-19 outbreak, many schools and other public spaces have been shut down. Childcare is extremely difficult to find at this time, and the cost of hiring a childcare professional can be incredibly expensive. Working from home allows employees who have children to care for their children without incurring additional expenses they may not be able to afford.

### workers have more autonomy

Working from home also allows workers to take control of their day and set key priorities during this crisis. As an employer, you'll have peace of mind that your employees are home safe and able to complete their most essential tasks your business needs to operate remotely. And workers benefit from being able to focus on key tasks without distractions or worrying about being exposed to the virus. You'll just need to find a balance that works for you and your employees about how frequently they'll report in.

If you are launching a new work from home initiative, we have two essential pieces of advice for employers implementing remote-working for the first time: 1) have your employees create a daily routine and 2) ask employees to set up a productive workplace at home. Here is how to accomplish these two things efficiently.

## how to start a daily routine with your employees:

- Set up recurring meetings with employees who are working from home, at least several times a week, to check in and ensure everything is going well for them. You can also use this time to make sure they have all the tools they need to get their work done. It also helps employees to set a rhythm and determine a clear schedule between home and work time, just like they would have at the office.
- Create a reasonable schedule for how you want your employees' days and weeks to unfold. Project management tools like Monday or Asana can be useful for this. Ask your employees to create a to-do list each day for the next day's work, so they're able to prioritize and make sure they know what they can accomplish in a day. You should also suggest they make time for breaks, a walk, exercise, lunch, and so on.
- If you're able to, you can offer flexible hours to your employees working remotely. It's possible some of your employees will have to deal with issues such as having their children at home, as schools also close. For example: if an employee prefers to work in the afternoon and in the evening because of their children, try to make accommodations. We promise they will work just as hard for you, and be incredibly grateful for your consideration!

## how to help employees build a productive workplace at home:

- We suggest you work with a popular communication tool to stay in contact effectively. Many tools are available including Skype, Slack or Google Hangouts. Also try to provide your employees with the same materials they would have at the office if possible. Make sure they have the basics they need to work effectively, including a functional desk, keyboard, laptop, and so on.
- Make sure they treat their workspace like a real office, even if it's a space under the stairs. Their home workspace should be quiet and calm, away from where the family gathers, as well as comfortable and efficient. They should also try to keep it neat and organized. Having this space will help them get in the right professional 'work' mindset.
- Request that employees reduce distractions by setting aside time in their day to manage non-work activities. While it's understandable that they will have other responsibilities during this time, setting aside time to focus on work is important. Ask that employees try to avoid social media, doing chores, or taking personal calls during designated work hours. Instead, they should set aside break times to handle these activities.

## protecting company data while working from home

When your employees work from home and are unable to use your secure private network, it's essential that added precautions are taken. As a business with access to a lot of sensitive data, your employees must be able keep sensitive information private and work in a secure manner. Here are some best practices to follow:

- Ensure that your employees have the tools and resources they need to work remotely in a secure manner. This includes providing company-issued hardware like laptops and phones to conduct business activities. Record serial numbers and keep track of what devices have been loaned to each employee, to protect your IT infrastructure.
- Provide access to critical software applications to ensure employees are able to work from home seamlessly. Creating a secure VPN for your organization is one solution to ensure that employees are able to securely access the software they need remotely.
- Ensure your employees follow best data security practices. These include:
  - Isolating themselves during sensitive calls (finding a quiet place away from others) or using headphones to keep conversations as private as possible.
  - Do not print out sensitive information if possible. If printing is necessary, ensure documents are shredded or disposed of in a secure manner.
  - Do not leave sensitive information unattended. For example, lock laptop screens when they are not in use and password protect company phones.
- If you need support developing a data security plan for your remote staff, we are at your disposal. Our consulting team is able to provide urgent support on updating your data security measures to protect your organization.

# helping your organization

## move forward.

If the virus is hitting your business hard or you need to address an urgent need for workers in response to the crisis, Randstad Canada is available to support you. We are equipped to continue working remotely at full capacity and will provide the support you need to get through this crisis. And as Canada's largest HR partner, we have access to a high volume of pre-vetted talent who are ready to be placed. So if you need help with recruitment or any other HR needs, please contact us and we can help you through this crisis!

in addition, here are some other points  
we can support you with:

- Urgent hiring needs regardless of your sector
- Customer service agents to respond to increased customer inquiries
- Issuing Record of Employment documents (ROE)
- Safe workplace solutions customized to you
- Strategic planning for other areas of your business
- Provide expertise on data security and privacy



The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. Further, given the rapidly revolving spread of COVID-19, the information may not be up to date. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

For additional information on current best practices we are following, please refer to these organizations:

CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

WHO:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

OSHA:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

NIOSH:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/>

PHAC:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>

Government of Canada-Employment Insurance:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei.html>

Quebec-Temporary Aid for Workers Program:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/financial-assistance/temporary-aid-for-workers-program/>