

# HOW TO BUILD A REMOTE TEAM

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Remote teams are becoming the future for many workplaces. As businesses have become global, remote teams provide a cost effective way of sourcing talent. They offer increased diversity, flexibility to keep work running across time zones and access to talent regardless of geography.

You may be wondering how to integrate and lead remote teams in order to scale your business? This guide explains the principles you need to start building remote teams for your business.

## Challenges you may face building remote teams

Common pain points that businesses may face when working with remote teams include:

- A lack of trust when engaging with remote teams.
- Finding effective methods to manage remote teams and their workflow.
- Providing timely feedback to remote team members on projects and creating time to train them.

To address these, basic training and leadership principles can be employed to get your teams running. Remote teams need to be given the same respect and support as in-house employees.

## How to build trust with your remote teams

Remote workers are typically accustomed to contractual work and having less intimate relationships with their employers. This means there are many much-needed opportunities to build strong connections with your remote team.

As we are unable to grab coffees or have a chat in the kitchen with our remote team, businesses need to be intentional in engaging with their out-of-office workers. Here are four simple ways to build trust with your team:

Bring the fun of the office culture into calls. Starting team calls with music is a great way to warm up the room. Having a different member choose the song every week helps build team rapport.

Schedule regular catch ups that aren't

work related. Being stuck in a virtual environment away from the camaraderie of the office can make work feel mundane. To address this, hosting calls with your team and talking about topics other than work helps build rapport between team members.

## Provide career progression and training opportunities

Remote teams can find greater purpose and alignment with your company's mission if they can pursue mastery in their work. This can come in the form of on-the-job training or online training courses.

Establish a culture of learning. Working remotely can be intimidating since you're unable to gauge how the other party is feeling over chat. When mistakes are made, remote teams may be hesitant to take calculated risks and their learning can be handicapped. Reassuring your team members that mistakes are part of the learning process and encouraging them to explore how things work will set them up for success.

## How to integrate remote teams into your company culture

The onboarding process for your remote team should be no different to a regular staff member in the office. The only added element is to remember they are working virtually.

## Onboarding process

The onboarding process sets the trajectory for your team, remember to include the company's mission, vision and core values. Quizzes and written response exercises can help your team develop a deeper understanding of how their own values resonate with the company's values.

After your team has understood the company's purpose, it is time to equip your team for autonomous success. You can achieve this by teaching your team how to self learn, diagnose issues and solve problems as a unit, instead of relying on managers for answers. Informing the team that everyone in

the company has an equal stake in improving how things are done will help set the tone. Valve Software's *Handbook For New Employees* is a great example of how you can set your team up for success.

Onboarding or induction programs should be highly stimulating, offering a range of group exercises and variety of learning mediums (polls, quizzes, videos, interactive exercises) to keep them engaged since they are tuning in virtually.

### **Set the rules of engagement from day one**

To ensure your remote team knows the rules of engagement, you need to make the following things clear.

- Whilst flexible ways of working are commonly adopted, personal errands should not interfere with working hours.
- Meetings and logging on require full punctuality.
- Break times should be announced to the team, so everyone is aware of who is working.
- Using online time trackers is efficient, allowing you to monitor exactly which tasks your team is working on. Upwork.com is a useful platform, offering a time tracker feature and inbuilt payroll system.

### **Introduce them**

Formally introducing your new team members to office staff via video call helps break down the geographical barrier and provides a real face to represent the hard work happening remotely.

You can also ask new members to complete an introductory blog to introduce themselves to the wider company.

### **Practical ways to effectively manage remote teams**

Remote teams can be highly effective if they are given the right environment to work in. Systems and processes should allow the team to work together and assess priorities easily.

### **Build a system of accountability**

A great way to keeping your remote team engaged is by using a buddy system. This gives your new remote members a soundboard to ask questions. Once your team has grown and team leads have been appointed, give your leads the responsibility of keeping the junior members in check.

To align your remote teams workflow, use a spreadsheet for each team member to manage their daily tasks on. This creates transparency between team members and allows them to manage priorities together.

### **Communication**

You can utilise video calls to bridge the gap. It is highly encouraged to have a weekly one-on-one (20 minutes) with each of your team members in the early stages of development, and a weekly meeting with the entire team (1 hour) to discuss workflows and roadblocks.

### **Use an effective project management system**

Choose a system that allows your team to collaborate, update projects easily and view priorities at a glance. Jira Software by Atlassian allows all teams across the company to update project cards for full transparency.

### **Training remote teams**

The classic pitfall when training remote teams is forgetting they aren't able to tap you on the shoulder for advice.

### **Scheduled check ins**

If you've taught your team a new process or briefed a new project, make sure you check in on the project within the same business day. Sending them a calendar invite and making sure the team has understood all requirements will avoid any awkward scenarios. Once you have mentored some team leads, they can help ensure projects and training are running smoothly.

### **Manufacture the learning curve**

After teaching your team the key

processes it's time to reinforce and scale. Requesting your team member to create a guide on how to execute a process helps them reinforce their learnings and patch up any knowledge gaps. Once guides have been made, give the team full accountability for updating these guides whenever a process improvement arises. Employees with a keen interest in compliance can be instrumental in ensuring key documentation is up-to-date.

Building effective remote teams may feel like additional work in the beginning. But by building trust with your remote team, aligning them with your company's mission and creating an environment for their progress, your teams will find purpose in their work and begin scaling.

### **References**

VALVE Handbook For New Employees, 2012, Valve Press, Bellevue, Washington, USA. [http://www.valvesoftware.com/company/Valve\\_Handbook\\_LowRes.pdf](http://www.valvesoftware.com/company/Valve_Handbook_LowRes.pdf)

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