Experts Weigh In

Best Practices for Managing Remote Employees

ABYX PROPERTIES

WELCOME!

Do you manage employees in a remote work environment? Do you struggle with how to be an effective manager while keeping a pulse on productivity?

Whether you've been managing remote employees for a while or you've recently transitioned into an online work environment, this ebook will give you all the best practices you need to manage your remote workforce.

Research actually shows that when managed effectively, employees can be more productive when they work from home rather than in an office full of distractions. So if you manage your employees well and establish ways to make sure they are doing the work that needs to be done, the output of work and the effectiveness of your company don't need to suffer when your employees work from home.

Research actually shows that when managed effectively, employees can be more productive when they work from home.

In order to help you be a better manager, we asked experts for tips on how to manage employees remotely. These tips will help you be a stellar manager and increase productivity from your employees in a remote business model.

CONTENTS

Embrace Your Role as a Leader

In these uncertain times, your employees crave leadership. Try to stay upbeat and lead your employees with clear communication and by setting a good example. Whether you like it or not, your remote workforce looks to you for sentiment and advice, so make yourself available to help your employees with their daily tasks and offer lots of feedback.

The experts speak ▶

Embrace Your Role as a Leader

Alex Pasykov is the CEO of Hily Corp and prioritizes frequent communication across his team. "Help your employees figure out their work-from-home routines. Not everyone has a designated home office. Give your colleagues a hand organizing their workspace, ship their double monitors, office chairs, or even tables over if needed. Stream yoga classes (or any exercises) every morning to help them feel more energized and stick to their usual schedule. Ask specific questions, like what helps them stay productive or what challenges they face, and react accordingly."

As a leader, it's important that you show appreciation to your staff even though they're currently remote. **Flynn Zaiger**, the CEO of Online Optimism has embraced unique ways to show appreciation for his newly remote team. "If your office was like mine, it was full of endless snacks for our staff. That snack supply no longer needs replenishing, which means you're saving money on that overhead. Rather than simply pocketing it, reinvest it in your staff by sending out small gift packages. Not only will it keep them motivated to continue working hard for you at home, but it's a small reminder of the normalcy of working for your organization and that their company cares for them."

Embrace Your Role as a Leader

Elsa Elbert is the CEO of **Composed Living** and shared a great tip on ensuring remote employees can do their job. "Make sure they have the tools they need to work remotely. They may need help figuring out how to optimize their setup to be fully productive. Offer to send them whatever equipment they may need in order to do their jobs."

Alice Dartnell is a successful **coach** and has implemented some great strategies when it comes to being an effective remote manager. "Communication is the trickiest element of working from home. How are you going to replicate "in office" communications? The following works for me when I manage a remote team: make the most of online meeting apps over emails to communicate and encourage video calls. Use email sparingly, otherwise important messages will get lost, and colleagues will be forever on emails responding to conversation and not actually doing what they need to do!"

Stay Organized

Your employees look up to you to set clear expectations and guidelines. Managing a remote team requires more organization than when in the office so be sure to set a good example when it comes to staying organized and your employees will follow your lead.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Stay Organized

Shiyang Gong is the CEO of a legal software company called **AiLaw** and recommends that employers "set the deadline a day or two ahead of the date when you actually need things done. Take into consideration the time that needs to pass before your people read your messages and complete the tasks. Leave a time buffer."

Ryan Denehy, CEO of NYC based IT services startup **Electric**, advises that everyone needs to be available to operate a functioning remote team. "Ensure the IT team is available in real time to handle the remote nature of the employee base. This will allow them to quickly troubleshoot potential connectivity, VPN, or audio and visual issues."

Anthony De Guzman is the Co-Founder of **Breezeful** and stresses the value of organized documentation. "Documentation is super important when working remotely. Notion and Google Docs help for keeping track and sharing context among team members."

Stay Organized

Boni Satani, Head of Marketing at **Zestard Technologies**, believes management should focus on outcomes instead of activities. "It's not possible to manage every aspect of the work done by a remote team. You should not be trying to manage every aspect of any team's work, but mainly when your team is distributed across different locations. Rather than focusing on activity or hours worked, focus on the outcomes and measure your team accordingly."

Be an Effective Communicator

Just because you don't have an in-office setting at the moment, communication doesn't have to suffer in an online work environment. It's important to schedule a consistent cadence when it comes to meetings and make it a requirement that your employees attend these meetings. Additionally, as a leader, it's crucial to get organized and be an effective communicator so that your employees know what is expected of them.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX PROPERTIES

Be an Effective Communicator

Dennis Vu, Co-Founder of **Ringblaze** is a fan of ongoing communication. "My best tip for managing employees remotely is to overcommunicate everything. If you want things done the right way, make sure to provide more information than you think is necessary. The moment you assume that someone knows something, you're in trouble. The more information you provide to your employees, the less they have to guess. Always assume that people don't know anything and give every piece of info that you can. That way, you will get fewer questions and the job will be done better and in less time because everyone can refer to what you wrote. Oh yeah — definitely get everything in writing. Video meetings are great but if you don't write things down, they get forgotten."

Hilary Bird, Marketing Manager at **Render Pilots**, stresses the value of healthy communication. "Keep your employees in the loop with big or little wins, or even setbacks. This could be through virtual meeting updates, chat updates, or email updates. Really, it's just about being transparent with things happening in the company. This helps keep the sense of a healthy company culture even if you aren't physically working together."

Be an Effective Communicator

Trivinia Barber is the Founder of **Priority VA** and has managing a team remotely for 17 years and has remote work down to a science. "Centralize communication. As a business owner, it's important to decide right away how you will communicate with your remote team and how they should communicate with each other. We use Slack for internal communication, email for external communication. We have a "Two-strike rule" which says that if something requires more than two emails or Slack messages to get your point across, hop on the phone or conduct a Zoom meeting."

