

Working Remotely: Onboarding and Mentoring

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Abstract—The year 2020 began with the swift and unprecedented spread of a global pandemic, COVID-19. Social distancing practices among other measures have been adopted worldwide toward slowing down the spread of the pandemic while the scientific and medical communities research, develop, and test vaccines and therapeutics. During the same time we have continued with hiring and on-boarding of new hires into the workforce, educated students, and students have participated in internships virtually, over the Internet and telephony. Adopting procedures and activities which have been predominantly in-person interactions, to a strictly virtual format spanning many time-zones has brought with it a fair set of challenges. Based on our current understanding of the disease and the evolution of vaccines and therapeutics, the global community of health organizations, health experts, and researchers predict that we may have to continue in this mode of operation for the foreseeable future. Motivated by what is now being called the “new normal” and stemming from participation as a panelist on an “ECP Virtual Onboarding and Mentoring” panel [1], this talk will focus on these key challenges, discuss ideas and present various approaches and their efficacy in the new telecommuting environment.

1. Preface

The year 2020 began with the swift and unprecedented spread of a global pandemic, COVID-19 [2]. Social distancing practices among other measures have been adopted worldwide toward slowing down the spread of the pandemic while the scientific and medical communities research, develop, and test vaccines and therapeutics. During the same time we have continued with hiring and on-boarding of new hires into the workforce, educated students, and students have participated in internships virtually, over the Internet and telephony. Adopting procedures and activities which have been predominantly in-person interactions, to a strictly virtual format spanning many time-zones has brought with it a fair set of challenges. Based on our current understanding of the disease and the evolution of vaccines and therapeutics, the global community of health organizations, health experts, and researchers predict that we may have to continue in this mode of operation for the foreseeable future.

In addition to adopting existing practices, many new approaches have also been devised, and lessons learned. Since the beginning of the wide-spread telecommuting adoption after the COVID-19 necessitated measures, many organizations and entities have been organizing discussions and workshops around telecommuting for their employees. One such endeavor is the “Working Remotely: The Exascale Computing Project (ECP) Panel Series” [3] organized by Exascale Computing Project (ECP) [4]. Initial ideas to be discussed and presented in this talk were earlier presented at the “Virtual Onboarding and Mentoring” panel [1]. Building on the questions the panel set out to answer — what are some lessons learned and best practices about onboarding new hires that we can take away from this experience? What are the challenges, lessons learned, unforeseen benefits, and opportunities to look for from this new normal?, this talk will focus on these key challenges, discuss ideas, and present various approaches and allude to their efficacy in this new normal.

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References

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