



# Outback

## Team Building & Training

# The Comprehensive Guide to Building Top- Performing Remote Teams



# Table of Contents

Introduction	<u><a href="#">4</a></u>
<b>PART ONE: Why Remote Working is Gaining Momentum in 2019 (and Beyond)</b>	<u><a href="#">5</a></u>
Key Factors Driving the Shift Towards Remote Employment	<u><a href="#">6</a></u>
<b>PART TWO: How Companies Can Effectively Adopt Remote Working</b>	<u><a href="#">12</a></u>
Tips to Help Employers Seamlessly Adopt Remote Employment	<u><a href="#">13</a></u>
How to Prepare Your Company for Successful Remote Employment	<u><a href="#">14</a></u>
How to Effectively Roll Out Your Remote Employment Policy	<u><a href="#">20</a></u>
<b>PART THREE: Key Tips for Building and Managing Successful Remote Teams</b>	<u><a href="#">23</a></u>
Effectively Hiring Remote Employees	<u><a href="#">24</a></u>
Ensuring Your Remote Employees Remain Engaged	<u><a href="#">24</a></u>



# Table of Contents

Tracking Remote Employees Without Micromanaging	<a href="#"><u>36</u></a>
<b>PART FOUR: Equipping Remote Employees for Success</b>	<a href="#"><u>39</u></a>
4 Tips and Tools to Equip Your Remote Employees for Success	<a href="#"><u>38</u></a>
<b>PART FIVE: Tips for Employees and Teams to Adopt Remote Employment</b>	<a href="#"><u>50</u></a>
Coaching Success for Remote Teams	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>

# Introduction



In today's digital age, the typical workplace is being redefined. With the emergence of ever-evolving technology and a new generation of employees beginning to influence the job market, remote employment is on the rise.

In fact, according to a study by IWG, more than two-thirds of global employees work remotely (also known as telecommuting) every week – and more than 50% do so for at least half of the week. Many companies hire fully remote employees and teams because it offers some big benefits. But it also presents new challenges when it comes to building and maintaining strong teams.

## PART ONE:

# Why Remote Working is Gaining Momentum in 2019 (and Beyond)

*With the rise of technology and a new generation of employees populating the workforce, remote employment is on the rise – bringing with it a plethora of benefits*

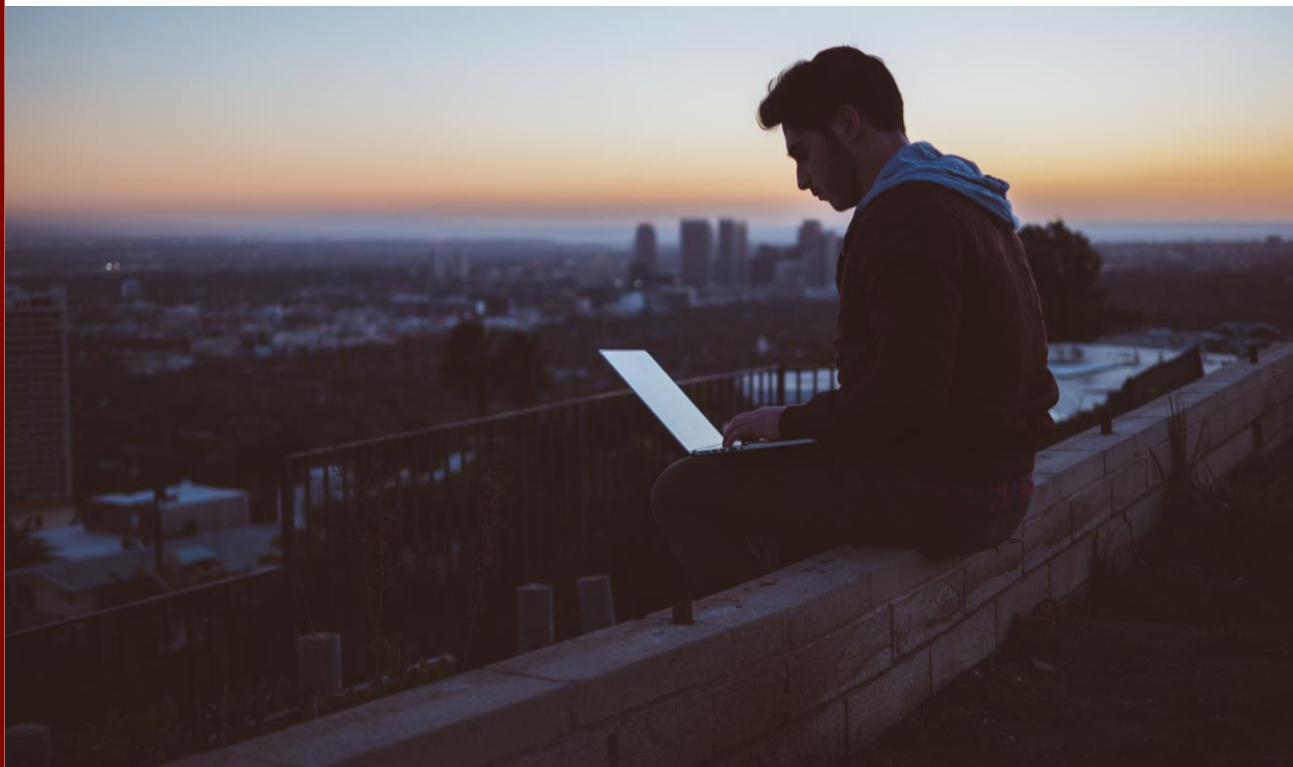


# Key Factors Driving the Shift Towards Remote Employment

To understand why remote working is gaining popularity, you need to examine current workforce trends



In its recently released forecast of employment trends, the World Economic Forum cited flexible work as one of the biggest drivers of transformation in the workplace. Here are three key factors fueling the change.



1. **New Employment Expectations from the Newest Generations in the Workforce** – Millennials are now the largest generation in the labor force – with Gen Z close in tow – and, as they grow into leadership roles, their values and expectations have begun shaping the job market. To understand why remote employment is on the rise, it's important to understand their views, values, and what they want in a job:
  - **They Give More and Expect More** - According to Matthew Mottola, Future of Work and On-Demand Talent Program Manager at Microsoft, "There are many misconceptions about younger generations in the workforce today. We frequently hear things like that they are lazy, entitled job-hoppers. But nothing could be further from the truth. In my experience, millennials are equally, if not more, committed to their work. But as a result, we expect more from our company. We expect to architect our careers according to our lifestyle and our passions."

- **Increased Desire for Work-Life Balance -** According to a survey by YouGov polling young professionals on their work priorities, one-third of respondents listed work-life balance and commute times as key factors when choosing a job. Young employees believe firmly in their ability to have a robust life outside of work, and they seek jobs that allow them the flexibility to live them. For millennials, the never-offline and always-available workplace is all they know. To them, turning off work at 5:00 p.m. isn't a reality. Their always-on lifestyle means they see no problem with blending work and life. Checking e-mail before they get out of bed in the morning, then shopping online while at work, exchanging texts with their managers after 8:00 p.m., and then catching up on e-mail on Sunday afternoon is normal to them.
- **Burnout is On the Rise -** Technology makes employees accessible at all times. Smartphones put email and work calls in their pocket. In fact, according to Bentley University, 89% of millennials regularly check email after work hours, and Randstad data shows that 42% feel obligated to check in with work while on vacation. In turn, 84% report experiencing burnout at work.
- **New Perceptions of Productivity -** According to PwC's, "NextGen: A Global Generational Study," millennials believe that productivity should be measured by the output of work performed rather than by the number of hours worked at the office. And when you consider that millennials are consistently engaged with work outside of traditional workhours, you can see why they feel this way.



