



# REMOTE CULTURE

GUIDE 2

# WHY ADOPT A REMOTE FIRST CULTURE?

The internet lets you work from where you feel the most productive. Remote work provides people the flexibility to design their days so that their professional and personal lives can be experienced to their fullest potential and coexist peacefully.

And the same is true for employers as well. You don't need to be based out of California, New York or London etc. to find the best talent for your company. You don't need to hire only those people who can physically show up at company's office. You don't need to pay commute expenses or parking spots as a "company perk".

If this is not convincing, watch closely. Presently remote work is part of most office cultures, just not during the office hours. Remote Work is hidden in job description at your organisation. Employees who have checked their emails on vacation or answered a call from the boss at home have participated in remote work.

You and your team is already working remotely may be once a week or a month. Its time to establish remote work culture with concrete written guidelines. Strategically implementing the remote work policy can make all invested parties happy.

Join the revolution.

Set up a remote first culture.

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# 1

## OPERATIONAL BENEFITS

### A. WAYS TO EXPLOIT THEM

#### Recruit the Best People, regardless of where they Live

- The best talent doesn't necessarily live in your company's city—or even the company's home country.
- Tap into a global talent pool without relocating people.
- Explore the global pool of professionals to find the perfect fit with experience, skills, and culture.
- Find the most qualified people in the most unexpected places.
- Set up your company to take advantage of the fact as a strength, not a weakness.
- Beware, hiring from anywhere only works with one crucial element- a time shift.
- Get access to a wealth of expertise and diversity that is necessary for the work.
- Onboard the best available people on the job with their wide array of experience and expertise means your end result will be much stronger.



#### Less Overheads: Better allocation of funds & faster growth

- Investors factor in the cost of an office when providing capital to a company.
- Save roughly \$11,000 per employee through the elimination of furnishings, maintenance, parking and phones. ( 2013 report by GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com)
- A smaller real estate footprint equals more money spent on the things that are going to move the needle.
- Funds saved can be spent on improving business offerings, enterprises are able to stay afloat longer.
- Less overheads means more money for your marketing budget, a year end bonus, a chance to go to a conference you've been eyeing.

## Operational Hours are round the clock following-the-Sun.

- Teams aren't confined to the traditional nine-to-five work schedule.
- Time zone coverage is just something that's automatically possible with remote teams.
- A global team, can handle projects 24/7 that keeps work ahead of the clock and easier to meet the deadlines.
- Or, if you have system administrators around the globe, no one needs to have their sleep disrupted for emergency server issues.
- Timezones are a huge help for our development cycle too – with engineers in the US, UK, Asia and Africa, one can literally never stop coding.
- Send instructions in the middle of the night—like 11 p.m, to 1 a.m.—and wake up in the morning with stuff delivered.”
- Good timing can make a project literally zip around the globe with work being completed 24 hours a day.

## Scope of Improvement (agile)

- An “extreme” team is already at the edge of innovative work methods.
- The agile spirit can thrive in all aspects of the organization.
- Instead of on-off office chatter and mentioning projects in passing, tasks and updates are streamlined via professional chat platforms, conference calls and, when all else fails, email.



## B. PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

If you're a business leader, the information in this ebook will help you how to consider:

- Better assessing your real estate needs.
- Increasing workspace efficiency, and reducing real estate overhead.
- Evaluating your IT readiness and the communications, collaboration, and technology
- Needs of your workforce.
- Effectively integrating employee mobility into hiring, training, and management practices.
- Developing and marketing products and services that support remote work.
- Better addressing the special needs of the disabled, of military families, and of caregivers.
- Understanding the role telecommuting could play in reducing traffic congestion, conserving energy, and reducing pollution.



### ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

## Action Steps for Businesses

- Businesses should consider how remote work can help to grow and develop their workforces and support their business goals.
- Areas such as skill gaps, urgent hiring needs, location flexible jobs, current remote workers, potential cross-border hiring options, business expansion opportunities, and labor regulations and laws are all excellent starting points.
- Companies already engaged in remote working need to start tracking their programs to truly understand and refine their benefits.
- Tracking and analysis of remote work programs can help improve outcomes, further reduce costs and improve productivity, and ensure remote working programs are an effective part of the business strategy.

