

# The teleworking trust gap and how to close it

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It's hard to beat the dress code and commute that come with teleworking. Your coworkers and supervisors can't see your sweat pants and dirty hair. Therefore, they can't judge you for them, right? But the truth is, they may be judging you, just the same.

## Mind the gap

Research reveals there's a trust gap between productivity and perception when it comes to teleworkers.

A Stanford University study demonstrated that teleworkers are actually 13 percent more productive and 50 percent less likely to quit when compared to their in-office colleagues.<sup>1</sup> But a recent survey told a different story: Onsite staff believe their home-based coworkers are four times more likely to miss deadlines or fail to follow through on promises.<sup>2</sup>

How can one explain the discrepancy? The truth is, seeing is believing. Observing your coworkers in the office allows you to form bonds with them. You tend to like them more. And therefore, you're inclined to forgive their mistakes.

On the other hand, remote working can lead to misunderstanding. Trust often comes from closeness. And it can be hard to build that trust in a teleworking relationship. So you're more likely to assume the worst and doubt others' motives.

## How to build trust

Trust is an important part of any workplace. Organizational trust is linked to productivity and morale.<sup>3</sup> And offices aren't immune to trust issues. So, whether or not you're "in the trenches" together, consider these tips to build trust:

**Be transparent.** Make sure your actions fit your promises. Nothing hurts trust like saying you're going to do something and then failing to do so. So be sure to follow through. And if you mess up — don't hide it. Be honest and make it right.

**Communicate.** People can't know what you're doing unless you tell them. As a teleworker, coworkers can't see you slaving away. So let them know what you're working on and how you're progressing.

**Build relationships.** Trust is about relationships. So take time to be collaborative. Help your teammates. If possible, attend meetings in person, by phone or by webcam so you can connect.

**Check yourself.** Would you want to be on a team with you? Be the kind of person with whom people want to work. This means being reliable and easy to reach. Set a high, but reasonable, personal standard. Consistency is what builds reputations.

If you manage a team that includes teleworkers, encourage them to give one another the benefit of the doubt. Meet in person or by webcam, when possible. Promote performance and consistency — trust will follow.

<sup>1</sup>[www.workflexibility.org](http://www.workflexibility.org)

<sup>2</sup>[www.deseretnews.com](http://www.deseretnews.com)

<sup>3</sup>[www.hci.org](http://www.hci.org)