



REMOTE TEAMS

GUIDE 3

HOW TO GROW A REMOTE TEAM

According to Global Workplace Analytics 50% of the workforce is already working in some sort of remote working role and 80% of all employees said they would like to work remotely at least half of the time.

Leading a remote team might be the new norm, but that doesn't mean it's easy. We asked quite number of leaders of remote teams a simple question. "Why is leading a remote team so difficult?" The common answer was - "Being distant and struggling with communication and visibility are real-world challenges when it comes to leading a remote team." While this [Remote Work] is the ultimate work scenario for many employees, it can be difficult for many managers to come to grips with. You may feel like you have no control over the situation or find that gaining a trust level with a remote team can be a bit of a challenge. Yet, it is the way of the future of the workplace, and managers need to adapt to make the situation work for everyone involved.

Not only we need a solution for leading our remote teams, but there is also a need to find a solution to teach clients on how to keep up when the team is working remotely. After interviewing many leaders on the remote work summit we have uncovered solutions and processes which can help you lead a remote team.

Manage better.

Embrace Remote Work.

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LEADING A REMOTE TEAM

“ Companies considering whether to let employees work remotely (even occasionally) face the challenge of understanding what managing remote workers will actually look like. ”

TO SCALE JUST AS EFFICIENTLY AS CO-LOCATED TEAMS, MEMBERS MUST EMBRACE

Structure

Transparency

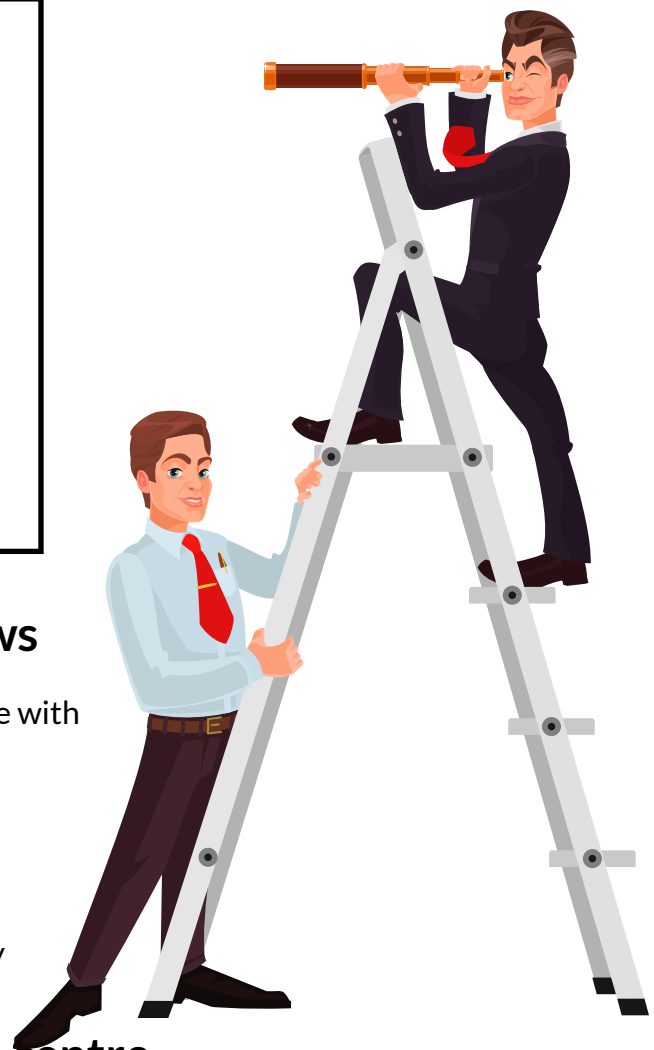
Culture of knowledge sharing

What happens when your team grows

- The arrangement becomes more unreasonable with every added person.
- It slows work down
- Create longer decision times
- More communication loops
- Overwhelming amount of stress on everybody

What to do about it: Avoid being the centre of everything.

- **Consider creating teams within a team.**
Don't be at the centre of every decision-making process. Letting go of some control in the team is important. Empower other people in teams to make decisions. Do this Across all portfolios product, hiring, sales etc



■ Manage expectations (Do not micromanage)

As a leader set clear expectations and goals.

