

## NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

# MAKING REMOTE WORK WORK: MANAGING YOUR CAREER FOR THE NEW NORMAL

**Nano Tools for Leaders®** are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes—with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

### THE GOAL

Whether you are fully remote or work from home part-time, avoid the “Zoom ceiling” by understanding and working around the pitfalls of remote work.

### NANO TOOL

When remote work was mandatory and all or most of your coworkers, your boss, and many of your external stakeholders were remote, the playing field was level. There was a real sense that we were all “in this together.” People were remarkably understanding and accepting of quirky situations, whether IT related or the result of the blurred line between home and work (think dogs barking and children crying during meetings). That kind of tolerance is now rare. And it’s just one of many pitfalls for remote workers.

Elora Voyles, people scientist at human resources software company TINYpulse, coined the term “Zoom ceiling” to describe the potentially career-limiting results of remote work. Whether you are now working out of the office full- or part-time, consider the five steps below to position yourself better for greater visibility to ensure that you are getting recognition for your accomplishments and staying in line for promotions and desirable assignments. Make sure your employer knows you aren’t stepping off the ladder.

### ACTION STEPS

- 1. Understand the playing field:** Previous research about telework reveals a lot about work environments that include some remote workers. The drawbacks are clear: it’s hard to get attention and easy to get forgotten. The importance of being in the office, of “face time” for signaling value, is real. Those at home often have to work harder for the same recognition or opportunities.
- 2. Clarify your arrangement:** Ideally, you want your employer to be explicit about performance management—here’s what we want you to be doing and how we want to measure it—and to require supervisors to do more check-ins with remote workers to head off problems. That means there’s attention being paid to the development of supervisors who are able to manage remote workers.



If that's not the case, you will need to initiate the conversation, asking about check-ins and performance metrics. If there are no formal or even informal arrangements, it's up to you. The first step is to schedule regular check-ins. You could also suggest metrics, some that could apply longer term and others that apply to individual projects. Then make sure to explicitly refer to these metrics in conversations and correspondence (which will create a record of your progress).

- 3. Widen and deepen your circle:** Staying in close touch with your colleagues in the office, and creating new connections, is more important than ever. You need sources for the kinds of information you used to have access to in casual, water-cooler conversations. Whether you schedule regular check-ins or make time for face-to-face lunches or coffee meetings, relationships with colleagues are a critical lifeline to help you stay on top of what's really going on in your organization.
- 4. Promote yourself:** Don't wait to be noticed. You can no longer expect news of your accomplishments to spread by word of mouth or be overheard in the office. Tell your manager or team leader regularly about your accomplishments. It's not only about sharing today's good news but also about signaling commitment for future assignments. If your work has been recognized by someone other than your manager or team leader, share it.
- 5. Keep predictable work hours:** Research also tells us that fully remote workers make more personal sacrifices than their colleagues, including volunteering to do extra work or working late hours. To create better work-life balance and prevent burnout, consider keeping regular hours. They don't need to mirror exactly the norm of the office, but they must be consistent so your manager and colleagues know when you're working and are available.

## CONTRIBUTOR TO THIS NANO TOOL

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## ABOUT NANO TOOLS

*Nano Tools for Leaders®* was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, director of Custom Programs at Wharton Executive Education. *Nano Tools for Leaders®* is a collaboration between joint sponsors Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. This collaboration is led by Professors Michael Useem and John Paul MacDuffie.