

# Making Remote Work, Work:

## How to Build and Lead High-Performance Dispersed Work Teams

With 70% of the global workforce now telecommuting at least once per week, ensuring remote work success is more critical than ever.

This guide shares powerful strategies to create and lead cohesive, high-performance teams – regardless of where people work.

### You will learn:

- The rise and impact of remote work.
- The challenges that can come with managing a remote team.
- Actionable strategies for overcoming those challenges.
- How to hire and onboard remote employees to set up your team for success.



# How Is Mobility Changing the Way We Work?

The rise of the cloud has made remote work much more possible – and much more effective than ever before. Today, employees can access their work at any time, from anywhere.

Not only does remote work help improve employee work-life balance, it also opens your talent pool to a national or global set of candidates and provides real business benefits.

## The Rise of Remote Work



## Remote Work Facilitates Productivity



## Remote Work Creates Cost Savings Opportunities for Businesses

- Businesses save as much as **\$11,000 per person, per year** by allowing employees to work from home.
- AT&T reported savings of **\$30 million a year** in real estate alone by offering remote work along with **\$150 million in extra hours** of productive work from their employees.
- Cisco's Internet Business Services Group reported an **annual savings of \$277 million** in productivity because of remote employees.

# The Challenge of Working With Remote Employees

Remote work can be ideal for many employees, and it can lead to significant productivity increases and overhead decreases for a business.

But managing remote teams comes with challenges.

**The most common challenges are:**

- Effective communication
- Scheduling
- Tracking and measuring performance
- Lack of cohesion with the in-house team
- Hiring and retaining self-starters

*The good news? Overcoming these challenges is possible – and even easy – with proper planning and a commitment to success.*



# Overcoming Communication Challenges

Communication challenges should always be addressed first, because they tend to be the root cause of most other remote team challenges. Managers of remote teams must prioritize clear, effective communication and they must continually re-evaluate communication on their teams to ensure ongoing success.

But since you can't just walk down the hall to talk to a remote employee, communication is often a stumbling block for companies that are dipping their toes into remote work.

**You can improve remote team communication by:**

- Setting clear expectations for remote employees. Let them know when they must be reachable and how quickly you expect them to respond to their peers and managers.
- Requiring that all employees – both remote and in-house – keep those channels open during regular business hours.
- Leveraging communication-based technology like instant messaging and chat, video calling and other two-way channels.
- Monitoring those channels to ensure people are being answered in a timely fashion.
- Leveraging project management software to assign and track tasks, control workflow and manage deadlines, store the most recent copies of documents, and track notes on projects.



## Communications Tools for Remote Teams



Google Drive



Slack



Microsoft Teams



Skype



Fuze



Glip



Flock



Zoom



InVision



Trello

# Overcoming Scheduling Challenges

Remote work can boost productivity, but time zone differences and other scheduling issues can present challenges. If someone is waiting for hours for a remote employee to respond, it has a negative impact on team efficiency.

When all employees work in the same time zone, it's easy to set clear expectations for availability and hours worked. If your remote employees are scattered across the country – or the world – it is much more difficult to navigate.

**You can deploy several strategies for overcoming potential scheduling issues:**

- Schedule meetings at a time when everyone can comfortably dial in. This may mean moving your 8:00 a.m. EST staff meeting to 1:00 p.m., for example.
- Record meetings if it is impossible for certain team members to dial in. Don't make someone wake up at 2:00 a.m. for an impromptu meeting about a picky client. Record the meeting so the remote worker can upload and view the meeting first thing.
- Use email or cloud-based documents to record announcements that might not require a meeting, but are important.
- Require all employees – both in-house and remote – to update their calendars each month with their availability.
- Use time-tracking software that will alert you when a shift is missed or abandoned, so you know when remote workers are truly on the clock.



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# Overcoming Performance Management Challenges

For remote work to work, you must be able to track performance. Are remote workers accomplishing all of their tasks? Are they working efficiently? Are they performing to standards?

The way you track performance will depend on the types of jobs remote workers are doing. Project-based work is typically a matter of knowing employees are completing their tasks on time and accurately. For other jobs, the work requires a set number of hours per day.

## You can improve performance tracking by:

- Setting clear expectations on day one, putting those expectations in writing, and having the remote worker sign off on them.
- Make sure those expectations include clear differentiation between projects completed and time worked. That way they understand if you're concerned about hours logged or if you're more interested in completing tasks regardless of hours spent working.
- Use productivity software to track what your remote team is doing during the day. This could be as simple as time tracking or as invasive as delivering intermittent screen shots throughout the day to show you an employee's desktop.
- Develop qualitative ways to evaluate remote employees' work, so if you become frustrated or unhappy with a remote worker, you can have a clear case if you need to intervene with a performance management plan.



