



Remote Work Survival Kit

A kit to help yourself and your team adapt to
remote working during (and after) Covid 19





HERE TO HELP YOU THRIVE

- - - - X

This is a crowdsourced effort to help people and organisations to work remotely at this time of need.

The reasoning being that the better people are able to do this, the more effective it will be, and the better the outcome for society, with less risk of spread of disease - which benefits everyone. The potential for these benefits to continue after the current phase of coronavirus are huge, both the ecological and the human benefits.

Every single piece of this advice has been sourced, collated, produced REMOTELY by a team of >200 global volunteers. It's been produced using WhatsApp and a Google Doc in days through the willingness of dozens, for no reason other than to help! We publish a new version every 100 hours.

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."

-Booker T. Washington

CONTENTS

- - - - X

Section 1: Remote Work Survival Guide (printed from Google Doc [\(Link\)](#))

Page 17 - Curators details and links to contributor WhatsApp groups

Page 21 - Remote working: tools, technology, environment, culture...

Page 34 - Remote working as a recruiter: Comms, tools, productivity...

Page 41 - Family and WFH: Educational content and activities, links...

Page 46 - Psychology: focus and distraction, psychological factors...

Page 47 - Mental Health: Support

Page 49 - Managing remote teams when you are not used to it

Page 53 - Remote Leadership: Team lead tips, Leadership framework...

Page 56 - What happens when the tech fails Plan C, D -

Page 58 - Education - Advice for school, remote teaching, resources...

Page 67 - Remote work for graphic / web designers / creatives

Page 69 - Physical fitness and exercise: YouTube playlists

Page 73 - Media and links

Page 76 - Contributors // Page 78 - Remember: Don't Panic

Section 2: Supporting Materials

Page 79 - Remote Working Management Framework for Team Leaders ([Link](#))

Page 80 - Remote Working by Career Karma

Page 111 - Leading Remotely by MIT Sloane Management Review

Page 116 - Five Ways to Improve Comms in Virtual Teams by MIT Sloane

Page 123 - The Ultimate Guide to Remote Work by Zapier

Page 310 - Kids Guide to Coronavirus by MindHeart.co

Page 322 - 2020's Black Swan: Coronavirus by Goldman Sachs

All documents and content collected to assist our mission and published in the spirit in which we found them, being circulated openly and freely on the Internet.



lavoro a distanza

Kit di sopravvivenza al

un kit per aiutare te stesso e il tuo team ad adattarsi al lavoro a distanza durante (e dopo)

Covid 19





QUI PERA

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Questo è uno sforzo di crowdsourcing per aiutare le persone e le organizzazioni a lavorare in remoto in questo momento di bisogno.

Il ragionamento è che le persone migliori sono in grado di farlo, più efficace sarà, e migliore sarà il risultato per la società, con meno rischi di diffusione della malattia - a beneficio di tutti. Il potenziale per questi

benefici di continuare dopo l'attuale fase del coronavirus è enorme, sia i benefici ecologici che quelli umani.

Ogni singolo pezzo di questo consiglio è stato fornito, raccolto, prodotto REMOTELY da un team di > 200 volontari globali. È stato prodotto utilizzando WhatsApp e Google Doc in pochi giorni grazie alla disponibilità di dozzine, per nessun motivo se non quello di aiutare! Pubblichiamo una nuova versione ogni 100 ore.

"Se vuoi sollevarti, solleva qualcun altro."

-Booker T. Washington

INDICE

- - - - X

Sezione 1: Guida alla sopravvivenza del lavoro a distanza (stampata da Google Doc Lavoro a [\(link\)](#))

Pagina 17 - Dettagli dei curatori e collegamenti ai gruppi WhatsApp che contribuiscono

Pagina 21 -distanza: strumenti, tecnologia, ambiente, cultura ...

Pagina 34 -distanza come reclutatore: comunicazioni, strumenti, produttività ...

Pagina 41 - Famiglia e WFH: contenuti e attività educative, collegamenti ...

Pagina 46 - Psicologia: attenzione e distrazione, fattori psicologici ...

Pagina 47 - Salute mentale: supporto

Pagina 49 - Gestione di team remoti quando non ci si è abituati

Pagina 53 - Leadership remota: suggerimenti per i team leader, framework di leadership ...

Pagina 56 - Cosa succede quando la tecnologia fallisce Piano C, D -

Pagina 58 - Istruzione - Consigli per la scuola , insegnamento a distanza, risorse...

Pagina 67 - Lavoro a distanza per grafici / web designer / creativi

Pagina 69 - Idoneità fisica ed esercizio fisico: playlist YouTube

Pagina 73 - Media e collegamenti

Pagina 76 - Collaboratori // Pagina 78 - Ricorda:Non fartipanico

Sezioneprendere dal2: Materiali di supporto

Pagina 79 - Framewor di gestione remota del lavoro k for Team Leader ([link](#))

Pagina 80 - Lavoro a distanza di carriera Karma

Pagina 111 - Leader a distanza del MIT Revane Management Review

Pagina 116 - Cinque modi per migliorare le comunicazioni nelle squadre virtuali del MIT Sloane

Pagina 123 - La guida definitiva al lavoro a distanza di Zapier

Pagina 310 - Guida per bambini al Coronavirus di MindHeart.co

Pagina 322 - Black Swan del 2020: Coronavirus di Goldman Sachs

Tutti i documenti e i contenuti raccolti per aiutare la nostra missione e pubblicati nello spirito in cui li abbiamo trovati, fatti circolare apertamente e liberamente su Internet .



trabajo remoto

Kit de supervivencia de

un kit para ayudarlo a usted mismo y a su equipo a adaptarse al trabajo remoto durante (y después)

Covid 19





AQUÍ PARA AYUDARLE A

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Este es un esfuerzo de colaboración colectiva para ayudar a las personas y organizaciones a trabajar de forma remota en este momento de necesitar.

El razonamiento es que cuanto mejores personas puedan hacer esto, más eficaz será y mejor será el resultado para la sociedad, con menos riesgo de propagación de la enfermedad, lo que beneficia a todos. Las posibilidades

de que estos beneficios continúen después de la fase actual del coronavirus son enormes, tanto los beneficios ecológicos como los humanos.

Cada pieza de este consejo ha sido obtenida, recopilada, producida REMOTAMENTE por un equipo de > 200 voluntarios globales. Se ha producido usando WhatsApp y un Google Doc en días gracias a la voluntad de docenas, ¡sin otra razón que la de ayudar! Publicamos una nueva versión cada 100 horas.

"Si quieres levantarte, levanta a alguien más".

-Booker T. Washington

CONTENIDO

- - - - X

Sección 1: Guía de supervivencia de trabajo remoto (impreso de Google Doc ([enlace](#)))

Página 17 - Detalles de los conservadores y enlaces a grupos de WhatsApp contribuyentes

Página 21 - Trabajo remoto: herramientas, tecnología, medio ambiente, cultura ...

Página 34 - Trabajo remoto como reclutador: comunicaciones, herramientas, productividad ...

Página 41 - Familia y FMH: contenido y actividades educativas, enlaces ...

Página 46 - Psicología: enfoque y distracción, factores psicológicos ...

Página 47 - Salud mental: Apoyo

Página 49 - Gestión de equipos remotos cuando no está acostumbrado

Página 53 - Liderazgo remoto: consejos de liderazgo del equipo, marco de liderazgo ...

Página 56 - Qué sucede cuando falla la tecnología Plan C, D -

Página 58 - Educación - Consejos para la escuela , enseñanza remota, recursos ...

Página 67 - Trabajo remoto para diseñadores gráficos / web / creativos

Página 69 - Estado físico y ejercicio: listas de reproducción de YouTube

Página 73 - Medios y enlaces

Página 76 - Colaboradores // Página 78 - Recuerde: No se asuste

Sección2: Materiales de apoyo

Página 79 - Marco de gestión de trabajo remoto k para líderes de equipo ([enlace](#))

Página 80 - Trabajo remoto por Karma profesional

Página 111 - Liderando remotamente por MIT Sloane Management Review

Página 116 - Cinco formas de mejorar las comunicaciones en equipos virtuales por MIT Sloane

Página 123 - La guía definitiva para el trabajo remoto de Zapier

Página 310 - Guía para niños sobre coronavirus por MindHeart.co

Página 322 - Cisne negro de 2020: Coronavirus por Goldman Sachs

Todos los documentos y contenidos recopilados para ayudar a nuestra misión y publicados en el espíritu en que los encontramos, circulando abierta y libremente en Internet .



远程工作 生存工具包

该工具包可帮助您和您的团队在Covid期间
(及之后) 适应远程工作。19





这里帮助您

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这是一项众包工作，旨在帮助人员和组织在此时进行远程工作。需要。

这样做的理由是，人们越有能力做到这一点，它将越有效，社会成果就越好，疾病传播的风险就越小，这对所有人都有好处。在目前的冠状病毒阶段之后，这些益处生态和人类方面都具有巨大的潜力。

该建议的每一条信息都是由200多名全球志愿者组成的团队进行采购，整理和制作的。它是用WhatsApp和Google Doc数十天的意愿在几天之内生产出来的，无非就是要提供帮助！我们每100小时发布一个新版本。

“如果你想抬高自己，抬高别人。”

-Booker T. 华盛顿

目录

-----X

第1部分：“远程工作生存指南”（从Google Doc打印 [\(链接\)](#)）

第17页-策展人详细信息和贡献者WhatsApp组的链接

第21页-远程工作：工具，技术，环境，文化...

第34页-担任招聘人员的远程工作：通讯，工具，生产力...

第41页-家庭和WFH：教育内容和活动，链接...

第46页-心理学：注意力和注意力分散，心理因素...

第47页-心理健康：支持

第49页-当您不习惯时管理远程团队

第53页-远程领导：团队领导技巧，领导力框架...

第56页-技术失败时会发生什么计划C， D-

第58页-教育-学校建议，远程教学，资源.....

