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Remote work & RAMP: Keeping remote teams motivated

As we face new challenges in the workplace and the world in general, it seems that working from home and remote workforces will become an increasingly common practice. Employees and employers alike will be feeling the strain to balance priorities and maintain 'business as usual' structures. Communication tools and software are imperative for ensuring connectivity. If implemented alone, without strategy and an understanding of how your team engage in their work, they can feel like tools to monitor and observe employees.

Though vital to remote working, if implemented without an understanding of how your team engage in their work, communication tools can feel like they're there to monitor and observe employees.

Here we will look at how even just a basic understanding of motivation can help you to ensure your employees or your team, whatever their profile or drives, stay engaged and motivated whilst working from home – **now and in the future**.

The RAMP model is based on Self Determination Theory and stands for **Relatedness, Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose**. Relatedness taps into our innate desire to be connected to others, Autonomy, the need to have choice and freedom. Mastery is a need to improve, feel progress and achievement. Finally, Purpose can be described as the "reason" we do things.

All of these can hold the key to make working from home feel as productive or satisfying as working in an office.
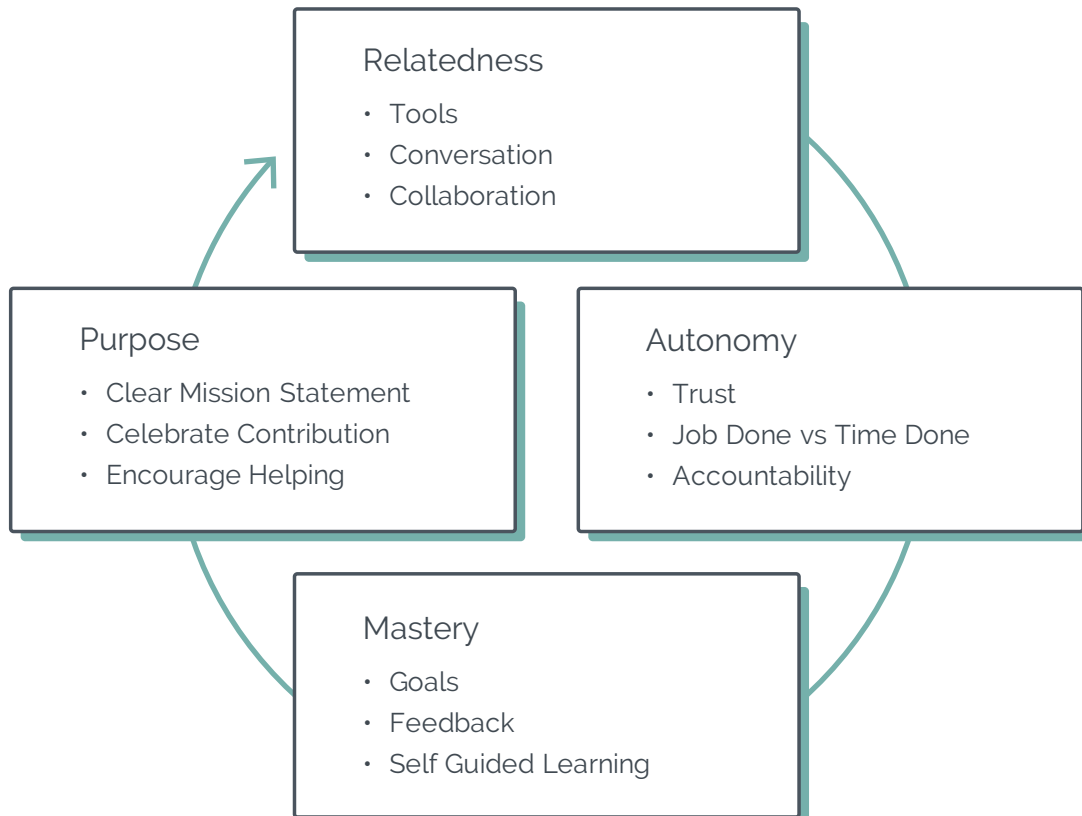
Relatedness

This is one of the most important aspects that can be lost when working from home. In the office you always have people around to talk to, bounce ideas off and even just share a lunch break with. Working from home can be calming for some, isolating for others – and in times of uncertainty it is important to **find ways to stay connected, not micromanaged.**

Tools

When working from home, it can be very isolating if no effort is made to engage with others. Most companies have tools that will enable this one way or another, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Slack and so on. Don't bombard each other, but find reasons to send a positive message or email, and make sure there are meetings held on conference call, video call or even the good old-fashioned phone. Give your people a voice, literally!

