



How to Effectively Manage a Remote Team



A detailed guide on
12 effective practices for keeping a remote team
focused, productive, and positively-minded

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this white paper is to connect remote team leaders with effective practices for successful management of a remote or virtually-based team. Experienced remote team leaders and professionals who are new to their remote supervisory role will find these suggestions handy for keeping remote workers on track and productive. These recommendations are very concrete, actionable, and applicable for remote team management functions across many industries.

Who is this White Paper for?

This white paper is intended for remote team supervisors looking to increase their remote workers' efficiency, accountability, and professional satisfaction. These best practices will enable them to:

- Build stronger rapport with individual members of their virtual team,
- Keep goals and objectives clear and top-of-mind,
- Make sure team members are empowered for strong performance,
- Boost worker morale and sense of identity within the team setting,
- Ensure the remote team's work process is timely and efficient, and
- Be certain that important details such as legal and tax-related issues are handled.

What to Expect in this White Paper?

As a result of the technological prowess of the Internet, you work with team members who reside in different locations. These distant working relationships bring up challenges in team cohesiveness, communication, and productivity not normally encountered in a traditional workplace environment. It's therefore necessary to adapt measures that address these challenges and keep remote work collaborations fluid.

But the question of "how to do so" may be a driving force here. How, in concrete terms, do you effectively manage a remote team for best results?

In this white paper, we provide best practices for effective management of a remote team, which can be valuable for experienced and newer professionals alike.





The 12 Practices for Effective Management

1. Hire the Right People

Naturally, the first step is having the right people as team members in the first place. After all, any successful work team's made up of individuals who are best-suited for their particular work roles and responsibilities.

In the case of a remote working environment, this reality takes on further definition. Not everyone is up to the task of working alone. Also, some professionals perform better in a structured, physical workplace over a virtual work experience, which places a huge premium on independence and responsibility. For best results, it's imperative to hire people who are up for this challenge and capable of working independently, but yet in a small team.

Professionals who are looking for a change-of-pace from a corporate environment could represent enterprising, well-suited candidates. Interviewing professionals who have an established track record in remote employment should be worth considering, as well.

2. Ensure Your Remote Team Workers' Understanding of Goals and Objectives is Clear

In a virtual work setting, the importance of having clear project goals and objectives cannot be overstated. It's much easier for a remote team to achieve what's expected of it when everyone is on board with what's needed at a project's end.

From the project start, it's optimal to be sure to articulate these goals and objectives clearly. Sharing these aims in a context where all remote workers are present is, of course, also necessary. For a remote team, that's likely to



be an online meeting. After sharing what's expected, make certain to ask if anyone has any questions or concerns. During an online meeting, when you cannot always see the faces of your remote workers, it is vital to take time to address each worker and give him or her a chance to speak and raise questions. It's important that everyone's on the same page, and addressing any confusion or lack of clarity regarding project end-goals from the get-go will reduce opportunities for misunderstanding or even underperformance.

 **Bonus Tip: Document questions and answers as you go along**

As your remote team moves closer to the project deadline, it's a good idea to take individual questions that come up during the process and document them and their appropriate answers. Afterward, share these questions and answers with all of your remote team members. Doing so will keep everyone informed of what's going on and cut back on complications arising from worker confusion.

3. Schedule Regular Calls and Meetings

It can't be emphasized enough—in a remote work setting, frequent communication is paramount! Regular calls and/or meetings will keep everyone apprised of what's been accomplished, any project setbacks, any important details related to individual worker responsibilities and duties, and other relevant information.

In this context, it's important to be well-prepared for the meeting beforehand. A meeting agenda should be shared ahead of time so everyone can prepare adequately. Keeping regular meeting minutes are also an asset, as the minutes can serve as a to-do list for the time between now and the next-scheduled meeting. Minutes can also help keep meetings efficient. They enable your remote workers to refer back to them at any time and check what was agreed on for different projects. In turn, that helps you avoid any unnecessary repeating of these points in future meetings and enables your team members to proceed with their work.