第67页-用于图形/网页设计师远程工作/广告素材， 69

页面 -身体素质和运动：YouTube播放列表

第73页-媒体和链接

第76页-贡献者//第78页-记住：不要惊慌

科2：支持材料

第79页-远程工作管理框架团队负责人的知识 ([链接](#))

第80-Career Karma进行远程工作

页第111学院远程学院 斯隆斯隆 管理管理回顾管理

页第116改善虚拟团队中交流的五种方法

-MIT页-MIT第123页-Zapier的远程工作终极指南

第310页-MindHeart.co编写的儿童冠状病毒指南

第322页-2020年的黑天鹅：高盛 (Goldman Sachs)

收集的所有文件和内容以协助我们的使命并以我们发现它们的精神出版，并在互联网上免费开放和免费传播。 。



रिमोट वर्क सर्वाइवल किट

एक किट जो आपकी और आपकी टीम को (और उसके बाद) रिमोट काम करने के लिए अनुकूल बनाने में Covid 19





मदद करती है। यहाँ क्लिक करने में मदद करें

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यह लोगों और संगठनों को दूर से काम करने में मदद करने के लिए एक भीड़ भरा प्रयास है जरूरत।

तर्क यह है कि बेहतर लोग ऐसा करने में सक्षम हैं, जितना अधिक प्रभावी होगा, और समाज के लिए बेहतर परिणाम होगा, बीमारी फैलने का कम जोखिम होगा - जिससे सभी को लाभ होता है। कोरोनावायरस के वर्तमान चरण के बाद इन लाभों को जारी रखने की क्षमता विशाल है, दोनों पारिस्थितिक और मानव लाभ।

इस सलाह के हर एक टुकड़े को > 200 वैश्विक स्वयंसेवकों की एक टीम द्वारा तैयार, समतलीकृत, निर्मित किया गया है। यह व्हाट्सएप और गूगल डॉक का उपयोग करके दर्जनों की इच्छा के माध्यम से किया गया है, बिना किसी कारण के मदद के लिए! हम हर 100 घंटे में एक नया संस्करण प्रकाशित करते हैं।

"यदि आप खुद को ऊपर उठाना चाहते हैं, तो किसी और को उठाएं।"

-Booker टी वाशिंगटन

सामग्री

- - - - X

सेक्शन 1: रिमोट वर्क सर्वाइवल गाइड (Google डॉकसे मुद्रित [\(लिंक\)](#))

पृष्ठ 17 - व्हाट्सएप समूहों के लिए क्यूरेटर का विवरण और लिंक

पृष्ठ 21 - दूरस्थ कार्य: उपकरण, प्रौद्योगिकी, पर्यावरण, संस्कृति ...

पृष्ठ 34 - रिमोट एक भर्ती के रूप में काम कर रहा है: Comms, उपकरण, उत्पादकता ...

पृष्ठ 41 - परिवार और WFH: शैक्षिक सामग्री और गतिविधियों, लिंक ...

-
- पृष्ठ 46 - मनोविज्ञान: ध्यान और विकर्षण, मनोवैज्ञानिक कारक ...
- पृष्ठ 47 - मानसिक स्वास्थ्य: समर्थन
- पृष्ठ 49 - जब आप इसका उपयोग नहीं कर रहे हैं तो दूरस्थ टीमों का प्रबंधन करना
- पृष्ठ 53 - दूरस्थ नेतृत्व: टीम लीड टिप्स, लीडरशिप फ्रेमवर्क ...
- पृष्ठ 56 - क्या होता है जब तकनीक विफल हो जाती है C, D -
- पृष्ठ 58 - शिक्षा - स्कूल के लिए सलाह , दूरस्थ शिक्षण, संसाधन ...
- पृष्ठ 67 - ग्राफिक / वेब डिज़ाइनर / क्रिएटिव के लिए दूरस्थ कार्य
- पृष्ठ 69 - शारीरिक फिटनेस और व्यायाम: YouTube प्लेलिस्ट
- पृष्ठ 73 - मीडिया और लिंक
- पृष्ठ 76 - योगदानकर्ता // पृष्ठ 78 - याद रखें: आतंकन करें

अनुभाग2: सहायक सामग्री

- पृष्ठ 79 - दूरस्थ कार्य प्रबंधन Framework k टीम लीडर्स के लिए ([लिंक](#))
- पृष्ठ 80 - कैरियर कर्मा द्वारा रिमोट वर्किंग
- पृष्ठ 111 - एमआईटीद्वारा दूरस्थ रूप से अग्रणी स्लोन प्रबंधनसमीक्षा
- पेज 116 - एमआईटी स्लोन द्वारा आभासी टीमों में सुधार के लिए पांच तरीके
- पृष्ठ 123 - जैपियर द्वारा दूरस्थ कार्य के लिए अंतिम गाइड
- पृष्ठ 310 -बच्चे MindHeart.coद्वारा गाइड Coronavirus के लिए
- 322पृष्ठ- 2020 के ब्लैक स्वान: Coronavirus गोल्डमैन सैक्सद्वारा

सभीदस्तावेजों और सामग्री हमारे मिशन की सहायता के लिए एकत्र और आत्मा है, जिसमें हम उन्हें मिल गया में प्रकाशित, इंटरनेट पर खुले तौर पर और स्वतंत्र रूप से वितरित किया जा रहा है ।



[REMOTE WORK](#)

[SURVIVAL KIT](#)

PLEASE ADD YOUR EXPERTISE TO THIS DOCUMENT

A crowdsourced document to help those, in response to the coronavirus, who are trying to:

- a) implement remote working in their org
- b) set themselves up to work from home
- c) protect their business, their staff and teams from effects of coronavirus

Name	Role	Experience
Chris Weston	Curator	CIO adviser - often via video call, and often WFH. Managed global distributed teams.
Dominic Mason	Curator	Global digital strategy consultant. Works from home 95% of time, accompanied by Puddles the Springerpool.
Puddles the Springerpool	'Technology Director' and Entertainment Lead	Very help. Much cuddles. Bouncing maximum.

This is a crowdsourced effort to help people and organisations with remote working at this time of acute need - the reasoning is that the better people are able to do this the more effective it will be and the better the outcome for society, with less risk of the rapid spread of disease which benefits everyone. If after contributing you would like to add your name please do so in the [Contributors](#) section.

Inspired by the [Coronavirus Tech Handbook](#) and the brilliant work done to bring the tech community together to help build tools and information services by [Newspeak House](#)

Current PDF release is here <http://bit.ly/remoteworksurvivalkit> this is a formatted doc for sharing widely but not a replacement - more info will always be on this google document.

Want to contribute? This is your document, please add your suggested edits!

Please edit this document, they will show up to the curators Dom and Chris as suggested edits so they can be formatted into the document

WhatsApp group to discuss the content of this document

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/I8AHAVEA1BtCWqVRBgXRr9>

'I am not sure but is this helpful?' queries, and random pictures of dogs to cheer people up, can be posted into the #Random WhatsApp group : <https://chat.whatsapp.com/CMaO8FicnkMHATEjuhNgxO>

Styling:

Headline

Subhead

Content area

Index:

Remote Working

[Remote Working - Collaboration Tools](#)

[Known providers with free tiers](#)

[Remote Working - Identify essential tools / software / data](#)

[Working from home management - setup of space etc](#)

[WFH checklist](#)

[List of links for businesses to construct homeworking capability](#)

[Distributed / Remote Working](#)

[Online Meeting/Gathering Resources](#)

[How to work from home](#)

[Tools & Guides for Event Alternatives](#)

[Links:](#)

[General Advice for business and organisation event contingency planning in response to COVID-19](#)

[Plan across 2 areas:](#)

[Measures to protect health and respond to COVID-19](#)

[Financial planning and organisational decisions](#)

[Home WiFi, connectivity, 4g etc and how to manage it](#)

[Links:](#)

[Culture of remote working, always on, time management, "presence" etc](#)

[How are you setting expectations about what people should be expected to do at home](#)

[General tips:](#)

[Easy to action productivity tips](#)

[Hey, it's OK if you are wfh and...](#)

[Remote work advice](#)

Everything You Need To Recruit Remotely In 2020

[Working remotely requires a bit of grit.](#)

[Communication](#)

[Emails](#)

[Meetings](#)

[Remote Office Tools](#)

[Productivity](#)

[Admin](#)

[Content](#)

[Wellbeing](#)

Family and working from home

Family life:

Psychology

Focus:

Psychology:

Mental Health:

Managing teams remotely when you are not used to it

Managing teams remotely, esp when you're not used to it

5 ways to improve communication in remote teams

Checklist:

Importance of cultural change for remote working teams:

Agile and Scrum for working in remote teams

Articles:

Publications:

Leadership and remote teams

Being a resilient leader in difficult times:

Remote working framework for team leaders:

How to Design Powerful Rituals for Successful Distributed Companies

What happens when the tech fails... plans C and D

What now... what next?

Information Security Considerations

How to engage in remote working as a freelancer

Education

Advice for schools:

General advice

Making a whole school virtual:

Changing to a virtual school:

Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19

Your team

Links:

Remote worker resources

Resources for designers:

Designers In Need of Work

Remote Job Boards

Job Sites Around the World

Remote Arts & Cultural Activities

Remote Resources

Consult remotely

Data on remote working:

Surveys:

Physical fitness and exercise

[When exercising from home](#)

[Health & Safety](#)

[Exercises - Pyramid circuit](#)

[Beginners to intermediate](#)

[Intermediate circuit](#)

[Advanced](#)

[Tips](#)

[Useful exercise links:](#)

[Exercise and your mental state](#)

[YouTube Remote Work Survival Kit](#)

[YouTube Remote Work Survival Kit exercise playlist:](#)

Media and Links

[YouTube remote work playlist:](#)

[UK media say:](#)

[Generic articles \(useful, but general, advice\):](#)

[General:](#)

[General suggestions for content:](#)

[Backlog of things to do:](#)

[Contributors:](#)

Remote Working

Remote Working - Collaboration Tools

Providers of collaboration tools and other things in this space are welcome to add their offerings here and it would be even better if there were free tiers / trials available for evaluation etc

Known providers with free tiers

- BlueJeans
- Cisco Webex
- Jitsi <https://meet.jit.si>
- Google
 - <https://support.google.com/a/answer/1631886?hl=en>
 - <https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/g-suite/helping-businesses-and-schools-stay-connected-in-response-to-coronavirus>
- <https://wurkr.io/> Digital Office Space
- LogMeIn (GoTo Meetings), also join.me branded
- Microsoft Teams Free for the initial 6 month period of subscription
<https://products.office.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software?>
- Slack - <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/downloads/>
A quick intro for those using it for the first time:
<https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/help/categories/360000049043>
- Zoom - <https://zoom.us/download>
https://zoom.us/docs/ent/school-verification.html?zcid=1231&_ga=2.228851412.995105639.1583699918-735451631.1546545079 currently for K12 schools in Japan, Italy, USA
- <https://www.flowdock.com/> (free for teams of up to 5)
- <https://discordapp.com/> - usually used by gamers but free!
- <https://rocket.chat/> - free open source solution
- <https://whereby.com/> - free for single users
- https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/03/10/staying-productive-while-working-remotely-with-microsoft-teams/#.Xme9L_svDTt.twitter
- <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/03/02/working-remotely-during-challenging-times/>
- <https://blog.cloudflare.com/cloudflare-for-teams-free-for-small-businesses-during-coronavirus-emergency/>
- <https://meetcafecito.com/>
- www.hugo.team
- Notion <https://www.notion.so/product>
- [Hubstaff](#) for time tracking. Also check out [Clockify](#)
- [Geekbot](#) for remote standups and checkins
- <https://www.cloudflare.com/smallbusiness/> security, enterprise grade free until 1Sep2020 for now
- <https://openforbusiness.org/>
- <https://ideaflip.com/> tool for remote brainstorming - very powerful when you cant be together

- Prezi Video, which can be used in apps like Webex, GoToMeeting, and Zoom. prezi.com/video/ (Choose "Basic" plan for Free version). Option to join live training session here: www.prezi.com/training

Tip: Remember some free tools might not have robust privacy policies etc, if you are sharing confidential information it is always best to do so with a trusted provider and a well-formed set of terms and conditions. In particular, do not share passwords, and the like on these tools.