Define how communication about delivering these goals should take place.

Establish clear lines of accountability

Set regular (monthly, quarterly, yearly) performance goals.

Check in every now and then (clear schedule) to see the progress.

Lend a hand if something is not going as expected.

■ Adapting to new solutions/ technology/ tools.

Take advantage of different technical solutions for effective working.

Make sure the tools you're using are the best option for you financially.

■ Put extra effort on making sure communication works.

Provide your team with the right tools

Encourage mindset of communicating efficiently while managing themselves.

Keep adapting by becoming more intentional about your team sizes and communication flows.

Create environment of Trust

“ As much as horizontal trust (between team members) is absolutely crucial for your team working efficiently together, you should also never forget about vertical trust. ”

One on ones:

Dont's:

Just rely on written communication.

Make the mistake of believing that face-to-face are redundant and a waste of time.

One-on-one only when a problem has already surfaced.

1. its already too late.
2. People will be scared of one-on-ones.

Do's

Make the individual you're talking to the number one priority.

Have conversations to see how they're doing professionally as well as personally.

Talk about personal development and problem-solving.

Aim to make your talk something to look forward to for the employee, not a "what have I done now?" moment.

Honest feedback:

Stay open-minded. Honesty, doesn't mean judgement.

Listen, and offer help where you can without over-managing.

Be specific on what needs to be corrected.

1. Work
2. Attitude
3. Mindset

Try to be frank, but not intimidating.

Constructive criticism is fine. Aggression and threats are not.

Say it, don't spray it.

Don't underestimate your team's ability - they will know if you are not honest.

Encouragement:

Take time and say how well they're doing every now and then.

Burnout and Retention

Signs of burnout (for you as well your team)

- **Increased irritability:** Overwhelming feelings of not being in control can eventually lead to lashing out on others around you.
- **Noticeable drop in performance:** Burned-out employees often need to exercise a lot of extra effort to get their stuff done.
- **Overcompensate by working a lot more:** When people feel their control over their achievements is slipping, they try working a lot more to make sure they get everything done.
- **Constant exhaustion:** Low levels of energy can be a sign of many health issues, but are also a common symptom of burnout.

Steps for more retention

- **Create an open and accepting environment:** Make sure to make it very clear that you're there if there's any issues, and willing to really listen.
- **Make sure nobody is judged, punished or looked down:** If team members feel like any of the above when they discuss their problems, they won't come to you.
- **Providing support for a healthy lifestyle:**
 1. Pay for their gym membership or other activities among other perks, should they request it
 2. Show that you care about their mental and physical health.
- **Mental health recovery days:** Generally unmotivated or down should be enough of a reason to take a day or two, without officially considering it "vacation" or "sick days".
- **Open vacation policy:** Granted that they are aware of their dependencies and responsibilities when it comes to work.
- **Spending (as much) time (as possible) together:** Hanging out in person builds trust and personal relationships, which can then be later maintained online.

Measure of performance

■ How metrics improves chances of success.

Transparency of data (make data available to your employee as well)
Metrics show you where and how your employees spend their time.
Clarity helps manage expectations, timing and work habits.
Helps you target how your team can improve.

■ Discover focus time and lost time.

Use metrics to discover how long each team member spends his or her time on a task.
Productivity will improve once team learns to focus on uninterrupted segments of work.

■ Improved performance evaluation.

Employees appreciate being evaluated against metrics.
Provide clear goals and they objectively measure performance.

■ Promote work life balance.

Pinpoint ways for everybody to save time at work.
Liberated they can manage their life out of the office.

Things to keep in mind

- Showing up to work is simply not the same as getting work done.
- Hours worked is irrelevant to output.
- Trust your team members to have a large amount of self-discipline.
- There's absolutely no reason to spend your or your team members' time on reporting their hours worked and regularly checking them.
- It doesn't matter when or how long they actually work; if they are delivering quality work on time.

Question to ask yourself: Key determinants

- Are the employees personally invested in the team's common goals and activities?
- Do they work well and cohere with the rest of the team?
- Do they participate actively in discussions about the team's business goals as well as culture topics?
- Do they constantly thrive to improve themselves and their work?
- Do they set ambitious goals and work hard to get there?
- Are they excited about learning, growing and improving when it comes to both work and life in general?

