ESOMAR

COVID-19
Open Community Support Circle

1st session | Switching to a virtual office

Follow up – Tips and Findings

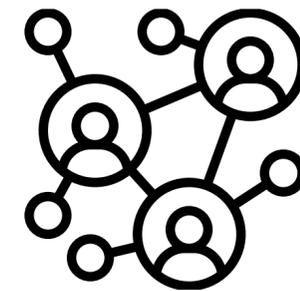**Tips and solutions you can use to go virtual and data protection and privacy tips**

Allow your company some time to get used to the working from home situation, many countries are facing a historic shift in living conditions
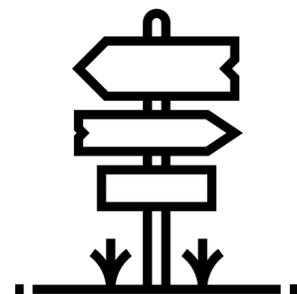
1 Review the security & remote access policy

2 Change how you manage your teams

3 Stay connected

4 Open questions regarding the switch to online fieldwork

**5** Strategic considerations for the profession and the sector

1. Review the security & remote access policy

- Review the Data Protection Checklist: Ensure that you security policies are up-to-data and clearly communicated to your employees. As an employer you are still responsible for any data breach occurring. Ensure people working from home have secured connections and store data on encrypted devices.

https://www.esomar.org/what-we-do/code-guidelines/esomar-data-protection-checklist

- Data protection and privacy laws continue to apply so it's important to also maintain a focus on these aspects, having remote and security policies that are updated and fit for purpose is key, the data protection checklist is a great port of call.

- Make sure your project related files are not circulating in unprotected emails, these should be accessed remotely but kept securely on company-owned or authorised company managed servers and suppliers.
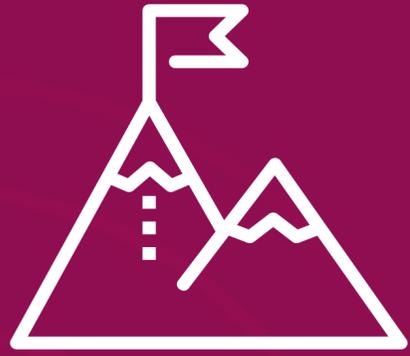
2. Change how you manage your teams

- The shift to a virtual office requires a shift in management mindset, managers must adopt a more results-oriented management style rather than focusing on purely productivity metrics like being in the office on time and working set hours per day.

- Be mindful that many employees will have to juggle working from home (perhaps for the first time!) and sharing the home with children and spouses due to the closure of childcare. It's important to allow more flexibility in terms of re-arranging work-life balance.

- Be clear about expectations and availability: Agree when people are available to be joined by telephone, chat or email.

- Consider splitting your teams in shifts, so that people can arrange their days differently but you still maintain a fully functional team throughout the day.
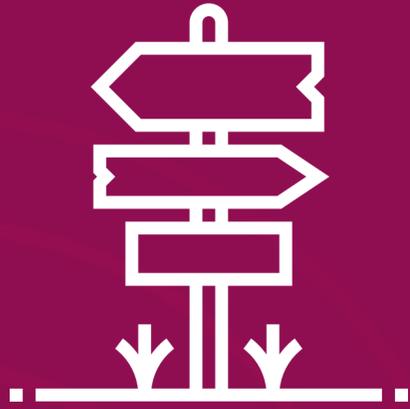
ESOMAR

3. Stay connected

Organise regular calls with your team (e.g. weekly, or daily) to ensure everyone feels connected. Maintaining virtual social contact is important and key, privileging regular catch-ups.

Video calls can be vital but be mindful also that some employees may be uncomfortable sharing a video from their home.

Move away from emails only and privilege the use of Slack, Teams, Skype, GoTo Meeting, Facebook Workplace and other similar platforms both for internal and external communications.

In China, it seems that the use of Skype and GoTo Meeting isn't ideal and that Zoom might be a better solution.

4. Open questions regarding the switch to online fieldwork

ESOMAR

For those struggling to find tools and providers, don't forget to check out ESOMAR's Directory:

o **Online Focus Groups | Bulletin Boards**
 https://directory.esomar.org/service/11-online-focus-groups-bulletin-boards/

o **Online Passive | Behavioural**
https://directory.esomar.org/service/77-online-passive-behavioural/

o **Mobile Ethnography**
https://directory.esomar.org/service/39-mobile-ethnography/

Some agencies are facing an issue regarding 'respondent' non-response because people are working from home and thus harder to reach and aren't interested in answering surveys due to the latent anxiety.

How do you convince sectors which privilege the use of classical methods to switch to new online methodologies, how do you reassure them on research quality?

Some companies are turning to freelance students to help boost fieldwork capacity and provide them freelancing opportunities as a way to break the boredom of the lock-down, could this be a generalised solution?

5. Strategic considerations for the profession and the sector

Members should consider agreeing with clients an adjusted timetable of project delivery particularly if it isn't strictly time limited, and ensures the best results and most participation. A responsible business practice may be to accept that sometimes it's best not to push on if your outcome isn't going to be up to standards until such time as the situation normalises.

Some sectors are more affected than others, accordingly it may be important to reassess the customer database and to focus on sectors which are not as impacted for research, i.e. eCommerce.

The role of associations is underlined, both in terms of helping to position the industry as a source of evidence for crisis management purposes and also in terms of ensuring that government support schemes for SMEs is also earmarked for our ecosystem too

ESOMAR