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Tools to Increase Productivity and Communication

Nowadays technology tools are advanced, especially communication tools that you can implement across your remote workforce. Take a look at the tools our experts recommend to make you a better leader.

The experts speak ▶

Tools to Increase Productivity and Communication

Kristen Brown, owner of [Hoot Design Company](#), has been managing remote employees for years and has found tools that make her remote workforce more productive and collaborative. "Use cloud-based communication. Our company runs on Google Docs, Basecamp, and Slack. These cloud-based platforms make sharing files, schedules, and feedback seamless. It also allowed us all to quickly transition to remote work in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis."

Joe Flanagan is the Lead Project Engineer at [Tacuna Systems](#) and has found useful tools to monitor the hours his employees work. "Track the time spent working by employees using time tracking apps such as Timely and Toggi. Some of these apps like Time Doctor enable you to track log in and log out time, specific tasks being worked on, and time spent on each task."

[**Brandi Mowles**](#) has discovered a plethora of tools to manage her team remotely. "Have a great project management system. We use ClickUp, but Asana or Trello work as well. Just pick one and stick with it, and most importantly make sure everything is in there and updated. This way everyone knows exactly what they should be working on and when it's due."

Tools to Increase Productivity and Communication

Kim Kohatsu, the CMO of **PickFu**, has a lot of experience managing remote employees and has found the best tools to keep her team productive. "Adopt tools that make communication easier. For example, my team loves Loom. We can quickly organize our thoughts while screen sharing, but our team members (who are in five different time zones) can watch them whenever it makes sense instead of having to meet at a determined time."

Rob Stand runs **SEOBetter** and has a lot of experience managing a remote team. "To run a remote team there are a few pieces of software you should have in place to safeguard your business and allow for a streamlined process of communication between workers. All businesses should be using Slack for communication, Trello to manage projects, and Confluence to keep track of processes and bugs that may arise during the courses' preparation and creation stages."

Stewart Guss is the Founder of a **national law firm** and has a robust experience managing remote employees and knows about the tools needed to manage effectively. "Accept the benefits of cloud technology and learn how to make it as secure as possible, not only for your industry's regulations but the privacy of your customer and team data too. If you're able to get the bulk of your work on the cloud, you can reroute tasks as needed to unaffected markets or allow for the whole company to WAH as we are now."

ABYX PROPERTIES

Tools to Increase Productivity and Communication

Jason Parks is the owner of [The Media Captain](#) and uses a variety of tools to manage his employees. "I recommend investing in a project management software. Our agency uses Monday.com. This allows me to see tasks completed by all our associates and freelancers. It keeps track of time on projects and helps with oversight. I have a great deal of faith in my team and have solid managers underneath me who help oversee things. A project management software holds everyone accountable while improving organization."

Lisa Chu is the owner of [Black n Bianco](#) and manages an entire team remotely and shared that "Asana is an app that allows me to organize and track my employees' work."

Christina Moss is the owner of [Moss Financials](#) and she has found a few tools that help with employee productivity and organization with her clients. "It's all about processes. Someone told me a while ago to document all of my processes. That is what I did. I have set up my MS Teams app with the different areas of my business, and within that platform there is a wiki for every process that we have to do for our clients. I also heavily utilize JetPackWorkflow for the firm to make sure that client tasks are being handled in a timely fashion."

Tools to Increase Productivity and Communication

Mimi Banks, Founder of [MB Social](), recommends WhatsApp. "We have various group chats that are ongoing all day long — we use the desktop version so the window stays open and we can just ask questions there versus email. It also helps engage the team to chat all day long and connect as a team so we don't feel alone. We have a team chat that we use to share personal details. We also have groups with clients which they appreciate. They can contact us or we can ask them quick questions. It helps with productivity and reduces email! Many of our team members have NEVER met in person and they interact/communicate like they have. They have formed true relationships."

Julie Singh, Co-Founder of [Trip Outside](), uses different tools to effectively manage her remote team. "Project management tools like Trello, Asana, and Basecamp allow us to clearly break down projects and tasks and monitor the progress of each goal or task. All three have excellent free trial versions that allow you to track projects, comment on tasks, add labels to assignments, and receive reminders through email alerts. Our favorite of the three is Trello — we just love their features, and the mobile app makes it easy to manage everything right from your phone."
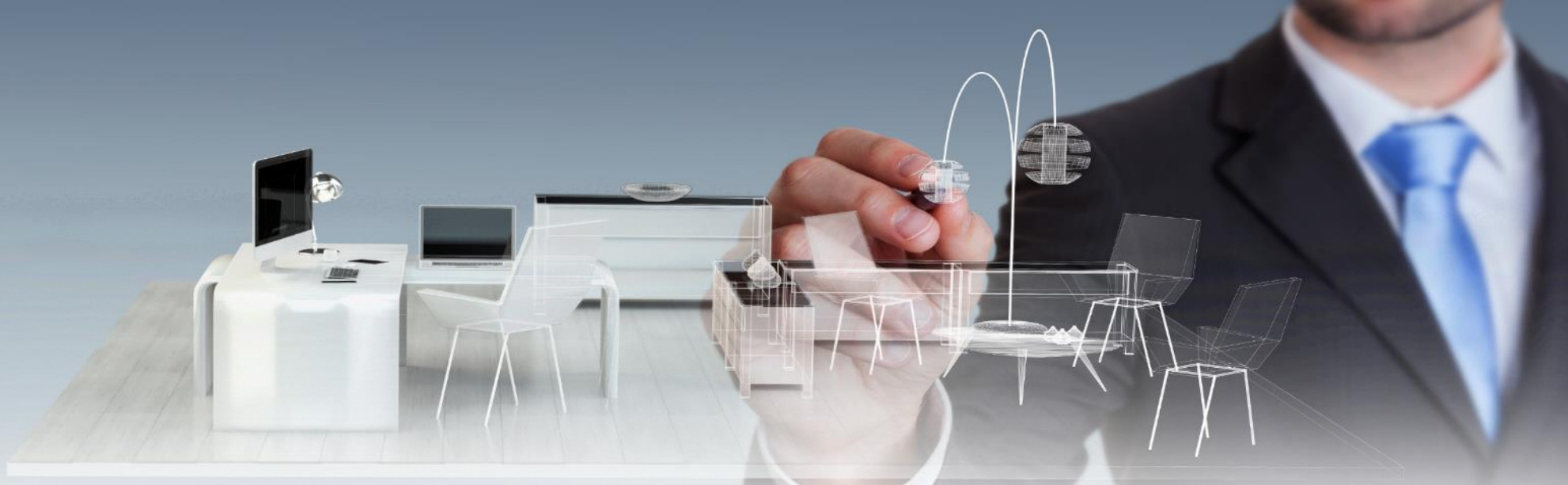
Build an Online Workplace

