

Respectful Workplace

FOR EMPLOYEES

As employees continue to work from home and interact with colleagues virtually, it is important to remember the importance of maintaining a respectful workplace - even when that workplace is your home.

We are all in this together which means now, just as much as ever, we need to continue to follow the City's [Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy](#). Adapting to a temporary normal can be challenging, especially for those who are used to having in-person meetings and conversations with colleagues and supervisors.

See the tips and reminders below on how to keep the Respectful Workplace momentum going - even in virtual format. Some of these tips are already excellent habits many of us implement into our everyday work, while some are special considerations to the temporary work from home platform.

Tips:

1) Remember to be mindful of email etiquette such as:

- Using proper punctuation
- Using plain language; being clear and concise
- Writing in a neutral tone
- Avoiding the usage of common online chat/text acronyms which could be confusing for some, i.e. "LOL" laugh(ing) out loud

The Learning Centre lists some great points under "Learning Outcomes" from the [Enhanced Business Writing](#) workshop.

2) Consider using the Google Hangouts phone or video conferencing function for the following:

- If you are expecting to have a difficult conversation
- If you are delivering sensitive information
- If you are delivering information which can be easily misinterpreted

3) As we continue to adapt to an ever-changing virtual work environment and still fulfil our regular work commitments, remember to take a few moments to review what you are sending and scan your emails, documents or instant messages for items which could be interpreted as disrespectful. Remember: Impact over intent!

4) The “24-hour” rule still applies. If you are feeling upset or disturbed about communication you received, take the appropriate time to process, reflect and reply when you are able to do so respectfully.

If you have a concern, first talk to the person and/or speak with your Supervisor. If you still feel that your concern is ongoing, the Safe Disclosure Office remains open to speak with employees regarding any Respectful Workplace concerns. To make an appointment to speak with the Safe Disclosure Office please email questions@safedisclosure.ca or call 1-844-298-6782. While in-person meetings are not being conducted at this time in support of physical distancing, you may still schedule an appointment and speak with an adviser over the phone.

FOR SUPERVISORS

As employees continue to work from home and interact with colleagues virtually, it is important to remember the importance of maintaining a respectful workplace.

We are all in this together, and it is important that we encourage our teams to continue following the City's [Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy](#). Adapting to a temporary normal can be challenging, especially for those who are used to having in-person meetings and conversations with colleagues and supervisors.

Below, you will find a few tips and reminders on how to keep your team working respectfully in a virtual environment.

Recognizing and Reinforcing Respectful and Positive Behaviours

Working remotely can create communication challenges, as it can be difficult to interpret tone without the presence of body language to aid in that assessment. Recognizing and reinforcing respectful and positive behaviours from employees is important to keep teams positive and engaged. Consider implementing the following tips:

- Make it a priority to offer timely recognition of employee's efforts.
- When possible, seek input from employees.

Having Constructive Conversations About Disrespectful Behaviors

- Continue to address concerns with employee performance as soon as they arise, while keeping in mind that it can take some time to adapt to working remotely.

- Difficult conversations (including performance) or the delivery of sensitive information is best done in an environment such as a video chat, when the employee can read your body language and hear the tone in the message you are delivering, and when you can do the same.

Making Space and Time

Working from home can be distracting for many of us, and we are all trying our best to work and supervise as effectively as possible. Meetings with employees should be conducted with the same level of care and attention as meetings with any other stakeholder. Some ideas on how you can fulfil these commitments are as follows:

- Recognize the “new normal” and how children, family, pets, and more may unintentionally interrupt calls and video conferences. Start meetings with reminding employees that this is okay and offer each other understanding should this occur. Create an appreciative orientation; these little interruptions can allow team members to get to know each other better, and inject some much needed humour. Consider introducing your family members/pets to the rest of the team.
- Focus on the meeting by setting the time to engage with the employee and avoid multitasking on another project at the same time.
- Listen attentively and be open to what the employee is saying.
- Recognize differences and when possible, ask for input
- Commit to sharing knowledge and information as often and timely as possible.

Addressing Concerns:

1. As we continue to adapt to an ever-changing virtual work environment and still fulfil our regular work commitments, remind those who report to you to take a few moments to review emails, documents or instant messages for language or statements that could be interpreted as disrespectful. Remember: Impact over intent!
2. If an employee comes to you with a concern, or if you have a concern, first talk to the person. The “24-hour” rule can help - if you are feeling upset or disturbed about a communication that you, or someone who reports to you has received, take some time to process, reflect, and engage with the sender when you are able to do so respectfully.

Resources:

[Safe Disclosure Office](#)

[City Chaplain, John Dowds](#)

[LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell](#)