Meeting scheduling and timing are also of prime importance. Because time management is already a huge element of individual remote worker efforts, being on time for the meeting is critical. It is advisable not to postpone scheduled meetings, either. Aside from its role in virtual workplace efficiency, it's a measure by which your remote workers can gauge your respect for their time.





 **Bonus Tip: Hold regular meetings with an online meeting program**

When you host an online meeting, you make it easy for your remote team workers to attend and participate. Particular online meeting software features, such as the screen sharing feature can pay huge dividends in showing remote team members important information that needs visual reinforcement or demonstration.

4. Keep the Communication Lines Open

Having communication avenues open on a daily basis is essential, as well. In order to answer any questions or concerns from your remote team, it's necessary to be readily accessible for addressing requests. An instant messaging platform is an example of where you can quickly address worker concerns or inquiries. Other methods for daily communication can include telephonic contact or email communications. If you won't be available, be sure to let your remote team know.

In your daily communications, encourage your remote team members to be innovative or forward-thinking. If they have a problem or new idea, they shouldn't be afraid to reach out. Be sure to ask them what they are working on, each day. Such frequent contact may at first seem unnecessary. However, if one or more remote workers are spending time on the wrong task, then that potentially could be many hours wasted. If it makes sense, encouraging team members to keep in touch with each other can be invaluable for additional points of communication, too.

5. Make Sure Expectations are Straight

In a remote team setting, one of the most important elements to be mindful of is accountability. Having standards in place for accountability, as well as for streamlined team performance, is essential. Of course, these expectations should be stated upfront, clearly, and where remote team members are aware of what's required of them. That way, they know the expectations set for them and are mindful of how things should work.



Expectations for key business protocol can include:

- When to work
- How to apply for and announce holidays
- Performance standards for professional conduct
- Which lines of communication should be open
- When these lines of communication should be open

In short, when your team members are aware of what's expected of them, they'll be ready to perform according to those expectations and to be held accountable for when they don't.

6. Be Sure You and Your Team Use the Right Remote Work Tools

Communication and collaboration between you and your remote workers are only as effective as the tools you use. A truly effective remote work team will have all of the vital remote work tools. These tools can include: email, a file sharing capacity (e.g. Dropbox), an instant messaging platform, screen sharing software, project management software, and any tools or resources specific to your industry (e.g., creative software for marketing or advertising applications).

It is advisable to be sure you and your team remain up-to-date in your communication technologies. Testing them so they stay at performance standards is ideal, as well. Communication technologies that should be “up-to-speed” include hardware and software alike. After all, it can be frustrating to do something like a VoIP call with someone who doesn't have a microphone on his or her end!

Bonus Tip: It's best to ensure the screen sharing software you use performs well

Sometimes screen sharing programs don't function well and close or freeze up without warning. In other instances, the features they come with may not work as intended, either. To avoid these instances, it's advisable to test a screen sharing program before using it in a professional application.





7. Make Sure Remote Workers Are Comfortable

For best performance results, making sure a remote worker is comfortable in a home office setting is recommended. If not, consider utilization of shared offices or desks. This can help the worker feel as if he or she is traveling to work every day, even if he or she doesn't work directly with those around him or her. It also places them in an active busy office environment, which can facilitate work and boost motivation for the remote worker.

If a remote worker requires social interaction, there is another solution you can take besides a shared desk or office environment. It will help reinforce the personal dimension of working in a team setting, which can help the remote worker overcome feelings of loneliness or even social disconnect. If appropriate, some remote team supervisors have found spending an hour on the phone with an individual worker to discuss work updates as well as company developments useful. It could be done once a week or once every two weeks, from a timing standpoint. This approach can be especially useful for a remote workplace setting for a new startup. Aside from reinforcing the remote worker's social side and team identity, it can help in establishing personal rapport between you and him or her.

8. Address Requests for Help

Do your remote workers have everything they need for performing their job duties? It's recommended that you be sure they have access to the tools and resources they require. Having help available when work issues arise may be necessary as well, depending on your company's industry. For remote team members, one of the most frustrating problems to deal with is a complicated IT problem. If there's no one available to help him or her through it, there can be a dramatic impact on worker morale. Dealing with a difficult customer without adequate support can produce the same negative effect.

At regular meetings as well as in daily communications, it's not a bad idea to be certain your remote workers have the resources they need. Reinforcing they can let you know of any resource availability-related requests is recommended, too.





9. Maintain Up-to-Date Process Documents

Having documentation of processes for completing common tasks and projects is of prime importance. Keeping these documents fresh, easy-to-understand, and up-to-date can be invaluable in saving man-hours and money in what would otherwise amount to hours of training. These materials will be of tremendous value to professionals who are new to your company, or learning the ins-and-outs of a new task.

Process documents can also be a useful center-of-reference for experienced company workers who are dealing with an esoteric business process or situation. They can also be helpful for general refreshment of critical working skills or knowledge related to everyday company operations.

10. Promote a Positive Team Environment

An important factor for many professionals is for them to feel valued. Aside from the personal reinforcement a positive team environment gives an individual team member, it's important to instill a team culture that's premised upon mutual respect and trust. For one, the power of expressing gratitude for remote workers' contributions cannot be overstated.

Keeping your remote workers up-to-date with what's going on with your company's core team or other team segments can help in fostering company identity, as well. By relaying new company developments or exciting highlights from the week, you can help build a sense of "corporate belonging" among your remote team members. Other measures that reinforce the personal dimension of your remote workers, such as timely, in-person meetings can help build worker morale, community, and professional satisfaction as well.

Bonus Tip: Provide opportunity for workers to submit feedback

Having a feedback system in place where remote workers can, during performance reviews, offer insights into how the company's virtual working environment could be enhanced can be invaluable.



11. Give Feedback and Praise

Having a performance review system in place will help remote workers keep informed of their job performance record as well as areas in which they are strong or could improve. Monthly or quarterly one-to-one performance reviews are a recommended format for reviewing worker performance. In this context, reinforce worker accomplishments, if needed. If improvement is needed in some areas, be sure to convey that any criticism or noting of areas needing improvement is intended to be constructive feedback for the individual.

Making remote workers aware of their professional strengths and weaknesses can help them in their professional development. It's advisable to articulate the company's commitment to fostering the remote worker's professional development, too. Doing so can reinforce a remote worker's positive company impressions.

12. Shore up the Legal Stuff

When hiring new remote workers, be sure that all legal and tax-related issues have been cleared. From an employment standpoint, a remote worker can be engaged in a variety of capacities: a hire through a contractor or outsourcing partner; a freelance capacity under a subcontractor agreement; or direct employment by your company itself.

In any case, it should be clear to the remote worker, as well as the company, how he or she is to be compensated and any taxes and social insurance to be paid for.

Another key area to cover is terms of intellectual property. It is an area that can have varying degrees of magnitude based on the industry in which the company is engaged. It is advisable to agree and confirm with a remote worker about how intellectual property is handled. This is of even greater importance should the company be engaged in a creative field.





Closing Thoughts

In short, even though you are in different locations, there are ample opportunities to establish quality performance standards, relationship-building opportunities, and worker support for your remote worker team. Have your project goals and work environment standards in place, be upfront about what's expected of your remote team members, and take time to promote their own contributions as well as their own professional satisfaction and sense of worth. By fostering an environment of high performance standards, mutual respect and trust, and team cohesiveness, you can be effective in taking your team's productivity and efficiency to new heights.





About Mikogo

You may have seen that screen sharing and online meetings were mentioned a couple of times in this white paper.

Mikogo is an online meeting software tool with an easy-to-understand screen sharing capability, as well as multiple other easy-to-use features. Carefully designed to appeal to workers of all technical skill sets, it can be a tremendous asset in relationship-building and collaboration with your remote team.

Used by more than 1 million registered users in over 180 countries, Mikogo's customers consist primarily of small- to medium-sized businesses that use the software for online meetings, web conferencing, remote support and online trainings.

At present, more than 3,000 corporate customers are using the Mikogo technology and benefiting from significantly reduced travel time and travel expenses.

www.mikogo.com