2. **Technology is Evolving Every Day** – While technology can cause stress by increasing accessibility, it's also challenging traditional perceptions of employment locations and working hours, as well as the way work is done. Millennials are the first generation to enter the workforce with access to technology that enables them to work seamlessly from anywhere.

In fact, right here at Outback Team Building and Training, we have over 25 remote employees on staff across North America who work remotely to execute more than 2,000 annual events. Technology plays an integral role in their ability to work efficiently and effectively to successfully deliver events with so many moving parts – from [Slack](#) for consistent, easy communication, to [Microsoft SharePoint](#) for document sharing and editing, [Zoom](#) for video conferencing and face time, and [Smartsheet](#) for project and deadline management.

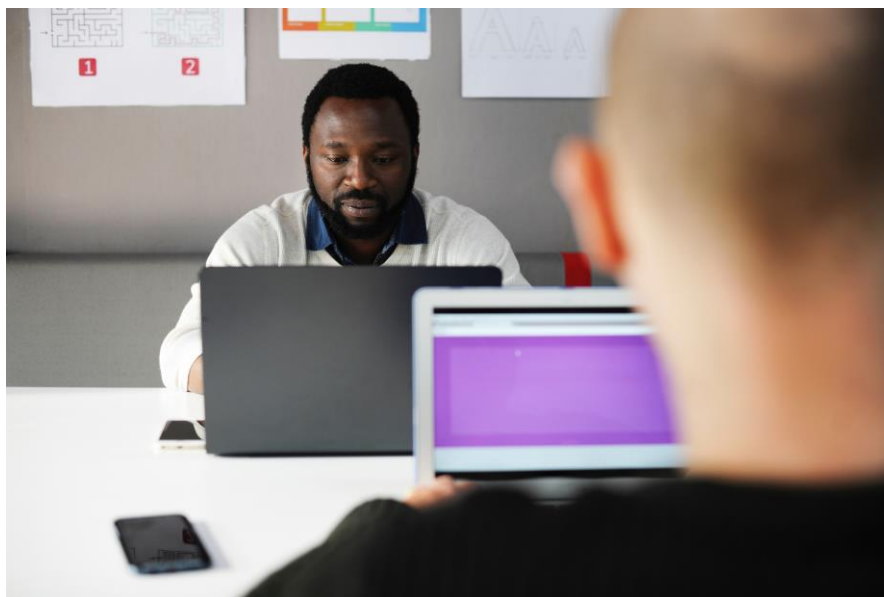
And as remote work becomes increasingly popular, technology can also help build strong remote teams. At Outback Team Building and Training, we offer a wide array of corporate [team building](#), [training and development](#), and [coaching and consulting](#) solutions that can be run from multiple locations simultaneously, allowing remote employees from all over the world to participate together.

At Outback Team Building and Training, we're experts in harnessing technology to help our customers bridge distance between colleagues and create even stronger teams. For a real-life example of how we helped to do so, check out our case study: [How Principia Built a Stronger Company Culture Even with Its Employees Working Hundreds of Miles Apart](#).



3. **Major Benefits to Businesses and Employees** – Remote employment has been proven to create quantifiable benefits to both businesses and employees. These benefits include:
- **Increased Productivity** - Remote employment has been shown to boost productivity. In fact, a two-year long study conducted by Stanford University professor Nicholas Bloom reported that telecommuting employees showed a productivity boost equivalent to one full day of work per week.
  - **Improvements to Recruitment and Retention** – As the employment market becomes more populated by employees who seek flexible working options, employers who offer them will become increasingly appealing. But doing so also offers big business benefits. That's because hiring remote employees means you're no longer tethered to a certain geography. Top talent isn't always local. This means that by hiring remote, you can get the best of the best, even if they're in a different city – or even country – from your head office. It also means you're not forced to lose great employees if they choose to move or relocate.

For more information on how to hire and retain the best possible talent, check out our online free guide: [The HR Guide to Recruitment](#).



- **Reduced Overhead Costs** – Having more remote workers means less necessity for physical office space. The result is lower overhead costs – fewer chairs, desks, office supplies, operating expenses, phone and internet bills, and money on leases or office space ownership, which is particularly valuable for businesses operating in major metropolises. In fact, Dell reports saving about \$12 million per year in real estate costs by encouraging its employees to work from home. American Express reported this number at somewhere between \$10- to \$15 million. This reduction in overhead costs allows companies to set aside more budget for activities that help build stronger remote teams, including [team building activities](#), company retreats, and kick-off meetings (check out our article on [planning epic company kick-off meetings](#)).
- **Boosts in Employee Morale** – A survey by PGI showed that 82% of telecommuters reported lower stress levels, and 80% reported higher morale when working from home.

## PART TWO:

# How Companies Can Effectively Adopt Remote Working

*As remote employment becomes more common in today's workforce, companies can help elevate their business above the competition by taking the initiative to embrace it*

# Tips to Help Employers Seamlessly Adopt Remote Employment

How to effectively prepare a remote working policy and successfully roll it out to your company



According to Upwork, 63% of companies have remote workers in some capacity, yet more than half don't have a remote working policy. Without proper systems in place, remote employment can be challenging for both business and staff. Whether a company is launching from scratch and plans to offer flexible work options, or an existing organization has committed to implementing them, taking the necessary steps to plan and roll out their policies will ensure it's effective and successful. Here are some tips on how to prepare your company for the adoption of flexible working, and how to effectively roll it out to your organization.