Remote Working - Identify essential tools / software / data

- An organisation of around 100 employees may typically use between 100-200 applications.
- It's important to understand which of these is essential to your employees workflow and business continuity - rate them in terms of essential, desirable, not needed. Then test each of these from a remote location to ensure you're able to correctly use them. Consider where the data is stored within these applications - even though the application runs, can your data be reached?
- By identifying applications essential to your business you can prioritise your focus on these to ensure they operate correctly, at speed and reliably.
- Ensure your staff understands the difference between saving data on their remote device and on your network or cloud server. Data that is mistakenly saved on the device may be lost, cannot be collaborated on or fall out of continuity if others edit the same file and overwrite changes.
- If you control access to your network through a single VPN/RAS point this is likely to be a bottleneck. Managing the use of this (audio rather than video for example) may become essential depending on your capacity.

Working from home management - setup of space etc

WFH checklist

- Duty of care.... Acknowledgement that not everyone has appropriate space in homes, so support with guidance and information as to how they can utilise the space around them
- How can you set aside a place for "work"? Is it possible in your home? Not everyone has a home office, but a dining table can work just as well as long as you don't allow distractions
- Keeping set work hours (and sticking to them) and adding these to your email signature can help you to differentiate between work time and home time
- Can you manage expectations regarding your availability to "just pick the kids up" etc when WFH. Focus is a valuable thing. But then so is the flexibility of being at home.
- When will you use video on calls? Have you got a suitable camera and will you wear different clothes when talking to customers as opposed to colleagues? And what's in the background - will it be an unnecessary distraction for whoever you're talking to?

- Online meetings - how will you take notes? If you have one screen you might not be able to use your computer to type up notes while you're in that meeting. Ask if you can record the meeting - most online meeting tools have this capability but sometimes only the organiser can do this.
- "Busy Lamp" or notice for when conducting / in meetings to prevent being disturbed by others in the household that may walk in. Do not disturb sign for the door can really improve the quality of meetings.
- Working from home could increase some of your household bills due to increased use of heating and lighting, being mindful of the additional cost could be important. Sometimes it helps to have a comfy jumper or blanket near-by before reaching for the thermostat boost button. That said, it is important to be warm and comfortable (think about your circumstances - could the cost be offset by reduced travel costs?).
- Be prepared that your brain can rebel if you're not used to working from home. Try to make your working environment different from your usual hang out places to emphasise the differences. Somewhere new, even if just a different chair will make it easier to promote new habits and not just want to keep putting the TV on. Home is usually your sanctuary from work so you may well find it harder to motivate than expected.
- You want a comfortable chair, but not too comfortable. If you try a dining chair you'll find a newfound respect for even the cheapest office chair.
- Shared calendars are often a huge benefit to remote teams to see others' availability. I've used Google Calendar with my dev team in the past but even a spreadsheet works at a pinch.
- Be aware of security but Google Docs, Dropbox, Box, etc. are great when working remotely and files are too big to exchange easily by email or IM.
- Consider using your commuting time as exercise time, preferably in the fresh air. Working at home, you will take far fewer steps than you would travelling to work, in the office, dashing out for a sandwich at lunchtime. A walk/bike ride/run or whatever exercise you enjoy also 'bookends' the working day effectively, helping to provide a mental separation between homelife and worklife.
- Consider ergonomics! Check that your chair and desk are at a good height, and that you aren't reaching too far or flexing your wrists at a bad angle on your keyboard. If you can, use an external monitor or raise up your laptop and use an external keyboard. RSI is a real thing, and if you're a bit more stressed than usual you're likely to be tensing up and placing more strain on your back, neck and arms. There's more advice on the NHS website about preventing RSI <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/tips-to-prevent-rsi/> and good sitting positions for working <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly/>
- It could be helpful to set your workflow to suit your productivity, not that you have the flexibility to do so. This could be through prioritizing your best tasks for when you are most productive. [This article](#) is quite helpful. It may also be good to pencil in activities you cannot miss such as

collaborative work or meetings, or even a scheduled walk to get you up and going in the mornings, and as a way to give some structure to your day.

- Also, it could be helpful to check in with colleagues or neighbours about helping each other with practical errands in the event that you need to self-isolate

List of links for businesses to construct homeworking capability

Distributed / Remote Working

Edge Ryders' guide to Distributed Collaboration:

<https://edgerydereu/t/distributed-collaboration-manual/11263>

Producthunt Library of Remote Work Apps: <https://www.producthunt.com/e/remote-apps>

Facilitators for Coronavirus response: <https://groups.io/g/f4c-response/message/1>

Online Meeting/Gathering Resources

Remote guiding - give technical support/instructions: <https://xmreality.com/business/>

Simple creation of how to guides. Easier and more cost-effective and powerful than creating a word file or a youtube video. Instant translation makes it easy for anyone to read the resulting instructions:

<https://manual.to/>

Open Data Institute Remote Working Resources: <https://theodi.org/projects-services/>

CAST/Catalyst guide to remote working for charities/nonprofits:

<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/voices/how-to-work-remotely-in-a-time-of-coronavirus.html>

Deeson Handbook: Small digital agency openly publishes all of their work policies, including this useful guideline to running remote meetings professionally

<https://handbook.deeson.co.uk/working-at-deeson/remote-meetings/>

How to work from home

How to work from home:

www.theverge.com/2020/3/11/21171349/remote-work-how-to-home-coronavirus-quarantine-productivity-tips

Top 5 Tips for Remote Working

<https://www.michelleharris.social/top-5-tips-for-remote-working.html>

Working Remotely in Slack: Getting Started (webinar):

<https://slack.com/events/webinars/working-remotely-in-slack-getting-started>

Gitlab Guide to having an all remote company:

<https://about.gitlab.com/company/culture/all-remote/guide/>

Tips For Running A Great Webinar: <https://owncloud.more-onion.com/s/QKXDsx9YLdndyk6#pdfviewer>

OMG I'm working remotely, now what?!: <http://omgwfh.com>

Best practices and tips to help you stay sane, focused and boost your productivity while working from home, a coffee shop or really anywhere in the world, because distributed teams are a reality and remote work is the future: <http://www.benedikt-lehnert.de/contact>

20 Tips for Telecommuters (Hubspot):

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/productivity-tips-working-from-home>

Tools & Guides for Event Alternatives

Open Source Guide to Running Conferences Online:

<https://www.taxjustice.net/2020/03/05/lessons-learned-from-organising-our-first-virtual-conference/> In the Ether is an approach to fully remote meet-ups, meetings, conferences and events. It is a remote first approach to bring like minded people together from across the globe, to discuss, share and learn about topics they care about: <https://intheether.xyz/>

Live video Q&As, interviews, summits, webinars and more: <https://www.crowdcast.io/>

Remote digital scribing captures content from live events and meetings in a simple and shareable form: <https://www.scriberia.co.uk/journal/workingremotely-remotescribing>

Links:

- Coping with '[Cabin fever](#)'
- Anxiety and coronavirus, how to cope: <http://www.alibinns.co.uk/resources/2020/3/11/how-to-cope-with-anxiety-about-coronavirus-cov-19>
- Working from home without 'losing it': <https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-work-from-home-without-losing-your-mind/>
- <https://a.wholelottanothing.org/2019/08/09/tips-from-16-years-of-working-from-home/>
- <https://blog.alicegoldfuss.com/work-in-the-time-of-corona/>
- Personnel Today, Home Working Considerations: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/coronavirus-home-working-considerations/>
- Keeping your emotional intelligence intact at work: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2020/03/11/workplace-emotional-intelligence-during-the-global-coronavirus-outbreak/>

- Starter level video conferencing tips:
<https://workremote.us/5-advanced-video-conferencing-tips/>
- Zoom Basics:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xdENyIV1505FDXBJ7n5PaaHinGGUWc1R0ib1t7DRSCw/edit>

General Advice for business and organisation event contingency planning in response to COVID-19

Plan across 2 areas:

1. Measures to protect health and respond to COVID-19
2. Financial planning and organisational decisions

And the 3 phases of an event/project

1. Planning
2. Delivery
3. Post-event

Relevant to all 3 phases is:

- Plan for your event/project to go ahead despite COVID-19.

- **Decision making.** In collaboration with authorities, agree 'trigger points' in advance. At what point would:
 - Risk mitigation measures need to be reviewed and/or enhanced
 - The event be modified
 - The event be postponed
 - The event be cancelled

Note : There seems to be legal and liability differences between deciding to call your event off yourself, and following orders/advice from authorities. Always follow advice of authorities re. postponement or cancellation.

- Reduce event-related risk of transmission of the virus. Create a basic set of principles for this as an organisation including:

- Staying away from work/the event if unwell and supporting staff to be able to do so
- Hygiene
- Isolation
- Precautions around travel
- Crowding / close contact

1. Measures to protect health and respond to COVID-19

Planning phase, key things to do:

Liaison

- Liaise with local and national public health authorities
 - Nominated person to liaise
 - Contact maintained throughout the planning period (can be achieved via your SAG)
 - Channels of communication (between organisers, authorities, and the public) agreed in advance.

Planning and documentation

Note: Emergency plans should be based on the size and duration of the event, demographics of participants, complexity of event operations and type of activities the event may offer.

- Create a COVID-19 Risk Assessment - regularly review (as with main RAMS) Considerations for this are within [WHO's advice document](#).
- Create a COVID-19 Action Plan - actions to mitigate all risks identified in the Risk Assessment.
 - Different parties responsible for different actions (public health authority, local health service provider, event organisers)
 - See WHO for what Action Plan needs to cover
 - Include decision trigger points
 - What measures will we take preventing and responding to COVID-19? I.e. detect and monitor the virus, reduce the spread, manage and treat anyone who is unwell, communicate messages specific to the virus.
 - Agree with the local authorities how attendees and the local population will be kept informed about the health situation, key developments, any relevant advice and recommended actions.
 - How do we do the same for our staff, volunteers, artists, partners and programme participants?