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LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN VIRTUAL TEAM COHESION

1 Focus on the process, then the goal.

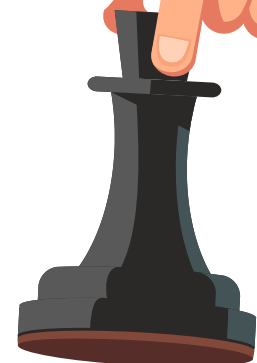
- Outline the tasks you wish accomplished for the day.
- Identify how you will communicate and with whom.
- The more video, the better, because it humanizes everyone involved.

2 Check in daily.

- Eliminate (or at least reduce) the cognitive bias.
- *If you were to pit two hypothetical subordinates against each other where one checks in with you daily and the other every few days, the perception is that the former is working harder than the latter. However, the truth is you just don't know.
- Have each team member check in with their team daily to state his or her tasks and what they're tracking on.
- Let everybody know it's always better to over-communicate than to under-deliver.

3 Share objectives daily.

- Team members need to know how their individual behaviors align toward the overall objective.
- Everybody should make their own course corrections along the way.
- Self ownership without having the boss weigh in upon every decision.





4 Post yesterday's achievements.

- Not to be confused with a forced ranking system.
- This enables each member to see how their own individual efforts map against everyone else's.
- Figure out who needs help with work, at the end of the day.
- Measure success by what the team accomplishes, not individual merit.

5 Have a weekly video teleconference.

- Team members can see each other's mugs and make sure there is a human on the other end.
- Personalize communication through individual chat time.

6 Don't worry about motivation.

- You don't motivate people -they motivate themselves.
- Immerse people in the right environment that facilitates individual drive and talent.
- Create the environment that facilitates trust, openness and commitment.

TOP MISTAKES; Ignore these mistakes at your own peril.

- Not building rapport with your remote employees.
- Not involving them in key conversations.
- Leaving them out of wins.
- Forgetting the power of collisions
- Not talking about their growth and advancements.

PRO TIPS

- Make strategic planning a time bound process.
- Be adaptable to demanding and differing management challenges.
- Meeting the needs of a globally-distributed team is no small feat.
- Everyone is experiencing a different daily environment and are experiencing challenges that may be less easy to identify from afar.
- Addressing feelings of isolation need to be continually in mind.
- Being available and empathetic to creatively solving issues as a manager is very important to keep a remote team in a positive place.

Willingness to share responsibility for success.

- Accept dependency on each other for results.
- Take personal responsibility for team actions.
- Show interest in the work performed by all team members.
- Willingly accept even mundane tasks to assure the success of the project.

Showing respect for other team members is paramount.

- Respect and appreciate the skills and contributions of others.
- teams members should not be self-centered and abrasive.
- Don't be a loners who won't share the load or risk.

FEEDBACK

180 degree Feedback process (By 7Geese)

Let the employee initiate the feedback process whenever they need to.

Let the employee choose the people they trust to receive feedback from.

Allow the employee to keep the feedback received private and use it for self-development purposes,

and only share it with managers if s/he feels that it is needed.

Instead of having the feedback providers rate the employees skills and competencies, allow the feedback recipient to rate the effectiveness of the feedback received. This encourages everyone to give well-thought feedback.

The feedback mechanism: Make sure

- 1 → The feedback provider is credible in the eyes of the feedback recipient
- 2 → The feedback provider is trusted by the feedback recipient
- 3 → The feedback is conveyed with good intentions
- 4 → The timing and circumstances of giving the feedback are appropriate
- 5 → The feedback is given in an interactive manner, i.e. the receiver can ask for clarifications
- 6 → Feedback message is clear
- 7 → Feedback is helpful to recipient

How to give feedbacks.

