

How to Build a Successful Team of Remote Workers

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FULL TEXT

Remote work has evolved as an attractive alternative to traditional modes of work where physical relocation and strict working hours were the norm. It helps businesses cultivate a diverse talent pool that is not constrained by factors like location, time zone, and work hours.

There are, however, a few challenges that come with a remote team. Studies show that on an average, over 42% of employees rate their organization 9 or above in the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS). To build a successful remote team, you should target an eNPS higher than this. This is because remote teams come with inherent challenges that are over and above what you experience in a traditional work setup.

For one, it is tough building a strong relationship with your workers when you do not get to meet them in person. Secondly, if your workers are spread across different time zones, you may find it challenging to efficiently manage projects that require real-time collaboration. Finally, a remote work setting is successful only when you have self-motivated workers. Finding and training such a workforce can be a lot more challenging than building a traditional team.

Understanding Your Requirements

The first step in building a successful remote working team is to have clarity regarding the requirements, qualification, and duties of the remote worker. Start-ups typically hire workers who are multidimensional so they can fill numerous roles. In the absence of face-to-face engagement, employers may have difficulty communicating such expectations.

This does not necessarily mean that you only hire remote workers who specialize in one task. Instead, it is important to have a clear idea of the various responsibilities and train your workers accordingly. This helps them plan their work schedules accordingly and deliver successful results.

Effective Collaboration

Another key element to succeed in a remote work setup is effective collaboration. Remote workers do not always come from multiple time zones. If your workers typically operate from the same time zone, you may consider investing in real-time collaboration tools like video conferencing and live chat. If your employees operate on multiple time zones, it is a good idea to route all your live collaboration through meeting scheduling tools that allow users to pick a time based on their own time zone. Hubspot has a free tool for this purpose.

On the other hand, if your team does not have to work in tandem and have independent responsibilities, then non-real-time collaboration tools like Trello or Slack can be handy.

Building Trust

Employees tend to perform better in organizations that they feel are more trustworthy and credible. Remote teams often struggle with building trust since most engagements happen over non-real-time communication channels and are seldom face-to-face. There are, however, a few tricks to build trust in remote organizations. To begin with, create a dependable team and a consistent workflow. This allows a recruit to get used to the flow and align better with the processes. In addition to this, create transparent work processes and a congruent workforce that says

what it means and does what it says. Focusing on these factors helps you build trust with your workers that contributes to a happier team.

Performance Assessment

Tracking working hours of your employees when they log in from multiple time zones can be a challenge. Although there are several tools to help you with this, the fact is that work hours may not be a good measure of your employees' performance. Experts recommend the use of a result-oriented approach that assesses an employee's contribution based on the results and completed tasks and not on the hours put in.

This also helps with better management of deadlines. However, make sure that employees are free to negotiate longer deadlines without being penalized. This keeps the morale of your workers high and helps in building a happy remote working team.

Managing Deadlines

In their bid to overcompensate for the lack of personal engagement, some managers tend to micromanage their remote workers. This inevitably leads to resentment and does not contribute toward building a happy workforce. Giving your team clear deadlines and expectations is the first step in ensuring timely completion of projects. However, it is important to note that success with this approach depends to a great extent on how motivated your employees are. If this is your first time building a remote team, it is a good idea to hire employees who already have experience working remotely. This helps you assess their potential and check their references to ensure that they are capable of successfully delivering on projects.

Anand Srinivasan is the founder of Hubbion, a suite of free business apps and resources.

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