

## Useful Tips for Leaders and Managers

### Virtual Leadership: Basic Principles

UZH offers its employees the option of working at any location in addition to their normal on-site workplace (see also “Guidelines on Mobile Working at UZH”). This allows UZH employees – following discussions with their supervisors – to do part of their work outside of their usual assigned office at the university if they desire. Being physically separated from staff is a new challenge for managers that presents both opportunities and risks.

The following guide has been created to help you manage your UZH team virtually in a mobile working setting.

The guide distinguishes between on-site leadership (at one’s usual physical workplace) and virtual leadership (when working from home, for instance).

### Communication and collaboration

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Usual approach in an office setting where manager and employee are present (= on-site leadership)</b>	<b>Adapted approach for virtual settings (= virtual leadership)</b>	<b>Recommendations for leaders and managers</b>
Direct leadership, guidance and feedback	Can be done (often spontaneously) at someone’s desk, in the hallway, etc.	Discussions have to be planned and conducted virtually.	Create an agenda for meetings and one-on-ones in advance and share with each another. Set out clear and structured tasks; give and solicit feedback regularly.
Informal communication	Shared office environments allow for regular interaction regarding daily business (work-related communication) and for	Virtual settings can be an obstacle to quick, spur-of-the-moment communication	Warning: “Out of sight, out of mind” applies here.



Topic	Usual approach in an office setting where manager and employee are present (= on-site leadership)	Adapted approach for virtual settings (= virtual leadership)	Recommendations for leaders and managers
	<p>relationship building (interpersonal communication)</p> <p>Possible to directly communicate on a daily basis (e.g., at the water cooler or coffee machine)</p>	<p>(particularly when it's not strictly related to work).</p>	<p>Several days may pass without any interaction if there's no work-related reason to get in touch.</p> <p>For that reason, you should align with your team and be transparent about preferences re: how informal interaction can be arranged.</p> <p>Make a point to set up opportunities for informal interaction (at least 1x/week) and work together to create an atmosphere of togetherness.</p> <p>Once the middle of the week rolls around, be honest with yourself about how your interaction with employees has been so far. If necessary, actively get in touch.</p>
<p>More effort required for communication in a virtual setting</p>	<p>Shared working environment allows for a variety of short-notice and non-verbal communication (e.g., glancing across the office to see if someone is available).</p>	<p>The team now relies on e-mails that have to be typed out, phones that have to be reached for and meetings that have to be initiated via MS Teams.</p>	<p>Warning: Be aware that seemingly small points need to be discussed as well – otherwise you run the risk of lost information, poor understanding and a bad atmosphere.</p>



Topic	Usual approach in an office setting where manager and employee are present (= on-site leadership)	Adapted approach for virtual settings (= virtual leadership)	Recommendations for leaders and managers
			<p>Discuss the challenges of virtual communication with your team and agree on shared ground rules.</p> <p>Examples of points that could be clarified: quickly checking in with people via chat, leaving out greetings/closings in internal team email chains, calling someone before e-mailing them, sending a follow-up e-mail afterwards when needed.</p>
<p>Different personal preferences within the team re: how to communicate and be reached</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees who like to write clearly structured e-mails to present their topics.</li> <li>• Employees who might feel like they're just being bossed around due to the increase in written communication.</li> <li>• Employees who prefer direct conversation because they find the interpersonal dynamics/interaction to be efficient and positive for their working relationships.</li> </ul>		<p>Be transparent about people's preferences and reservations within your team so that you can find or provide a helpful mix of digital communication channels</p>

If you have any questions or feedback about virtual leadership, please get in touch with Ephraim Appius, our specialist for leadership development and change management ([ephraim.appius@pa.uzh.ch](mailto:ephraim.appius@pa.uzh.ch)).