How to Successfully Manage a Remote Team

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How to Hire a Remote Team Successfully

Use these 8 methods to transform your remote hiring process. The new reality of the workplace is remote workers. As technology and modern business practices improve, you no longer have to consider only applicants from a certain region—you're free to consider almost any candidate in the world, which can help you save money and grow your business. But with this freedom comes a new set of remote hiring challenges. Thankfully, these eight tips help make the process a breeze.

1

Perfect the Job Description

Before you even get the chance to consider any remote workers, your job description tells them what to think of your business. To create the best possible first impression, emphasize aspects of the job that are most appealing to remote workers: Flexibility, a comprehensive support system, good work-life balance. By crafting a description that outlines the positive aspects of remote work and values productivity over process, you'll find yourself with a strong pool of applicants, making the rest of the remote hiring process much easier.

2

Research Listing Sites

Posting your job listings in the right places is also an incredibly important but often overlooked part of remote hiring. Unlike the regular sites, there are plenty that focus exclusively on remote listings, making it much easier to connect with applicants who understand the process of working remotely. You'll have to pay to post on them, but it's worth the investment. Use more general sites like 'FlexJobs' and 'We Work Remotely' to reach a wider audience. For a smaller but deeper pool of candidates, you can also look into industry-specific listing sites, like editorial-focused 'Ed2010', development and management-driven 'Working Nomads', and SkipTheDrive's dozens of subcategories.

3

Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities

You should know exactly how many people you want on your remote team and what you want each specific role to encompass. If you don't have answers for each of those questions yet, consider the goal that you're hiring the team to accomplish, then work backwards as you imagine your ideal team. The best way to set up for success is to delineate exactly what needs to be accomplished by each member—that way, you know who you need to hire and how the group's personalities should fit together. Setting expectations early makes it much easier to build your team and monitor their progress down the line.

4

Get to Know the Best Candidates

Like any normal office job, you should perform due diligence with each top candidate. But when you want to hire remote workers, you should heighten this step. Talk to each of their references and ask questions that speak to remote job responsibilities, such as responsiveness, initiative, and ability to function in a team. If there are any red flags, don't be afraid to consider someone else—it's better to have an abundance of caution when narrowing down these candidates. More than anything, you want a team that will perform well together, so vet them with teamwork and ability in mind.

5

Perform Video Interviews

Gone are the days of simple phone calls. Thanks to today's tech, almost everyone has access to video chat, so use this to your advantage. Make sure you <u>ask the right questions</u>, especially ones about availability, flexibility, and organization. If it's hard for the applicant to nail down an interview time or for the get an internet connection, it's a great indicator that they might not be able to perform the unique duties of remote work. On the other hand, if you end up having a productive conversation despite the physical distance, you might have found the right person for the job.

6

Consider Assessment Tools

By now, you've narrowed the pool down to your top few candidates. As you know already, this is where hiring gets tougher, especially if you're new to remote hiring. To help suss out who could be the perfect fit, implement a skills assessment during the hiring process. This can be as quick or as involved as you want it to be, but make sure that it speaks to the actual day-to-day work that you will be asking of your remote employees. If you're hiring a communications team, give them a writing test. If you need a group of developers for a project, test their coding skills before bringing them onboard.

7

Establish Face-to-Face Contact

Now that you've narrowed down the field into your most qualified group of candidates, it's time to introduce them to each other. They'll most likely get along well, like any other employees in an office environment, but monitor their initial communications and check for any issues that might arise. You should be present for their first meeting, which will take place as part of the onboarding process, where you can establish a productive relationship between group members.

8

Check in With New Hires

Even after you've made your final choices, you can still get something more out of the remote hiring process. Schedule one-on-ones with your remote employees and check in on their progress. Check if their onboarding went well, if they're working well as part of a team, and even if they have any pointers for you to make the process smoother the next time you do it. You'll be surprised at just how much you can learn by going back to them.

Team Building Activities for Remote Teams

The success and productivity of any company largely depend on the interactions between its employees. A strong, bonded team of employees, simply put, accomplishes more than a disconnected team. Team building exercises have consequential implications for a company and, for that reason, represent a crucial part of office culture.

For teams with employees that interact face-to-face on a daily basis, team building exercises tend to be more straightforward: Your employees can learn a lot from each others' body language, speech patterns, work ethic, and countless other observable traits. However, when dealing with a remote team that primarily interacts via the Internet, you must take a more creative approach to build the company culture through virtual team building exercises. Just because the members of your team don't interact in person doesn't mean you can't help them create meaningful bonds. So, what are some effective online team building games for remote teams? We're here to share.

Chit-Chat is Important

For teams that work together in an office, a majority of their interactions are based in casual exchanges and small chit chat. Because your team doesn't have this privilege, make sure you find ways to make room for people to simply talk to one another. At the beginning of your team's Skype conference calls, set aside a few minutes to let your employees engage in small talk. If it's Monday, for example, have everyone share a highlight from their weekend round-robin style; a great way to get to know someone is to learn about the ways they spend their free time on the weekend.


Home Tours

While the remote employees on your team may mix it up and work from a library or coffee shop once in a while, chances are many of them work from their homes for a majority of the work week. Get people excited about their personal "offices" by setting up an MTV Cribs-style interaction once a week where one member of your team shows everyone else via Skype what their house is like ("Glad you could make it, now come on in!"). Not only will this allow the members of your team to learn more about the specific environment that hosts the creative process of a particular employee every day, but it will also reveal more about the employee's personality and lighten the mood with some humor. Your employees can put together pre-made videos of tours of their homes or you can have them do it extemporaneously, which is more likely to be funny. The same can also be done if they're working out of different coworking spaces around the world.

