

10 Tips for Engaging New Work-At-Home Agents

Today's contact centers require flexibility in how to deal with planned and unplanned events that have the potential to disrupt business continuity and impact the customer experience.

Severe weather, natural disasters, and other events that interrupt your employees' ability to work as usual can be particularly harmful to adequately serving your customers. Cloud Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solutions offer the unique capability to quickly enable your workforce to work remotely if needed.

The ability for agents to work from home is not the only issue, however. Transitioning from working in person with other agents to working in isolation can be difficult. Agents may feel depressed, isolated, and struggle to remain engaged with their work. Studies have shown that agent engagement is directly related to customer experience. When you consider that agents are typically the first point of contact for customers and, therefore, the face of your business, keeping agents happy is just as important as keeping your customers happy and loyal.

CCaaS solutions offer several ways to help ensure your agents stay actively engaged, no matter where they are located. Here are 10 tips to help you improve engagement with new work-at-home agents.

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Tip #1: Leverage Collaboration Tools

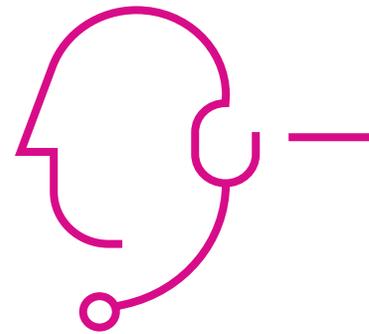
Collaboration tools are essential for replacing the "water cooler" environment of a physical location. Agents accustomed to face-to-face time and impromptu conversations with the rest of their team can feel isolated when working at home. Overcome this by providing access to virtual collaboration tools.

Tip #2: Host Virtual Meetings

Meetings are a valuable way to keep everyone connected. Hosting them virtually invokes many of the same feelings as in person. They don't have to be long. Even a 15-minute "huddle" at the start of the shift can help make everyone feel part of the team. Possible topics include performance highlights, tips, and recent trends.

Tip #3: Promote an Engaging Company Culture

With a remote workforce, feeling part of the company and connected to its vision and mission is especially important. Consider doing a virtual town hall every month to keep everyone up to date on what's happening, ensure they're invested in the business' goals, and reinforce the importance of their role. Ask for questions in advance, but also be sure to include live Q&A time. Having a company blog is also a great way to promote company culture with a remote workforce.



Tip #4: Provide Performance Visibility

Visibility into performance, both individual and organizational, keeps everyone informed and aligned. If you currently use physical wallboards, make sure everyone has access to virtual equivalents so they can continue to keep up on performance metrics, important announcements, and fun stuff like birthdays, anniversaries, and successes. A personalized agent dashboard provides agents with visibility into their personal performance and helps substitute for the in-person feedback they usually get during the day.

Tip #5: Maintain Supervision

Cloud-based supervisory tools let supervisors be in contact with agents at a moment's notice. Real-time dashboards make it easy to keep track of agent activity and performance. Supervisors can monitor interactions and reach out with help as needed. Video conferencing is a great way to help replace the intimacy of in-person one-on-one and team meetings.

Tip #6: Make Work Fun

Fostering an entertaining environment is key to creating engaged employees. Use gamification tools to bring a little fun into a potentially stressful remote environment. Make agents' everyday work feel more like a game by staging competitions. Reward good performance with both virtual and real prizes. In addition to making remote work more enjoyable, gamification encourages agents to self-manage their performance and is great for team building.

Tip #7: Provide Remote Training

Cloud-based contact center solutions include integrated eLearning tools to help agents learn how to handle challenging customer interactions or new processes. Video conferencing can also be an effective replacement for in-person training where agents can ask questions, engage with instructors, and interact with their peers – just like in an in-person environment.

Tip #8: Enable Quality Assurance

Cloud-based contact center solutions include integrated quality management tools designed for remote working environments. Monitoring and managing performance is even more important for remote agents so they realize that their actions are just as meaningful and impactful as when they are in the office.

Tip #9: Provide the Right Technical Environment

Make sure remote agents have access to the technical tools needed to be successful and professional when engaging with customers. These include a suitable and secure computing environment, access to key business applications, a reliable internet connection, and video capabilities. Most cloud solutions provide high-quality voice connections over the internet, so a physical phone may not be needed. Agents just need a high-quality headset that plugs into their computer.

Tip #10: Promote a Helpful Physical Workspace

Don't forget about the physical environment. Ensure common office supplies are available. It's important to have a workspace free from distraction, noise, and interruption. A comfortable and ergonomic working environment helps reduce stress and relieves physical discomfort.

Having remote workers, be it on a temporary or ongoing basis, can add new challenges and make for difficult transitions. This can be overcome with good planning and the right tools and technology. Cloud contact center solutions are uniquely designed to address these needs.



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