Capacity and resource assessment

Consider:

- Does the local authority need to provide any specific resource and/or capacity to the event for risk mitigation, i.e. testing, isolation and treatment facilities?
- Do we have the resource in the team to deliver all the actions identified in the COVID-19 Action Plan?
- Ensure we are delivering what we are responsible for, and the local authorities are doing the same. Ensure no gaps/crossover.
- How will we ensure both the event and the Action Plan can be delivered if any staff become unwell? Can we cover any gaps and safely deliver the event? How will we support staff who become unwell, or are at risk of becoming unwell?

Delivery phase, key things to do:

- Reducing the risk of event-related transmission of the virus. What will we do and how will we communicate these measures?

- Hygiene
 - Event supplies
 - Identifying symptoms
 - Isolation space
 - Access to treatment
 - Communicating these measures
 - How will we continue to assess risk and respond throughout the event
- Risk communication
 - Keep in touch with local authorities and national announcements
 - How will we deliver key messages to participants and the local population in a reliable and consistent way?
 - How will we communicate to participants and the local population quickly if an unusual event occurs?
 - What advice will we communicate, and how (ie. see above measures)
 - Decide on whether specific information and advice required for participants who would be considered higher risk to the virus?

Post-event:

- Review and communicate learnings to necessary authorities
- Agree steps to take if feel unwell at / as a result of the event.

2. Financial planning and organisational decisions

Staff

- Plan for staff absences
- How can staff be supported, practically and financially, if they need to be absent due to illness or isolation, or if the event is postponed or cancelled.
- Plan ways to limit in-person contact and encourage remote working
- Have prepared alert levels e.g. amber, red, etc detailing what would be needed at each stage. That way, staff can know exactly where the organization is, and anticipate what may be coming next
- Try as much as possible to give timely information so people are not left wondering what to do and afraid of consequences, and also try to avoid conflicting information which could cause panic and further confusion

Finance

- Forecast for different scenarios, based on modifying, postponing and cancelling the event.
- What are our priority payments?
- Can we reduce any areas of the event to create a large contingency budget?

Participants

- Can we create flexible refund policies for participants?

Contracts

- Are any contract amendments required to create clarity around the potential scenarios? How can we do this in an ethical way?

Insurance

- We won't get cancellation cover. Are we able to get cover for the other potential scenarios, ie. modifying and/or postponing?

Funders

- What are the funders response to COVID-19? How can we encourage them to consider the realities of our current scenario?

Comms

- What comms supports our organisational reputation, in addition to communicating in response to COVID-19?
- For companies it may be worth proactively announcing to customers, suppliers, investors and other stakeholders how we are organising to maintain continuity of service and protect staff.

Additional considerations:

- How can we support the wellbeing of staff, participants, attendees, partners in a challenging time?
- Consider communicating flexibility in work expectations considering that staff will have responsibilities and concerns beyond work
- Consider flexible non-work related check-in sessions
- Reputationally, how do we want to be seen to be responding to this?
- How are event venues responding to COVID-19? Do their plans correspond with ours? Would we need to plan for the closure of some venues, but not all.
- What equipment will we need on site re. COVID-19? Have we budgeted for this?
- Some international staff may have to return home or incur additional housing, travel related costs - consider how to accommodate pressing financial needs

Home WiFi, connectivity, 4g etc and how to manage it

Such as - how many people in your street use high speed broadband, what is your actual bandwidth on (speedtest.net), what are your kids using it for when you're trying to do that Board presentation...

- There is going to be an assumption that everyone has broadband - what if they don't? Who will pay for them to work from home.
- Can you supply a mini connection device that uses 4G (separate from their mobile, often called a MiFi device) for workers with limited or no connectivity

- Check your mobile contract - if your employees use their mobile for tethering will you end up with unexpected and expensive bills for data outside your plan?

Links:

Networks will struggle with homeworking load:

<https://bigworldtale.com/science/uks-broadband-network-wont-cope-home-working-in-coronavirus-crisis/>

Negotiating with broadband providers:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/haggle-with-virgin-existing-customer-tips/>

Bundle tip!: Be mindful that your broadband capacity will be limited by the number of people in your neighbourhood as well as in your home - so expect to work offline or reduce the number of video calls.

Culture of remote working, always on, time management, "presence" etc

How are you setting expectations about what people should be expected to do at home

- Trust... Kill the air quotes and believe that folk will be productive.
- Creating new working hours and patterns - if folk don't have to commute, let them start at 7/8am and finish at 3/4pm.
- Death to the 9-5 - Whilst ensuring we meet departmental/company SLA's or opening hours for response to enquiries or phone calls. It's not good if all your staff choose to finish at 15:00 when your opening hours are until 17:00!
- How will orgs survive where flexi time is dependent on them tapping in and out on a box by the door.
- How to extend this as a practice beyond times of crisis. Don't revert back to Dark Satanic Mills once a period of isolation has passed.
- A tip for working in a shared document is to become comfortable with sharing early, as a contributor you are 'working out loud' and as a reader you will see the document evolve in real time.
- "We as a 5-person team have embraced Microsoft Teams (the client and our consultancy's mutually preferred collaboration tool) and, collectively, built emails, powerpoints, and goodness knows other stuff through a highly interactive and collaborative setup. Key = psychological safety. As this team's servant, I contribute by guiding all of us that each of us is given a voice in discussion and establishing that we are all 5 peers. Chatham House Rules: we work as a team and we respond as a team."

- Create a Team Charter. Here is a simple example: “We comm over a WhatsApp Group (given the way they've implemented Teams and my confidence is higher in a WhatsApp Group than their Microsoft Team implementation). I told them that Jira was to reflect the actual state of play, with a 2 hour tolerance. I guided them towards my general coaching directive of 'no dark work' i.e. make the work transparent; at any point in time they should be able to point to an item (Jira = sub-task) that contributes towards a piece of value delivery (i.e. a Work Item / Product Backlog Item) I formed a new WhatsApp Group that included the client so comms was readily available across all team-members. I guided them that despite the lower confidence, we'd be using Microsoft Teams more for collaboration; however, our anchor, the behaviour established is we're all sensitive to our WhatsApp Group. Share the charter and reference it often.”
- <https://www.modernservantleader.com/servant-leadership/leading-global-teams/>

General tips:

- **2 minutes on a video call can save many more minutes** and significantly more brain space than a long back-and-forth on Slack taking place in the background, body language is transmitted to an extent (phone calls are not as good as video, but they ARE better than endless Slack / WhatsApp or email! - PE)
- **use your webcam on calls as much as possible** - helps you know when people have finished speaking/want to speak
- **use Trello / Jira / whatever to guide stand-ups and check-ins.** Centring the updates around the cards keeps it really focussed but also means the detail is there for later when you can't just check something with somebody in 3 seconds
- **have a shared Google Doc for meetings** so people can follow along with the conversation and keep track of what's been agreed/asked - don't assume that somebody else is writing in their pad / on post-its if you can't see them doing it
- it's really hard to judge what the general mood in the camp is, so **introduce a low-key way of sharing general feelings** - e.g. if people are happy to, share a number out of 10 for your general vibe in your stand-ups so people know who to give support to and who to go to for a bit of a pick-me-up
- **make a bit of time for inconsequential, non-work chat** - you are not machines, nobody wants you on back-to-back calls
- **don't pretend you can do life admin throughout your working day** - it disrupts concentration and just makes for a weird vibe when you jump from putting a wash on to talking to somebody about something super serious
- **you're allowed to make tea/coffee/stretch your legs** - Essential to stretch the legs, circulation will be hindered if you walk less than in the office, and it's surprising how many thousands of

steps you can find yourself behind in the house than the office. It can have an impact on health, which isn't good considering the circumstances.

- **you're allowed to close Slack for a bit if you need a bit of focus time** - just give people a heads up, but nobody will assume you're skiving off. You can also put it in the do not disturb mode.
- if you feel a bit lonely, a bit confused by some work, or feel like you're making no headway - **ping somebody to share a feeling or frustration**. When nobody can pick up on your furrowed brow or sighs of annoyance, it can feel like you have to fix it all yourself, but we work in teams for a reasons
- **Slack/email isn't the best medium for sharing a difficult message**
- **Remember people are not all set up with home offices** - people will be working with kids, dogs, cats and partners in the background and not everyone has an office to go to. Be understanding and respectful of this situation. If using Video / Voice calls we should expect delays around mute / unmute and a loss of concentration. Recommend using messaging to write questions / ask specific people for answers and responses (PE)
- Keep an eye on your work/life balance and general efficiency with <https://myanalytics.microsoft.com/> (if you're on a corporate Office 365 account)

Easy to action productivity tips

- Get dressed - do not be tempted to wear your pjs to work. It will put you in the wrong mindset for work. No need to go the whole hog and wear a suit, but find a comfortable medium that makes you feel comfortable at your new working spot, but also makes you feel professional and motivated.
- Be strict with yourself (and family/friends) about your working hours.
- Prep lunch for yourself ahead of time if possible and eat something healthy - no more Pret sandwiches
- Use video and/or speaker phone wherever possible to discuss team actions and help you feel connected to your office-base
- Set a strict time non-work activities (e.g take a walk by 5pm) so you have an incentive to be productive, so you can get to them

Hey, it's OK if you are wfh and...

- If your kids start yelling in the background while you're on a call (or they casually walk into your home office/bedroom to ask you for something)
- If you accidentally forget to hit the mute button and we hear you scream across the house for those same kids to be quiet
- If you didn't have time to shower because you had a call with the UK team at 7am and you don't turn on the video
- If you're new to working remotely and we can see everything in your closet behind you

- If your wifi goes down and the call drops, twice
- If the lawnmower outside or builder next door is a bit too loud for comfort
- If your dog starts barking in the middle of your sentence and suddenly you go on mute
- If your cat jumps on your lap or keyboard in the middle of a video call and you lose your train of thought
- Finally: Organisations will have to be relaxed about this whilst people get acclimatised to remote working - whether they like it or not...

Remote work advice

1. If you've been commuting, keep a percentage of your commute cost for "nice things" at work - whether that's a great lamp for your desk, an image you love in a frame, some plants or a set of 20 Sharpies in different colours. Put the rest of the money into your savings if you don't need to use it for other essential costs.
2. The presenters on Radio 5 Live (or your station of choice) are a big part of your life but they are not actually your real friends. Talk to some real people each day as well as the radio/the cat/the dog.

Everything You Need To Recruit Remotely In 2020

Remote working's been sprung on the nation.

Working remotely requires a bit of grit.

For one thing, it's harder to fire yourself up when you aren't in the office.

You don't get the same camaraderie over Skype.

And, after a while, Netflix *does* start to beckon...

But at the end of the day, it's the same work. Just not where you usually do it.

And it's about as simple and as complex as that. Although, being realistic, there are things you get in the office you can't at home.

Fortuitously, as is often the case, good ol tech's provided something of a bridge over these troubled waters. And being well versed in operating remote teams ourselves, we've put together as many apps, programs, tips, tools and hacks as we could think of to make your time working from home as productive as possible.