#FunnyPets Slack Channel

Remember that the entertaining value of the Internet is largely premised on funny cat videos, and harness this to entertain your remote employees. Set up a channel on Slack, or whichever company-wide instant communication system you use for employees, to share funny pictures of their pets. The only thing people love more than looking at silly pictures of animals is sharing silly pictures of their own animals. Of course, everyone might not have a pet, so you can modify the theme to be inclusive of everyone on the team—we call our channel #warmfuzzy.

Meetups

While several members of your team may be located in disparate parts of the country or globe, there's also a good chance that many of them are working from homes not too far from one another. If geography allows it, set up a few different in-person meetups for your team so they can see what it's like to interact with their co-workers face to face. These meetups don't need to happen constantly but it could benefit the overall productivity of your company to do this once in a while.
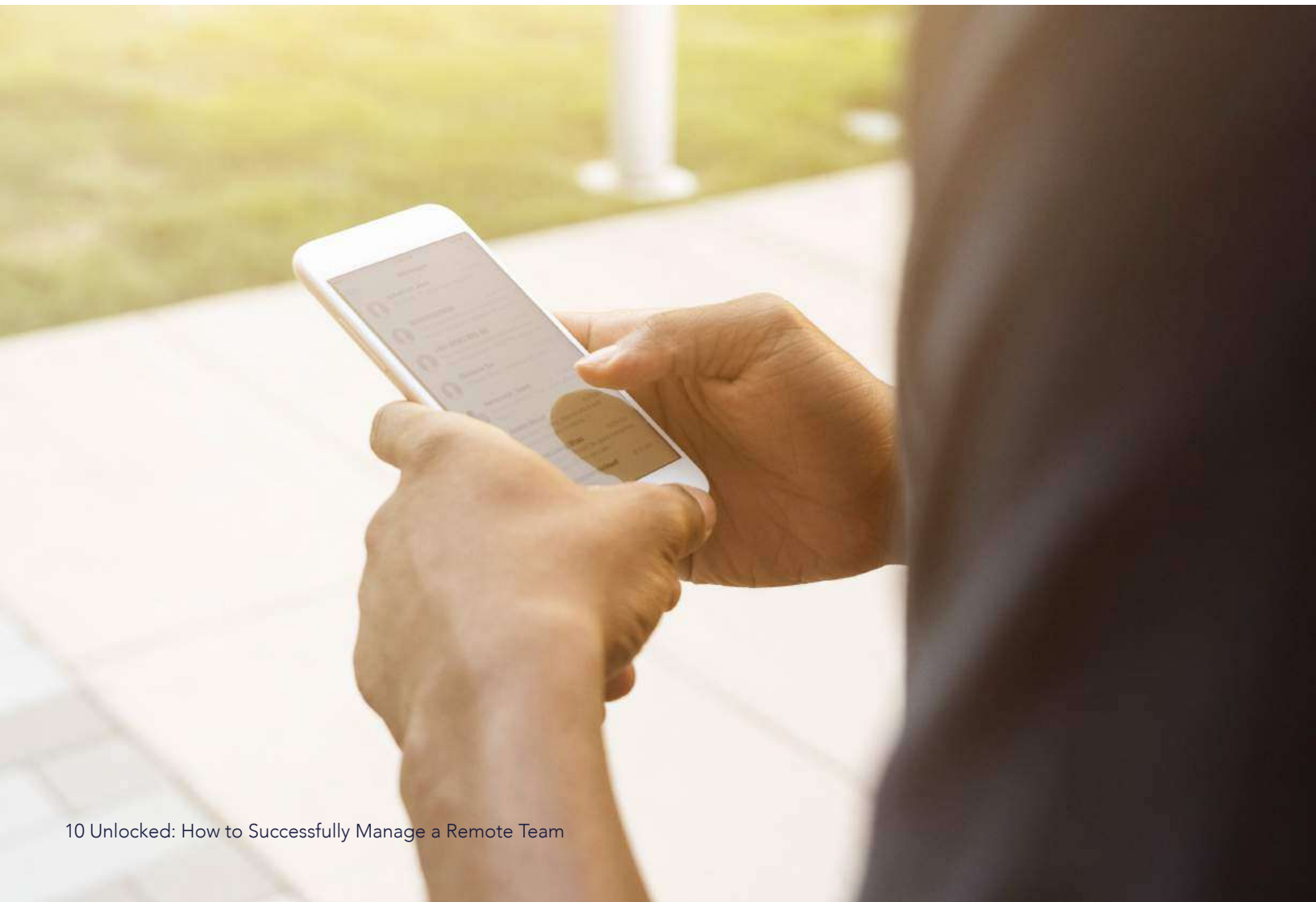
Virtual Team Icebreakers