There are services like [Abyx](#) that allow companies to build a virtual office. These online workspaces feature offices for each employee where you can see a headshot of each employee when they are in their office, conference rooms for team meetings, file storage and sharing to keep documents in one place, and even a virtual patio for video conferencing happy hours. This type of technology increases productivity, accountability, and communication.

The experts speak ▶

Build an Online Workplace

John King, Director of Operations at [The Authenticity Alliance](#), is part of a fully remote team that operates in a virtual office. Within this office, he establishes "meeting times and approaches such as considering overlapping time zones, scheduling group meetings, and encouraging individuals to initiate ad hoc verbal chats with other team members versus just emailing or texting someone."

Kristen Matthews, Founder of [AuthentiConference](#), recommends that employers utilize online workplaces just like they would in-person workplaces. "With virtual offices — also referred to as placeware — it's nice because you can see headshots of employees when they're in their office so you know that they're working. You can also click to enter their office and initiate a video chat with them. It really helps productivity and lessens the feelings of isolation right now."

Prioritize Video Conferencing

Video meetings are more effective than phone calls because employees can express and detect emotion. Not to mention, video meetings help negate feelings of isolation. Now that you're operating a remote workforce it's time to try moving your meetings from phone calls to video meetings.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Prioritize Video Conferencing

Ted Kaplun, Co-Founder of [KaplunMarx](#), understands the challenges of managing a remote work force. "We have calendared 2-3 hour long online video meetings per week. This allows us to see what each person is working on, but more importantly we get to *see each other*. The importance of seeing one another cannot be understated — we went from seeing each other daily in our physical office, and we don't want to lose that sense of team. Online video meetings have certainly helped."

Adam Sanders, Director of [Successful Release](#), has some great input on keeping video conferencing meetings productive. "It's extremely tempting to multi-task during any remote meeting, especially if you're not particularly engaged. My team has a "no multi-tasking honor system" during our meetings. That means that we all commit to giving our full attention and make sure our video and collaboration tools are the only things open. I also encourage my team to call me out if they think I'm breaking the rule!"

Kelsi Smith heads up the powerful social media team at [CMD Agency](#) and has created strong bonds with her team even though they're currently remote. "We kick off every day with a team meeting — video ON. These help us connect, kickstart our days, and make sure everyone is feeling supported for their day ahead and surfaces any needs they may have of me, or each other. Video ON is essential as it creates both accountability and empathy."

Prioritize Video Conferencing

Simonas Steponaitis, Marketing Manager at [Hosting Wiki](#), really values video conferencing. "Comprehending the demands of a complex task in a remote work environment can be a challenge that is compounded by an exchange of queries and information over email or IM tools. Using video calls instead can ease out this process because discussing things with a real person in real time is always more effective. Besides, this gives you a chance to establish rapport with your colleagues."

Isaac Hammelburger, Founder of [Search Pros](#), prioritizes video communication over other forms of communication. "First of all, you must be able to communicate with your employees frequently through video calls. Is it necessary to have video calls? Yes! One way of understanding a person when communicating is by observing their body language and facial expressions. This is one way of avoiding any miscommunication with your employees. You should establish these calls frequently so as to build relationships with them despite being far away from each other."

Prioritize Video Conferencing

Matthew Ross, COO of [The Slumber Yard](#), has been managing remote employees for years and prioritizes video conferencing. "During video conferences, we require our employees to use the chat function to state they have a question or statement first instead of just blurting it out. When multiple employees are on a video call, it can be a nightmare if everyone is just speaking over one another. By following our guidelines, we ensure the call proceeds in a structured and organized manner. We also have employees wait for two full seconds after someone is done speaking before they jump in. This gives the video conference software time to catch up. I've noticed that lag in the system can create a hectic and unproductive call if everyone immediately starts speaking right away.

We're keeping our weekly all-team status meeting and monthly lunch-and-learn (for the last one, we sent GrubHub gift cards to the whole team so they could order in). We're sending little gifts and other treats to the team regularly to help them feel appreciated, and I've instituted "#pjFriday," where they can show up to our morning meeting in pajamas (some probably were already)."

Check In Often

In order to keep a pulse on your employees and to make them feel less isolated on the team, it's important to establish a cadence in which you have reoccurring check-ins as well as spontaneous check-ins to keep a pulse on employee productivity.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX PROPERTIES

Check In Often

Yaniv Masjedi, the CMO of **Nextiva**, has great advice. "Have everyone join a conference call for five minutes a day. Have everyone answer three questions:

1. What did you do yesterday?
2. What are you going to do today?
3. Is there anything blocking you from making progress?"

Jason Davis is the CEO of **Inspire360** and has a lot of experience managing remote employees. "Since going remote, I've instituted a team meeting at 11 am every day. It's usually a quick 15-20 minute meeting where each person goes around and says what they worked on the day before, what tasks they plan on working on today, and any impediments they have in completing those projects."