Now let's go. Time's a wastin'.

Communication

Communicating well is absolutely paramount when everyone's in different places. We use Slack for all internal comms at Hunted. In fact, I'd stop centimetres short of saying it's business-critical to us.

A Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge.

If you don't use it, read [Why Every Recruiter Should Have Slack](#) and see whether you should.

Essentially it's Whatsapp for business. It takes the rigmarole out of organising a meeting over Outlook, and replaces the 'popping over to the desk' part of your job with a quick IM when you're working remotely.

And it comes with a whole suite of apps in the Slack app store to hack your work chat even further.

[Katella](#) – an "intelligent virtual assistant for your team" which sends your day plan first thing, finds out whether colleagues are available or not, and keeps on top of your To-Do List.

[Yala](#) – social media AI that helps you create 7 second videos, and schedules them to post on your social channels when your individual audiences are most active.

Calendar for [Gmail](#) and [Outlook](#) – manage your calendars from a chat window, sync your status, see your schedule, and respond to invitations.

[Zoom](#) – start, join, or record a video meeting within Slack, you can even screenshare to stay connected with your team.

[Polly](#) – gauge the opinions of team mates quickly without the need for protracted discussion, simply knock up a quick survey, send it, and see the results in real time.

[Zapier](#) – automate repetitive tasks with simple lines of command (like every time you receive an email attachment, convert it to a PDF without touching a button) to trim a bit of time off your remote working day.

[Giphy](#) – I told you it was WhatsApp for business, this program brings your slack messages to life by giving you access to Giphy's massive library of animated images.

Emails

Whether you're on Slack or not, I'd imagine you've got Outlook going in either a spare tab or a separate window. And if you spend a lot of time in your inbox, but haven't yet used any apps and programs to optimise that experience, these are for you.

[Spark](#) – a free app that prioritises your emails and only notifies you of the important or urgent stuff, in order to keep your inbox a bit quieter and reduce the amount you're distracted.

[Yesware](#) – with both Gmail and Outlook integrations, this tool tracks email open and reply rates, link clicks, attachment opens and presentation pageviews.

[Dropbox](#) – if you need to share a file with a colleague, don't bother emailing an attachment, sling your files in here and they're readily available and easy to find when you need them.

Meetings

Just because you aren't in the same building together doesn't mean any interaction with the team needs to be compromised.

WFH's a great way to identify meetings which really could've been an email, and which are truly vital. For those, there's plenty of resource available to you to keep communication flowing.

[Accompany](#) – recently acquired by Cisco, Accompany provides in-depth information on a company in an instant, saving you research and prep time ahead of a meeting.

[GoToMeeting](#) – a simple and effective way to host virtual meetings, set up a meeting room, email attendees a link, and make sure you look smart from the waist up.

[Houseparty](#) – a group video chat platform, the app notifies you when friends and colleagues are online and jump into a virtual face to face hangout.

[Phone Call Translator](#) – naturally there's a fee for this app, but it'll let you call anyone worldwide, in 30 popular languages, to any device.

[Meeting Owl](#) – over 20,000 companies use this product and it's easy to see why, a 360 degree camera makes your meetings a hoot and lets you reconnect with everyone in the room at once.

[Muzzle](#) – silences embarrassing notifications when you're sharing your screen, so the WhatsApp message from your other half doesn't pop up for your all to see.

[Scriberia](#) - offers a remote digital scribing service, which captures and distills meeting notes in a form that's easy to share.

Remote Office Tools

Mod cons from the office without having to step foot inside it. *Great.*

[Workfrom](#) – if you need to get out of the house but aren't sure where to get set up, this is a crowdsourced platform to help you discover the best places to work remotely in your city.

[Microsoft To-Do](#) – smart daily planning you can access anywhere, from the people who made all the other apps you use; integrates with them rather nicely, as you'd expect.

[Google Drive](#) – Or if you'd rather take advantage of a whole suite of products that do basically the same thing albeit with less functionality and more focus on user experience, el Goog have their own versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, all free and accessible from your browser.

[Beamery](#) – a CRM for recruiters who spend time on their marketing activities, the platform has a big focus on candidate experience, using AI to evaluate performance, build your brand, convert passive leads and improve conversion rates, among many other features.

[Hinterview](#) – to record and share video interviews, engage with top candidates and introduce yourself to prospective clients without the need for endless calls and emails. [Check them out on HuntEd.](#)

[Odro](#) – a video interview and messaging platform which increases the chances of reply ten fold, engages more talent, and helps you win more business. They're on HuntEd too! [Take a look.](#)

[Wurkr](#) – work together from anywhere. A video platform that replicates your physical office – online. There's screen-sharing, messaging, always-on features, the ability for external guests and visibility over the whole virtual office.

Productivity

It's one of the reasons companies give when asked why they haven't rolled out remote working across the board already, but when people aren't in the office, how do you make sure they're still productive? With these tools, that's how.

[15Five](#) – named after the 15 minutes it takes to complete a report and the five minutes it takes to read it, this gives either you or your team a macro analysis of performance each week.

[Todoist](#) – replacing your paper notebook is this smart to do list, which processes natural language to understand what priority your tasks are and when they're due.

[Any.do](#) – different programs work for different people, so while this is another digital to do list, you can access it from anywhere, including a smart speaker, and it comes with a really clean, simple interface.

[Asana](#) – a project management tool to help you stay on top of priority tasks, the Chrome extension allows you to create a workflow from any web page and share it with team mates instantly.

[Timpler](#) – another powerful, simple task manager, this one helps collect your thoughts throughout the day, organise tasks and schedule work for the future.

[OKRs App](#) – OKRs are the new KPIs, in that it's a name for you to call 'targets and performance tracking', this app promises to make hitting them more likely by helping you stay on top of them.

[Droptask](#) – a project management tool that works by dragging and (as the name would suggest) *dropping* tasks into your workflow, it's a user-friendly way of seeing all the moving parts of your business in one place.

[Effortless](#) – a nice Mac app which will focus your mind, simply set your goal, set a time limit, and go for it.

[Slash](#) – a productivity app that forces you to do one thing at a time, useful if you're in the middle of something like a meaty search, get interrupted by a phone call, and usually struggle to get back to what you were doing, this app'll sort you out.

Admin

Oh you thought working from home meant less of this? Think again, my phone bashing friend.

Admin's only boring because you have to do it. But at least these tools will make it less of a hassle while you're working from home.

[Genius Scan](#) – an app to scan documents and convert them to PDFs on the go, good for expensing receipts, or converting CVs and cover sheets.

[DashMetrics](#) – provides a live metrics dashboard for your personal brand, helping you build your social presence and understand where to win online.

[Plume](#) – a multi-room wifi tool so you don't lose connection moving round your house, it tracks your movement and reprioritises bandwidth to keep you connected, even if you're say, in the living room, and all your housemates are streaming something on Netflix.

[Time](#) – an app to both see and show how you spend your time, it tracks your productivity but also doubles as a reporting tool, so you can prove how hard you're working away from the office.

[Toggl](#) – mostly used by creative types, developers, and freelancers to account for their time, all you do is start the timer and it automatically fills out a timesheet for you.

Content

If you aren't in the office, your ability to reach people just got all the more important. And more difficult.

Words are a great way to do that. And when the physical world's compromised, it makes sense to establish yourself in the digital one. So here's how.

[Morning Reader](#) – a website [and app](#) delivering top tech and blockchain news round the clock, useful for staying in the loop generally and for sourcing articles to share with your network.

[Writefull](#) – designed to augment research writing, Writefull compares and analyses anything you've written, lets you hear it being pronounced, and even translates text into English.

[Otter.ai](#) – I personally use this all the time, it's a free program that automatically transcribes speech, which is ordinarily good for capturing meetings, but use it to record all those conversations you have with yourself and you could find you have a piece of original content, ready to share, that's already been (mostly) written for you.

[Enlight Quickshot](#) – a photoshop alternative for mobile, it's simpler to use than the desktop version, and means you can crank out quality vids without spending hours on them.

[Insense Stories Video Editor](#) – a free web-based tool that lets you upload video, trim it to fit Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat stories, and then send to your social media pages.

[Trace, by Sticker Mule](#) – instantly remove the background on any image, for free.

[The Recruitment Rollercoaster Podcast](#) – a podcast brimming with ideas for your branding, and great to pop on over a well earned lunch break so you don't get too cabin feverish.

[Hemingway Editor](#) – for those moments you can't ask the marketing person to proof read something you've written, this website will tell you how to make your copy better.

[Weava Highlighter](#) - virtual "highlighter" to help you gather colour code and organize useful information you find digitally

[Osmo Mobile](#) – stop making shaky videos, get yourself a gimble and stabilise that camera for higher quality shoots. This one's £150 but [there are plenty of alternatives too](#).

Wellbeing

Working from home has plenty of challenges. Most of which are logistical. Although hopefully you'll have negotiated some of them with a handy tech product or two.

We always say the number one tool you need to look after is yourself. And when you work remotely, it's also the number one tool you let slide.

It can be lonely, frustrating, and frankly depressing doing your job at your house. But it shouldn't be and doesn't need to. And these programs have all been designed with your wellbeing in mind.

[Headspace](#) – one of the first mainstream meditation apps to hit the market, and one of the most enduringly successful, with routines you can do anytime, anywhere.

[Calm](#) – Headspace's slightly more expensive cousin, with this app you can have celebrities read you stories to help you sleep, or take advantage of over 100 guided meditations, from Never Meditated In My Life level exercises, right the way up to more advanced stuff.

[Muse](#) – Muse, the brain-sensing headband has a free [app](#) that you can use on its own if you don't have the headband.

[Sanvello](#) – based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) this app tracks your mood, and helps you reframe the way you think about things and alter your behaviour accordingly.

[Sleep Cycle](#) – put your phone on your bedside table before bed and this app detects motion in the room during the night, which it uses to determine when you're enjoying a lighter sleep cycle, waking you up at the most pleasant time.

Family and working from home

Family life:

Keeping the kids occupied while you are all at home, and not letting their education slip, can be hard work. There are lots of free educational resources and some that have been opened up specifically to help with the coronavirus issue in this list.

These have been loosely broken down into two sections the first organised according to subject specific resources (ART, History etc.) and the second around levels of study (Primary, GCSE, 'A' Level)

Subject Specific resources

General Education

BBC Learning <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/>

- This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV licence required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

National Geographic Kids <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

- Activities and quizzes for younger kids.

Crash Course <https://thecrashcourse.com/>

- YouTube videos on many subjects

Crash Course Kids <https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids?app=desktop>

- As above but targeted to a younger audience

Maths resources

Khan Academy <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

- Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's a mostly common material.

Prodigy Maths <https://www.prodigygame.com/>

- Is in U.S. grades, but good for UK Primary age.

Beast Academy (Math) <https://beastacademy.com/>

English

Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

- Collection of free books out of copyright.