While many of us roll our eyes at the thought of icebreakers, these kinds of team bonding activities for conference calls are incredibly useful for remote teams. Try the Birth Map icebreaker: Upload an image of the globe to the shared screen and have everyone place a pin on the place they were born and explain a little bit about their background, using their birthplace as a jumping-off point. Or try '10 Things in Common': Split the team into a few groups and have them brainstorm at least 10 things they have in common, whether it be hobbies, favorite foods, preferred styles of music, etc. While sharing the results of this with the other teams can be fun and informative, the substantial bonding occurs between the team members who are trying to sift through their traits to find what they have in common. Another fun icebreaker in a long list of virtual team building activities is called "Aliens Have Landed," where the members of your team must use pictures or symbols to explain the mission of your company to a group of aliens that have landed on the planet and don't speak English. This is a great way for you and the members of your team to learn about specific motivations that drive everyone's work ethic and the different aspects of the company that matter to them.
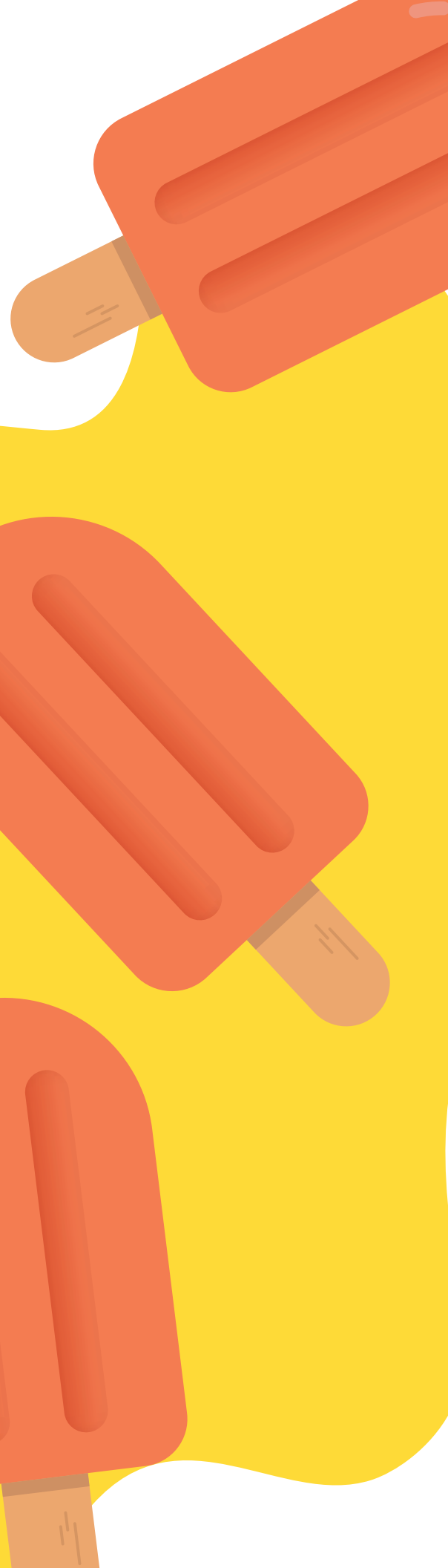
How to Run a Remote Team Meeting

They're convenient, you don't have to leave your couch, and you can even be wearing pajama pants. Of course, they also get co-workers updated on each other's progress, provide a platform for troubleshooting, and allow teams to plan for the future. But they can be a huge waste of time if not done properly. If people come unprepared, if the meeting lacks direction or the lack of physical proximity invites distractions, then the costs may outweigh the benefits. The secret to running productive, effective, engaging meetings? Keep reading.

Block Out Recurring Meetings With Start and End Times

We all know communication is key, but making it happen requires intentional planning. Find a day and time that works for your team and stick to it, whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly, so that employees can plan around the meetings and prepare for them.

Next, find a frequency that works for your unique remote team. If they're too often then team members won't have enough info to bring to the table; not frequent enough, and they'll take forever and leave you more overwhelmed. Find the right balance where you're getting the info you need without taking away from work time.

Prepare for the Meeting

Too much time gets wasted in meetings on topics that are only relevant to one or two people. Instead, many companies have found success with the 'Progress, Plan, Problems' model. The idea is for each employee to write down what they're working on, what their plan for the next day/week/month is, and any problems they've encountered—before the meeting starts. The idea is that things are conveyed better and more concisely when they're written down than when they're explained verbally. The task of reading the briefs can be assigned before the meeting or at the start of it. Either way, updates will be presented more efficiently.

Another benefit to this method is that updates will be documented for future reference. Whether something goes wrong and you need to check in, or something goes right and congratulations are in order, you can easily search for who was in charge of a specific task. Before assigning new projects you can refer back to the brief to see what team members are currently working on or to check who has extra time and needs more tasks delegated.

Create a Meeting Agenda

Nothing wastes time like not having a plan. Write down each topic that needs to be covered beforehand. That way you'll have a roadmap of where to go and won't forget anything. You can rank topics by priority in case time starts to run out. Be sure to prioritize topics that concern most or all members of the meeting, and save individualized ones for one-on-one chats. Better yet, frame topics as questions so that team members know not just what but why.

Update, Feedback or Decision?

Just stating points to be discussed during the meeting can leave team members unclear about what is expected of them, or frustrated that their opinion isn't being taken into consideration. By clearly delineating what is simply an update, what employees should provide feedback on, and when opinions should be weighed takes the guesswork out of it.

Choose the Right Tools

If you're wondering how to make virtual meetings more interactive, the secret is in the platforms you use. In order to effectively manage remotely, you'll have to carefully choose tools that make up for the distance between you and your employees. Always choose video above audio, as it creates a more meaningful connection and increases the likelihood of members staying on task. Beyond that, look for tools with a track record of good quality video, audio and maintaining the connection, plus features like screen sharing. You can find a few widely-suggested tools on the next page.

Appear.in

This app allows you to create a permanent video chat room with a custom link. That way anytime you want to hop on a call you only need to visit the link. The room will always be waiting for you.

Google Hangouts

Hailed for the way it combines multiple platforms, Google Hangouts has features ranging from video chat, instant messenger, screen sharing and photo sharing. Plus it's already part of Google drive, so set up is simple.

Join.me

Another great platform for video calls and screen sharing. The premium version even allows you to hold meetings with up to 250 members and record them for later use.

GotoMeeting

This platform allows video calls in high definition, so you won't waste time waiting for your screen to unfreeze. Plus you can launch meetings from platforms like email, not just the app. Screen sharing is available too.