# 2 HIRING

“ Don't you wish you could do your dream job remotely?  
Well, so do your (prospective) employees. ”

MILLENNIALS WOULD BE 75% OF WORKFORCE BY 2030  
(US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

## AND WHAT DO THEY WISH FOR?

68% are more interested in a job that are remote. (AfterCollege)

64% would like the opportunity to work from home. (PwC)

82% say they would be more loyal to employers with flexibility (Flexjobs)

The numbers above clearly indicates that it's about time to have a remote hiring process in place if you wish to stay relevant in the game and want to hire best talent to work for you in the next decade.

When hiring remote workers a heavy emphasis is placed on whether working remotely will be a good fit for a candidate. People tend to either love or hate working remotely and it is important that you make sure each candidate understands the benefits and challenges of our remote work environment before joining the company.

For this you need to understand how to hire remote workforce and distributed teams.



## Fact:

Companies that support remote work have 25% lower employee turnover than companies that don't.

# Things to look out for while hiring remote workforce

Those looking for remote job, read this with a perspective of what qualities you need to inculcate to secure a remote job.

## Trustworthy

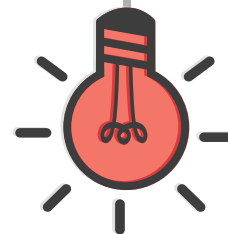
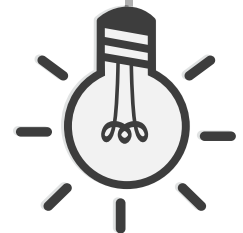
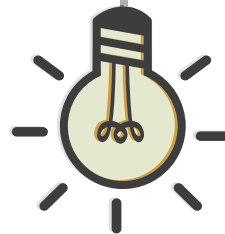
- After all, you'll be relying on these workers to do their job even without any oversight.
- Look for remote workers who demonstrate the characteristics of a trusting professional. Letter of recommendation and checking in with references can be helpful.
- Ask them directly about a time when they were trusted.

## Writing proficiency

- Most remote team communication takes place over writing- chat, email etc
- Look for evidence if they can write; whether he is an engineer or a marketer.
- During the interview, ask candidates how comfortable they are with writing.
- Also ask, "How do you make your written messages clear and understandable?"
- It's all-too-easy to come off as curt via text. Liberal use of emoticons can go a long way.

## Ability to prioritize

- Important tasks can be unclear when working remotely (especially at a startup).
- Look for an individual who can focus on the right tasks and know to ignore others will do well.







## Sense of self-discipline

- Look for people who know how to build their work flow for maximum productivity regardless of the environment they are in.
- Ask about how they would make sure they get things done on their own
- Do they have a tendency to stay organized with task apps, to-do lists and flow boards?
- Do they track their time to know how much time they're spending on work in general as well as specific tasks?
- Do they take regular breaks between work to make sure they stay focused and productive?
- Do they have a designated work area (or if they don't have previous remote work experience, whether they're planning to have one) to make sure they're in the right mindset for being productive?

## Very strong communication skills

- keep in mind that it's not just the frequency of communication that you should be looking for, but the quality of it.
- Is the candidate clear and concise in their communication, and gets to the point straight?
- Does he use text /or speech that are hard to decipher into useful or relevant information?
- Can they handle scheduling well between timezones and locations?
- Can they actually offer up several available times to chat?
- Do they respond to important messages/information/questions in a timely manner?

## Cooperative

- Ask each person you interview to share a time they successfully worked with a remote team, along with a time things didn't go so well.
- Follow up by asking which factors made the difference, and how they're applying those insights.

## Personal care skills and time management

- Look out for strong personal wind-down scheduling skills: Time management.
- Are they able to treat themselves well to avoid overworking and burnout.
- Do they take regular breaks in between working to help keep their focus?
- Do they have the ability to "switch off" after work and wind down?
- Or are they the kind of person who keeps going endlessly? (Not a good sign)

## Self-starting and critical thinking skills

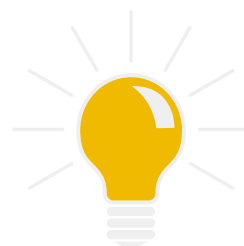
- Applicant must be able to think for themselves, connect the dots, start processes.
- Should not need any constant hand-holding by anyone, however—still be able to ask for help when they absolutely need it.
- Give candidates an exercise that is related to the job they will be doing, testing their critical thinking skills.
- Propensity towards action; if devoid of a task list given, will he/she will be able to find something meaningful to do.