Jennifer Clark, owner of **JC Design and Media**, creates a sense of community in her brand with consistent meetings. "I plan weekly virtual meetings with my team to help keep that face-to-face interaction. I also plan a team brainstorm meeting every other Friday so that we get that true team feeling working together. Those individual and team meetings seem to make a huge difference in creating this virtual space that makes it feel like we are together but we're not."

Check In Often

Elena of [WLM Financial](#) does a great job of explaining a good employee check-in cadence. "Rather than be an overbearing boss adding to the stress of my employees, focusing on their humanity has been a huge benefit. The number one thing I do to manage employees is a phone call in the form of a check-in. I ask how their day is going and if they need anything. This simple conversation appeals to their humanity. Rather than feel the pressure of a boss asking for work updates, they feel cared about. Something about an employer showing interest in your well-being is uplifting on a subconscious level, boosting their self-esteem. I found that ultimately, the result is that they end up more productive. I compliment them on their talents and work well done; their work continues to improve. Before long, I found that they end up filling me in on the work they've done without me having to ask. This eliminates the need for me to press them about work and avoids fostering a negative relationship. With everything going on the world we must focus on the positive of what we have left."

Find Ways to Stay Connected

Through the right communication strategies and tools, there are many ways to make sure your employees still feel connected. A lot of people are struggling with feelings of isolation and there are tactics you can implement to lessen the feelings of disconnect.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Find Ways to Stay Connected

John Stevenson, head of **Top VPN Canada**, understands the value of staying connected. "Every once in a while, hold a video conference to give the members the chance to hold team-building exercises, exchange feedback, and get to know each other more. Interactions like this can be brief and simple, but they are effective at strengthening teamwork and boosting productivity."

Eric Elkins owns **WideFoc.us** and is an extremely effective manager of a remote workforce. "The first thing I instituted was full-team video meetings every morning at 9:30am. I do a roll call, and everyone shares 1) How they're feeling 2) What they're working on today 3) What they need help with. We all have our cameras on, so we can see each other's faces and check on each other. I'm doing 15-minute video calls with every employee at least once or twice per month, to answer questions, reassure them, and keep them optimistic about the situation.

Find Ways to Stay Connected

Allison Hernandez, Managing Partner at **Lotus 823**, has found that there are certain tools that help her brand function and feel connected remotely. "We use Amazon Chime regularly. Chime is our chat room that allows our team to connect with each other privately or within their client teams, and includes the ability to do video conferencing and screen sharing. These tools have been a vital asset to check in with our teams and ensure productivity and transparency. This video communication solution allows us to connect with our clients and prospects, as it is widely popular and available to businesses across the world."

Create Team-Building Events

Of course you'll be checking in frequently on all things business, but to keep morale high and foster a sense of community, you should be adding non-work-related team building events in your video communication.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Create Team-Building Events

Clayton Durant, Founder of [CAD Management](#), has a great strategy when it comes to team building. "There is no doubt that these uncertain times have put a lot of pressure on every person across the US. With that said, one of the most important management tools one can use to keep a remote workforce productive is protecting employee mental health. One way we are doing that at CAD Management is actually having group dinners every week. We send out a recipe for everyone to try and home and we all cook and eat together via Google hangouts. Surprisingly, it has been one of our team's favorite group activities."

Phil Nardone, the President of [PAN Communications](#), has been managing remote employees for a while and has some great insight to share. "The most important tip I have for leaders who may find a remote workforce daunting is to find ways to carry your office culture into what I call a "virtual hallway." For PAN, this has been through weekly cocktail hours with teams, a shared Spotify playlist and daily emails to celebrate successes from the week. No effort to maintain a positive culture is too small in this scenario."

Christy Laurence is the CEO of [Plann](#) and advises that companies use Slack for both work-related purposes and fun purposes. "Creating a #watercooler channel so there's still a place for office banter, industry news, and team chit-chat and memes."

Create Team-Building Events

Kristen Wiley, CEO of [Statusphere](), implemented a really creative team-building activity. "To keep morale up and our team connected we decided to use social media to connect with our team and highlight our company culture, albeit remote. Last week we hosted a "Spirit Week" on Instagram. We encouraged our employees, our clients, and the members of our network to dress up for themed days (such as "denim on denim" and "full-glam") and share a selfie with the outfit. This gave everyone something to look forward to and feel united as a team. You can see all of the Spirit Week selfies on our Instagram (@statusphere) under 'spirit week' highlights."

Monica Eaton-Cardone, COO of [Chargebacks911](), has found that online team-building events help morale. "While I believe it's important to have daily conference calls to ensure everyone is on the same page and understands the game plan, I also think it's important to set aside time for social activities. My team and I recently gathered on Zoom after work and participated in a virtual happy hour. We shared a beverage and conversation that had nothing to do with our jobs, and it was clear how much we all needed to laugh and spend time in a relaxed atmosphere."

Create Team-Building Events

Deya Aliaga is the Founder of **DBM Bootcamp** and has been managing a remote team for three years and really values virtual team bonding. "In an online setting, you have to place way more priority on bonding virtually and guiding the team culture. In an office, everyone is kind of physically kept together but online, everyone is in their own world and bubble. It's easy to feel disconnected so make the space and room for people to come together. Treat this as a new challenge for you all to embark on together. Invite feedback and new ideas."

Shania Khan is the CEO of **For the Love of People Group** and has been managing remote employees for 15 years and has great advice on boosting morale. "I do remote happy hours with my team. I order them all pizza to be delivered at a certain time along with some champagne or wine (if allowed by the company) and we all get on a video call and cheers and eat together virtually. This really helps boost morale and boost spirits in rough times."

