Adjusting to the New Virtual Workplace Dynamic



Question:

Recently our workplace began offering a flex-time option that included virtual work from home opportunities. As a result on many days there are only 2 employees physically in our department offices where there used to be many more.

I have noticed that one of the employees who used to be bubbly, friendly and helpful is much quieter and starting to be less productive. I would like to help this employee make the adjustment to our new workplace structure but I am not certain where to start.

Answer:

While there may be many factors to consider you may find that this individual's personality preference is that of an Extrovert and as a result she may be feeling less energized by the new dynamic.

Extrovert's needs sometimes not met in virtual workplaces

Extroverts gather energy from their direct engagements with others. Research has also demonstrated that the Extroverts are ranked by their co-workers as having more 'impact' in face-to-face encounters but Introverts ranked as having more impact in virtual encounters. Perhaps your extroverted employee has not only lost her opportunity to engage with others but also the position of influence she enjoyed having within the team.

Engagement opportunities required with a virtual team

Try these tips to create a more extrovert friendly virtual workplace.

1) **Build personal relationships**

- Provide each employee with the name, job description and contact information for all members of the team
- Gather a photo from each employee for a contact sheet (all photos on one sheet). Provide a copy to each employee and suggest they post it near their computer or phone.
- Each day provide an opportunity for people to share some routine information

about the current or previous day such what they did the night before or what they are planning on having for lunch that day.

2) **Get team members connected** face-to-face or voice-to-voice) regularly

- Hold 20-30 minute video or audio virtual team up-date meetings twice per week with the entire team.
- Schedule daily video or phone calls between this employee and other employees. These calls can be scheduled for 15 minutes first thing in the morning or right before or after lunch
- Assign this employee duties that enable her to visit with other employees in the organization, customers, vendors and more. Even 15 minutes of direct person engagement every couple of hours can help an Extrovert increase their energy intake and help boost productivity and motivation.

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