### PRO TIPS

- Make sure that person is able to adjust to the culture and values.
- Look for personalization, investment, interest, and signs that the person is genuinely interested in you and not just any job.
- Applicant not taking themselves too seriously and having a good sense of humour is probably a good sign.
- Check potential hire's ability to troubleshoot technical problems and minor technical blips.
- Inquire about the person's ability to not only work alone, but also focus in the midst of home-based distractions.
- Ensure they have a local support system and not just their work one. (remote environment will likely make them go crazy, otherwise)

# Effective way to hire a remote employee

- Use project management tool to sort through applicants.
- Use Launchpad, Asana or Trello or anyother.
- This allows everybody to see the candidates, comment on their application and feel involved in the process.

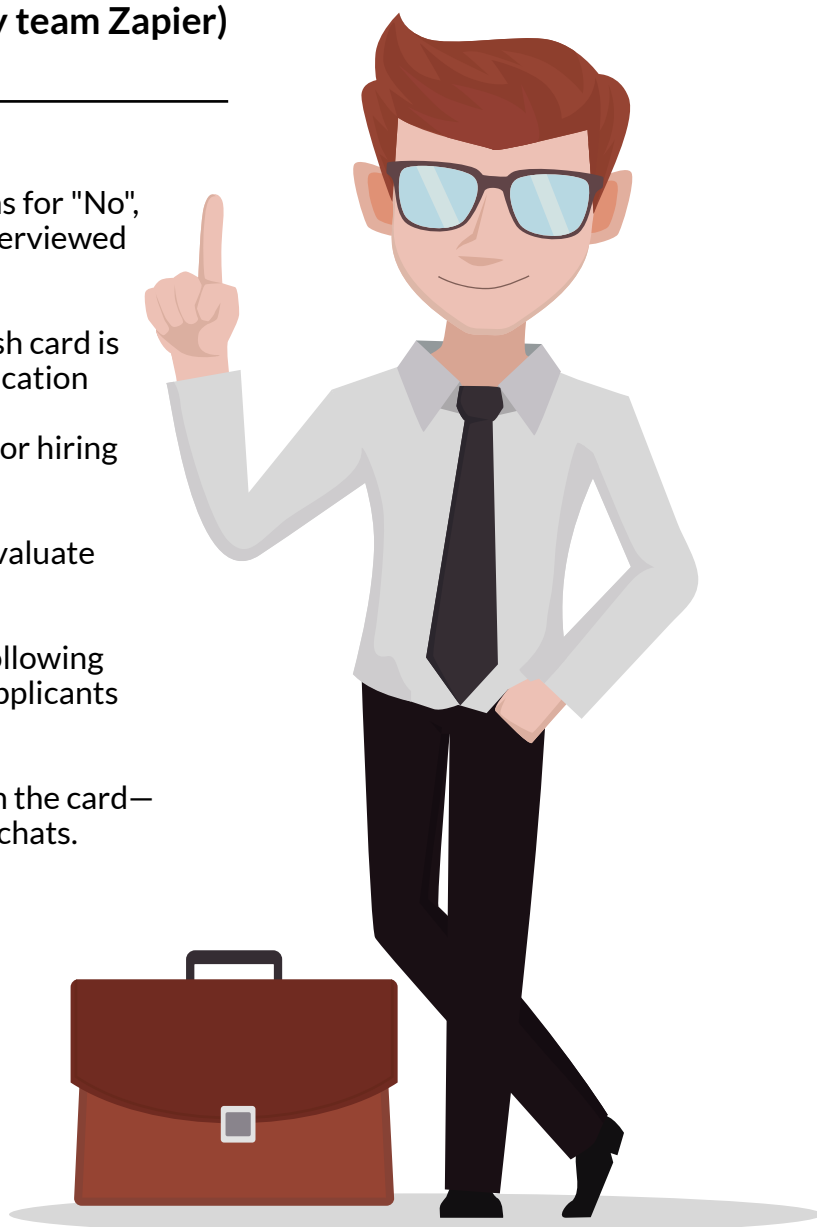


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## EXAMPLE (Used by team Zapier)