Keep Things Transparent

Transparency is key in these uncertain times. Employees want to know the health of the company they work for and know that they have job security. By keeping things transparent, your employees will feel a stronger sense of camaraderie and feel like they are an integral part of the team.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Keep Things Transparent

Larry Blocker, Vice President of **Media Stage,** whole-heartedly believes in transparency. "Be open and honest about the state of the company. By embracing transparency, employees will appreciate being in the know and feel more comfortable coming to you with any questions or concerns. This will also help build trust."

Jono Bacon is a Community and Collaboration Consultant and author of **People Powered: How communities can supercharge your business, brand, and teams**. He's been running a remote workforce for years and has a lot of experience keeping employees productive. "When people work from home, access to information is critical. If you don't provide information about the company, processes, and other details, staff can feel increasingly disconnected. When there is a lack of information, assumption and sometimes paranoia can set in. Set up an internal blog and ensure there is a regular feed of short, focused updates to the team. Cover new processes, policies, and announce-ments. Share great work going on in the company (and recognize team members). Discuss team changes, updates, and new work. All of this helps people feel more connected and informed."

Keep Things Transparent

Diana Ross is the CEO of **Get Emails** and shared that "We have a bi-weekly company-wide video call to make sure all employees are up to date and aligned with key company information (revenue growth/goals, role changes/hires, customer wins, internal acknowledgments, and more) while giving everyone a platform to ask questions and share their own wins. The feedback we receive is that this makes all departments within our company feel inclusive and aligned. These meetings keep our teams motivated and overall company morale high. (We have been remote for over two years and have not had one employee quit!)"

Make Sure Your Employees are Actually Working

Worried that since you're not in an office anymore you can't keep a pulse on whether or not your employees are working? There are a variety of ways that you can make sure that your employees are doing the work that needs to be done.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Make Sure Your Employees are Actually Working

Alan Ricks, CVP of Operations at <u>Lumera Diamonds</u>, has found strategies to keep a pulse on employee productivity. "The most effective tactic so far has been a 30-minute meeting at the beginning of each day, where each team member answers two questions: "What did I accomplish yesterday?" and "What am I working on today?" These simple questions allow us to confirm that everyone is staying on task and making progress. At the same time, a sense of shared purpose is fostered. Feedback so far is that this exercise has helped everyone stay motivated and positive. Without a continuous reminder of the shared initiative, each team member can easily start to drift and lose focus."

Earl White, the Founder of a law practice called <u>The Office of Earl White</u>, has recently shifted to a remote workforce. "As a remote business owner, it's impossible to walk by the office to check-in that you're not at your desk. One option is live screen recording, but I've resisted that because "trust" is part of our culture. Instead, I set goals to be completed in a realistic amount of time. If the goal isn't met, it's time to assess if an employee is pulling their weight."

Make Sure Your Employees are Actually Working

David Lynch from **Payette Forward** has been managing remote employees for a while and has set up processes to ensure that his employees are doing the work that they're tasked with. "Set hard deadlines and use time-tracking software: There are a lot of distractions at home — your phone, television, video games, and so on. Setting hard deadlines helps make sure that nobody lags behind and becomes a bottleneck for the business. Time-tracking software will help you make sure that your team is actually doing what they say they're doing. In my experience, this is especially important for new employees. It's important to set the expectation that they'll have to meet deadlines and track their time right from day one."

Set Goals and KPIs

Holding your team accountable and establishing clear goals is crucial when running a remote team. Share your KPIs and keep your team informed on where things stand with these goals. You should even consider rewarding your employees when they reach your KPIs, and don't' forget that a little bit of praise goes a long way.

The experts speak ▶

Set Goals and KPIs

Joy Gendusa, CEO of [PostcardMania](#), manages a large team remotely and has a lot of experience to learn from. "I currently have about 200 staff out of 279 working from home. The biggest factor that ensures they continue to work and be productive is something that we implemented almost 20 years ago — weekly stat reporting. At PostcardMania every staff member keeps a statistic that tracks their production and the final valuable product for their job. We use these metrics as a key performance indicator (KPI). My stat tracks EBITDA. My CMO's is overall leads. A designer's main stat would be customer-approved designs — every job has one. This is something we've done since opening in 1998 as part of the Hubbard Management System. These metrics are updated weekly, and then used to set tangible goals across the company. Every week, every single staff member sends a writeup to their senior explaining the current condition of their KPI, and what they're going to do to improve it or continue to improve it. Having something concrete to refer to makes a huge difference in our ability to track productivity, achieve goals, and get to the next level."

Set Goals and KPIs

Kean Graham is the CMO of [MonetizeMore](#) and shared his view of establishing KPIs for his remote team. "Since implementing this KPI system, company performance has dramatically improved. We've seen great collaboration within teams, more innovative thinking, greater work ethic, and improved morale with the increased transparency and being part of a team that is working towards a clear and common goal. The KPI system has been one of our best implementations in our history and works especially well for remote teams."

Manny Hernandez, CEO of [Wealth Grow Wisdom](#), has been running remote teams for ten years and has a great approach to monitoring productivity and meeting KPIs. "My number one tip for managers entering this dynamic for the first time will be to focus on outcomes, not activity. It's not possible to manage every aspect of the work done by a remote team. For what it's worth, you will be making a mistake trying to manage every aspect of the team's work. Instead of focusing on activity or hours worked, focus on the outcomes and measure your team accordingly."

Set Goals and KPIs

Greg Birch, Content Manager for **Drop Ship Lifestyle**, is a goal-oriented manager. "Set goals for each week. Make these goals be on the bold side. Oftentimes, people will be amazed at what they can accomplish when they have a deadline. I'm not saying give them unreasonable tasks, just make sure that they're challenging themselves. It's good for you and it's good for their growth as well. You'll also have a tangible expectation for what should be done by the end of the week."