- Don't wait for the monthly newsletter or yearly review; don't wait to deliver good news.
- If you see something fabulous a remote worker did, let that individual know with a quick comment instantly.
- Choose the best medium to communicate; make your feelings public, your words will carry a larger meaning. (However, save the more intensive stuff for the phone.)
- Be specific; details make the comment more meaningful and help to deliver messages of how they can continue to be successful.
- Try to make all feedback personal and unique.
- Standardized messages will lack impact even if you're doing them regularly.
- Keep all feedback constructive. (It takes 10 positives to counteract one negative.)
- Make sure to invite two-way communication.



Tips for positive criticism

- Reflect on your purpose, stay mindful.
- Focus on the behaviour, not the person.
- Start leading with questions.
- Don't forget to inject positivity (wherever you can).

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM IN REMOTE ENVIRONMENT

The wrong reasons to provide a feedback:

- Defend/excuse your own behavior
- To demoralize/condemn
- You're in a bad mood
- To appease a third party
- To make yourself seem superior/powerful

The right reasons to provide a feedback:

- Commitment/concern for another
- Sense of responsibility
- To guide/mentor
- To support/enhance

Questions yourself about the process you are following.

- Was the flow of communication sufficient?
- Did the virtual setup contribute to any serious problems? If yes, what changes will solve that problem?
- Did new team members assimilate well to the virtual environment?
- Does this still work for us as a company?
- If results aren't in alignment, why would you stick to the same plan?

2 PRODUCTIVITY

Remote workers boast about being more productive than traditional office workers. Instead of spending time at the water cooler, staring at the clock longingly, dodging your boss, and trying to look busy, a remote worker actually gets stuff done and thus maintains the status-quo of being more productive. Employees are less stressed in a remote environment as they are able to ditch the stressful office commute and choose their own working hours and space.

But as we all know nothing is constant. Distractions come easy for a remote worker as well. Though remote workers are self-motivated but to maintain high productivity and keep the work going smoothly one needs to put a defined process in place. For example simply stating shared and measurable objectives for a remote team member eliminates the temptation to micromanage the person for fear he or she is slacking.



PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE MAXIMUM PRODUCTIVITY

Foster a culture of collaboration and trust.

- Focus on strengths and desired behaviors, rather than personalities and faults.
- Everybody should be visibly and mentally present to be perceived as trustworthy and part of the team.

Practice regular communication with each other.

- Effective and frequent communication to all team members is the key.
- Nobody on the team should be hard to find or consistently refuse to communicate.
- Frequency standards and modes of communication must be set early.
- Everyone should be held accountable for making it happen.

Provide necessary tools and support for collaboration.

- Tools may range from secure phone lines to compatible messaging software for everyone.
- Tool-acquisition process, training program and support contact for all technology should be provided.

Define conflict resolution procedures

- Conflict arise more quickly in remote teams from simple oversights and poor communication.
- Team leaders must be especially proactive.
- Follow up and resolute, before productivity and trust are lost.

Establish clear objectives and metrics early

- Time constraints and budgetary limitations to be tracked by the team, as well as the leader.

3 COMMUNICATION

This quote by Jeremy Duvall of Automattic succinctly defines the importance of having a robust communication setup if working remotely: “In many ways, communication is the lifeblood of a remote organization.”



The traditional office setup confers certain advantages: When employees merely have to walk down the hall for an impromptu discussion with a colleague about a collaborative project, great ideas can emerge from that spontaneous fusing of thoughts. In a remote environment, communication is very different. When your team is distributed all across the world, specific guidelines are required for efficient communication. Also, communication hygienes have to be maintained.

Finding your communication balance is important for effective remote team management.

Why chat tool is important for internal communication over Email.

- Quick visibility - Everybody can know what the other members are working on.
- Topics to bubble up at surface - Internal tools should help employees to separate out the important issues from the noise.
- Conversation and following along is encouraged - tools should make it easy for dialogue to occur and everyone to stay on top of what is going on.

Some apps and their suggested benefit.