## How to Prepare Your Company for Successful Remote Employment

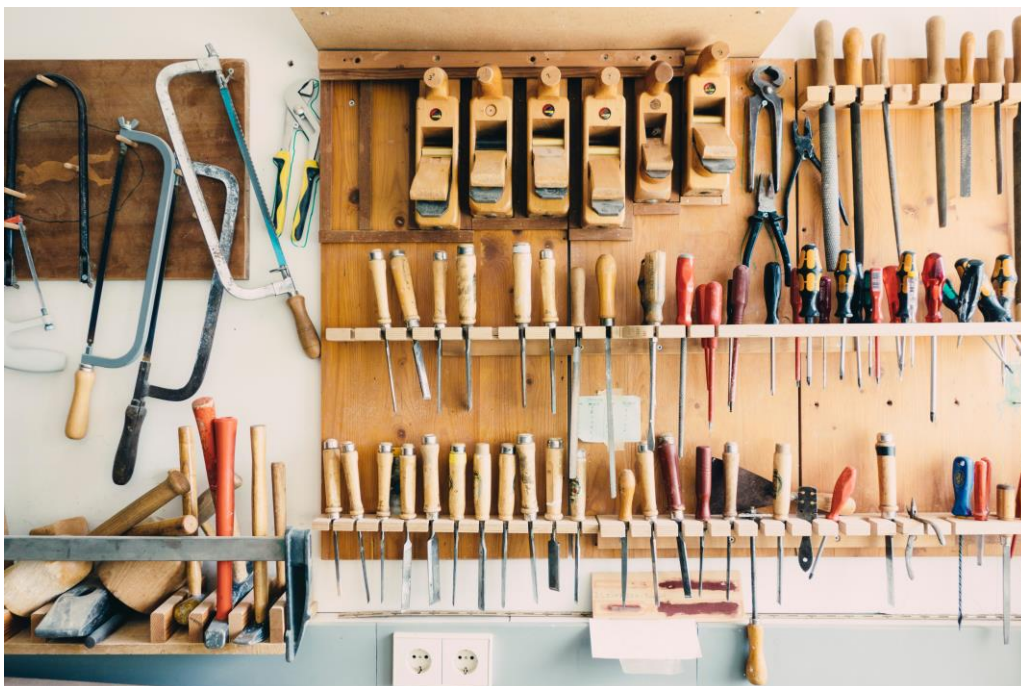
– Implementing a remote employment policy – whether for hiring net-new remote employees, or for making flexible work an option for current staff – requires thorough planning before you roll it out. Here are 11 key considerations to keep in mind as you prepare your remote working policy then roll it out.

- 1. Don't Rush the Process** – Leave yourself ample time to develop your remote employment policy. It's important to cross your T's and dot your I's, so don't set an unrealistic timeframe and then rush your way through it. Leave as much time as possible – depending on the volume of your organization, you should leave at least three months for planning, and another three to six months for rollout and evaluation (more on this to come!)

2. **Determine Which Jobs are Remote-Friendly** – Many people can perform their roles from anywhere – including writers, editors, analysts, and programmers – but others can't because they require staff on-site in order to be performed. It's important to identify which roles will be eligible for remote working so that there's no confusion or animosity between colleagues. And to that point, if you're hiring for a role that doesn't include the option to telecommute, it's vital to communicate that fact clearly from the outset to ensure they don't feel misled.
  
3. **Incorporate Remote Employment Principles into Your Company's Core Values** – Offering flexible work and remote employment is a big draw to your company for potential candidates and a great retention tool for current employees. It's important to adopt it as a part of your corporate identity. Take some time to tee up verbiage that focuses on flexibility and helping remote workers feel like part of the team and implement it into your company's core values. Then, roll out this new core value to your team and in external resources like your company's website and on job postings (more to come on this!). This will help in finding great talent but will also inform your company-wide announcement of the new policy.

For more information on why core values are important and how to incorporate them at your company, check out our two articles: [5 Clear-Cut Reasons Why Company Core Values Matter](#), and [Creating Your Company Core Values in 5 Easy Steps](#).

4. **Create Specific Parameters** – Your remote work policy should be simple and specific, particularly for current employees who will need to adapt to a new process. Too many options will become confusing and hard to keep track of. For current employees who will be able to work from home, identify how many days per week they will be able to do so, and determine if a particular tenure must be met in order to use this benefit.



**5. Identify and Implement the Necessary Tools and Uses –**  
Remote work requires a unique set of tools to be successful. You'll need to consider the following:

- Effective and efficient communication and collaboration tools
- Cyber security tools to ensure staff can remotely access internal servers without risk of your systems being compromised
- Clearly defined rules for how flex and remote workers should use company devices and networks to ensure the company's proprietary data and intellectual property are protected

It's also important to ensure that all software and IT tools are in place and functional for your team. Whatever they may need, VPN or remote desktops to access internal servers, communications tools, or programs, you should install and test these before remote work begins. There are few things more frustrating and counterproductive than trying to troubleshoot major problems remotely!

For more information, contact a Human Resources specialist or consult your local labor standards act.



**6. Consider Potential Legalities** – There are several legalities to consider when developing a remote employment policy. For example:

- You will need to investigate how employment benefits apply for team members working in other geographical regions
- You should also think about any sort of insurance issues that may be applicable or potential workplace safety standard issues
- For both flex workers and fully remote employees who are overtime-eligible, you will need to consider how you can accurately prove the volume of hours they've worked.
- If you're hiring employees who live abroad, consider currency conversion and tax implications as well. You may want to consider consulting a certified accountant to gain additional insight into how to navigate this situation

For more information, contact a Human Resources specialist or consult your local labor standards act.





7. **Determine Availability Parameters** – You will need to identify parameters for your employees' availability when working remotely:
- Will you allow them to set their own schedule?
  - Will they be required to abide by set working hours? If so, what are they?
  - What will be the process for employees who wish to head out during the day for appointments or errand?

These details should be ironed out before implementing your policy. Failure to do so will only cause confusion for everyone.

8. **Determine Productivity Measurements** – Consider how you will measure your remote employee's productivity. Is it delivery of work by deadlines? Is it participating in prescheduled meetings? This will vary by role but it's an important point to outline.
9. **Outline a Request and Approval Process** – For in-house employees working remotely on a flexible basis, it's integral that you outline a detailed request and approval process. For instance, you could make it a rule that all work-from-home requests must be submitted at least one week prior, in email, and will be approved by the end of the week. Without these parameters, the process could end up being confusing – and frustrating – for both your team members and the managers who are required to manage their requests.





- 10. Consider Covered Expenses** – For full-time remote employees, will you have budget available to provide tools and office items for their remote office? If so, how much? It's important to ensure your remote employees are set up for success, but you'll need to determine what your company's contribution will be.
- 11. Allow Yourself a Trial Period** – With a policy as substantial as this, it's important to allow yourself a trial period. Don't go all in on the first hand. Allow yourself three to six months after implementation to ensure all is going well.

Remember, it's important to lay out specific parameters, procedures, and protocols for each type of remote employment – whether it's flexible working or full-time remote employment. While there will be overlap, the same rules won't always apply to both. If you're looking for a remote employment policy template, check out [this basic one from Hubspot](#).



## How to Effectively Roll-Out Your Remote Employment Policy –

Once you've solidified your remote employment policy, it's time to break the news to your company and put the policy into effect. Here are three tips on how to do it:

- 1. Formally Announce the Policy –** This is a big, exciting announcement – so don't be afraid to announce it in a big and exciting way! Host a full company meeting to explain what's happening and take the opportunity to get into the full details of what, why, and how. Once you've announced it in person, send a follow up email outlining all parameters and including a copy of the policy for your employees to review, sign, and return.

2. **Provide the Right Tools** – Ensure you’ve got on-hand a full stock of items and tools your team might need to work remotely. Provide laptops and a spare mouse for anybody who may work from a desktop computer at the office. Ensure your team’s equipment is set up with all the necessary collaboration and communication tools – from VPN connections to software like Slack, Skype, Zoom, Google Drive, or Microsoft SharePoint. You will also want to consider how you can patch calls to office phones out to employees’ cell phones when they’re working from home.
3. **Evaluate and Adapt:** Take full advantage of your trial period to evaluate what’s working with the policy and what needs to change. You can consider an internal survey or one-on-one meetings to get a solid gauge on the policy’s successes and opportunities. As you evaluate, consider a few key factors and ask questions to gain insight about them:
  - How did the company benefit?
    - ✓ Greater cost savings?
    - ✓ Higher productivity?
    - ✓ Improved recruiting efforts?
    - ✓ Less employee turnover?
    - ✓ Improved employee sentiment?
  - How did the employees benefit?
    - ✓ Greater satisfaction?
    - ✓ Less stress?
    - ✓ Improved health?
    - ✓ Improved work/life balance?
    - ✓ Increased individual productivity?

