

# How to Cultivate Productivity in a Remote Team



*Nicole Garrison*

Even before COVID-19 forced teams out of centralized offices, remote work was becoming increasingly popular. It's easy to see why. This option gives workers flexibility and convenience. It also allows employers to save money on the costs of office space, and to recruit workers based on talent, not geography.

Still, many team leaders find working with remote teams to be an adjustment. One of the key challenges they face is maintaining or even increasing productivity. Perhaps you've faced this challenge yourself. If so, check out these strategies for cultivating productivity in a remote team.

# **Create Systems That Work**

Sometimes, redundancy is a good thing. When there is a prescribed way of doing something that guarantees the task will always be executed smoothly and without error, your team has more time to deal with mission critical stuff.

Identify tasks that are completed over and over again. Then, create a document of best practices and procedures for these. This will ensure that these become as close to automated as possible.

# **Set Clear Metrics And Milestones**

It's quite difficult to measure productivity without some concrete definitions. That's why it's important to determine what your metrics will be for a given product, and to set due dates and milestones. Then, good productivity can be recognized as meeting or exceeding those goals.

# **Facilitate Productive Communication**

When a team works in a centralized location, communication is much less complex. Someone can simply walk over to another office or cubicle to ask a quick question. Face to face interactions also make it easier to read emotion and tone. Even then, miscommunications can happen. Imagine the potential for failure with a remote team.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be that way. You simply have to find ways to compensate for what may be lost in communication with a remote team.

Start with setting an example of clear communication. Everyone on the team should be aware of their roles and responsibilities, along with everyone else's. Identify key areas of responsibility, and name a contact person for each.

Next identify the means of communication. This ensures that everyone is on the same page, and using compatible technologies. It's also helpful to establish a regular schedule for team meetings, sub-team breakout sessions, and status updates. Be sure that everyone knows when and how they are expected to participate, and that they know the deliverables they are expected to have prepared.

Finally, be flexible. As projects evolve, you will likely find that your communication schedule will need to change. Be prepared to step back and adjust as needed.

## **Check in More Often**

Many workers relish the opportunity to work remotely. They enjoy the flexibility and lack of commute. However, it's important to recognize there are a few pitfalls. It's possible that some of your team may be struggling. Their lack of wellbeing can negatively impact productivity.

One thing to be aware of is presenteeism. This occurs when workers make themselves excessively available for work to the point that it impacts their health and ability to function well. This includes:

- Making themselves available to clients outside normal hours.
- Signing in late at night or early in the morning because they don't feel productive enough.
- Working while sick or ignoring family emergencies in order to be present at work.

Some team members may struggle with presenteeism because they find it difficult to set limits outside a regulated schedule that they experience in a normal office environment. Others may feel guilty about disruptions as they work from home."

Encourage workers to maintain a healthy balance. Remind them

that self-care and time off are important, and that these things ensure that they are as productive as possible when they are on the clock.

## **Be Flexible But Not Too Flexible**

Remote workers enjoy the flexibility of controlling their schedules, even taking time to deal with personal business during the day. They know they may be able to do these things, because there simply aren't as many constraints on them.

To some extent, this is great. Your team is likely to appreciate this flexibility and autonomy. On the other hand, you may find there are some boundary issues. For example, flexible schedules are great, until nobody wants to provide early morning coverage, or a few team members miss important deadlines.

Of course, it's no fun being a scold, and micromanaging team members who take their new-found control a bit far. So, the best approach is to get ahead of things. Set clear boundaries and guidelines from the beginning. This might include:

- Establishing a business casual dress code for team meetings.
- Setting rotating schedules to cover on-call needs.
- Designating a process for checking in and out of the office.
- Creating a consistent set of rules for taking personal time.

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# Find Tech Tools to Improve Collaboration

Fortunately, many of the productivity deficits created by remote work can be resolved through technology to improve communication. Work with your team to identify needs and requirements. Then, look for tools, or a suite of tools that will meet those needs. Keep in mind that most remote teams will need to:

- Use instant messaging to contact one another directly.
- Meet via video conference.
- Share documents.
- Enhance their use of email as a communication tool.
- Assign project tasks and track progress.
- Share screens.

## Final Thoughts

Remote teams thrive under good leadership. They need tools that work with them not against them, and to be able to communicate in ways that work for them. Try applying these strategies to your own team, and you will be impressed with the results.

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**About the Author:** *Nicole Garrison is a talented writer with skills that include blogging for small business owners, penning dissertation writing service reviews, and writing content to help people boost their productivity. She has been in this field for nearly ten years, and has earned high praise.*