

10 strategies to maintain the benefits of a team working remotely

Remote work options have been set in place since 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic plagued the whole world. Many companies and employees had to make drastic changes in their work setup, but some successfully transitioned and benefitted from remote work.

According to Global Workplace Analytics, *IBM saved \$50M* through remote work as they reduced office space and lease expenses. Not only were they earning more from the greater demand that the pandemic caused for tech companies, but they were also able to save on real estate, travel, and company events costs.

IBM isn't the only company that's been benefitting from a work from home setup. Alpine Access Remote Agents were able to close 30% more sales than agents who traditionally worked on-site. Nortel also saved about \$100,000 per employee that they no longer need to relocate.

How to succeed with your remote work setup

A work from home setup has now become the new normal for many global

businesses. The old-fashioned stigma that remote work leads to a lack of productivity has been debunked as employees who work from home are more productive compared to when they were in the office setting.

Some employees focus better on their tasks because they're free from coworker intrusions or loud noises from the surroundings. They also get more work done because they're more engaged, ultimately leading to an increase in profits.

Aside from increased productivity, some benefits of remote work also include reduced overhead or operating costs, a wider talent pool to work with, and better business overall.

But how do you sustain the gains of a remote work setup?

1. Make the purpose of your work from home policy clear

Clearly mention the purpose and intent of your remote work policy. It should be clear why you're implementing a work from home setup and what you aim to achieve through it. Everyone in the organisation must be aware of it.

Make sure that the policy not only maximises the experience of the team members but also improves the overall business value proposition.

2. Determine which positions are available for work from home setup

Specify which positions are available for remote work. This will make sure that those who have client-facing responsibilities are managed properly, and it will help reduce unnecessary work-from-home requests.

This will also open up more opportunities to work with the best talents, such as outsourcing certain business processes.

For example, search engine optimisation or SEO is a valuable marketing initiative for businesses. Hiring and training an in-house team could be expensive, but since SEO tasks can be done remotely, you can work with an agency and get SEO packages that will suit your company. You're getting quality services at a fraction of the cost.

Knowing which positions can be done remotely will enable you to implement an employment strategy that will benefit your bottom line.

Consider the following issues before deciding who can work from home or what jobs you can outsource:

Does the nature of the person's work allow them to do the job at home?

Are there privacy or complex security issues involved?

Will communication be a problem?

Can they do their work using a particular software or equipment? Can it be installed at home?

Is the employee's home environment conducive for work?

There should also be a policy that mentions when employees can work from home. Should they work from home full time, on certain occasions, or can they divide their time between being at the workplace and their home workstation?

3. Guidelines for availability and attendance should be set

Standards and guidelines should be set around when your remote workers are available and what modes of communication should be used.

When you clarify expectations on scheduling and availability, you ensure alignment and efficiency across the board.

It's important for everyone in your business to feel supported, and one way to provide the support they need is to have point-persons in the company available whenever they are needed.

4. Set up productivity measures

Productivity can be measured in a number of ways. It can be evaluated through time spent on the task, the number of projects completed, the number of sales closed, the number of customers handled, and more.

Once you set up your productivity measures, trust the process. Just because you can't see them, doesn't mean they're not getting the work done.

5. Provisions for equipment

Determine what kind of equipment must be provided to your remote workers. This will also include how you're going to provide the tech support they need. If the company will provide them with their laptops, it should be stated in the policy.

Include the guidelines for what they're supposed to do when they encounter technical difficulties.

6. Determine your communication channels

Communication is crucial for managing remote staff because there's no physical space to do those check-ins and in-office collaborations.

Consider which communication channels and tools best fit the team's work culture. Identify what platform works best for a specific type of work:

- Video conferences for meetings and brainstorming

- Chat rooms for check ins

- Emails for updates

- Phone calls for one-on-ones

Also, find the balance between constantly massaging or pinging people with emails and complete silence.

Listen to your employees and get their feedback on what mode of communication they're most comfortable with and how to create legal issues they would like to be managed while working remotely.

7. Security

Client confidentiality and other specific requests about office security must be clear to your employees. Establish clear protocols and communicate those to the entire organisation.

8. Compensation and benefits

If there are changes regarding compensation and benefits for remote employees, it should all be mentioned to them or negotiated with. When you change employment contract terms without telling employees, you risk legal issues for the company.

9. Learn to manage work relationships

Social isolation and loneliness could be a problem with remote work as employees can miss the informal social interactions they get from an office setting.

One way to take care of this is to create ways for employees to interact socially, from making time for informal conversations to sharing weekend ideas. You can do this at the beginning of the meeting by asking everyone how they're doing or how their weekend went.

You can also arrange virtual events when the company sends care packages to the employees. These small ways can help reduce feelings of loneliness and will let your employees know that the company cares.

10. Never micromanage

Trust is an important factor for any successful company. And looking in on your employees closely and providing constant criticisms to their processes will work against establishing trust.

Micromanagement may seem like it's working, but only in the short term.

In the long run, this (mis)management style will develop insecurity and even create a hostile environment where morale is also low. Instead of constantly checking up and requiring teams to loop you in on developments every day, set clear deadlines at each stage of the project. Then go over updates in meetings.

Can you use remote work as a sustainable growth strategy?

Studies have shown that employees who work from home have *increased productivity by 77%*. In this same study, workers were also recorded to have fewer sick days and leaves.

A work from home structure is a sustainable growth strategy. But you must know who may continue working remotely and who must be at the physical site.

Also, keep in mind that your employee's health and safety come first. If applicable to their position, allow them to have a choice in the matter. This will show your support and concern, enabling them to be empowered to do their jobs better.

Employee satisfaction will allow them to work more efficiently, which is always beneficial to the growth of your company.

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