



10 Tips for Managing a Remote Workforce





Working remotely is a growing trend. Different circumstances, whether personal or environmental, can increase the need to work from home. We are going to walk through 10 tips to help maintain a productive workforce, a collaborative work environment, and a positive company culture while working remotely.

#1 Make sure everyone has enough bandwidth. Make sure your employees have enough Internet bandwidth. You can have them test their bandwidth at www.speedtest.net and if an upgrade is needed, it can often be done without having to schedule a technician visit. Keep in mind that the cost of upgrading internet bandwidth is fairly small compared to the actual cost of the employee. So, it's important to remove any challenges in keeping them productive.

#2 Use video conferencing to get face to face. Use a video conferencing service, preferably one that enables you to share your screen with others. Some popular applications are Zoom, Webex, GotoMeeting, Skype and Google Hangouts. Not only do these services help improve productivity, having video calls where you can actually see one another helps to make working remotely seem less remote.

#3 Use Slack as a communication hub. Slack has become a very popular communication platform for remote teams. Think of it as a communication hub for your entire company. You can easily communicate with one employee, some employees or your whole company instantly. You can build channels to discuss topics in small groups, like "Marketing" or "Customer Service." It's a great way to collaborate and keep everyone "in the know." Additionally, you can use this technology to build culture and community. You can create a social channel for employees to share funny stories, share company wins or wish a colleague a Happy Birthday.

#4 Convert to Voice Over IP for phones. If you haven't already, now may be a good time to look into voice over IP for your phones. IP phones are portable, so an employee can take their phone home and plug it into their router at home. Or if you don't want to use an actual phone, you can receive and make calls directly on your computer. Additionally, most voice over IP systems provide a mobile app for your phone. Outbound calls made from your mobile phone will show your company's phone number on caller ID and won't use the employee's minutes.

#5 Use cloud-based file management. Quite often you will need to share files, especially large files, with your employees. Consider using Google GSuite, Microsoft OneDrive, Box or Dropbox for file management. Most of these services provide an application you can install on your computer that creates a cloud drive. The Cloud drive looks and acts like your regular hard drive, but all files are stored in the Cloud instead of on your computer. These services help to centralize your files, specify security by person or group, and keep backups of all files.

- #6 Provide technical support.** As you transition to working remotely, be sure to identify who will be in charge of technical support. If you don't have anyone internally, there are many third party services that can help. As great as technology is, small issues can be frustrating and waste a ton of valuable time.
- #7 Schedule recurring meetings with teams and individuals.** Too many meetings can definitely curb productivity, but moving from an office environment to a remote environment can be very isolating. Make sure you are checking in on a consistent basis, on both a team and individual basis. Review goals and to-do lists, ask questions and offer help. And as mentioned earlier, get into the habit of having video calls so you can connect face to face. While this does not replace an in-person meeting, it definitely helps.
- #8 Make an effort to connect on a personal level.** Chatting with a colleague as you ride up in the elevator, over a cup of coffee or at the water cooler is commonplace in an office environment but it takes much more effort in a remote environment. Check in on a regular basis, ask about family or common interests or current events as well as their work activities. On small group calls, push for everyone's participation and pay attention to who's not talking as much as others.
- #9 Set clear expectations.** Are your employees expected to be at their desk during certain hours of the day? Can they establish their own hours if they are meeting objectives? There is not a wrong answer, but it is important to be clear about expectations to avoid frustrations.
- #10 Run efficient meetings.** Keep meetings concise with set expectations to maintain a high level of engagement. Remote workers can tune out a little easier online versus meeting in a conference room. It is important to set clear meeting objectives and of course, stay on topic and on-time.

Final Thoughts

While working remotely can have some challenges, it definitely offers some advantages as well. Finding success in a remote environment can open up opportunities to hire outside of your geography, retain valuable employees whose circumstances have changed, and offer employees greater flexibility. If there is anything we can help you with, please let us know.



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