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- 1 → Set up a Trello board with columns for "No", "Applied", "Reached out" and "Interviewed (needs decision)".
- 2 → Use zapier integration so as a fresh card is created once you receive an application
- 3 → Nominate someone to run point for hiring for that position.
- 4 → Involve other to independently evaluate candidates to help reduce bias.
- 5 → Use Zapier automation like the following to notify teammates when new applicants come in.
- 6 → Invite them to leave comments on the card— this is to replace those in-person chats.



## Quickly and kindly reject unqualified applicants

- Use an email template and keep email short and personal.
- Provide a good reason for rejection so as they can improve and re-apply.

## Video call interview for top candidates

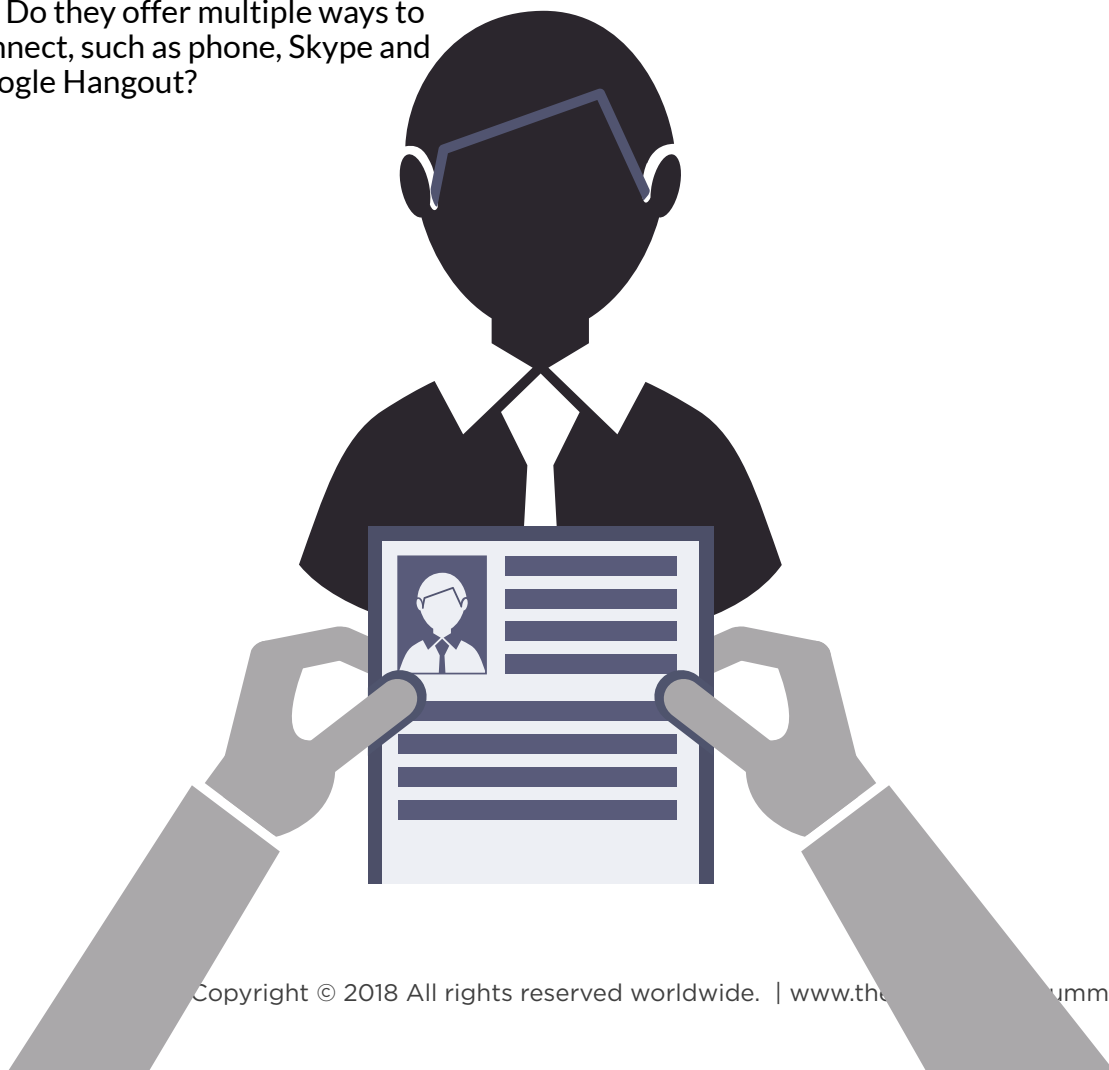
- Schedule a follow up call with the top candidates.
- Schedule these back-to-back. Doing so helps you compare candidates easily.
- Pay special attention to how well the applicant communicates during this part of the process.
  - (a.) Do they suggest dates and times with time zones?
  - (b.) Do they send over calendar invites?
  - (c.) Do those have time zones attached?
  - (d.) Do they offer multiple ways to connect, such as phone, Skype and Google Hangout?