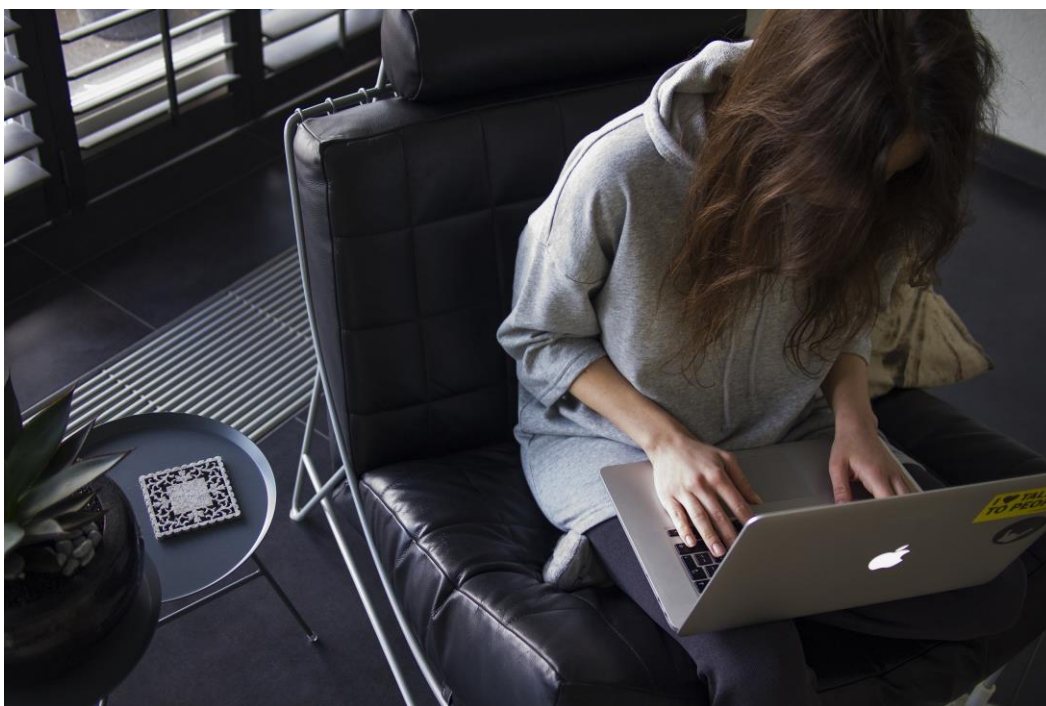
## PART THREE:

# Key Tips for Building and Managing Successful Remote Teams

*With a new way of working comes  
the need for a new way of  
sourcing talent and managing  
successful corporate teams*

# How to Attract, Retain, and Manage Employees in the Age of Telecommuting

As the employment landscape evolves, so too must the tactics employers apply to building and managing teams



As remote employment grows in popularity, business leaders and managers will be challenged with finding innovative new ways to effectively build, lead, and manage their teams. The key to doing so is in implementing effective recruiting processes, maintaining a strong culture and high employee engagement, striking the fine balance of being hands-on, available, and accessible without micromanaging, and adopting the practices, tools, and resources to ensure your team's success. Read on to learn key tips for how you can build and manage a successful remote team.





**Effectively Hiring Remote Employees** – According to Upwork’s Future Workforce Report, 55% of hiring managers agree that remote employment is on the rise, and many expect up to 38% of their full-time staff to be working remotely in the next decade. For companies – and particularly hiring managers – this means grappling with the challenges that inevitably come with shifting away from the traditional, in-person interview process, and towards interviewing and hiring candidates who live out of town. Here are five tips that can help you successfully hire great remote employees.

- 1. Create a Job Description That Speaks to Remote Employees** – When creating any job description, it’s important to include all the key differentiators of your company, your value proposition, the details of the role, and your company’s core values. For a remote position, there should be extra emphasis put on the flexibility-focused language you crafted while you were developing your remote employment policy. You need to highlight that your company has a culture which puts value on productivity over face time and focuses on strong communication and self-motivation. This flexibility will be a major selling point, especially for millennials hunting for jobs.



## 2. **Seek Traits That Will Drive Success in Remote Candidates –**

When looking for a remote team member, you will need to find somebody who possesses all the typical traits and qualities they would require to succeed within your company and the role. But you'll also need to find somebody who has the traits required to excel working remotely. Look for candidates who are:

- Strong written and verbal communicators
- Self-motivated
- Self-disciplined
- Organized
- Problem-solvers
- Technologically savvy
- Adaptable

**3. Ask the Right Questions** – To identify if a candidate has the right traits to be successful, it's important to ask the right questions. Remote employment isn't the traditional work environment, which means that having the candidate answer traditional hiring questions won't necessarily translate into a great remote hire. Instead, try asking questions like:

- Do you have access to a computer, a reliable internet connection, and a private space?
- Have you worked remotely before? If so, what were the biggest challenges you faced? How did you overcome them? If not, what challenges do you anticipate, and how would you deal with them?
- How do you schedule your day?
- What kind of distractions do you usually have when working from home? How do you ensure they don't interfere with the quality of your work?
- For some people, working remotely can blur the lines of work and personal time. How do you make sure you switch off from work?
- What would you do if you had internet or phone connection problems during a meeting with your manager or a call with a customer?
- What calendar and task management applications do you use?
- You have a big project to complete with team members who are based in the office. How would you work with them to complete the project on time?
- How do you stay motivated during the day without supervision?
- What would you do if you had an urgent question and your team was offline?
- What medium would you choose to have a difficult conversation with a colleague and why?

**4. Conduct Effective Remote Interviews** – When it comes to interviewing remote candidates, the specifics of the process will vary vastly depending on the role, and it may feel challenging if you're not used to it. But conducting remote interviews is more common than you might think. Many global corporations, including American Express, handle their entire talent acquisition process remotely. Across all companies that conduct remote interviews, there are some key best practices that can be applied to make the process more effective:

- **Start with a Questionnaire and Written Assignments** - One great remote interview tactic you can use is to start the candidate off with a detailed questionnaire. In it, ask them about:
  - Themselves
  - Their experience
  - Their passions
  - Past challenges
  - Why they're interested in the role

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold:

1. It will allow you to learn more about them without the traditional hour-long first interview.
2. It will give you a great read on whether they are able to write clear emails and reports that minimize back-and-forth communication. Given that in-person discussions may be less frequent, it's important that remote employees are able to exercise clear and effective written communication.



