20 QUESTIONS

Every Virtual Leader Should Be Asking Their Employees

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Many times, leaders in the virtual space get caught up in proving their results...showing their value. This can cause relationships with our employees to take a back seat. Leaders can begin driving their employees instead of guiding and may find themselves reverting to some troubling behaviors such as lack of trust, judging the process instead of the results, and micromanaging.

Employees want to work for someone they know has their back and cares about them on an individual level. It is harder to create this feeling in a virtual environment, which is why virtual leaders need to be more intentional than ever.

The following questions will help to build these relationships and trust, so your employees feel valued and heard.

A note of caution...this is only the beginning. These questions are not a magical formula. They are a starting point. Continue focusing on getting to know your employees above and beyond what they can do for you. Have their back, understand their needs, wants, and fears, and value them individually for what they can bring to your team!

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Starting Point

During the first 90 days or so, many leaders are buys focusing on how they can make an impact instead of focusing on people who are on their team. If you have just shifted to virtual, consider your 90 days as starting over. The best thing you can do to build current and future success is have intentional, focused, one on one meetings with each of your employees. These questions are a good starting point to ask when first meeting your employees to help begin building the relationship.

? **What is one thing you wish I knew about you?**

? **What are your hobbies?**

? **If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why?**

? **What are you most excited about working virtually?**

? **What are you most nervous about working virtually?**

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Development Questions

A leader's job is to make more leaders and help align employees with their strengths. How do you do this in the virtual environment where it is hard to have the unscripted moments that can reveal so much about our employees? You have to be intentional (sensing a theme?). Get to know your employee's strengths and opportunities and put them in positions and focus areas that allow their strengths to shine.

No one wants to spend a ton of time being mediocre at something…but as leaders, we build "development plans" which focus on the areas our employees are struggling with instead of building "success plans" that focus on what they excel at. In the virtual world, it can make the employee feel like they are getting singled out or picked on. This causes resentment, a lack of engagement, and a higher turnover rate.

Here are a few questions to help you better understand your employee's strengths. Once you know what they excel at, continuously look for opportunities to let their strengths shine through, whether a project, a way they can help you, or a lateral move.

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Development Questions
(continued)

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Development Questions

(continued)

What is the most challenging part of working virtually for you?

Do you feel like you are able to fully disconnect at the end of the day or while on vacation? Why or why not?

With burnout and wellness being extremely relevant topics, this question will allow you to get a pulse on how your employees are feeling about "unplugging".

Many employees who are new to work from home are feeling insecure and unsure, causing them to work even more and blurring the boundaries between on time and off time.

A leader needs to role model the acceptable behaviors, which means you need to show it is okay to unplug as well.

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Development Questions

(continued)

Do you have a virtual routine set up? If you don't mind sharing, I would love to hear it.

This question feeds into the previous question. Routines are extremely important to clear up mental energy and let us know what to expect.

When employees shift to virtual, many lose their routines and are not intentional about setting them up. As a leader of virtual employees, you can help them understand the value of routines and help them begin to set up their routine. Create a routine yourself and share yours with them.

A great piece of advice that has helped many people working from home is to create a "commute" that starts and ends their day. This can be a walk around the block, listening to a podcast, or anything else they are comfortable doing at the beginning and end of their day. This also helps with the balance and being able to "turn off".

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Development Questions

(continued)

? **Do you feel included in the team communication?**

Many times, decisions are made via a phone call or after a meeting with virtual teams. This question ensures that your employees are not feeling excluded or left out of decisions.

? **What do you want to learn more about regarding the team or company?**

If there are any knowledge gaps, this opens the door for the employee to share the gaps with you.

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Being a Better Leader

It is more important than ever that we are in tune with our employees and what they need from us as leaders.

The time is over where we can meet once or twice a year with our employees and consider that leading. We should be meeting with them regularly to keep a pulse on how they are feeling, to offer growth and feedback, and to ask for feedback.

Yep...you heard me right. We need to be asking for feedback as well. Use these questions to get started.

What keeps you up at night?

Knowing your employee's fear can help mitigate some of the anxiety and stress around this fear. For example, if you know your employee has a grandparent with dementia, you could offer FMLA, employee assistance programs (if your organization has one) or simply lend an ear to the employee to share what they are going through.

This is what it means to have your employee's back... you share the good, bad and ugly of the whole person.

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Being a Better Leader

(continued)

? Describe the best leader you ever had. What did they do?

Pay attention... they are disclosing how to be a good leader for them. This is leadership gold!

? Describe the worst. What did they do?

Again, pay attention... they are telling you what not to do if you want to keep their respect.

? What are your pet peeves?

If they answer this question, don't do any of the things they list. I remember a boss once asked me this and I said my pet peeve was people being late to meetings. That boss ensured meetings started on time from then on out. The team responded to her expectations and a lot of time was saved... but more importantly, I felt heard and valued. I would have walked through fire for that leader!

Be the leader that your employees would walk through fire for.

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Being a Better Leader

(continued)

How can I better support you specifically regarding being virtual and working remotely?

You should always be asking for feedback. This question can be adjusted to fit your style, but it shows your employees that you value their feedback and want to help them be successful. It also creates an environment that is feedback friendly.