Zoom

This is the one-stop shop for phone calls, video calls, document sharing, audio files, you name it—Zoom's got it.

Stay Still

This is kind of a silly one, but try to avoid moving around or doing crazy gestures over video chat. Movement lowers video quality and can create delays, so just save it for in-person meetings.

Be Mindful of Time Zones

This should go without saying, but plan around the time zones that remote employees are working in. An easy way to remember and keep track is with Google's clock-sharing feature. Just download the plugin and share like you would a Google doc. That way you can compare right on your screen before you schedule a meeting.

Designate Time for Everyone

Too often large meetings are dominated by a few while others stay quiet. By going around the table and giving everyone a chance to chime in, ask questions or solicit help, you make sure concerns are addressed by importance, not who's the loudest in the room.

Let's Review

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- ☐ **Block out consistent time**
- ☐ **Prepare for the meeting**
- ☐ **Create an agenda**
- ☐ **Use great tools for screen sharing and video:**
  - **Appear.in**
  - **Google Hangouts**
  - **Join.me**
  - **Gotomeeting**
  - **Zoom**
- ☐ **Document info for later use**
- ☐ **Utilize employee feedback software**
- ☐ **Work with every respective time zone**
- ☐ **Give everyone a chance to talk**
- ☐ **Keep movement to a minimum to preserve video quality**

How to Run a Company Retreat for a Remote Team

More and more companies are opting for at least some remote employees. They offer extensive benefits, from employing a geographically diverse set of people to their ability to work through weather conditions. And most of all, they can save you an unimaginable amount of money in overhead costs. Think about what's more expensive, keeping an office open five days a week, or having employees find their own places of work.

But there are obvious downsides. Without face-to-face interaction, communication can be limited, technology can fail or exclude less computer-savvy folks, and working from home can get straight up lonely. But many places of work are utilizing a creative solution: taking the money saved every day from working remotely, and spending it on team retreats. Retreats are hugely beneficial for a whole slew of reasons. You get tons of face time with employees you may have never officially met before, which can build trust, help you get to know one another, and strengthen your ability to work together. Plus some work just gets done better in person, so they can be hugely productive too. And if nothing else, they boost morale. Who would want to leave a company that takes them on vacation? Here's how to plan the company retreat of your dreams.

Decide What the Goals of the Retreat Are

There are tons of corporate retreat ideas out there, from weekends hiking in the mountains to ones spent exploring new cities, and working trips with fun activities mixed in to spur team building. The important thing is that you set goals for your trip beforehand. Team retreats are definitely a huge expense, and while they're worth it, especially if you're saving money on overhead, you'll want to make sure that they're as productive as possible.

Think about what you want your retreat to accomplish. Is it strictly for bonding and getting to know one another? Or do you need to get some work done that can't be done online? Will it be a work trip, a true retreat, or a mix of both? Once you make these decisions, you can choose a location and start mapping out the itinerary.

Incorporate Work and Play

Some of the best retreats leave time for work and play. That way it's not totally unproductive, but employees will look back fondly and look forward to next year's retreat. Plus, it leaves room for getting to know each other naturally, without the clinical, corporate feeling of forced team-building exercises.

Fun retreat ideas could include camping weekends, renting a house on a lake, escaping to the beach, exploring a nearby city or meeting in a different country that holds some of your employees.

Build in Down Time Too

Whether your ultimate retreat involves all work or all play, it's important not to overschedule your employees. In fact, schedule in some downtime to ensure it's an enjoyable week where everyone can work at their full capacity. If every spare minute involves a networking event, introverts may burn out quickly, and even the most outgoing might crave a minute to lay down or go for a walk. Plus some of the best bonding comes out of spontaneous run-ins. Give employees the space to discover that they both love morning runs or 4 o'clock dips in the pool.

"You don't want to pile on any extra "work" to get there."

Choose Somewhere Convenient

Your budget will largely determine where you escape to, but beyond that, try to pick a spot relatively close to a major airport, where most employees can drive or take direct flights to. You don't want to pile on any extra "work" to get there.

Plan Dates Strategically

Many companies have found success in implementing yearly retreats that occur on different dates each year. This way it won't fall on someone's birthday or family reunion every year. Additionally, having employees arrive a few days apart can help small companies maintain their productivity. If your entire customer service department is out of office on a plane on the same day, it may cause more problems than having them fly out a day apart.

Ask for Feedback

Wondering whether your employees find value in these things? The best and easiest way to find out is to ask them! Feedback can be collected both before and after the retreat in order to assess what will work best for everyone and what can work better in the future.

Forget Titles for the Time Being

If you really want employees to be able to relax, connect, and build strong relationships with one another, you don't want employees to feel as though they aren't invited to sit with someone more senior during meals or have to stick to work talk. Leave the titles at home and create opportunities to connect on a deeper level, regardless of status.

Eat Together

Some of the best opportunities for getting to know each other happens when breaking bread together. You can encourage bonding by forcing people to mix it up. Assign small groups to eat together for some meals, and have everyone dine together on other occasions. Maybe departments eat together the first day, and then everyone mixes it up the next night, and the week is bookended by large group dinners. But don't forget to give employees some meals where they can choose to be alone or in smaller groups if they need to recharge.

Invite Customers

Depending on the location, company retreats can be a great opportunity to meet clients. If you're in a city where you have a large customer base, make it your mission to visit their office or invite them to dinner. There's nothing like face to face contact to cement a relationship with potential clients.

> "There's nothing like face-to-face contact to cement a relationship with potential clients."

Incorporate Even Those Who Can't Make It

No matter how accommodating you are, there will inevitably be one or two people who just can't make it. But that doesn't mean you should ignore them for the week. If there are multiple employees, they could get together for a satellite retreat. If that's not possible, video chat them in at the very least. After all, you're already skilled at making remote work happen.