Conversation & Collaboration

When working from home for extended periods, make sure your employees are using those tools in a way similar to how they would talk to people in the office. Just because it is text based, doesn't mean it can't be just as valuable. If they are not using the tools, why not ask questions, send thoughts, share an anectdote. It is all part of keeping motivated and reminding you that there are others out there with you.

Relatedness
- Tools
- Conversation
- Collaboration

Autonomy
- Trust
- Job Done vs Time Done
- Accountability

Mastery
- Goals
- Feedback
- Self Guided Learning

Purpose
- Clear Mission Statement
- Celebrate Contribution
- Encourage Helping

Autonomy

With remote work, it is important to accept that employees will naturally have more freedom and inevitably less structure than they may have in the office. If they are working from home to balance family life or health needs or extenuating circumstances with work commitments, flexibility is important. **Flexibility doesn't mean employees going MIA** – which is a message for both employees and their managers. Don't tie your employees to their desktops and phones out of fear. Connect with them and empower them to continue contributing and they will feel all the better (and perform more) for it.

Trust

There may be a temptation to check in with employees more often than you might normally. This reduces their feeling of agency and autonomy. In turn, this makes them feel less trusted.

Accountability

Whilst autonomy is great, employees need to be disciplined and take accountability for the work that has been set, or for finding work to be done.

Job Done vs Time Done

Accept that employees will use their time working remotely differently to when they are in the office, breaking the concept of 9-5. Focus on rewarding and celebrating people getting work done, rather than whether they were online at 09:01. It can be hard, especially with current stresses, for people to be mentally present and motivated during strict time frames. Maintain ambitious project ideas, stick to deadlines, and celebrate when the job is done.

Mastery

This may be a little less obvious at first. If you are suddenly now part of a remote team, you might be feeling like your career progression has gone on hold, or maybe you're struggling to keep up with your company's e-learning system with other things on your mind. How can people develop their skills or experience when there is no one there to see them do it? Particularly if you're from a more traditional working environment, working from home can end up feeling like you're just sitting around. Mastery is about more than ticking boxes. Mastery is about achievement, and there are **many ways for you to feel you are continuing to accomplish things professionally in a less conventional setting.**

Goals

Make sure that everyone has clear goals and that progress towards them can be tracked (for the employee's benefit more than yours). It is essential that goals are achievable, and progress is recognised. If this is proving complicated in the beginning, break them down into smaller goals to build momentum.

Feedback

Provide constructive feedback as regularly as makes sense for each employee. Whilst working remotely, it can be very hard to feel that you are succeeding or achieving anything, or to know what other people are doing around you.

Self-Guided Learning

Help your team feel able to use their time to expand their skills with online and virtual learning/training courses. This will go towards them feeling trusted to manage their time, as well as providing some structure and even some inspiration for their day to day work.

Purpose

There are two versions of purpose that are important here. Firstly, finding some sort of value and meaning to the work you are doing – a reason why you are doing it. Organisations and employers play a huge role in this by **helping to remind employees why the work they do is important**, and emphasising that they are all part of a collective, collaborative group rather than remote satellites. The other aspect is philanthropic purpose, helping others. As mentioned before remote working, especially if somewhat involuntary, can be isolating for your team members. It is vital for team morale and motivation to keep up the human aspect of work rather than only pinging people for a favour or work related question.

Purpose and Value

The more disconnected you are from an organisation, the easier it is to forget the importance of what you're doing. It is essential that you keep up communications with your team so that you all don't lose sight of your common goals and purpose. Also companies should be encouraged to continue sharing communications and updates to remove the sense of people working for or towards something invisible.

Helping Others

The other type of purpose, that of helping others. Just because you can't do a coffee round as you would in the office, doesn't mean you can't still help others in some way remotely. Make yourself available and remember that everyone is in the same boat!

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