IT

Blockly <https://developers.google.com/blockly>

- Visual programming language, similar to scratch

Scratch <https://scratch.mit.edu/>

- Creative computer programming

Tynker <https://www.tynker.com/>

- Coding for Kids
Hour of code <https://hourofcode.com/uk>
- Learn the basics of coding
Lightbot <https://lightbot.com/flash.html>
- Fun coding based game (flash Based)
Code Combat <https://codecombat.com/>
- Learn Coding through gaming - for secondary school learners

Languages

- Duolingo <https://www.duolingo.com/>
- Learn languages for free. Web or app.
- Memrise <https://www.memrise.com/courses/english/>
- Courses for languages

Science & Technology

- Mystery Science <https://mysteryscience.com/>
- The Kids Should See This <https://thekidshouldseethis.com/>
- Wide range of cool educational videos
- Crest Awards <https://www.crestawards.org/>
- Science awards you can complete from home.
- iDEA Awards <https://idea.org.uk/about>
- Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.
- Tinkercad <https://www.tinkercad.com/>
- All kinds of design and making.
- Anyone studying A-Level Chemistry will find this website really helpful for learning online
<https://www.chemguide.co.uk/>

History

- Big History Project <https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>
- Aimed at Secondary age. Multi disciplinary activities.
- 12 museum tours online
<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- List of virtual museum tours

Geography

- Geography Games <https://world-geography-games.com/world.html>
- Geography gaming!
- Nat Geo Kids <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>
- Geography fun for kids.

ART

- The Artful Parent <https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/>
- Good, free art activities
- Red Ted Art <https://www.redtedart.com/>
- Easy arts and crafts for little ones
- The Imagination Tree <https://theimaginationtree.com/>
- Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.

Activity based

- Nature Detectives <https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/>
- A lot of these can be done in a garden, or if you can get to a remote forest location!

Blue Peter Badges <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges>

- If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.

Level Specific Links

Younger learners

General education & Games

Paw Print Badges <https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk/>

- Free challenge packs and other downloads. Many activities can be completed indoors. Badges cost but are optional.

Cbeebies Radio <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio>

- Listening activities for the younger ones.

Oxford Owl for <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

- Lots of free resources for Primary age

Toy Theater <https://toytheater.com/>

- Educational online games

Starfall <https://www.starfall.com/h/>

- American kindergarten educational site

Fun Brain <https://www.funbrain.com/>

- Fun Games

PBS Kids <https://pbskids.org/>

- Games for young ones

Highlights Kids <https://www.highlightskids.com/>

- Educational activities for younger learners

Maths

Splash Learn <https://www.splashlearn.com/>

- Basic maths games

CoolMath4Kids <https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>

- Maths games for kids

Math Game Time <http://www.mathgametime.com/>

- Maths games for kids

Science

Science Kids <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/>

- Fun Science and technology for kids.

Switch Zoo <https://www.switchzoo.com/>

- Animals and nature

Reading

Seussville <https://www.seussville.com/>

- Reading fun with Dr Seuss

Turtle Diary <https://www.turtlediary.com/>

- Word games - Literacy

Unite For Literacy <https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>

- Basic literature/reading for young kids

Lieractive <http://www.lieractive.com/Home/index.asp>

- Basic literature/reading for young kids

Story Time Online <https://www.storylineonline.net/>

- Collections of stories online

Key Stages

Scholastic Classroom <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

- Scholastic has created a free learn-from-home site with 20+ days of learning and activities.

DK Find Out <https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/>

- Activities and quizzes

Twinkl <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

- This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.

GCSE

Seneca <https://www.senecalearning.com/>

- For those revising at GCSE or A level. Tons of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.

British Council <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find>

- Resources for English language learning

A'Level

Seneca <https://www.senecalearning.com/>

- For those revising at GCSE or A level. Tons of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.

Apprenticeships

Codecademy <https://www.codecademy.com/learn>

- Online coding tutorials

Activities to do with kids while parents work remotely:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KCFnWreu4v7VoO3NbgP-Qcq2LyE1FvliYSoiTLRY7Qg/edit?usp=sharing>

Adult education & CPD

Futurelearn <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

- Free to access 100s of courses, only pay to upgrade if you need a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a parent account).

Openlearn <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

- Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.

Ted Ed <https://ed.ted.com/>

Educational Ted Videos

YouTube learning Channels:

- Crash Course Kids <https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids>
Science videos
- Science Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/ScienceChannel>
Science Videos
- SciShow Kids <https://www.youtube.com/user/scishowkids>
Science Videos for kids
- National Geographic Kids
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXVCgDuD_QCkI7gTKU7-tpg
- Geography Focus - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8HYERScBt-e0kV0fpe0asg>
- TheBrainScoop <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebrainscoop>
Chicago Museum video channel
- SciShow <https://www.youtube.com/user/scishow>
Science Videos for secondary learner
- Kids Learning Tube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7EFWpvc1wYuUwrtZ_BLi9A
General education
- Geek Gurl Diaries <https://www.youtube.com/user/GeekGurlDiaries>
Technology, coding videos
- Mike Likes Science <https://www.youtube.com/user/comaniddy>
Science inspired music videos
- Science Max <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbprhISv-0ReKPPyh7-Dtw>
Science Experiments
- SoulPancake <https://www.youtube.com/user/soulpancake/about>
Human experience

Psychology

Focus:

Why a tomato shaped kitchen timer is a great productivity tool. This can also link to physical health. Working from home can be way more sedentary. use the 5 minute breaks to get up and have a walk. If you monitor step count, then try to keep this at the same level as when in the office. This will benefit mental and physical health too. - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro_Technique

A useful tool for blocking distractions during working hours. If you're sitting where you would normally be looking extensively at Social media during your down time, the temptation may be strong when you should be working. This will stop you from looking at sites you know will hamper your productivity.

<https://getcoldturkey.com/>

Psychology:

Links:

Understand unwritten or 'psychological' contracts -

<https://www.alchemyformanagers.co.uk/topics/6ixdhhPwDvZFjsZc.html>

Meetings and managers - <https://www.inc.com/jason-fried/excerpt-easy-on-the-mms.html>

Two links from AIG over approaching the 'softer' side of remote working:

<http://influence.appliedinfluencegroup.com/post/102g1ba/influencing-in-isolation-practical-advice-for-succeeding-in-a-changing-environment>

<http://influence.appliedinfluencegroup.com/post/102e4jy/practicing-reciprocity>

Working from home - "Reduce the guilt" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaXvQdj74XM>

5 tips when working from home:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/digital-leaders/202003/5-tips-working-home-amid-covid-19>

Mental Health:

Top tips for managing Coronavirus anxiety:

- Wash your hands and reduce time spent in public
- Moderate your news intake, limit exposure to mass hysteria online
- When working from home or in self-isolation, arrange your space so that it's calming
- Practice deep breathing exercises or other methods of meditation
- Reach out for help: your mental health is important
- If you are struggling, you can use the Crisis text helpline on: 741741 (UK only)

Mental Health Blogs:

<https://oakwoodtraining.co.uk/coronavirus-and-my-wellbeing/>

<https://oakwoodtraining.co.uk/agilehomeflexible-working-increase-risk/>

<https://hoxby.com/blog/remote-working-coronavirus-mental-health>

Burn-out

People who work too hard -

<https://www.inc.com/jason-fried/excerpt-true-challenge-of-remote-workers.html>

Avoid burnout, Four Burners theory - <https://jamesclear.com/four-burners-theory>

General:

General 1-page guide to Collaboration -

<https://mmitii.mattballantine.com/2018/02/01/a-one-page-guide-to-collaboration/>

Mental health:

Big White Wall

Categories: Mental health, Online community

Free Big White Wall is an online community for people who are stressed, anxious or feeling low. The service has an active forum with round-the-clock support from trained professionals. You can talk anonymously to other members and take part in group or one-to-one therapy with therapists. This app has been updated and is currently under reassessment.

Catch It

Category: Mental health

Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with Catch It. The app will teach you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing. This app is currently under reassessment for Data Protection following changes introduced by GDPR.

Sleepio

Categories: Sleep, Mental health

Free in some areas

Sleepio is an online sleep improvement programme for people living in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. It has been clinically proven to help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep through the night, and give you more energy during the day if you follow the programme correctly.

The programme is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for insomnia (CBTi). You can use it to learn cognitive techniques to help tackle the racing mind and behavioural strategies to help reset sleeping patterns naturally, without relying on sleeping pills.

Student Health App

Categories: Healthy living, Mental health

Free

The Student Health App provides easy access to more than 900 pages of reliable health information all in one place. The content has been created for university students by NHS doctors and is regularly updated. Use the app to reduce your worries, feel more confident and get the support you need at what can be a challenging time for any student.

USA:

<https://www.suicidepreventionapp.com/>

The Suicide Prevention App is provided and operated by ISD Innovations, Inc., a California based federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to influencing, supporting, developing and designing projects and programs to advance social, physical and mental wellness. Apps updated, free for everyone, and without annoying adds that interrupt the experience.

Managing teams remotely when you are not used to it

Something to mitigate this:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turnpenny_wfh-workingathome-flexibleworking-activity-6645311875875692544-1IJN (all boils down to trust, or how to accept the need to implicitly trust, even if it might not have developed yet). On a side note - why do we not already trust our teams already?!

5 ways to improve communication in remote teams

These tips are taken from a research publication from MIT Sloan, the entire article is available for reading via a shared Google Drive link.

Tip 1 - Match the technology to the task

A team's communication tasks likewise vary in complexity, depending on the need to reconcile different viewpoints, give and receive feedback, or avoid the potential for misunderstanding. The purpose of the communication should determine the delivery mechanism.

So carefully consider your goals. Use leaner, text-based media such as email, chat, and bulletin boards when pushing information in one direction — for instance, when circulating routine information and plans, sharing ideas, and collecting simple data. Web conferencing and videoconferencing are richer, more interactive tools better suited to complex tasks such as problem-solving and negotiation, which require squaring different ideas and perspectives.

Tip 2 - Make intentions clear

Intentions get lost in translation for several reasons:

- People tend to be less guarded and more negative in writing.

When we cannot see the response of the person receiving the message, it's easier to say things we would not say in person.

- Negativity goes both ways.

People on the receiving end of written communication tend to interpret it more negatively than intended by the sender. Emotions are expressed and received mostly through nonverbal cues, which are largely missing from text-based communication.

- People read with different lenses.

In written messages, we often assume that others will focus on the things we think are important, and we overestimate the extent to which we have made our priorities clear. Unfortunately, it's easy for critical information to get overlooked.

To prevent these biases from causing problems on your team, ensure that you are crystal clear about your intentions.

Tip 3 - Stay in sync

When team members don't interact face to face, the risk of losing touch and getting out of step is greater. This can happen for a number of reasons.

First, when teams are not colocated, it's more difficult to tell when messages have been received and read, unless receipt is specifically acknowledged.

Second, communication failures can lead to uneven distribution of information among team members. Individuals might be excluded from an important team email by mistake,

Third, the lack of frequent in-person contact can create an out-of-sight, out-of-mind effect in which team members become distracted by local demands and emergencies and forget to keep their distant teammates informed.

Tip 4 - Be responsive and supportive

Trust between teammates in the same workspace is influenced to a large extent by familiarity and liking; however, in dispersed teams, people must signal their trustworthiness by how they work with others on a task. To help develop trust on a virtual team, encourage everyone to respond promptly to requests from their teammates, take the time to provide substantive feedback, proactively suggest solutions to problems the team is facing, and maintain a positive and supportive tone in communications.

Tip 5 - Be open and inclusive

Virtual tools reduce the social cues that help team members bond, which can diminish motivation to share ideas and information. People may also hold back when they can't directly observe teammates' reactions to their contributions.

To reap the benefits of your virtual team's diversity, focus on communicating as openly and inclusively as possible. Involve the whole team in important communications and decisions. Actively solicit perspectives and viewpoints from all team members,

LINK TO THE FULL ARTICLE:

This link contains the following two documents

1. 5 Ways to improve communication in virtual teams
2. Leading Remotely

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RVvMoEQO_4BO80o-AR3twB737wAUCy9O?usp=sharing

Checklist:

- Trust factor (CK)
- Neglect vs Overbearing
- How to check in versus diarising formal stuff (CK)
- Regular touchpoints - daily ceremonies to say hello (CK +1)
- Setting expectations - do your teams know when they are expected to be available to each other?
- Presence - now we are connected all the time, presence indicators can be less useful, but setting a precedent about how this is used can help. Using this shift in way of working to mitigate the widespread 'presenteeism' that plagues many offices - let staff get work done in the most productive way for THEM.
- Do you expect your teams to be “dressed for business” on internal calls? What is the done thing when on video calls with customers? It might be best to relax formal dress codes during this time.

Importance of cultural change for remote working teams:

<https://hoxby.com/blog/coronavirus-remote-working>

Agile and Scrum for working in remote teams

Adoption of Agile and Scrum techniques even on a small scale will help with communication, accountability, task management and focus. You don't need to go full blown agile to achieve results.

For example, a daily stand up call with a team helps focus efforts, each person speaks in turn answering these three questions:

1. What did I do yesterday?
2. What am I doing today?
3. What might stop me achieving what I want to do today?

Use a KanBan board if appropriate so there is clear sight of what's to do, what's in progress and what has been done - physical and virtual KanBan boards are options and in many cases using both achieves the best outcome.

Overview of some Agile techniques here:

<https://www.cio.com/article/3156998/agile-project-management-a-beginners-guide.html>

A daily standup call may not work in a flexible working environment. One method which is effective in our experience as a remote working team is to have a communication channel in your chosen platform (ie Slack) which is purely for daily feedback. A #huddle channel where people post what they achieved today and what they're planning to do the next working day helps to provide essential feedback to line managers and team members alike, whilst also ensuring focus on activities going forward.

Articles:

'Forming, norming, performing' for remote teams:

<https://blog.insynctraining.com/adapting-tuckmans-model-for-global-virtual-teams>

Remote Work: [Intro](#) (Events, Economy, Experiences, Policies, Environment, Stats, Sources), [Guide](#) (Remote Scale, Challenges, Benefits, Principles, Tooling, Hiring and Staffing, Onboarding, Culture,, Accountability, Communication, Collaboration, Timezones)

Publications:

Build a remote company culture:

<https://shift.infinite.red/six-ways-to-build-a-strong-remote-company-culture-df0a49b2f549>

Remote working book: <https://basecamp.com/books/remote>

<https://www.readyforremote.com/>

Free ebook on remote team management: <https://mailchi.mp/infinitered/manifesto>

Tips for remote working with Google's suite of tools:

<https://www.cloudshedtraining.co.uk/single-post/2020/03/10/Five-top-tips-for-working-remotely-with-G-Suite>

Leadership and remote teams

Being a resilient leader in difficult times:

The Six Pillars of Resiliency:

Vision

This is all about ensuring you are clear about your purpose and goals. Then ensuring you are authentic.

Vitality

You need to ensure you have enough energy by exercising, correct diet, enough sleep and using mindfulness.

Support

Having the right support in place will ensure you boost your resiliency. This comes from other leaders, peers and your network.

Composure

We are always in control of how we feel! Building your self awareness and self control is a key element of resilience.

Persistence

Your tenacity, optimism and bouncebackability all come into play here, supported by all the other elements.

Decision Making

How you solve problems, take action and move forward is key to your success. You need to build your toolkit.

Remote working framework for team leaders:

Excel spreadsheet to guide you through the first and additional weeks of remote working:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UZqD6VJjsZS_EvWAGboVpjXNC08KNUPP

How to Design Powerful Rituals for Successful Distributed Companies

Because distributed business management doesn't really differ from brick-and-mortar business management, let's focus on how distributed team management differs from that of a co-located staff. Implementing these regular habits will ensure that communication, culture, and unity stay strong within your team, regardless of where you're all located.

Daily Rituals

Team Standups. To ensure your team feels connected and supported, it's important to quickly check in with each member at least once daily. Some teams like to have a casual standup conference call, while others prefer an agile scrum on Slack. How you do it isn't important, but gauging accountability and tracking progress is. (Tip: Here at Yonder, we use an [automated slackbot](#) and love it!)

Catch up on email. Avoid future "Have you followed up on this, yet?" emails by encouraging all of your team members to zero out their inbox at the end of each workday. Trust us, your clients and vendors will notice and appreciate your team's accessibility!

Plan your tomorrow. This tried and true productivity method is easy to integrate into your team's daily routine with a slackbot.

Weekly Rituals

Casual Chats. Remote employees may need to be reminded that they work and interact with real human beings. Make sure to integrate efficient (but sincere) personal conversations into your work week by asking about kids, pets, trips, hobbies, or anything else that is exciting or unique about your coworkers. If you're not "naturally blabby," block a quick one-on-one chat with each of your team members into your calendar or randomly pair employees with each other (including yourself) to connect during a scheduled time.

Live Meetings. Every team, regardless of size, should come together at least once a week to report, plan, celebrate, and problem solve. How you connect (phone, video, in-person, or other) isn't very important, but uniting over shared experiences or goals is.

A Celebration. Recognize another stretch of a job well done with a celebration of some kind. You can start simple with extra compliments on Slack, then eventually graduate into Friday afternoon parties or breaks. Fun goals, like this, often make it worth getting through a tough few days and recharges everyone for the next week.

Monthly Rituals

Progress Reports. Voluntarily providing updates communicates trust and confidence, so make sure to offer some kind of reporting to your followers, including progress summaries, important news, and forecasting for the next month. It's up to you to decide whom to share these reports - just your team, a department, the whole company, or even your entire community. Again, the message is more important than the medium, so don't get too caught up in format or distribution tools.

Unprofessional Activity. Forget about work and deadlines and clients for a minute and just do something outrageously fun or fulfilling together. Some teams host a Fitbit challenge, slack book club, or

happy hour video call to enjoy together. Be creative. Tap into your company's branding or common interests and goals for inspiration. This will not only support your company's mission, but strengthen it.

Temperature Gauges. Check in on your team members one-by-one to get an idea of how they're doing in general. Think of it as an agile scrum, but for their big picture: Are you satisfied with your progress and accomplishments this month? What blocks are you noticing that are hindering your creativity? What can I do that might help you accomplish your goal for next month? If you choose to share responses publicly, make sure to follow up your posted response with a private message to display individual concern.

Quarterly, Semi-Annually, or Annually

Employee Evaluations. During standups and meetings, topics are usually discussed on a micro-scale, so this is a good opportunity to zoom out and look at the big picture of each worker's progress, satisfaction, concerns, and goals. To encourage transparency, create a casual and comfortable environment, be open to any responses (positive or negative), and be as honest and compassionate as you expect them to be with you.

Personal Gifts. Remind your team about how much you appreciate their work and value your professional relationship with them by *sending them a little something* every now and then. Budget these into your necessary expenses, so if a special occasion pops up or morale seems to sink, you won't have an excuse to hold back.

Company Retreats. You already know how important retreats are to the culture, workflows, and communication of a team, so we don't need to be redundant here. Suffice it to say, this is a crucial investment for the emotional and logistical functions of your team. Have fun, work hard, and watch the incredible impact that it will have on your staff when you return. Trust us.

Establishing rituals with your team might be the most direct path to becoming a more engaged and productive remote leader. With consistent habits and rituals, you will notice a higher rate of employee satisfaction and a more positive vibe to your company culture.

What happens when the tech fails... plans C and D

What now... what next?

At the point that we're working remotely because it's part of business continuity plan, then we are already on Plan B. So what comes next? How do we build contingency into remote working?

Disaster Recovery plan - review your existing disaster recovery procedures. Are they up to date? When were they last tested? In the event that offices are closed and empty for long periods security may become a risk. Is your data securely off site?

What might your tech fail?

Stress test your remote connectivity. You may have several users that already have Private Network (VPN) or other methods to remotely access your internal network - but how many people will it sustain simultaneously? Cheaper SMB routers will struggle to manage more than single digit number of connections. The slightly more advanced and commonly found Draytek 2860 router for example will support 32 simultaneous VPN connections.

Test the capability. For example, set aside two days for immediate remote working only. On day one, have all employees with existing capability work from home to ensure that the remote infrastructure is capable of dealing with that amount of traffic. On day two (after you have equipped remaining staff with the capability) have all employees work from home to fully stress your remote capability. There should be a suitable gap between the two days to enable day two to be a success (this maybe equipping some desktop/WYSE based users with laptops for example, or allowing users to use their home kit via a VDI session and writing clear instructions for use), there is no better test than actually doing it - best to test it than assume - best to test it before you must invoke a work from home policy. Start this process now.

Similarly your remote software may have limitations on licensing for the number of simultaneous users. Ask your IT provider/administrator to check your hardware limitations and software licenses. Whilst they're at it, check the router configuration is up to date and supported - VPN and security standards are updated regularly so ensure you're confirming to the latest specifications.

Your office connectivity will also need good, high speed connectivity to support many remote working tools such as remote desktop. Consider that a remote desktop connection requires approx 1.5Mbps to operate well. Typical modern Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) lines run at a maximum of 80Mbps download and 20mpbs upload (data FROM your office), many SMB connections are slower than this. If you're limited by a 20Mb upload speed you will be able to support a maximum of 13/14 full screen remote desktop connections, less if each of those users is also using the internet on their machine in the office. Check with your IT administrator what your maximum theoretical bandwidth limit is to determine how many users can be supported.

