**Furman University**

**Management’s Remote Worker Manual**

**March 17, 2020**

**I. Summary**

Effective March 17, 2020, Furman University is requiring all employees who are able to work remotely to do so. Furman believes this decision is in the best interest of the health and safety of employees as well as of the employees who must work on campus.

This document will provide guidance to Furman University’s managers and supervisors who are managing employees working remotely during the mitigation efforts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**II. Definition**

Remote work is the relocation of an employee’s work site either to the employee’s home or other off-site location. Remote work normally involves the establishment of some type of computerized or electronic communication lines with the original on-campus work site. Remote work can be arranged on a part-time or full-time basis; the number of hours depends on factors, such as, the nature of the work to be done, the needs of the unit, and to the extent possible, the needs or preference of the employee.

**III. Considerations**

**Set Clear Expectations**

It will be essential to set expectations that are easily understood and that certain words do not lend to misunderstandings or miscommunications. Showing examples of what you expect to be done or when you expect it to be done are helpful tips to ensure the employee can succeed. For example, the manager will be responsible to assign specific work hours to each employee working remotely. The manager will also be tasked to clearly define performance requirements and standards that are measurable and results oriented.

This process is extremely important as non-exempt (hourly) employees need to document the work performed and the amount of time they spent performing specific tasks. Note that with non-exempt (hourly) employees, managers must re-emphasize Furman’s policy that overtime must be pre-authorized by the appropriate person in a given division.

**Treat remote employees like on-site employees**

It will be important for managers to make themselves available to employees that are working remotely. Remote workers may begin to feel isolated and unengaged. Responding to your remote employees in a timely manner can reduce feelings of isolation. Timely responses may also lead remote workers to feel (and be) more productive.

**Management Style**

There is no "one best management style". It is important, therefore, for managers to consider their communication and management style when planning, interacting, and working in a remote work arrangement. Some managers require more interaction with staff members while others prefer to let employees work with a greater degree of independence.

Either of these styles can work well if the manager and remote workers incorporate the manager’s style in the plans and procedures established. For example, how and how often the remote workers should check with the manager will depend on the manager's style preferences. Managers will need to take an active role in raising and maintaining their comfort level with directing the work and ensuring mutual trust and accessibility has been established. This may require special efforts by both parties to increase the employee’s productivity, meeting deadlines, and producing a quality work product.

**Engage Regularly**

Engage the remote worker often with different kinds of communication channels. Daily connection will be important and can be in the form of morning watercooler meetings via phone, SKYPE, instant messaging, etc. This constant interaction and engagement will help remote workers feel included in an important aspect of the organization and keep them motivated to work.

**Don’t forget to coach**

It is important to engage with the employee and engage often. Employees need to be guided on a continuous basis especially when the employee is not used to working remotely. Working in a strange environment can throw people off because it is unfamiliar and not a part of their normal routine. It is important to recognize this and continue to offer support and encouragement.

Silence from managers may lead remote workers to wonder how they're doing. Working in a new capacity may cause employees to feel vulnerable so managers need to communicate frequently and be reassuring.

**Trust your employee**

There is a chance that managers may feel that the work will not get completed at the same level as if the employee were in the office. To combat this belief, set up work-from-home guidelines, such as requiring responses to emails within 24 hours, use of text messages for urgent matters, etc. On the flipside, it is important to ensure that remote workers are not working around the clock or feel they have to extend their workday. This is especially the case with non-exempt (hourly) employees who must track their time.

In talking with remote workers on the phone, managers should avoid accusations like, “Hey, I hear a washing machine. Are you doing laundry, or working?” Managers should use telework as an opportunity to foster trust between employees and management. Check-ins are important for engagement but rigid micro-monitoring of daily activities may hinder productivity and create an environment of distrust.

**Create a communication plan**

Managing a productive remote worker begins with a solid communication plan. It will be important to arrange for the appropriate number of weekly formal “report-ins” or “watercooler” meetings. Second, set guidelines about daily needs and communication standards. Some people work better with a definitive list of “to dos” while others prefer a narrative directive that is more broad. An understanding of what is urgent will further mitigate inefficiency, allowing ultimate productivity.

If time permits you could set a time every other week to go over what has been accomplished over the last two weeks. Celebrating accomplishments is important.

**Technology**

Due to the electronic limitations of the Furman phone system it is recommended that employees monitor their email notifications of voicemails that may have been left on their office phone.

Use tools like Zoom to stay connected, attend virtual meetings, and collaborate on projects.

**Customer service**

If your remote workers interact with customers, make sure service-level support requirements in communicating with customers are clearly defined. All remote workers need to agree to meet the same service levels to ensure transparency to the customer.

Commitment of acceptable response times for email inquiries or phone calls should be established. Remember that customers can be internal as well as external to Furman.

**The Work**

Are there any tasks or functions that cannot be fulfilled while the staff is working remotely? Will this have a strong impact on your department or unit?

The manager should consider how the remote work may impact other departments that interact with or rely on their department so that alternatives may be established if necessary.

Are there any special projects or tasks that the manager can have their staff focus on while working remotely?

Are there meetings or events that need to be cancelled due to the remote work arrangement?

**IV. In closing/Things to consider**

The remote work function is not to be used as a substitute for childcare or other personal responsibilities. It is important to ensure that dependent care obligations or other family obligations do not interfere with work. Managers who feel childcare or other responsibilities are interfering with a remote worker’s ability to work should contact Human Resources.

Disruptions such as personal visitors or personal calls should be kept at a minimum during an employee’ workhours while they are working remotely.

The manager will need to approve any sick leave taken during times scheduled to work remotely.

Remote workers are **not** eligible to work overtime. Managers should establish this directive in writing to their direct reports.

The manager must approve any changes to the employee’s work schedule in advance.

Remote workers are required to understand and abide by all university policies and procedures.

**Wellness/Self care**

It is important that employees are able to continue with their wellness goals. Taking walks, taking breaks, meditation, etc. Allowing flexibility during remote work is as important as it is when the employee is working on campus.

**Contact Human Resources**

Managers should contact Human Resources with any questions. Managers should also contact Human Resources for assistance with remote work issues, including but not limited to, performance issues, accommodation requests, and leave requests related to COVID-19.