- **Move on to a Phone Call** - Conduct a screening phone call to get a sense of the candidate – the way they speak, their verbiage, and some deeper insight into who they are as well as their past work experience. This should be in-depth – try to give yourself a full hour. This phone call is a critical step in ensuring the candidate is a fit for the role – and the role is a fit for them, as well. It's important to be honest and transparent about exactly what remote employment entails, including:
  - Potential growing pains with communication
  - The lack of direct supervision
  - The reality that it requires more effort to become part of a company's culture when working remotely

You should also take this time to ensure the candidate shares your company values. Geographical distance shouldn't negate the importance of hiring somebody who's a great cultural fit. Ask them about their motives, their workstyles, and how they prefer to receive feedback. And pay attention to their questions for you – it's key for them to be interested in your business and objectives.



- **Finish Off with Video Interviews** - The importance of video interviews shouldn't be understated. The lack of in-person communication during the remote hiring process often inhibits your ability to get a read on the critical visual cues that you would typically get from in-person interviews. You can gauge things like:
  - Whether the candidate dressed up for the interview or if they look like they just rolled out of bed
  - Hints of their judgment and organizational skills by looking into where they choose to take the interview – is it a quiet, well-lit area that's conducive for a professional meeting?
  - An authentic gauge on the candidate's enthusiasm for the role

You can use a tool like Zoom or Skype to conduct these interviews. At Outback Team Building and Training, we prefer Zoom because it makes it easy to simultaneously include multiple participants in multiple different places. There are also a wide variety of video interview management platforms available, including [Freshteam](#), which acts as a one-stop-shop allowing you to interview top applicants using Skype Interviews and Google Hangouts; store resumes, emails, interaction history, and interview scores; collaborate with your hiring team; and make offers to candidates.

And when you go to schedule your interview, remember to confirm that the candidate has – or can acquire and set-up – the right software ahead of the meeting.

For more interesting insight into hiring great talent, check out our article: [5 Big Trends in Recruitment for 2019](#).



- 5. Evaluate the Success of Each Hire** – Like any position within a company, it's a great idea to bring remote employees onboard contingent on a probationary period. Three months is generally a fair amount of time for evaluation as it allows the employee a chance to get ramped up and settled into their role. Here are a few tips to help you accurately evaluate a new hire:
- **Measure Success Based on Output** – According to Matt Mullenweg, CEO of Automattic, “If someone shows up in the morning dressed appropriately and isn’t drunk or asleep at their desk, we assume they’re working. If they’re making spreadsheets and to-do lists, we assume they’re working really hard. Unfortunately, none of this gets at what an employee actually creates during a day. At Automattic, we focus on what you create rather than if you live up to some ideal of the ‘good employee’.” This in-office analogy applies perfectly to remote employees because managers will lack the visibility into whether their team member is even awake at their desk. It stresses instead the importance of evaluating output and results. With remote employees, you need to measure them on quantifiable factors, such as:
    - Whether they’re delivering quality work in-full and on-time
    - If they are making themselves accessible to their team when needed
    - If they are fulfilling the obligations of their role



- **Seek Feedback from Their Colleagues** – There's no truer gauge of an employee's performance than the feedback received from their colleagues. That's because remote employees maintain several varying relationships with various colleagues at any one time. Reaching out to the colleagues who work most closely with the remote feedback to gather their feedback on what they've found is going well and where there are opportunities for improvement will provide a great foundation for your evaluation of the new remote employee. When seeking this feedback, you should approach your staff using specific and direct questions as it will provide you with a true read on the performance of your remote employee.

## Ensuring Your Remote Employees Remain Engaged –

While remote work presents several big benefits for business and employees, it also presents unique challenges. Buffer's 2018 State of Remote Work study found that, while 90% of remote employees planned to work remotely for the rest of their careers and 94% would encourage others to try it, 21% of respondents still indicated both loneliness as well as collaborating and communicating as the biggest struggles with remote working. Luckily, there are some effective tips and tools you can implement to minimize these feelings.

Here are our top five:

- 1. Digitize Your Processes** – Given the challenges faced by remote workers when it comes to collaboration, it's important to digitize your processes to make collaboration even easier and more efficient. Luckily, there are several easy digital tools available. At Outback Team Building and Training, we use platforms like smartsheet and Microsoft SharePoint as our key collaboration tools as they allow our teams to simultaneously edit and update documents and projects and keep track on the status of each respective project and deadline. We also use Zoom for video meetings and Slack for easy, ongoing communication – but there are a ton of other options available. When it comes to digitizing, keep in mind that it's important to not overdo it with options and platforms. Pick one or two and stick with them. The issue with having too many ways to disseminate information internally is that you spend far too much time chasing messages or scouring various software for documents versus getting work done.





2. **Make Time for Face Time** – According to Indeed, 37% of people at companies that allow remote work believe working from home can result in less visibility and access to leadership. With this in mind, it's important to make time for face time – and to stick to it. Take every opportunity available to connect for “face-to-face” meetings on digital video platforms like Skype or Zoom – including regularly scheduled meetings – and do your best never to cancel them unless absolutely necessary. It's also wise to have your remote employees video conference into all-hands meetings so that they can engage and gain visibility with the greater team as well.

To learn more on this, check out our article: [Why Having an “Open Door” Policy with Your Remote Employees is Critical](#)





3. **Host Team Building Events and Company Retreats** – With remote employees on your team, the importance of creating opportunities for colleagues to get together and bond becomes even greater. Setting aside budget to host team building events and company retreats is a great way to ensure you're bringing together every member of your team – we recommend that your team gets together at least once a year. The great thing about company retreats is that they can be multi-day events hosted almost anywhere (for inspiration, you might want to check out our article: [The Top 20 Destinations in North America for Company Retreats](#)) and they act as a way to get teammates together. At Outback Team Building and Training, we host annual company retreats in different locations every year, and we bring in our full-time remote employees to ensure they're part of it. The purpose of these retreats is for our employees to spend time getting each other outside of work and to develop great personal bonds in addition to professional ones. Through our company retreats, we encourage our team to connect, find commonalities, and learn new things about each other in order to create even stronger and more impactful working relationships.

For more information and how to host awesome company retreats that will help your organization bring together teammates from all over the map, check out our free online guide: [Everything You Need to Know About Planning the Ultimate Company Retreat](#) or [get in touch with us](#) for a free consultation call with one of our expert Employee Engagement Consultants.



4. **Encourage Digital Water Cooler Conversations** – Socialization is an important part of the office experience – and it's one that remote workers often lack. Even in-passing conversations, small talk, and light-hearted chit-chat go a long way in keeping morale up at work. When working with remote employees, it's wise to encourage them to maintain a little bit of "digital water cooler conversation" to help build those valuable social bonds and ensure they feel included in the team. This isn't to say you want them spending all day chatting, but with the availability of instant messaging apps, maintaining healthy social banter is easy – and important.
5. **Communicate and Encourage Feedback** – It's wise to check in with remote employees regularly to see how they feel things are going, and it's also important to encourage them to provide feedback. Remote work – especially with new employees – sometimes comes with growing pains. Maintaining open communication and avenues for feedback will allow you to troubleshoot the experience with your staff, in turn sourcing solutions and improving the experience in real time.



**Tracking Remote Teams Without Micromanaging** – One of the biggest new challenges facing leaders as a result of the rise in remote working is reduced in-person visibility. When managers can't physically see their team at work, they may find it more difficult to quantify exactly how much work is being done. And while statistics have shown remote workers are actually more productive, this new working style can lead to misperceptions and issues with micromanagement.

So, how can employers still effectively track the performance of remote teams without micromanaging? The keys are trust and open communication – and it's integral for leaders to successfully adapt. In fact, according to Buffer, employees at high-trusting organizations experience 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement and 40% less burnout. Check out these five tips to help managers track remote employees and teams.



1. **Set Clear Expectations from the Outset** – When entering a remote employment situation – whether it's implementing a new policy with current employees or hiring a net-new one – it's important to set clear expectations from the outset. You need to agree on details such as:
  - Whether they are working a flexible schedule or need to be available during pre-set hours
  - Predetermined communication systems
  - Deadlines
  - Key projects
  - Communications timelines and email response times
2. **Encourage Transparency** – One critical factor in a successful remote employment engagement is two-way transparency. Get to know your team and let them get to know you as well. Encourage them to discuss projects and share their opinions. Most importantly, get them involved in as many aspects of the business as possible. Communicating company vision and objectives is a great way to get them feeling engaged.

3. **Trust Your Team** – This can sometimes be easier said than done, but one of the primary keys to successful remote employment is to trust your team. Remember that you hired them for a reason. Focus on work quality, adherence to deadlines, and quantifiable output as the measures for success of your remote team and focus less on thinking about where they are or what they're doing.
4. **Utilize a Tracking Tool** - While building trust is important, you can also safeguard yourself using a remote team tracking tool without being overtly invasive. You can consider [Google+ Hangouts](#), [Timely](#), and [Worksnap](#)s, to name a few.
5. **Supporting Successful Self-Management** – Being a remote employee comes with its own set of unique challenges – from dealing with distractions to learning truly effective time management and even, to a degree, missing out on learning opportunities that come with interoffice collaboration and conversation. To set up remote employees and teams for success, it's important to support successful self-management by encouraging them to speak up when they need something – whether it's tools, educational courses, or [training and development](#) seminars.

For remote employees looking to use their time more efficiently, you might want to consider providing them access to a hands-on training solution, such as our [Practical Time Management](#) program. It's a great way to support them in learning to minimize distractions and make the most out of every workday.



## PART FOUR:

# Equipping Remote Employees for Success

*For organizations with remote employees, it's integral to provide the right tools and implement the right strategies to ensure your team is set up for success*

# 4 Tips and Tools to Equip Your Remote Employees for Success

Team members who telecommute or work remotely require a certain set of tools in order to operate successfully outside the office

According to research by Owl Labs, remote workers are quickly becoming more commonplace in the workforce, with 68% of global employees working from home at least once per month.

And they might even be giving office workers a run for their productivity. In fact, data from Sure Payroll found that 86% of workers prefer to work alone in order to “hit maximum productivity” and more than two-thirds of employers reported increased productivity amongst their telecommuters.

But, while working remotely certainly has its fair share of benefits (for more on this, check out our guide, Remote Work in 2019), it isn't always easy. And it isn't for everyone. There can be distractions that are just as disruptive as chatty office coworkers – pets, household chores, personal errands, TV, and noisy cafes, to name a few. And, for some, it can be difficult to manage your schedule when you're not working within the traditional parameters of an office.

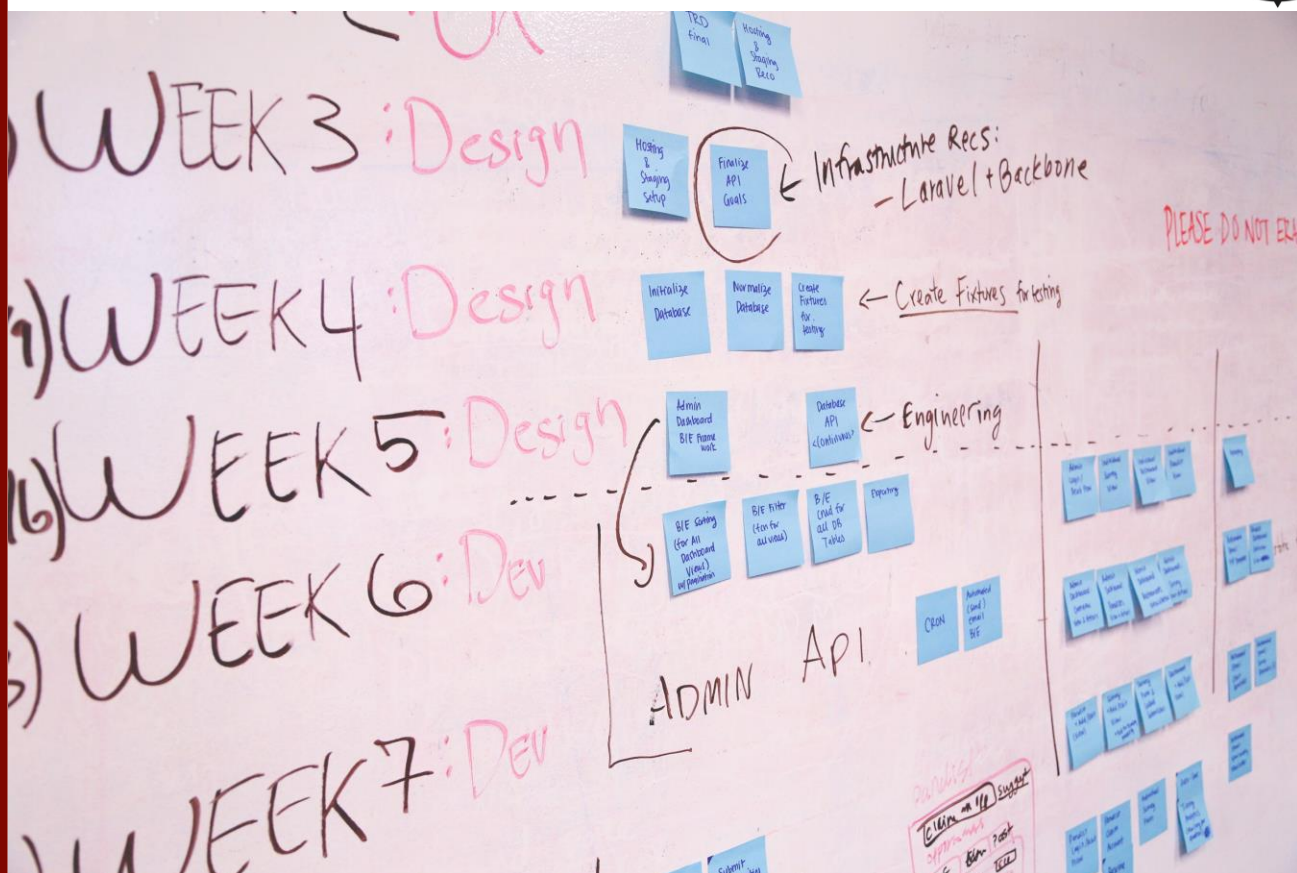
So, how can you make sure that you're doing your part to maximize your employees' productivity and set them up for success? Whether your company is just starting to think about offering remote options or you've been at it for years, these tips and tools can help your virtual team get the most out their workday.

- 1. Set Clear Guidelines for Responsibilities and Expectations** - It's essential for both the productivity of your remote employees and the function of your entire team that clear guidelines are set for what needs to be accomplished and how it's to be completed. Setting expectations on things like work hours and attendance requirements for meetings lets the employee know what is needed on their end to do their job successfully in a remote setting.

Another element of this is having defined and measurable goals. This further creates expectations of what's needed to be done, as well as a timeline that employees can work within. It also helps you keep track of their progress.

There are a couple of ways that we do this here at Outback:

- **Performance Management Agreements** - In this document, the manager and the employee work together to map out what the employee's responsibilities are, how success is measured, and what constitutes exceeding expectations. Then, they meet at the end of each month to review and discuss. An employee is required to be meeting their core responsibilities in order to meet the criteria of working from home. Check out our program, [Performance Management Fundamentals](#), to learn more about this useful tactic.



- Project Management Software** - All of our teams use [Smartsheet](#), a collaborative spreadsheet platform, to track progress on monthly performance, as well as daily and weekly tasks. This gives both managers and employees clear visibility into the work that's being done -- and also allows managers to keep tabs without having to constantly check in.

You can also schedule weekly or bi-weekly check-ins with your remote team members to touch base on how they're doing with their tasks. While you might keep in touch regularly on chat platforms (more to come on communication!), meetings with a specific agenda help reinforce set guidelines and expectations and gets everyone on the same page. Click here for more information on how to create a remote working policy.

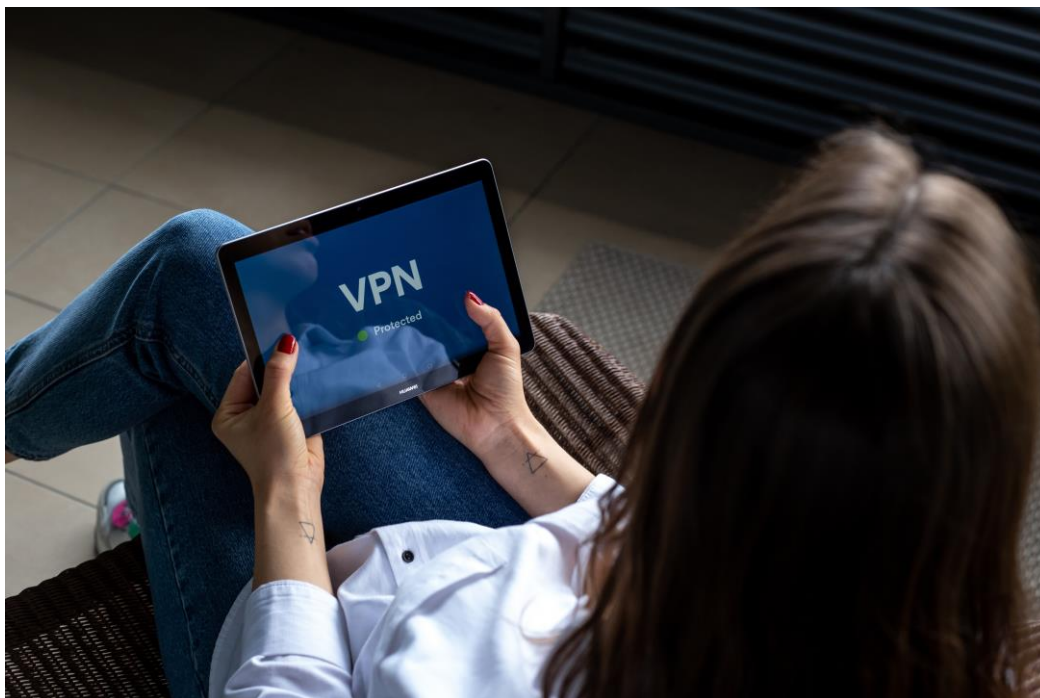


## 2. **Connect Remote Employees to the Technology They Need -**

If your remote employee has a slow computer, no access to the appropriate software required for their job, and can't clearly hear on a conference call, you're setting them up to fail. As an employer, it's your responsibility to make sure that your team is set up with the tools they need to succeed in their role. And, especially when working remotely, your employees' productivity can depend greatly on reliable, good quality equipment. So, be sure to invest in the tools that your team needs to do their jobs, whether that be a laptop, telephone, or even an external hard drive.

For example, at Outback, we have a budget available for our full-time remote employees to acquire all the tools they require in order to ensure their designated workspace is as functional and conducive to their success as possible. Some other things to think about include...





- **Network access** - Ensure your remote employees have access to everything they would if they were in-office, including the company network. For such purpose, many companies use either Virtual Private Network (VPN) or Remote Desktop (RD). As for which is better suited for your team, that depends on the needs of your company and your employee. Here's some more information about each:
  - **Virtual Private Network** - This provides private encrypted access between a remote user and your company network. Pros? The user is accessing their own domain account, including all the privileges normally associated with that account. As for cons, the service can be laggy and expensive.
  - **Remote Desktop** - Through the Internet and software like [Apple's Remote Desktop](#) and [Window's Remote Desktop Connection](#), this allows you to connect with another computer from anywhere. Pros include the fact that it's free and very easy to use. The downside, however, is that it's potentially not as secure as its private counterpart.



- **A proper computer set-up** - Is a single laptop or desktop monitor enough or would the employee work more efficiently with two or three computer screens? Do they need accessories, like a webcam or a headset? A set-up that suits their specific needs will help boost productivity.
- **Appropriate software** - Do they have the programs they need to do their job downloaded to their computer? If not, make sure that the software is easily and readily available.
- **Tech support** - If something does go wrong with one of your employees' devices, ensure that they have IT support available. Especially if the worker is located across the country, if they must wait for a long period of time until they can get their problem resolved, they could potentially lose hours of productivity.



Here are some other useful tools that can help your virtual team manage their tasks efficiently and stay organized:

- **Outlook Calendar** is great for setting up meetings, appointments, and reminders. If your company already uses Outlook for email, take advantage of this easy-to-use function.
- **Trello** is a popular app for remote workers for good reason. The project management program helps you make lists, organize your work, and allows you to share it with your coworkers.
- **Every Time Zone** is a simple tool that allows you to see what time zone your clients, bosses or coworkers are in all over the world. No more guessing games when it comes to meetings!

### 3. Support Your Team in Mastering the Art of Time Management -

Time management is an integral element to being productive in any working environment. But it's particularly important in a remote setting because, with no coworkers to gauge themselves by, no manager on-site to check-in, and no punch clock, it's up to the remote employee to build that structure and accountability for themselves – and up to you to support them.

Here are some tips on how to help keep your remote employees accountable:

- **Encourage the creation of micro-goals.** When you commit to hitting several smaller goals, it keeps you accountable in terms of reaching the overall end goal.
- **Have them review their own performance.** It's important to be brutally honest with oneself. If their performance isn't up to where it should be, they need to own up to it and make a change.
- **Provide feedback.** To further hold your remote team members accountable through an unbiased lens, give them honest feedback on how they're doing. You can also have other team members provide feedback, too.

Outback's own [Practical Time Management](#) is a great program that can provide both you with your remote employees with further practical tools to help enhance work rhythm, prioritize tasks, and align top priorities.

Another important tip for remote time management? Always make a to-do list. A tool like [Todoist](#) – a useful desktop to-do list app and organizer – will help remote workers keep track of deadlines and responsibilities. Read more about how to build out to-do lists in our article, [Quick-Fix Tips for Common Leadership Productivity Killers](#).





- 4. Make Sure the Lines of Communication are Always Open** - It's simple: remote teams must have good communication strategies in order to survive and thrive.

When you're in an office, you can easily pop into someone's office to ask a quick question or huddle together with your coworker for a brainstorm. But, if you're not working face-to-face, you need to find effective ways to talk to your team in order to overcome roadblocks, avoid misunderstandings, and ensure everyone is aligned with their responsibilities.





Here are three useful methods of communication and tools that we use for our remote teams in a variety of departments:

- **Video Conferencing** - This nips the potential issue of not being face-to-face right in the bud. [Zoom](#) is a great platform for video chats – you can invite multiple teammates in for a meeting and even record your conversation for reference, if needed.
- **Text-Based Chat** - Sure, phone calls are great – but tools like [Slack](#) allow you to chat in real-time and keep in touch with your coworkers without interrupting them. You can also share documents within the program, too.
- **Document Sharing** - If your job requires any sort of collaboration, programs like [SharePoint](#) allow you to easily create, edit, and share documents back and forth between your team. Microsoft Office apps like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint are also integrated into it.

Our learning program, [CAP Feedback Module](#), can help your team further develop effective communication skills. CAP is an acronym for “clear,” “authentic,” and “productive” – qualities that are integral for building a culture of effective communication.

## PART FIVE:

# Tips for Employees and Teams to Adopt Remote Employment

*As companies begin focusing on how they can embrace remote working and make it benefit their business, remote employees and teams are also working to master the skills they need to ensure they're impactful within their organization*

# Coaching Success for Remote Teams

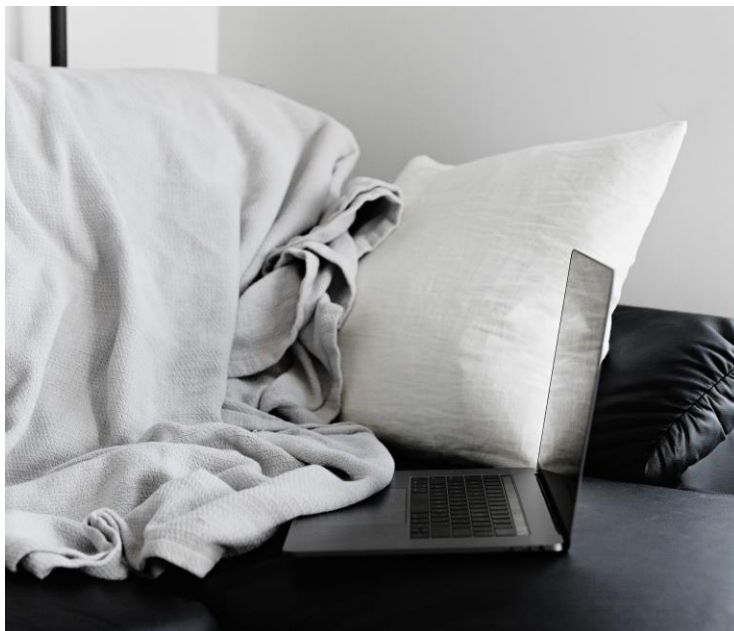
As a manager, it's your responsibility to provide guidance and advice that will help your remote employees operate as efficiently and effectively as possible



While the onus to embrace remote employment falls onto organizations, there is an important responsibility that falls onto employees as well. It's their responsibility to ensure they're taking the necessary steps and conducting themselves in a way that will be conducive to success, and great employers will provide them with sound guidance to help them get the most out of their role. Here are six key lessons you can share with your remote employees and teams in order to help them be successful.



1. **Be Proactive** – Whether it's clarifying on expectations, sending a follow-up summary email after meetings or project briefings, seeking ways to help, or regularly communicating the progress of deliverables and projects, being proactive is a key tactic for remote employees to give their manager peace of mind that they're staying on top of it all.
2. **Have Regularly Scheduled Meetings and Stick to Them** – Maintaining ongoing communication is integral to a successful remote employee. Encourage them to book regular video or telephone touch-bases – whether daily or weekly – and do their best to never miss them. This will help them to maintain great relationships and get to know their colleagues on a personal level, which can be challenging when working away from them.



- 3. Don't Fall Victim to Slacking Off** – High-school physics teacher will tell you that objects in motion tend to stay in motion while those at rest will stay at rest. The same applies to working remotely. Encourage your remote team to keep themselves busy to help maintain their momentum. The second they let themselves slack off or get distracted, they'll probably find it much tougher to get going again. Active breaks are great – such as a quick walk or a coffee break – but they should ensure they don't become stagnant and avoid doing their work tasks. Advise them to set themselves an airtight calendar that accounts for everything – whether work or breaks – and stick to it. They can schedule productive downtime to give themselves a beneficial brain break while assigning themselves predetermined blocks of time for work.
- 4. Set Strict Work Times** – According to EurekaAlert, many remote employees report feeling that they are always on call. As much as it's important to avoid slacking off, it's also important for remote employees to set strict "on" and "off" times for their work schedule to help you avoid burnout. As a great employer, it's on you to support and encourage your remote teams to draw boundaries between work time and personal time.





- 5. Test Their Ideal Work Times** – Remote employees enjoy the benefit of a little flex in their schedule. Since no two people work exactly the same way, it's important that they find the working routine that works best for them. Encourage them to test the times when they're most and least productive. For instance, they may find they're more productive from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. and slump from 2:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. They should find what works, and tailor their schedule accordingly. And as an employer who is focusing on results more so than having your employees at their desks during traditional work hours, you should encourage them to work when they're most productive. This way, you'll get the best from them while ensuring they stay happy and motivated.
- 6. Don't Be Afraid to Overcommunicate** – In a traditional office, employees can pop over to their boss to ask a question. People can also see when they're available to chat. When they're working remotely, they lose that access and visibility. This makes it important to over-communicate, so encourage them to do so. They can apply this principle to voicing problems or asking questions to ensure they're not getting lost in the shuffle, but also to drawing boundaries to let colleagues know when they're unavailable or need downtime to dedicate to work.

# Get In Touch

Get in touch with one of our Employee Engagement Consultants to learn more about our team building, training and development, and coaching and how they can help you build high-performing remote teams.



**1-800-565-8735**



**info@outbackteambuilding.com**



**[www.outbackteambuilding.com](http://www.outbackteambuilding.com)**

**BOOK YOUR FREE CONSULTATION**

# What Our Customers Say

When asked if they would recommend Outback's solutions, customers like these gave us an **average rating of 10** out of 10!





**This was an amazing team building exercise. Very relevant for groups that operate remotely during the year or work in different departments. Very good thought process, high level of engagement with all employees. The Outback Team Building & Training team was well prepared, open, and had a good sense of the dynamics of this exercise. 10/10!**



The team from **Nova Measuring Instruments** team participated in a Cardboard Boat Building Challenge team building activity.