

5 hilarious but true principles of remote work for startups

Welcome to the era where your office can range from a beach in Bali (yes, I've been there for almost a year!) to your grandma's attic (and yes, I've seen that happen, too). I'm part of a remote-first company, a concept that often raises eyebrows since it's a venture capital firm.

Temps de lecture : minute

14 May 2024

The common expectation is for us to have an HQ or at least a fancy physical office. However, LETA Capital has mastered coordinating with every team member based in different countries. Let me share my experiences along with insights from our portfolio companies, most of which have also embraced a remote-first culture. I've dubbed these insights the 5 true principles of remote work.

#1. You're an adult now: Communicate properly!

In a remote setup, osmosis isn't going to cut it for absorbing information from your colleagues. Yes, you actually need to talk to them. Shocking, right? But over communication isn't necessary in remote work. Although it involves updating your team on every detail of your project, including those 27 slightly different versions of the <you name it> you scrapped, because without constant updates, how will anyone know you're actually working?

Well, here's my recipe for balanced communication:

- Always start with a message/email to express your ideas/thoughts/suggestions.
- If that doesn't work, arrange a 10-minute call—no more, no less—to stay concise and avoid wasting time.
- You control your output, but create a system of short touch-points for sharing weekly plans and results with your manager, peers, or juniors.
- Arrange daily/weekly/bi-weekly syncs and take notes. No notes? Then the sync wasn't needed.
- Schedule "coffee break" slots for casual, non-mandatory catch-ups within your department or the entire startup.

#2. Take video calls seriously: The good, the bad, and the ugly

Ah, video calls, the digital equivalent of a séance. Often, you're trying to summon the spirit of that team member with ancient internet. The mantra "Can you hear me now?" becomes as repetitive as any chant. Then there's the dilemma of video: to turn it on or not? It's a fine line between proving you're a real human and showing you've neglected personal grooming since lockdown began.

A simple digital etiquette guide includes:

- Set up your space with optimal lighting - no one wants to talk to a person from a cave unless it's Batman, right?
- Frame the camera correctly so your face takes around 60% of the screen (and definitely don't focus on a forehead—I know people who do that, so don't).
- Mute yourself when not speaking unless you want people on the call to listen to your accidental swearing when you spill your coffee or the voice of your neighbours calling their friends and inviting them to a party on Friday night.
- Be on time, ensure your headphones work correctly, and wear

appropriate clothing (trust me, living in Bali, I know what that means).

#3. The never-ending quest for Wi-Fi: Handle it

Wi-Fi is the lifeline of remote work, akin to water in the desert—precious but hard to find. Every remote worker performs the Wi-Fi dance, seeking the elusive perfect connection.

Pro tip: Use Wi-Fi extenders to help broadcast your signal to every corner of your remote workplace, e.g., TP-Link RE605X, TP-Link RE220 (one of the cheapest ones), Linksys RE7310, or Asus RP-AX56.

#4. Pay attention to time zones: But who needs sleep anyway?

Global startups mean your team spans all conceivable time zones. Scheduling a meeting turns into a complex puzzle, akin to solving a Rubik's Cube blindfolded. The phrase 'Let's have a quick call' now involves math, a world clock, and ethical debates over waking someone at 3 AM for a meeting. Spoiler: It's unethical, but who said working in a startup would be easy? Come on!

My tip here: choose slots that are suitable for your schedule and block the others. That doesn't mean you should leave only 2 hours per week for those meetings, so be reasonable. However, blocking time slots for your actual tasks can dramatically reduce stress. Tested.

#5. Abandon the cult of productivity tools

Lastly, remote work has given rise to the cult of productivity tools. With an app for everything, you're expected to navigate through a sea of

project management and time tracking software. It doesn't matter if updating your tasks takes longer than doing them; it's all about the illusion of productivity.

So, my tip here: discuss with your team and senior staff which tools and reporting practices don't help in your work and eliminate harmful practices. But you will need data, so be prepared to present a valid argument for why you don't need an extra software tool that wastes your time.

And there you have it, the 5 commandments of remote work, startup edition. Mastering these principles sets you on the path to thriving in the digital nomad lifestyle or simply working from home in a vivid megapolis. Remember, at the end of the day, it's about getting the work done—whether in your PJs or, on those rare occasions, actual clothes. Happy remote working!

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