## Test with a project

- Devise a task that is of moderate difficulty.
- Make sure it is indicative of the types of activities they'll do on a day-to-day basis.
- Ensure the task requires interaction with folks on the team.

## Meeting with the whole team

- Ask the candidate to prepare a short lightning talk on a topic of their choice.
- Start with a brief round of intros and then the applicant gives the presentation followed by Q&A.
- It allows everyone on the team to interact with the person at least once.
- Allows the applicant to get an inside look at how you operate.
- If all goes well. Hire the hell out of the applicant. BooYaa.



# 3

# ONBOARDING REMOTE EMPLOYEES

## Strategies and techniques to make on-boarding more effective

On-boarding of a remote employee is interesting yet a little challenging. As a welcoming part of a new employee it should be comfortable for them to connect. Try to replicate an in-person onboarding experience. Its crucial to keep in mind the way you organize your onboarding process as it can make or break your first impression and experience to a new employee.

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### STEPS

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#### Explain how things work in your team “culture wise” to your new employee.

- The main internal team values (tolerance, inclusivity, etc).
- Guidelines and practices for efficient remote work.
- Key factors to efficient long-distance communication both on a personal and professional level.
- How the chat systems work, how you keep transparency in your work, reporting on progress.
- Communicate everything more than that feels necessary.
- If you have a write up of your personal values and culture share that.



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## PRO TIPS

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### Onboarding a traditional working employee for remote working

- Be aware that remote working is not for everybody, choose carefully.
- Deploy the right technology; the medium to connect is only technology.
- Out-of-sight, out-of-mind can happen; stay in continuous connect in early stages.
- Help remote worker help himself.
- A remote-working wiki; Here, remote workers can share resources, advice and tips.
- Video handbooks; Remote workers and other team members can record short videos offering advice to new ones.
- Social media groups; Use an internal social media platform like Yammer or SocialCast, set up a group that lets virtual workers connect to resources and coworkers.
- Buddy system; Pair virtual employees with an employee at the home office to act as a mentor.

## Introduction and ice-breakers

- Assign a mentor; new hire should feel integrated. Connect as many names to faces to voices as possible, as soon as possible.
- Encourage them to chat to team members who aren't directly connected with their position.
- New hire icebreakers (Suggestion by Becca from Helpscout) Everyone who joins the team answers a set of five questions. Then they go back and read what everyone else has said.
- People discover that they grew up in the same area or have traveled to similar places.
- It's an awesome conversation starter and helps people get to know each other.
- Lastly, encourage your existing employees to reach out to the new hire on their own, too.

## Sort work related logistics

- Get all the paperwork done, just use docusign or pandadoc.
- Give them access to any necessary company accounts (social media, Wordpress, etc);
- Add them to any relevant internal collaboration tools (for example Asana, Slack, Github, etc).
- List the tools you use to make everyday work productive.
- Check whether they have prior experience with all of it.
- Pair them up with an existing team member who knows the topic well and having them show them the ropes.
- A master process document or “process backup” is a great idea.