Establish Ground Rules

Many employees are new to working remotely. They may feel unsure what is expected of them, so it's your job as a leader to establish clear guidelines, deadlines, communication practices, etc.

The experts speak ▶

Establish Ground Rules

Nicole Wood, CEO of <u>Ama La Vida</u>, recognizes how important ground rules are. "The rules of engagement have changed since the typical ways of working have been turned upside down. Get your team together to establish new commitments to one another and best practices for how to work collaboratively. For example, you may decide that we always respond to each other's emails within 24 hours or if it is an urgent matter, we will text one another or we agree not to send emails after 6pm. It's important that you collectively agree on the new ground rules."

Diane Domeyer is the Executive Director of <u>The Creative Group</u> and weighed in on accountability and establishing ground rules to keep teams on the same page. "Tech tools are more essential now than ever as workforces have become dispersed. No matter which systems and apps your team uses, all of your employees should be on the same page about how they work, what they should be used for, and who to turn to if issues arise. Consider setting up trainings with IT for clarity on any new programs."

Establish Ground Rules

James Chittenden of Triumph Business Consulting of **One Click Advisor** has some great advice on dictating how remote workers can maintain a professional appearance on video calls. "Employees must ensure that the visual and audio background is professional, as if they were at an office. Pick battles carefully. I had a recent conversation with a Bank of America employee who had been temporarily working remotely. Their whole team, who was not customer-facing was scolded by a manager because she heard the sound of a washing machine in the background during bank time. We are an entrepreneurial business. Results matter greatly."

Calloway Cook, President of **Illuminate Labs**, is extremely organized when it comes to managing remote employees. "Set a time zone that all team members agree on. If your company has remote employees across the globe, scheduling meetings can be a hassle. It's common for employees to miss meetings because they thought it was scheduled for a different time zone. I recommend using Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) for international teams."

Monitor Productivity

Managing remote employees means that a large part of your job is to keep a pulse on employee productivity. This can also clue you in to whether or not your procedures are working. Productivity should be managed by meeting project deadlines, not hours that employees spend working. When working remotely, your employees may not be able to work the traditional 9-5 schedule because they may be dealing with other things besides work, like raising children. Allow your employees to work the hours that work for them and measure their output by meeting deadlines and producing good work instead of monitoring their productivity by the hours they work.

The experts speak ▶

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Monitor Productivity

Domantas Gudeliauskas is a Marketing Manager at <u>Zyro</u> and has implemented a few ways to make sure his employees are being productive. "Document performance. Nothing is worse than making guesses. By logging productivity you can make data-driven decisions on what is working and what isn't to further improve your team."

Will Bachman, Co-Founder of <u>Umbrex</u>, has been managing a remote team for five years and has some great communication advice. "Where feasible, schedule inter-mediate points to review interim work product. Don't wait until two weeks from now to look at the final report. Instead, the employee should show progress regularly and the manager should provide feedback either by email or in the daily call."

Brian Lim, CEO of <u>iHeartRaves</u>, manages a remote team and values solid communication and tools. "It's important to ensure that deadlines have been discussed so there is no guesswork and you don't have to micromanage anyone. We track our tasks in Basecamp to ensure that everyone is on the same page so there are no surprises."

Monitor Productivity

Jason Lavis, Managing Director of **Out of the Box Innovations**, believes there are positive and negative aspects of a remote workforce. To negate the drawbacks of managing a remote team he recommends that employers "audit the time, skill, and effort needed for each task, and assign a work productivity schedule based on this. For example, rather than having employees checking in twice each day, and justifying themselves (or screen sharing apps that feel like spying), both manager and worker can agree how long a set of tasks takes. That makes it simple to map out a week. A trusted staff member, or manager, can do each job once, and time themselves. (They can even record themselves to produce a standard operating procedure video). This way, if an employee has a 12-hour day one day, then decides to take half a day the next, it doesn't matter. If they want to stay in bed until lunch, then work through the night, it's okay. Everyone has their productivity hacks. By timing the workflow schedule, no one needs to worry about micromanaging or whether they're doing enough."

Trust Your Employees

There is a learning curve when it comes to running a remote workforce. Give your employees a little trust while they're adapting to a new way of doing things. Check in on them and have consistent meetings, but also give them trust and freedom to get their work done. Remember, you hired them for a reason — so let your employees show you that they can still hit milestones while working remotely.

The experts speak ▶

Trust your Employees

Malte Scholz, CEO of **Airfocus**, believes that over-communication can be counterproductive. "The best tip I have for managing remote employees is to let go of control because you can't really control what someone else is doing if they're not in the office. Instead, focus on goals only. Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals and only check whether the employees are meeting them. If you try to manage their time and ensure that they are constantly working from 9 to 5, you will see that this is not only impossible, it's also completely unproductive. Instead of worrying about how your employees spend every minute of their time, just focus on the results and don't micromanage. Your employees will be happier and more independent, and you'll have more time for things that really matter — such as growing your business."

Richard Lloyd-Williams, Business Director of a marketing agency called **Flavor**, stresses trusting employees. "The most important tip I can give is to trust your team. It's easy to slip into thinking that whilst you're out of site from them they could take advantage and start to slack. This way of thinking is never productive though and can actually end up becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as you end up trying to tighten the reigns which can lead to resentment. Remember that you hired your team because they are great at what they do. If you show that you have complete faith in them, especially during this time when they probably could get away with doing less work, you'll see that trust paid back tenfold."

Trust your Employees

One of the most important things in running an online workforce is trusting that your employees actually are working, since you can't keep a pulse on their activity in an office. **Aaron Anderson**, Founder of [Linkpitch](#), recommends establishing trust over time. "Trust should be earned, not given. When I start out with any new employee, I have them use screen recording software that helps me track how active they are and helps me get a sense for how they use their time. This is important for me to gain trust in them and to know how they are as a worker. Once trust is built though, I'm happy to not require the use of those tools on an ongoing basis. But I've been burned in the past when I trusted too much from the beginning, so now I make them earn my trust."