- **Slack** - Best for a chat powered workplace
- **Hipchat** - Best for fast, focused team chat
- **Twist** - Best for exclusively threaded conversations
- **Microsoft teams** - Best for detailed discussions about documents and meetings
- **Flock** - Best for quickly making decisions in chat
- **Discord** - Best for always-on voice chat
- **Cisco spark** - Best for mocking up ideas in chat
- **Mattermost** - Best for self-hosted team chat
- **Chatwork** - Best for chatting across teams
- **Ryver** - Best for adding more details to important conversations
- **Zoho chat** - Best for chatting in multiple conversations at once

Virtual water cooler

For non work communication

- Hanging out in chat app. (hipchat, slack etc)

Suggetive usecase

- Morning salutations and greetings
 - Place to celebrate occasions, like business milestones, anniversaries etc
 - Using gifs and emojis add fun
 - Share picture of your workstation
- Goofing up on video calls

Suggetive usecase

- Sunglasses day
 - Share the screen with your pet
 - Everybody take picture of their shoes
 - Comic con weekends.
- Social media groups (facebook, instagram)

Suggetive usecase

1. Share books to read
2. Funny memes
3. News related to you
4. Evergreen jokes



Making sure communication works does not mean spying on your team members' personal conversations or pressing your nose against the virtual window when they're discussing anything. It means:

- Getting to know your employees—through both team conversations as well as one on ones;
- Learning to recognize the signs of something being “off”;
- Encouraging employees to be open about how they feel by creating a judgement-free environment;
- Gently nudging any conflicts to be solved in a reasonable manner;
- Setting up a regular communication schedule both between you and an individual employee as well as the employee and the rest of the team;
- Encouraging the use of team messaging and collaboration tools;
- Nurturing familiarity between team members;
- Avoiding any “them vs us” moments.

4 COLLABORATION

Creating a good working environment is a major concern for every business organization; especially if you want to generate satisfaction, build community and keep your people around.

In a traditional office environment, it is easy to share information and have meetings that generally breed teamwork. Whereas in a remote environment, proper collaboration strategies need to be followed if you want to enjoy the benefits that come along with flexible working.

Working with a remote team is way different than working with a team in your office. When your entire team is distributed all across the globe and face-to-face interaction between you and your team is minimum or none collaboration amongst the team can get very difficult.

Some remote managers are able to manage their team way better than other managers simply because they follow three basic steps of improving collaboration in their team while working in a remote environment- **Schedule, Manage and Evaluate.**



VIRTUAL TEAM BUILDING

Remote work pay off only when the team has great relationship with their direct supervisors and among them. No amount of technological wizardry or personal autonomy negates the fact that job satisfaction is still closely tied to having an effective, emotionally intelligent boss and team members. With that in mind, here are a few ways managers can continue to be the same thoughtful, compassionate leaders of remote teams as they've learned to be in the office.

Decentralize power to Individual team

- Create task forces.
- Train them to pull info, like a concierge service model.

Create team challenges

- Fitness month challenge throughout the team
- Trivia quizzes
- Story making, building, sharing
- Product/company trivia game

Icebreakers are useful for a variety of reasons:

- Creating the opportunity for everyone to speak.
- It gives you insight into your teammates' personalities
- Adds a layer of fun that helps the team bond in a very unique way.



Effective ideas for building

- **PlayPrelude** –A trust building exercise for virtual teams.
- **Dr Clue's treasure hunts** – virtual (and in person) treasure hunts for

Measuring Employee Engagement: Ask these questions monthly, quarterly, or annually and have employees rate how much they agree or disagree

- Am I satisfied with my company as a place to add value?
- Do I know what is expected of me?
- Am I using my strengths at work?
- Was I recognized for a job well done this week?
- Does my supervisor support my development and care about me as a person?
- Do my opinions matter?
- Do I understand the overall goals of my company and where my work fits in?
- Am I surrounded by teammates who are motivated and doing great things?
- Do I have a close friend at work?
- Do I have access to feedback in order to progress in my role?
- Are there opportunities to learn and grow?



TRANSPARENCY & TRUST

Building Trust:

Vulnerability in a team setting

Without a safe environment where teammates can admit truths and avoid office politics, the rest of the pyramid doesn't work.

Exercise number 1: Personal Histories

Exercise number 2: Behavior Profiling

Recognition / Feedback / Praise
(keeping transparency and building trust)

Imbibe employee recognition in remote teams

- Recognize people based on specific results and behaviors.
- Implement peer to peer recognition - not just top down.
- Share recognition stories every week.
- Make recognition easy and frequent.
- Tie recognition to your own company values or goals.