## Setting up the right expectations

- Explain the organization structure.
- Let them know the timeline of on-boarding process.
- Have performance and promotion standards, fully understood by your remote employee.



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## Starting the individual work

- Be extremely organized and detailed with your new employee in the beginning.
- See that each area of responsibility has a clearly defined set of goals with quantified results.
- Suggest which steps they should start out with.
- Share document between you and them, that they can freely comment on, edit and contribute to.
- Create a task list with precise action points and due dates. (Ask them to join boards or collaborative tools)
- Schedule calls a little more often with your new hire than your existing employees.

## Take feedback on your on-boarding process. (Questions to be asked at a later stage)

- Did we tell you enough about our team values and communication guidelines to make you feel comfortable and confident?
- Were we clear enough about the tools and resources we use for efficient day-to-day work?
- Did you feel like you had enough support from your team members during the onboarding period?
- Was there any point where you felt left out or uncomfortable?





## Essential info to be shared (Hiring)

- Making sure they're aware of the challenges (and benefits) that come with working remotely.
- See how the system has worked in their previous workplaces and if there are any significant differences.
- Whether you have an open vacation policy or a fixed arrangement, make sure they're aware of the terms.
- Any potential hire should be aware of what you find important and what/how you're working towards.
- All your communication guidelines
- How many people you have (and have had), where they work from, what they do, who your new hire would be working closely with.
- How are the payments handled between countries, any taxation topics that need to be tackled, etc.

## Red flags (Hiring)

- Slow communication during hiring is a major red flag in remote environment.
- Inability to be flexible with meeting times
- Not in sync with your culture and values.
- Skipping skills assessment completely just because its a right culture fit; find balance.
- Settle for the first candidate that seems to tick the boxes.



## PRO TIPS

- Keep in mind that not everyone works best from home.
- What happens if the candidate experiences technical difficulties on the job? Have a clear guideline.
- When you offer flexible work options within the organization, ensure that all individuals have access to those choices; be it new, old, people with families or young millennials.
- People defend the status quo on matter its take a lot of effort to try something new.
- Youngest managers, on the youngest teams, at the youngest companies would be willing to try new things first. They have fewer preconceptions and fewer things to fear.
- Typically people with control over policies are conservative: one need enough influence before even considering changing policy.

## Beware of making these mistakes

- Moving forward without the consensus for the idea.  
Underestimating cultural issues; you have a lot to lose, but much that can be gained if you start off on the right foot.
- Believing communication will be organic; it will go a long way in setting a collaborative atmosphere.  
Not including the transition cost; its largely saving but there are costs involved too.
- Neglecting Governance and Protocol under the pretext of flexibility and self management.

# 4

# VIRTUAL MEETINGS

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## Strategies and techniques to make virtual meetings more effective

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**Biggest issues that has surfaced around remote work is how to handle meetings.**

- How do you communicate effectively when the meeting is with teams that are several miles away instead of face-to-face in a conference room?
- How do you ensure that your employees are a part of the meeting, instead of just following directions?

**| Make your next virtual meeting just as effective as its in-person counterpart.**

### Start Screensharing

- allows your employees to effectively “look over your shoulder” as you are talking. employees will be able to see your screen as you see it.
- You can also change the presenter, so you’ll be able to see the employee’s computer.
- Examples of services that you can use include Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts and Join.me.

### Schedule a specific time

- It’s more difficult to chase down the other party if they aren’t physically present.
- Always have a specific time scheduled, and confirmed, for all remote meetings.
- Don’t forget to account for time zones when scheduling meetings.

## Personalize the meeting with video technology

- Remote meetings lack the personal feel of a face-to-face meeting, change this with video conferencing.
- Unlike past technology is now much more stable and reliable (with a decent Internet connection).
- Video conferencing is especially effective in virtual sales meetings.

## Engage attendees by assigning talking points

- Have at least one talking point on everyone's agenda.
- Give them a purpose for being at the meeting beyond hearing what everyone else is saying.
- Confirm that they are part of the team and are spending their time in a valuable way.
- Ask them to prepare for the meeting in a much more positive way for they have to present

## Assign responsibilities and follow ups

- Assign each participant at the meeting a responsibility during the meeting.  
In addition to above at least one follow-up item.
- Assign someone to take notes and someone to track time.
- After the meeting, ask everyone to post their follow-up items for review.  
(a wiki-style product usually works well for this).