Avoid Micromanaging

Micromanaging can lead to a decline in employee productivity. It takes more time out of your day and your employees' day if you're giving your employees too short of a rope. Instead, instill deadlines and hold employees accountable to meet those deadlines. Don't micromanage your employees and allow them to show you that they can do the work.

The experts speak ▶

Avoid Micromanaging

Deborah Sweeny, CEO of [My Corporation](#), advises that companies shouldn't micromanage their remote employees. "We emphasize not micromanaging the work-load of employees. I find that micromanagement makes it difficult for individuals to be their most productive selves. Everyone is aware of what they need to be working on and expected to get their work done at home as they would in our traditional office setting. We trust our team and know we are all working hard during this trying time together."

Jason Lee, Content Success Manager in charge of remote employees at [Our Best Online Dating](#), says, "There can be a strong tendency to micromanage employees when they're not in the office. It might make you feel more in control, but it can cripple productivity. Here's my tip: Unless it's absolutely necessary for the position, start measuring the success of your remote workers by their output and accomplishments instead of hours worked. Give your employees the flexibility to manage their own time at home and find how they best produce. For us, this has produced happier, more productive employees who love what they do."

ABYX PROPERTIES

Avoid Micromanaging

Robert Remak, Co-Owner of **Art of the Gentleman**, advises that managers need to not micromanage. "Trust your employees and keep the lines of communication open, but don't saturate them with constant check ins and questions. Doing so would send a clear message to your employees that you don't trust them to get the job done unless you can physically see them in person."

Mercedes Rodriguez-Sanday, the Account Executive of **DistantJob**, manages a remote workforce and advises against micromanaging. "It's very important not to become a helicopter manager out of fear that employees will not be as productive as they were in the office. At DistantJob we've been working remotely for over a decade, and in our experience the best you can do is help your employees to make sure they have everything they need, are in the right mindset, and feel you trust them to get their tasks done. There are lots of time-tracking tools in the market, or you can even ping people every 15 minutes to ask what they're doing, but in the times of coronavirus, people will need their leaders to help them focus, not be an additional distraction."

Be Flexible

Working remotely may be a new concept to your team members. It's very important to keep in mind that there is a learning curve associated with remote work, so be flexible while your employees are adapting. Your management strategy should also keep in mind that there are different types of employees. Some are going to want to be left alone so they can do their work while others feel better if they can ask a lot of questions. So, be flexible and remember that every employee is different.

The experts speak ▶

Be Flexible

Jagoda Wieczorek, HR Manager at **ResumeLab**, has great advice on how to adapt management skills to cater to different types of employees. "Different people might have different needs for support. For instance, a single parent with a young child might face different struggles compared to dual-parent households with high-school-age children. On the other side of the spectrum, there are others that live alone and might need a different sort of support. That's why it's essential for leaders to spend every ounce of their time to pinpoint what each and every employee on the team needs to thrive. Who is introverted vs. extroverted? Who needs more emotional support and guidance? Once you know your team members' personalities, priorities, and motivations, you'll be able to bring out the best in them in remote work."

Konrad Rotkiewicz, CEO of **Ulam Labs**, believes in flexibility and measures employee output by goals and deadlines. "Remote work is by definition quite flexible. Unless a remote employee is in a customer service position, do not require specific hours of work, e.g. from 9am to 5pm. We achieve the best results when we are oriented on the goals, and not on the activity. A flexible approach to the employee gives us measurable benefits: the employee works at his own pace and does not feel tied up, and we get the highest quality job done. However, we always pay attention to clearly define the purpose and deadline for the remote employee, otherwise such flexible work can last indefinitely."

Be Flexible

Eric Fischgrund, Founder of <u>Fisch Tank PR</u>, manages a large remote team and has great insights from his experience. "My biggest tip is to focus on objectives and stress flexibility. It would be silly to expect, in this coronavirus pandemic environment, employees to sign on to their work computers at 9am and sign off at 5pm. Employees require flexibility at this time, not only to meet their real-life demands but to reduce stress at work. They don't want to be concerned about discipline every time they step away from the computer for 30 minutes to place a food order — they want to know they're supported in this environment. So instead of focusing on time, focus on objectives. I push my employees to work smarter, even if that means working less. What does the client want, and how can you help them get there? With no commute, limited team meetings, and reduced office/city (we're in NYC) distractions, you can get more done with less."

Bill Joseph is the owner of **Frontier Blades** and is working hard to support his employees in a new workfromhome environment. "During normal working conditions, each member of our team is assigned an established fixed daily quota. However, as a manager, it is understandable remote work may contribute to reduced efficiency due to increased external pressures. Therefore, when working from a remote location, employees are provided an adaptable daily quota with an upper and lower limit. Fulfilling a quantity of assignments within this range is sufficient and enables our employees to experience more flexibility and less strain when working from home."

Be Flexible

Mark Webster is the Co-Founder of <u>Authority Hacker</u> and has strategies to ensure employees don't get burned out. "One thing I think every manager who finds themselves looking after a remote team all of a sudden is that you must understand that, as humans, we are social creatures. We need distractions and we need to talk to people. It's part of the way we function. For that reason, maintaining contact and allowing your employees to have "distraction time" is crucial to success and productivity. Give your employees a way to engage in discussion and simulate that "water cooler talk" they'd otherwise get in an office. Allow them time throughout the day to browse Facebook and catch up with the outside world.

While this will never be an outright replacement for the real thing, being able to do so guilt-free is one of the best ways to allow your team to satisfy their need to be social. Remember, no human was designed to sit in front of a screen eight hours solid a day!"

Foster a Work/Life Environment

Employees are going to be more productive and produce higher quality work if they have the proper balance of work and home life. A good leader helps employees create this balance by being understanding and being flexible with deadlines.