Effective steps for remote-employee recognition/praise.

- **Frequency** - not enough to do it quarterly/monthly/yearly.
- **Spontaneity** - Lightweight and easy enough to be spontaneous.
- **Timing** - crucial for building motivational inertia.
- **Specificity** - saying 'great job' is not good enough.
- **Visibility** - public recognition has some unique benefits that can't be underestimated.
- **Transparency** - everybody should know the reason of recognition.

Tools and procedure

- **Use Discourse** (forum software for asynchronous communications): Big or smaller items to celebrate
- **Slack gratitude room**: Great for peer-to-peer praise.
- **Officevibe Bot**: Prompts for reflection and user friendly polls.
- **Occasional hand-written card**: traditional but effective.

Ways to have fun virtually

- **PLAY GAMES**. Games are easy to play online, and an easy way to build team spirit.
- **WATCH A MOVIE TOGETHER**. Who says you have to sit next to each other?
- **ORGANIZE A WHITE ELEPHANT GIFT EXCHANGE**. Join in on the fun and surprise you

workmate with a present.

- **HOST A RECIPE EXCHANGE**. A fun way to share cultural holiday cuisine.
- **DONATE TO A CAUSE TOGETHER**. A great team building event.
- **GIVE AN EXPERIENCE INSTEAD OF A GIFT**. Check out Tingly.
- **SEND E-CARDS**. Just letting team members know that you're thinking about them can help build the holiday spirit.

Commandments of remote work

- Value individuals over infrastructure.
- Avoid impromptu meetings.
- Communication is asynchronous, deal with it.
- Socialising will be around a virtual water cooler.
- Tools you are using matter a lot.

Values to live

- **Always assume positive intent**: Tone and nuance can get lost over chat, so assume good intent to brush off potential misunderstandings.
- **Keep important information accessible for everyone**: always take notes to share in public spaces. Treat others with transparency.
- **Embrace asynchronous communication**: Plan ahead: No decisions are made last minute. It may seem like extra work, but it's actually more organized.
- **Expect a structure**: Self management does not mean No rules or structure. Establish and follow processes.

5 TOOLS AND APPS



Leaders/Managers

- **Infusionsoft** - They offer sales and marketing software that takes input from thousands of apps to deliver comprehensive insight into your sales performance.
- **Hubspot** CRM to generate leads, close deals, and manage his sources and pipeline.
- **Zapier** - automation platform powering the backend of more businesses than you'd expect.
- **Prodoscore** - provides a simple score to measure, understand, and improve employee productivity across your entire organization

Synchronous communication

- **Discourse** - Somewhere between the real-time collaboration of Paper and the formality of email is.
- **Bitrix 24** designed for effective collaboration, communication, social networking, and workflow and knowledge management.

Asynchronous communication

- **Boomerang** for scheduling mails.
- **The Top Inbox** to track email opens, schedule emails and set auto-followups from inside his Gmail for Business account.

Scheduling

- **Time Trade** allows clients or colleagues to see your availability and syncs automatically with Google Calendar.
- **Acuity Scheduling** is fantastic for controlling your calendar and booking efficiently.
- **Calendly** to make booking meetings and calendar management simple and straightforward.

Collaboration

- **Basecamp** - allows you to manage projects, communicate with your team and stay on top of who's assigned to what tasks.
- **Trello** - it can help lay out clearly where you are in a project and what step is next.
- **Slack** is the best tool, ever, for collaboration.
- **Wrike** is the very best solutions for project management.
- **Asana** allows you to chronicle tasks, projects and conversations.
- **Confluence** robust project collaboration platform with plenty of social features.
- **Samepage co**-author documents, share files, manage tasks & calendars, draw diagrams, edit spreadsheets, & more - in real time
- **Realtimeboard** - is your online whiteboard for visual team collaboration.
- **Pipefy highly**-customizable platform, manage all your teams work and achieve cross-functional collaboration by connecting processes.
- **Aha.io** Roadmap software to manage your products connect strategy to execution.
- **Attentiv** is all about having fewer, more effective meetings and arriving at better, more informed decisions.

