

Remote working: Collaboration in the time of Covid-19

By [Jan Davel](#)

2 Apr 2020

R.E.M. might have been thinking about the current global situation when they sang, "It's the end of the world as we know it". But in times of crisis there is usually the opportunity to emerge stronger and better.



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In this case, organisations have a chance to embrace new ways of working that allow their people to work safely in any conditions – online collaboration platforms that automate routine business processes and get the job done, wherever they're working from.

Due to the spread of the coronavirus, people all over the world are being forced to take measures to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. For many employees this means working from home, if possible, and many businesses will suffer losses or worse due to this extraordinary event.

Now more than ever, property rental agencies will have to keep delivering a high-quality, personal service with minimum personal contact – and the entire industry will have to adapt to make that possible. But is your business set up for it? Managing a winning distributed team isn't just about giving each employee a laptop and a fast internet connection – it's also about the processes you use.

Here are the three things everyone at an estate agency needs in order to adapt to remote working without compromising on the service offered.



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1. Access to real-time updates

You can get your weekly reports delivered as usual, but it's easy to forget about all the informal little confirmation checks that happen in a property management office. Think of how many times each day someone pops their head out of their cubicle to ask if tenant X has paid yet. Removing your team from their natural environment means they no longer have that real-time information.

When people don't have all the information, they often make bad decisions – or no decisions at all. And in residential property management, waiting is seldom an option.

The first ingredient of successful remote collaboration is real-time information sharing. If employees receive live business data, they can make good decisions immediately – not in two hours' time when they get a reply.

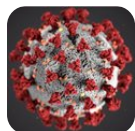
2. Sharing information

In most offices, there is usually one person who knows everything. That's useful when you can knock on their office door and ask a question, but dangerous when you can't. If the one person who knows which tenants didn't pay on time gets sick,

how do you know where to send payment reminders? When you have silos of unshared information in your business, it makes you vulnerable.

Centralising information also means waiting for updates. While monthly reports might be OK now, that's only because you can also ask your team for information face-to-face between reports. With a distributed workforce, getting that information together takes longer – assuming you can do it at all.

A successful remote team needs to pool information as it comes in, not silo it. That way, everyone can do what they need to do without waiting for confirmation first.



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3. Tracking activity

If your team isn't sitting in front of you, you probably don't have visibility of what everyone is doing. This isn't about productivity – good people will keep working hard even when you aren't watching. It's about knowing which tasks have been done and which are still in progress. When you can't see what everyone is up to, coordinating who has done what is hard – but as a responsible business owner, you cannot afford to fly blind.

Remote working doesn't work unless team members keep each other updated on the tasks they've done and keep track of what no-one has got to yet. Having a centralised system for tracking this isn't just a nice-to-have – for a distributed team, it's a necessity.

Solving the problem of remote collaboration

None of us can afford to think that our old strategies will always see us through – but by adopting new strategies and new technologies we can continue to work effectively and deliver great service even at a distance.

Tech platforms, like that from PayProp, are designed to be used from anywhere, on any device, and are specific for property management companies. The importance of platforms like these is that you're able to share live data with every employee so that everyone is on the same page at all times.

Lessons for later

While it may be difficult to look beyond the current headlines at the moment, it would be a mistake to think of these as temporary adaptations.

The advantages of real-time data sharing, easy remote working and live activity tracking will still be there long after coronavirus has passed. By adapting to the current situation in the right ways, we can also work together more effectively when we are back in the same room again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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