The experts speak ▶

Foster a Work/Life Environment

Chris Kaiser, CEO of **Click a Tree**, offers a flexible system for his remote employees. "We all know that working from home offers employees the opportunity for a better work life balance, and everyone has done the laundry during a conference call or expanded their lunch break because of the beautiful weather before. That's okay. As long as employees have fixed targets to achieve, it doesn't matter whether they do that during "normal" working hours or at midnight. There are a few exceptions, like customer service, who need to be available during opening hours, but when I ask my social media team to develop and implement a strategy, all it needs are fixed targets like engagement rate or new number of followers or similar. They can then go ahead and implement the strategy any way they like, so long as they meet their targets.

The beauty is this offers your team a lot more flexibility, and they usually come up with amazing ideas and are even more productive and overshoot the targets. In addition, it also shows employees that you trust them, which motivates them further. Remote work can be a win-win situation if done correctly."

Foster a Work/Life Environment

Vinay Amin, CEO of [Eu Natural](#), has been managing remote employees for 12 years and has a great pulse on how to be an effective manager. "Team members may need to work 'off hours' to accommodate their children or partner's needs. Tech or tools or new systems for working at home may be new and have a steeper learning curve than expected. Communications may take longer than they would in the office. Be flexible and understanding. It's a new world out here for all of you."

Employee Training

Just because you don't work in a physical office, training new or existing employees doesn't have to suffer. There are plenty of tools in which you can conduct employee training events. Now is a great time to have your employees tune in to virtual training events to keep their skills sharp. Conduct a webinar, hire a professional trainer, hold an all-day training event, etc. There are lot of ways to offer employee training so that you can keep your employees educated and tuned in.

The experts speak ▶

Employee Training

Mikel Bruce, the owner of **Tiny Frog Technology**, has been running a remote team since 2003 and has some great insights. "Training a new employee remotely can be challenging. We've put a lot of work into creating training documents and internal processes for a new hire. It's helpful to make sure the new hire has one or two designated people they can go to for miscellaneous questions. We use chat systems like Slack to communicate and those tools can be really helpful for new hires to ask quick questions and feel supported."

Keeping all of your employees on the same page and educating them on companywide events and roles is key. **Saurabh Jindal** runs **Talk Travel App** and implements creativity into the brand's online meetings. "Conduct open training sessions regularly, where employees teach the basics of their skills to others. It not only helps in skill enhancement, but also everybody gets an idea of what the other person does."

Employee Training

Kevin Miller is the CEO of [The Word Counter](#) and has an extremely creative way to increase the skillsets of his employees. "Recently, our organization created a "Grow Your Craft" fund, where we give remote employees $1,000 to spend on an online course of their choice. The only requirement is that it has to connect to the functional work area that the employee is in right now. We currently have employees enrolled in courses doing Google Analytics, Google AdWords, SQL, Data Analysis, and more. It has been a huge hit across the company with 80% adoption so far. This is the perfect time to utilize online courses, and we are taking advantage of that opportunity."

Shawn Johal of [Elevation](#) illustrates that even in a remote work environment, employees can still learn and be trained. "Helping employees learn and grow can be done remotely. Events like "lunch-and-learns," inviting speakers to give virtual talks over Zoom on different topics, and giving employees access to online courses could be amazing initiatives a remote company can take to encourage engagement by remote employees."

The Experts

Aliaga, Deya	33	Bird, Hilary	11
Amin, Vinay	62	Blocker, Larry	35
Anderson, Aaron	52	Brown, Kristen	14
Bachman, Will	48	Bruce, Mikel	64
Bacon, Jono	35	Miller, Kevin	65
Banks, Mimi	17	Chittenden, James	46
Barber, Trivinia	12	Chu, Lisa	16
Birch, Greg	43	Clark, Jennifer	25

ABYX PROPERTIES

The Experts

Cook, Calloway	46	Fischgrund, Eric	58
Dartnell, Alice	6	Flanagan, Joe	14
Davis, Jason	25	Gendusa, Joy	41
De Guzman, Anthony	8	Gong, Shiyang	8
Denehy, Ryan	8	Graham, Kean	42
Domeyer, Diane	45	Gudeliauskas, Domantas	48
Durant, Clayton	31		
Eaton-Cardone, Monica	32	Guss, Stewart	15
Elbert, Elsa	6	Hammelburger, Isaac	22
Elena	26	Hernandez, Allison	29
Elkins, Eric	28	Jindal, Saurabh	64

The Experts

Johal , Shawn	**64**	Lloyd-Williams, Richard	**51**
Joseph, Bill	**58**	Lynch, David	**39**
Kaiser, Chris	**61**	Masjedi, Yaniv	**25**
Kaplun, Ted	**21**	Matthews, Kristen	**19**
Khan, Shania	**33**	Moss, Christina	**16**
King, John	**19**	Mowles, Brandi	**14**
Kohatsu, Kim	**15**	Nardone, Phil	**31**
Laurence, Christy	**31**	Parks, Jason	**16**
Lavis, Jason	**49**	Pasykov, Alex	**5**
Lee, Jason	**54**	Remak, Robert	**55**
Lim, Brian	**48**	Ricks, Alan	**38**

ABYX PROPERTIES

The Experts

ABYX
PROPERTIES

Your workplace, where YOU are.

Abyx is a pioneer in the "placeware" community, helping brands operate fully-functioning remote environments. With years of experience helping brands move everything to a virtual workplace, Abyx is a thought leader on all things working remotely.

Abyx implements and trains brands on how to take their full business model remote while maintaining in-person office functionality. This includes virtual offices, video conferencing, online meeting rooms, file sharing, and more.

If you would like to explore how Abyx can power your brand in a virtual environment, contact us for a free consultation.

Let's get social! Follow us: