

Managing Remote Teams

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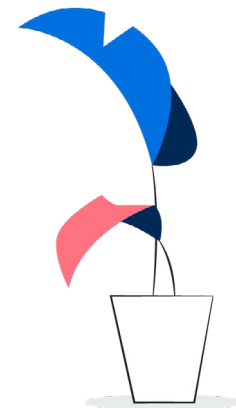
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The Philosophy of Remote Management



It takes care to replicate or replace all those ways of working which were intuitive, or happened naturally, in the physical office. When remote working, consider if your team has clarity on what the new normal is when it comes to:

1 Set clear boundaries

The clothes we wear, the Monday-morning commute tunes we listen to, a favourite spot to settle in for lunch—these are just a handful of the dozens of micro-rituals that frame a working day and distinguish our home-life from office-life. The walk from bed to the dining-room-cum-office doesn't leave a lot of time for a pump-up playlist, so it's important to help teams construct a new daily framework for themselves.

This isn't about working every moment from dusk until dawn. Instead, ask each individual to think about the ebb and flow of their day and help them to build a schedule and environment that provides clarity on where work begins and ends.

You can only effectively change your work style if you change your mindset. Achieving cohesion within your team while working remotely takes much more than a laptop, a solid WiFi connection and a steady supply of your hot drink of choice (although those do help). It takes a different way of thinking.



2 Start with clarity

Rather than micro-managing as you go, make sure objectives, plans and responsibilities are crystal-clear, and realistic, from the start. Asana's Anatomy of Work Index revealed that UK workers spend over seven hours each week just talking about work²—to free-up more time for deep work that will achieve your goals, ensure everyone is aligned on the high-level purpose of the work and expectations for projects.

When working from home, don't be afraid to check that people are clear on objectives. Take the opportunity to make sure everyone knows how their work ladders up to shared goals. To help with this, plan to set aside extra virtual-office hours with an open-door policy and encourage your team to “drop-in” to ask questions whenever they need to.



3 Faciliate better coordination

Autonomy is critical in an effective remote team. However, duplication also presents a growing risk for workers, who, in ordinary circumstances, already spend over five hours a week on tasks that have already been done.³

Plan initiatives with other leaders that can keep workers connected beyond their direct departments. After all, Sara in engineering might already have a perfect solution to a logistical challenge elsewhere in the business.

However, your coworkers also need to understand how their work should adapt as larger business priorities shift. Using a system for tracking projects and tasks as they progress can help here, boosting efficiency through coordination, and giving you critical oversight, without becoming overbearing.

“It’s important for any organization to create cross-company alignment about what communication channels you use and when you use them. At AppsFlyer Slack is used for coordination, knowledge sharing, and for quick questions and answers. Our work and projects live, progress, and are finalized in Asana. Emails are more formal, we use them with external vendors, or for things like project kick-offs or sending retrospectives of them. Each channel has a different level of urgency and we do our best to adhere to these guidelines.”

— Aurel Laor, Global Marketing Project Manager, AppsFlyer



Hints & Tips for getting the most out of teams

Once you're approaching and thinking about remote work with the right boundaries, clarity, and coordination in place, it's time to start, well, working.

Every organisation is unique and remote working is a learning process, so to really hit your stride be prepared to adapt, iterate, and scale. But first, here are some key tips and tricks to ensure you and your team operate in harmony.

1.

Empower your coworkers

Your work is important and it's critical teammates stick to deadlines. At the same time, remote working can make moving at pace feel chaotic. Trust in your team to execute on a brief and don't inundate them with requests simply because you aren't there with them.

As things progress, make sure to play your part by providing feedback and recognition for jobs well done. Using Asana can help you stay organised and connected to you and your team's work, while being able to track progress and give feedback in real-time.

2.

Make your team familiar with the tech stack

Technology today is amazing. A couple of taps and an app has turned your cat snap into an impressionist masterpiece. Workplace tools have come a long way too. However, with knowledge workers using over 10 apps per day and nearly two-thirds using collaboration tools more from home,⁴ it's important you outline which apps suit which purpose.

Create and share straightforward guidelines. For example, Zoom for team meetings, Slack for quick conversations, and Google Drive for storing and sharing files. Be patient and clear. Keep in mind not everyone will be familiar with these tools—new research from Asana shows that for one in five workers working remotely for the first time, they are trying new apps for the first time.⁵

⁴ Asana Anatomy of Work: Remote Teams (2020)

⁵ Asana Anatomy of Work: Remote Teams (2020)

3.

Use technology to drive focus and clarity

Responding to emails and messages is the top cause of working late,⁶ and when you're away from your team, the barrage of notifications can grow exponentially. In the office, headphones-on or moving to an empty space tells your team it's quiet-time. Tools like Asana offer a 'do not disturb' feature for a digital equivalent. Switch it on, and enjoy an hour or two of focused work with nothing but bird-song and/or keyboard-clacking for company.

When ready to check back in with teams, Asana allows you to centralise, prioritise, and coordinate work happening across your tech stack to maintain visibility into who is doing what by when.

“Asana has been an absolute lifesaver for working across teams and time zones, and keeping all of our work organized. Every task is perfectly actionable.

— Matt Turzo, COO, Wind

⁶ Asana Anatomy of Work Index (2019)

4.

Be human

Keep taking breaks and try to replicate your workplace schedule. If you miss your mid-afternoon coffee buddy, schedule a catch-up when you usually would, and encourage your team to do the same. Workplaces are much more than just the output of each individual job role, they're an important social hub, and those moments when coworkers chat in the kitchen, or the corridor, can be priceless. Maintaining connectivity on both a personal and professional level is key to keeping a healthy workplace culture even when working remotely.

5.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Research suggests working adults speak a lot—around 16,000 words every day.⁷ Working at home, you're likely to be talking to your team less, simply by virtue of not being seated next to them. So, never assume your team knows where things stand unless you tell them—keep sharing timely updates even for small details.

But, just because you're not with each other, doesn't mean you can't show personality and heart. Think about the tone you'd take at different moments in the office and pepper in emojis when inspiration strikes!

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20131112-do-women-talk-more-than-men>



Asana's global community head, Joshua Zerkel, offers **three Asana solutions** to tackling remote work challenges



Joshua Zerkel

Asana's global community head

1. Agree your team's working hours, and stick to them

When you're working from home you can wake up five minutes before your first meeting if you want to because the "office" is right there. But, your laundry is also right there, or there might be children at home. Work and life become meshed together.

You need to know when to start and end your day. You and your team should agree together on team working hours and stick to them. Set up a task on Asana that outlines these in detail, with transparent access for the whole team. If you spot coworkers tackling other tasks at all hours make sure to encourage them to take breaks. Gently check in with them. It might be they want to flex their hours around childcare, but it also could be that they are struggling to switch off.

With everyone distributed, though, flexibility also needs to be balanced. You need some time when you can say, for example, “if I need to get in touch with Sonja, I know I can do it between one and four in the afternoon.” That central part of the day can become your team’s time, and you still have your individual or flexible work times at other points earlier or later in the day.

By tracking all activity in Asana, though, whenever someone logs on or off the rest of the team can be confident they have the latest updates, and don’t run the risk of duplicating work.

2. Accept that remote isn’t for everyone

Remote work is here to stay, but it was forced upon many, rather than being a choice. While it’s likely that more people than expected will find benefits from remote working, there are equally going to be questions from those who like it less. As a manager, listen to those concerns, and work with teams to integrate remote work without disruption to those who may prefer office life.

While it won’t recreate the physical office, you can use Asana to provide workers who are split between HQ with clarity on what needs to be done, and when, removing some friction between work at home and the office.

3. Cancel meetings with conviction

Every week, UK knowledge workers spend two and a half hours in unnecessary meetings.⁸ It’s important to keep in touch with colleagues while working remotely, however, make every meeting valuable. Chances are, remote work will mean more calls in your diary, not fewer. You’ll need to set additional catch-ups with your team to make up for less face time. But take this chance to reassess your calendar.

You and your team need real blocks of time (not five minute intervals between one Zoom and the next Google Hangout) for real work. Use Asana to remove the need for calls for status checks and progress updates, freeing up more time for productive, skilled work.

⁸ Asana Anatomy of Work Index (2019)

Case study

How Stride uses Asana to work remotely and boost client retention

Stride⁹ has a 100% remote, distributed team working across the US and the Philippines. The business, founded in 2004 by Becky Brown was acquired by three technology entrepreneurs, Eric Page, Russell Benaroya, and Raja Kapadia in 2018. Partnering with Becky, they set out to rebrand the company and focus on a simple yet crucial goal: Give entrepreneurs the peace of mind that their books are done right, every time.

As the partners began to reset and build the business, with a remote team spread across time-zones they realised they needed a structure and process in place to scale, and a way to centralise everyone's work transparently.

After evaluating several tools, they chose Asana thanks to its intuitive UI, flexibility to handle different workflows, and visual transparency. After each team member had [learned the basics](#), all new work was planned and assigned in Asana, streamlining the need for spreadsheets, meetings, or email threads.

Now the Stride team manages all of their work in Asana, from [setting company objectives](#) to [onboarding new employees](#). With Asana, the Stride team can see where things stand with every client, and can mitigate issues proactively. This has delivered significant incremental value to the business by extending the lifetime value of each customer. Employees, meanwhile, are more engaged and doing better work because they feel empowered to share their ideas and they know what goals they're working towards.

The result? A team that's more focused, less stressed, and helping the company to double its growth for the second year in a row.

The logo for Stride, featuring the word "stride" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "i" has a blue accent above it, resembling a hat or a checkmark.

⁹ <https://asana.com/case-study/stride>



Looking to connect your
dispersed team?

Talk to us.