# Overcoming Lack of Cohesion With the In-House Team

People who work together in the same physical location build bonds, develop trust and learn how to work cohesively as a unit.

Remote employees do not have the advantage of proximity. They do not form bonds and trust can be difficult to establish.

## Use these tactics to create cohesion between remote team members:

- Host an in-house orientation so your in-house team can put a name to a face with the remote employee.
- Bring remote employees in for important company meetings or team-building events.
- Require videoconferencing for all team meetings so people can see each other's faces regularly.
- Be sure managers are checking in with employees regularly and providing ongoing feedback on their work.
- Don't micromanage, however. If you've hired wisely, give your remote employees the same freedom to do their jobs as you provide your in-house team.



# How to Hire Productive, Valuable Remote Employees

Opening your team to remote employees can be a great way to retain current team members who need more flexibility or to vastly widen your pool of available talent.

But the fact is, not everyone is cut out for remote work. To identify remote employees who have the right qualities and skills, you likely need to tweak your current hiring and onboarding processes.

## The qualities of successful remote employees include:

- **Self-motivation:** Remote workers should be able to get up, get to work and stay working without constant reminders or check-ins from management.
- **Communication:** Virtual workers must understand the importance of proactive communication with their team, they must be willing to ask clarifying questions when needed, and they must be able to receive communication and process information independently.
- **Organizational skills:** Independent work requires attention to detail and strong organizational skills. Remote employees need to prioritize their work without much handholding.
- **Technical acumen:** Remote work is only as good as the technology that facilitates it. Remote employees should be able to maintain effective hardware, wireless networking equipment, telecommunications equipment and software.
- **Problem-solving skills:** If a remote employee can't reach their boss or co-workers, they must have the ability to troubleshoot and develop effective solutions.



# Important Interview Questions to Ask Potential Remote Employees

You can stick to your standard interview questions for each specific role, but you'll want to incorporate some additional questions for remote employees, including:

- **What is your remote work experience?** Ideally, you want to find someone with a proven history of successful remote work.
- **What do you think the pros and cons of remote work are?** This will give you further insight into their remote experience.
- **What tools have you used to manage your time when working remotely?** Don't worry if they don't use your specific tools, you just want to gauge their organizational abilities and their experience using remote communications tools.
- **How do you stay focused and avoid distractions when working remotely?** From children to a sink full of dishes to a new Netflix show and more, remote work can be a minefield of distractions. Look for people who recognize the potential pitfalls and have developed strategies to avoid distractions.
- **Are you comfortable using time-tracking or desktop-sharing software?** This will show whether they are confident in their ability to stay on track during the workday.
- **What type of hours do you expect to keep?** If you will require remote workers to keep a strict nine-to-five schedule, someone who does their best work at 11 p.m. might not be the best choice.
- **What would you do if you were on a tight deadline and no one from your team was getting back to you with critical information?** This scenario is likely in a remote work situation. Look for signs the candidate can effectively solve problems like this.
- **Would you be willing to complete a test project?** A test project allows you to see first-hand how a potential employee approaches remote work.

# How to Effectively Onboard Remote Workers

Onboarding sets the tone for a new employee. If they have a rough start or feel disconnected from day one, they may begin to look for another job sooner rather than later. You can improve remote worker retention and employee satisfaction with a truly effective onboarding process.

- **Hold orientation on-site:** Bring remote workers in for a few days to receive their orientation, fill out their paperwork, meet their co-workers and lay the foundation for good working relationships.
- **Set them up with required technology:** While they are in-house for orientation, set them up with all the software they need to work remotely and provide training on each program.
- **Go over expectations:** Provide an accurate copy of their job description and a written outline of performance expectations including your expectations for communication and scheduling. Have the employee sign off on it.
- **Set clear goals:** Once they are clear on expectations, go over your written goals for the first week, month, 60 days and 90 days. Goals will help keep the new employee focused and provide you with a way to measure progress.
- **Assign a mentor or buddy:** Match new remote workers with someone in-house to act as their New Hire Mentor or New Hire Buddy. This person should be someone who can answer questions and provide guidance on company processes throughout the onboarding process.
- **Schedule weekly check-ins:** Don't leave new remote workers hanging out on their own. At the start or end of each week, schedule a check-in to review goals, talk about progress and give and receive feedback.



# Ready to Build Your Remote Team?

Remote work can transform your organization, but only if you plan well and manage your team effectively.

The biggest challenge can be hiring the right people from the start. If you're not well-versed in the art and science of interviewing and evaluating remote candidates, you could struggle.

**The good news?** There is a way to locate, attract and hire top remote workers starting now.

Working with an expert recruiter is the most effective way to improve your hiring practices.

A great recruiter will learn exactly what you need for the role and will quickly identify remote candidates who are a great fit today, tomorrow, and into the future.