Let's Review

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As you can tell, corporate retreats can be amazing opportunities for remote teams. But there are some key steps you can take to make them as engaging, productive, fun and memorable as possible. Let's review:

- ☐ **Decide on Your Goals**
- ☐ **Incorporate Work and Play**
- ☐ **Include Downtime**
- ☐ **Choose Somewhere Convenient**
- ☐ **Think Carefully About Dates**
- ☐ **Gather Feedback**
- ☐ **Ignore Titles**
- ☐ **Use Mealtime to Integrate Groups**
- ☐ **Invite the Customers**
- ☐ **Include Those Who Can't Make It**

How to Build Culture in a Remote Team

A hard to quantify and yet extremely important factor in employee retention is company culture. With underlined remote teams, company culture can come out in various ways. It's in the way you speak to each other over email, chat, and video, the amount of trust you put in employees you can't see sitting across from you, and how you look out for their well being.

A supportive, motivating company culture won't develop out of thin air. You have to be intentional about creating procedures, traditions, and methods of communication that align with what you want your company to represent. Luckily we're sharing some easy steps you can take to build culture with remote teams.

Define Your Values

In order to build culture, you'll need to define the values that will serve as a basis. Maybe you're all about innovation and self-starters, or maybe you're more into teamwork and community engagement. Values will differ from company to company, but they should never just be a laundry list of corporate jargon created to check off a box for marketing purposes. Think critically about what you want your company to stand for, and then use those values to inspire action.

Create Working And Non-Working Hours

One of the biggest risks of remote work is employee burnout. When your office is your living room, it can be hard to disconnect. Look out for your employees by encouraging them to set working hours. They don't have to be 9-5, but team members should know when they can expect to reach each other. That way the temptation to be "on" around the clock will be minimized. Encourage employees to take advantage of their geographic flexibility, and remind them that they can and should log off when their working hours are done.

> "Look out for your employees by encouraging them to set working hours."

Keep Things Light

There's a time and place for strictly professional, productive communication. But you don't have to use corporate speak all the time. Throw a gif in the Slack channel once in a while, and you might just create an opportunity for bonding.

The Buddy System

This might sound juvenile, but pairing remote employees can make them feel like they're part of a real team, not just an email chain. An employee's partner might be someone they run ideas by, troubleshoot problems with or even get together for a happy hour with. What they do is up to them, all you have to do is assign pairs and watch the team building happen before your eyes.

Create Opportunities to Meet In Person

Many companies with remote employees have started doing yearly company retreats to encourage team building and getting to know each other. This may sound expensive but it's likely cheaper than the overhead for maintaining an office. A good way to justify the cost is to ensure that in-person meetings are ten times more productive than what could get done over a video call. That's not too high of a standard to meet if you think about the difference in bonding that takes place on a conference call versus hiking together on a weekend retreat.
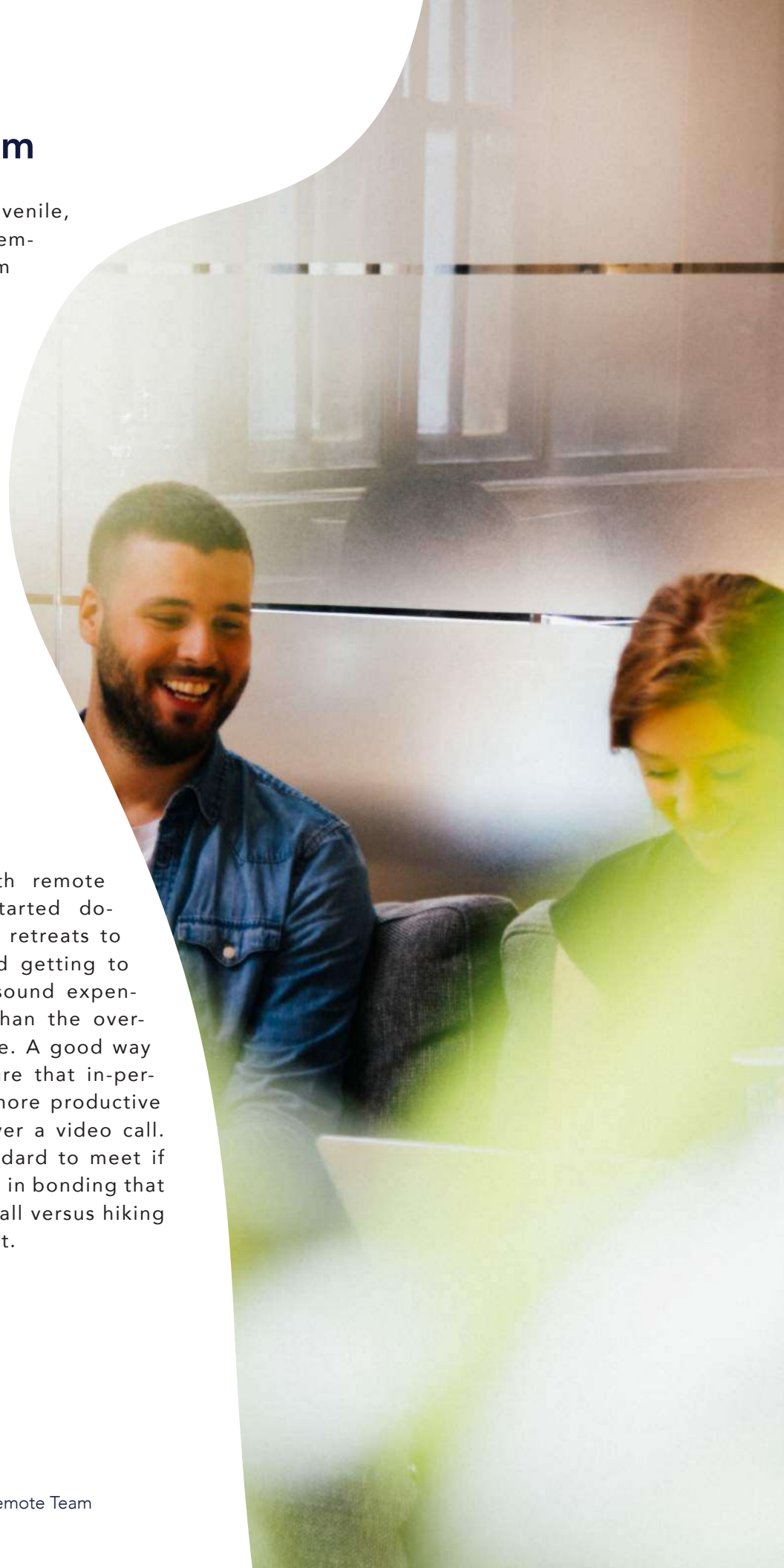
Trust

We've said it before, we'll say it again. When it comes to remote teams, trust is the single most important factor in determining your success. Psychologically, it's hard to trust people are getting things done when you can't see them doing things. That being said, <u>remote employees have been shown to be more productive</u> and to put in more hours than traditional employees who might leave their work at the office outside of 9 to 5. An environment of mistrust, where superiors are always checking up on employees and making them prove that they're working, is not the type of culture you want to promote. Instead, create procedures for employees to update managers periodically, and then, unless they give you a reason to believe otherwise, trust that they're doing what they say they are.

Use Meetings to Inspire

Team meetings are a great opportunity to exemplify the culture you want to emulate. Do you give everyone a chance to talk? Are you leading by example, inspiring team members with your drive and innovation? Are you giving constructive criticism and offering helpful resources or lambasting employees in front of their peers?

Stress Values at Every Step

If you want values to actually shape the culture at your company, you'll have to implement them into day-to-day procedures. They should be incorporated into the hiring and onboarding processes as well as employee reviews. In fact, ask employees to reflect on how they have lived out these values, and how they can in the future, often.

"You don't want to be the boss you only hear from when there's bad news."

Shout Out Success

Giving positive feedback (when it's due) is one of the most important things you can do as a manager. You don't want to be the boss you only hear from when there's bad news. It can be as simple as mentioning a co-worker's help in your weekly update, giving them a shoutout during a conference call, or sending an email thanking an employee for their hard work after a big project or at the end of the quarter.

Team Building Exercises

Remote team building may seem like an oxymoron, but there are a number of ways you can implement it and the payoff is huge. It can be as simple as having everyone go around and tell the team about their hometown or how they got into their line of work. Or you can have everyone give a virtual tour of their workspace, have everyone send an email describing who they are outside of work, or create a Slack channel to drop non-work related content like articles, memes and jokes.

Let's Review

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There you have it. Simple steps to build the culture in a remote team. Here's a quick review:

- ☐ **Create Company Values**
- ☐ **Improve the Quality of Communication**
- ☐ **Define Working Hours and Watch for Burnout**
- ☐ **Keep it Light With GIFS and Memes**
- ☐ **Buddies**
- ☐ **In-Person Meetups**
- ☐ **Trust**
- ☐ **Incorporate Values Into Hiring, Onboarding and Employee Review**
- ☐ **Use Team Meetings as an Example**
- ☐ **Shout Out Success**
- ☐ **Team Building**

Best Practices for Managing Remote Teams

Today, more and more employers are ditching traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. office setups and tailoring the work day to whatever makes workers accessible, productive and innovative. In fact, recent estimates say that <u>half the employees in the world</u> now work remotely at least half the week. With the ubiquity of computer access, the widespread availability of Wi-Fi and the advent of apps, like Slack and Skype, that make it easier for teams to communicate, almost anything that can be done in the office can be done from wherever in the world the best employees are located.

Managing remote teams doesn't come with a handbook. And the physical barrier presents unique, unprecedented challenges for those used to managing employees within the same office. Building relationships require extra effort, evaluations lack the basic psychological factor of seeing them come into work every day, and overall managing employees that exist only online requires unparalleled trust. But it can be done, and we'll outline some remote employee best practices. Fear not, the challenges of managing a virtual team can be overcome.

Set Goals and Expectations

First and foremost, in any management position (but especially when it comes to remote workers) you have to be clear about what you expect out of an employee. No one can succeed if they don't know what your definition of success requires. Remote employees can't pop into your office for clarification or informal updates, so you should clearly outline how you expect them to progress over time, what deadlines you expect them to meet and with whom they should communicate.

Pair Them With a Point of Contact Within the Office

A good way to bridge the gap between traditional employees and 'work-from-home' ones is to match them up as points of contact for each other. This provides another person who can answer questions if you're not available or even just a friendly face at the office Christmas party.

Give Them the Same Access to You as Your In-Office Employees

It can be easy to put remote workers in a separate category and think of their needs as secondary to those of the employees sitting right next to you. But their work probably isn't any less important. You should tell remote employees what hours you're available and will be checking your email (or whatever internal communication system you use), and let them know when it might take you a little longer to respond. Encourage them to provide updates, schedule weekly check-ins or ask them how they're doing and what help they need.

Train Traditional Employees on How to Involve Remote Ones

If in-office employees don't know how to reach out to remote ones for help or acknowledge their work, it will only further isolate remote ones. This can be as simple as reminding in-office employees to give credit to remote teams by giving them a shoutout in an email, or as extensive as creating teams that include both remote and traditional employees.

Train Them to Use the Tools You Use

When teams are not sitting next to each other in the office, they turn to other methods of communication. If your employee has never seen Slack before or doesn't know how to jump on a Google Hangout, their ability to communicate and work effectively will suffer. Make sure that the onboarding process includes training for any platforms that the team uses regularly.

Choose Good Tools

When your communication happens exclusively online, it's important that you utilize the best and most effective tools possible. Do your research and figure out what your team's specific needs are.

Focus on What Gets Done, Not How

It can be hard to trust that people you don't see <u>showing up to work</u> day in and day out are actually doing work. But time spent in an office is an arbitrary metric by which to measure success. Focus on the output of each employee, instead of when or where they're doing their work.

Outline How and When You Will Communicate

Another challenge to working remotely is the blurred line between work and home. Traditional employees can more easily define out-of-office status, but when your desk is ten feet away from your couch, it can be tempting to check emails at all hours of the day. For employees, this can lead to burnout and high turnover rates. By setting hours that you and your team members are expected to be available, you make everyone's life easier.

Watch for Burnout With Top Performers

On a similar note, it's important to monitor employees for burnout. Remote employees may be tempted to never log off and experience loneliness and isolation. No one wants to stay in a job that makes them feel like that. To avoid high turnover rates, keep your eye on remote workers. When you sign off, <u>encourage your employees to do the same</u>. You'll get more out of them in the long run.

Schedule Communication

This might be the single most import-ant piece of advice for remote teams. Communication will not happen by ac-cident by running into each other in the break room. It must be deliberate and planned out. Maybe you have weekly Skype calls, daily up-dates, or monthly debriefings. You should probably have all three. Without adequate communication, the distance will become ap-parent.

Provide Opportunities to Meet in Person

The most straightforward way to build real relationships with employees is to meet them in person. This isn't always possible, but even presenting the opportu-nity sends the right message. Invite remote employees to the office end-of-year party or have a remote employee meetup. It doesn't so much matter what you do, it's that you're in person doing it.

Track Hours So You Can Set Expectations Accordingly

If done wrong, tracking employees hours is a useless form of micromanagement. But if it's a suggested way for employees to denote how much time they're spending on different tasks and projects, it can provide in-valuable information for you on how to better delegate work.

Let's Review

Learning how to manage remote teams comes with its trials and errors. But with a few simple tips, you'll become an expert at incorporating these increasingly common employees into your plan for success. So remember these points for managing remote employees best practices, and you'll be prepared for the future.

- ☐ **Set Goals and Expectations**
- ☐ **Give Them the Same Access to You as Your In-Office Employees**
- ☐ **Pair Them With a Point of Contact Within the Office**
- ☐ **Train Them to Use the Tools You Use**
- ☐ **Focus on What Gets Done, Not How**
- ☐ **Outline How and When You Will Communicate**
- ☐ **Schedule Communication**
- ☐ **Provide Opportunities to Meet in Person**
- ☐ **Train Traditional Employees on How to Involve Remote Ones**
- ☐ **Make It Clear When You're Available**
- ☐ **Watch for Burnout Among Top Performers**
- ☐ **Choose Good Tools**
- ☐ **Track Hours So You Can Set Expectations Accordingly**

Successfully Evaluating Remote Workers

*A*h, performance reviews. The dreaded yet inevitable yearly staple of corporate America. Analyzing how well your employees are working can be difficult, and doing so with remote employees has no shortage of additional challenges. You're not there to see them working in the office every day, so mentally, it can be hard to picture their contribution, no matter how significant. And while you're (hopefully) communicating with your remote employees effectively, you don't have the benefit of those informal check-ins that happen when you run into each other around the office. But fear not, as we've scoured expert opinions and compiled a list of ways you can effectively evaluate your remote employees.

Focus On The Product They're Delivering, Not How Many Hours They Log

With traditional employees, when you sit down to do performance reviews you may recall that they get to the office early every morning and stay late. With remote ones, it's far harder to measure what type of time they're putting into the company. You'll have to find another way to measure their contribution. That can be challenging, but it's ultimately a good thing. After all, presence in an office doesn't always translate to output. An employee who shows up an hour early every day could still spend half the day taking Buzzfeed quizzes. By focusing on what actually matters, how the employee is furthering the mission of the company, and forgetting antiquated metrics like time logged in the office, you can more effectively evaluate a remote employee.

> "If an employee doesn't know what is expected of them, they're probably not going to exceed your expectations."

Measure Against Clear Benchmarks and Goals

In order to get the most out of any employee, it's important that you clearly define expectations and communicate to them how you define success in their position. Maybe that means bringing in x-number of new clients each quarter. Maybe it means attracting new followers on social media or maintaining relationships with existing clients. Regardless of the job, one thing's for sure: If an employee doesn't know what is expected of them, they're probably not going to exceed your expectations. Once those goals are communicated, you need to ensure they're what you're measuring against. Create a working evaluation that includes each expectation, or KPI, you set for your employee. Think of the rubrics teachers give out to explain how they grade projects. It may seem elementary, but the clearer you are about what you expect, the better an employee is able to do what you want or even exceed your expectations.
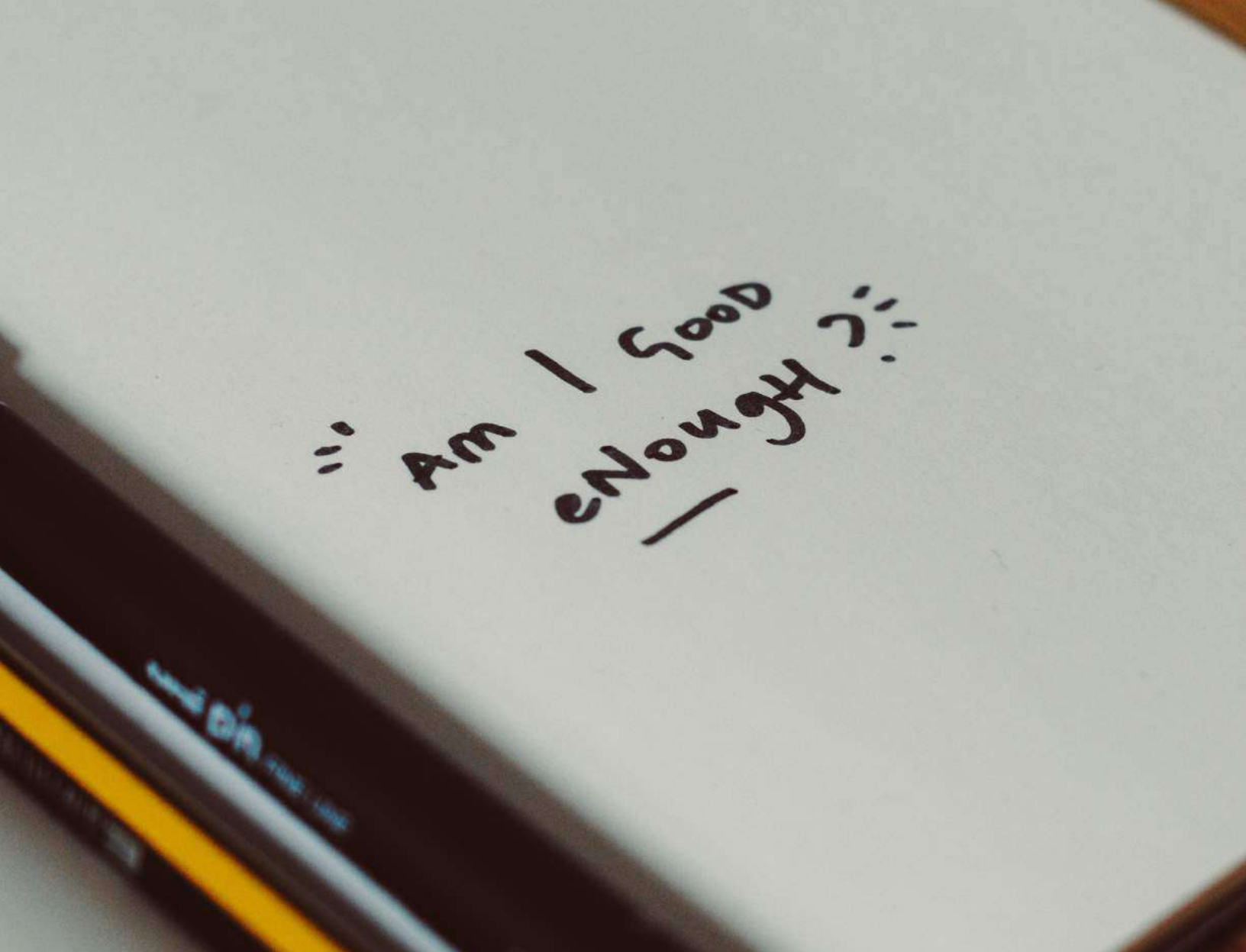
Self Evaluations

Self evaluations can be especially useful for remote employees, who don't have the same opportunities to update you as traditional employees. Self evaluations could reveal work you didn't know your employee was doing, challenges they were facing, areas in which they need extra help or successes you were unaware of. These can be especially helpful when paired with peer evaluations. Asking employees not only to rate their own success but discuss how they interact with each other can give you additional perspective.

Give Regular Feedback

In order to successfully evaluate remote workers, it is critical that you give feedback early and often. A yearly performance review should not be the first time they're hearing your opinion. It's certainly a good time to address concerns, but you can't expect an employee to do what you want if you don't communicate it effectively. With a remote employee, this can look like setting up Skype calls to give suggestions, making edits, and addressing overall concerns as soon as they pop up.

Measure Against the Expectations You Set

It can be hard to know where to start when judging a remote worker's contribution. A good place to start is by outlining the specific goals you set for employees and measuring to what degree they met them. Of course you'll have to take into account how realistic the goals were, and whether there were unexpected roadblocks; after all, it's only fair that you judge against the expectations you set.

Consider Asking Workers to Evaluate Each Other

Having co-workers provide feedback on each other can be extremely useful, as it allows you to see other perspectives on the employee to supplement your own. This is particularly useful in the case of remote employees, who you have limited interaction with. It can give you a better sense of how employees interact with each other, and highlight strengths and weaknesses that you may not be aware of.

Have Faith

It can be hard to identify an employee's contributions when you don't see them sitting across the room working every day. But you need to trust that they are in fact working. Micromanaging or making employees prove that they're logging hours doesn't benefit them, you or the business.

Let's Review

★

Evaluating remote employees can be challenging, to say the least. When you're not interacting on a daily basis, it can be harder to see where a worker is succeeding and where they need to improve; however, by communicating early and often, setting and measuring against clear goals, and having a little bit of faith, you can evaluate your remote employees just as effectively as traditional ones. Got all that? No worries, here's a summary:

- ☐ **Focus on the product they're delivering, not how many hours they log**
- ☐ **Measure against clear benchmarks and goals**
- ☐ **Self evaluations are an important tool**
- ☐ **Give regular feedback**
- ☐ **Measure against the expectations you set**
- ☐ **Consider asking workers to evaluate each other**
- ☐ **Trust your employees**

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