## Don't allow muting!

- This will make sure they are not multi-tasking.
- Allow muting only for purpose of reducing the background noise.
- Clear instruction on the Mute game.

## Limit the number of participants whenever possible

- One noisy background or poor connection can ruin the meeting for all.
- It's a good idea to encourage frequent meetings with fewer participants.
- It improves meeting quality for everyone.
- The meeting with two or three people is much more engaging for your employees.

# 5

# CULTURE OF A REMOTE COMPANY

## How different is the culture of a remote company than a traditional one.

- More is the freedom hence more accountability.
- Proactive communication runs through the company; (pulling info and not pushing it.)
- Feedback happen not just at the year end. It's a continuous ongoing process.
- Believe in work-life-integration and not just the act of balancing.
- More open to change & experimentation.

## CULTURE

Communication - Collaboration - Strong relationships - Transparency

We are not hard-liners who believes remote is the way every business should work. Let's be honest: Each way of working (remote, co-located, multi-office or mixed) has pros and cons you need to be mindful of. It's less about the philosophy and more about how well you can execute it.

That said, if you want remote company culture to be all or part of your culture mix, you have to be "remote first." Remote culture has to be an inalterable part of your company's DNA, which is why it's hard for companies to change once they've chosen a way of working.

A culture's effectiveness revolves around how information flows. Everyone needs to feel like they have access to the same information, but remote and co-located cultures share information differently.

You are the essence of your company culture. 80% of the company's culture will be defined by its core leaders



# 6 TOOLS AND APPS

## Hiring remote workers

- **TopTal** to grow his development resources fast.
- **Lever** to streamline the hiring process and simplify the tracking of applicants.
- **TribeHr** to manage employees' time off and for certain performance-management functions.

## Building culture

- **Remo App** bring your culture to life
- **Hipchat** – group chat and IM built for teams
- **Sqwiggle** – Sqwiggle is a video chat tool that helps you stay in touch with your team by taking a screenshot of everyone every few minutes (or only when you feel like it)

## High tech tools (AI)

- **Amy product of X.ai** - The bot can review team members' schedules, and deal with the back and forth email tennis volley involved with organizing meetings.
- **Troops.ai** slackbot, remote salespeople can extract data from the popular CRM tool Salesforce while on the move, using “conversational” natural language input.
- **Talla** is an “all-in-one” machine intelligence powered assistant that allows users to communicate, automate and coordinate with other team members.
- **Double Robotics** has created a movable device which is effectively an iPad on a stand with wheels.
- **Twyla** is a new chatbot tool that can converse with potential clients, answer queries and make appointments on a company's help desk or chat function.



## Tools for virtual celebration

- **BlueJeans** – “interactive, two-way video for teams of any size”.
- **appear.in** – an easy, instant way to have a video call.
- **Dr Clue’s treasure hunts** – virtual (and in person) treasure hunts for teams.
- **Icebreakers** for virtual teams
- **Kudobox.co** – an easy way to say thank you online.
- **Catch** – send quick video messages that expire after 24 hours.
- **Telepresence** – Teleport to your company party in a Kubi or Beam Pro.
- **Sococo** – Sococo is an actual virtual office where you can meet and work with your remote colleagues online.
- **PukkaTeam** – “realtime team presence through automated, regular webcam selfies and one-click video calling.”
- **Bisner** – “A social work environment where coworkers meet, interact and connect.”
- **Walkabout Workplace** – online workplace (i.e., virtual office) connecting remote teams.



# 7 KICKSTARTING REMOTE WORK

- Start encouraging flexible work hours in the beginning.
- Assign tasks and ask the employee to work from home two or three days a week.
- Go paperless. Put everything on the cloud. (Easier access)
- Initiate having daily team huddle on video conferencing.
- Get everyone on the same chat app for better communication
- Start communicating online more.
- Assign work on project management softwares.
- Clearly define undesired actions