Information Security Considerations

What information are your people working with and is their home environment suitable?

Privacy - are your remote calls recorded etc and are people aware of that?

Unless you have your own secure office space - be mindful of little eyes and ears wandering in and hearing, seeing, picking up information that could be critically sensitive.

- Are your IT policies up to date to include business rules and expectations around handling of data, handling login credentials, customer data etc.
- Run a security audit to ensure the credentials to be used by your external users are strong - ideally enforce 2FA (two factor authentication) by utilising 2FA mobile applications or dongles.
- Ensure the mobile or remote access device has all security patches applied and up to date OS updates. (These may not work if your update servers are only configured to work whilst in the office).
- For new devices purchased, decide whether to enable file encryption - this will ensure your data is safe in the event of a lost device as the drive cannot be read if removed from the machine.
- Building on the above point, consider whether remote wiping/'nuking' of devices is available or worth making mandatory. (Prevents stolen devices being used as a source of your sensitive data / data of your clients)

How to engage in remote working as a freelancer

Maintaining contact with customers and continuing to provide value if you can't visit premises. Always ensure that you are visible to your team, stakeholders and those that you report to - i.e. If you are using Skype for Business or Team - always ensure the settings are correct so that it shows when you are 'available' or 'in a meeting' during business hours.

Education

Advice for schools:

General advice

From Patrick Shaw, EdTech Consultant, [@EdTechAdviceUK](#):

- Many (most?) schools have G-Suite or Office 365 deployed already, because it's free to schools - so access to remote tools is not a problem.
- **The problem** is that schools generally have not invested in the skills, expertise and pedagogies to implement/embed use of these tools. So a typical school with 800TB+ SharePoint Online storage for free, will still be using internal mapped drives to run 80% of its function. Microsoft Teams generally not embedded despite having free access.
- Email is still the key technology (Gmail or Exchange/Outlook) used by staff to communicate with staff and students. So some options here.
- **Rapid measures that schools should take to plan for remote working/learning:** (example below is Office 365, but same applies to G-Suite, acknowledgement to [@msetchell](#)):
 - **Remember Safeguarding is King.** Brief staff on approved systems use outside school to communicate with students. Shouldn't be a problem as Office 365/G-Suite is Safeguarding-safe. For protection of staff and students, unsanctioned/unmonitored systems should not be used.
 - **Have you got integration between MIS, Active Directory and Office 365/G-Suite?** Use a tool like [@SalamanderSoft](#) to automate account creation/access for all stu/staff.
 - **Have you got documents in the Cloud?** Move content from mapped drives to SharePoint/OneDrive. Verify appropriate security/permissions though.
 - **Do all your teachers have a school-assigned laptop/tablet?** If not, plan to re-assign curriculum laptops for staff access at home.
 - **If you have an RDC service, set sensible restrictions to priority users.** 1200 concurrent attempts to connect will bring down RDC services intended for 10+ users (typical).
 - **School IT Technical Support should be testing remote access tools** that can be used to remote support home-to-home, and plan to need to issue several new guides to staff and students .
 - **For teachers happy with live remote teaching,** buy them some decent headsets.
 - **Ensure your public communication channels are open,** accessible and parents know where to go for updated information/instructions (Facebook, Website, Twitter, SMS, bespoke school app).
 - **Secure access to passwords to systems off site?** Populate a secure password manager. Use a specific tool for this, like LastPass, or Dashlane. These use encryption to ensure that passwords cannot be accessed, even by their staff, without a master password. Do not lose the master password or you will lose access to the passwords. Do not use something like Google Documents or Google sheets to store passwords, these tools are not intended for such.

- **Make use of distance learning Curriculum services, eg. [GCSEPod](#).** These services are embedded maturely across schools, and they offer good realtime student progress analytics - perfect for distance learning. Doesn't replace the teacher though.
- Train teachers how to [Broadcast your PowerPoint presentation online to a remote audience](#).
- **Problems that I don't have answers to** (but probably beyond scope of IT/this document):
 - Statutory duty to maintain accurate daily attendance data? May be government will relax this? If not, what do we do?
 - Safeguarding for identified students that are safer in school than at home? Can technology help in this context?
 - Continuity of live access to School MIS (SIMS, ScholarPak, Bromcom, etc..) data is **crucial**. Some schools have had the foresight to host this in the cloud, or ensure reliable remote access, but many (most?) do not due to cost. **Can industry IT help us with this given that we're definitely not for profit?**

Making a whole school virtual:

What does virtual mean?

- **Continuity of education/learning outside of the physical school building** - that's all that matters. It's important though - statutory duty.

What do parents want from a virtual school (clue: it isn't teachers on Skype 24/7):

- **Continuity of learning, no loss of progress**, online safety, consistent and regular **2-way** communication. Informed of progress, and timely interventions when progress slows.
- **Stick to a Six point lesson plan or similar**. Don't forget your basics just because of new media, location, means of working, for example:

North Carolina 6-Point Lesson Plan

Subject:	Topic:
Teacher:	Date:

NC Standard Course of Study Objective:
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Activity	Description of Activities and Setting	Materials and Time Setting
I. Focus and Review (Establish prior knowledge)		
II. Statement (Inform student of objectives)		
III. Teacher Input (Present tasks, information, and guidance)		
IV. Guided Practice (Elicit performance, provide assessment and feedback)		
V. Independent Practice -- Seatwork and Homework (Retention and transfer)		
VI. Closure (Plan for maintenance)		

Changing to a virtual school:

Technology

Virtual meetings

- Microsoft Teams.
- Wurkr - <https://wurkr.io/>

Assessments

- Relates to “School MIS” point above.

Partners

- Most IT Support partners for schools have a good moral compass and pull out all the stops for crises, including free extra support during Ofsted inspections. COVID-19 will be no different.
- Large IT Support companies are well-placed to flex their resource as they become more in demand.
- However - at least 50% of schools are supported by much smaller, well-meaning IT Support companies, that I believe will struggle under the enormous extra IT demands if schools close in huge numbers.
- Email / Microsoft Teams.
- Personal plea - Having Office 365 / G-Suite for free in schools is great, but it's had the impact of eliminating its perceived value, so school leadership teams have felt little pressure to invest in skills, expertise and pedagogies to implement/embed use of these tools. If you have valuable experience embedding/developing staff with Office 65 / G-Suite within corporate /commerce/ industry, then please get yourself on school local governing boards and help set the IT agenda for school leadership teams.

Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19

<https://www.mapping-access.com/blog-1/2020/3/10/accessible-teaching-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

- Getting ready to use video conference tools as a classroom on limited bandwidth connections
- Turn off your computer's cloud back-up service such as Box Sync or Google Drive Sync
- Turn off any software automatic updates. They eat bandwidth. Save software updates for overnight or the weekend.
- Turn off your mobile phone's wireless connection & other devices in your house that will suck your bandwidth dry.
- Ask others in the house to not use the internet during video conference meetings.
- Limit the number of browser tabs. Lots of web pages like to automatically and periodically "phone home" creating extra traffic.
- Close as much desktop software as possible during video conferencing for the same reason as limiting the number of browser tabs.
- If you share a screen, share the smallest screen available. Less pixels to render across the network.
- If using my camera in a video chat, make sure the room lighting is steady and use a plain wall in the background. Movement and lighting changes force more pixel value changes to be calculated and sent across the network. Trust me on this one. I've seen it happen more than once where the sun streaming through a window keeps peeking in and out behind clouds and the video gets all blurry and choppy.
- Use a headset with a microphone, if possible, to reduce background noise and to hear other participants better.
- Where possible use a wired over a wireless connection when using video & audio. The connection quality is significantly higher

- Be understanding/empathetic that there is a lag between your spoken words, and the students/other hearing it.
- Be understanding/empathetic that students' home situations are not the same as a classroom. Background noise, children, etc. Many faculty and students are new to virtual classrooms.
- Consider your video conferencing technology's "mute" functions. Take some time to learn what options are available.

[a]No mention of Skype? It's something most people seem to have. My company's cancelled live meetings and going to try it next week - but not sure whether to use voice only or video. Some kind of information link on this sort of practical thing would be good.

[b]Add it!

[c]Why? If you say this, provide an explanation of the added value. Zoom is not entirely free. What about open source options like <https://bigbluebutton.org/>.

[d]Google have made some of their tools free until July

<https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/g-suite/helping-businesses-and-schools-stay-connected-in-response-to-coronavirus>

Apprenticeships & General FE

Toolkit/Hardware/physical location

Dual monitor if possible (for instance a laptop and external screen) - This allows you to have materials on one screen and the presentation on another. Share whichever is smallest, set that to one side, have the largest screen directly in front and the webcam directly on top. Set your PowerPoints being set to the presenter view, the presenter view should be on your main screen, the one with the webcam. share the second screen.

Webcam - you're going to establish rapport via the camera so it's important you can position this in front of you. Always use video, Always, or you'll spend half the sessions wondering if they're still there.

Microphone - if a headset then ensure it's close enough for good audio and not so close that all everyone can hear is you breathing.

No Background distractions - Ensure as plain a background as you can from where you're delivering, this will minimise distractions.

Good internet is vital - wired is vastly superior to wireless for anything which requires real-time interaction.

Check your bandwidth with <https://www.speedtest.net/>

Standard definition video-sharing ~4Mbps

High Definition ~8Mbps

Virtual classrooms

It probably sounds impossible but if done correctly this will allow you to add to their learning techniques which aren't possible within a regular classroom.

Establish connectivity with learners beforehand. Make sure they can connect with Audio and Video before the session so that if they need any technical support etc. this can be dealt with prior to the session. You don't want technical problems when you're supposed to be teaching.

Have a clearly structured Presentation. The best approach is to Time Chunk, kind of basic but takes on a whole new level of significance when your audience isn't quite so captive.

Establish ground rules for the session - online etiquette. This will be new to both sides so ground rules will be appreciated all round.

- Mute microphones if not speaking
- Raise your hand if wanting to speak.
- Don't ask open questions, have a rota of who is asked, everyone trying to speak at once in a virtual classroom is bedlam.
- Ensure that your learners are set to mute when they enter the room to minimise distractions.

Look directly at the camera to establish eye contact and build rapport. ensure you are far back enough to get a range of non-verbal feedback. It can also mean that as you're looking into the camera you're looking directly at each learner and can actually establish more rapport than in a classroom.

Speak and engage with learners as though you were in class. Don't get too concerned with the new medium, it's still the transfer of ideas from one human to a group of others, not as much has changed as it might appear.

Use names a lot more as you're looking at a camera and they're looking at a screen, they may have no idea who you're really looking at or talking to unless you explicitly state their name.

Ensure sessions are recorded and the recordings shared with learners. This is important for learners who might lose connections etc.

SEND - use dyslexic friendly fonts and colours. use pictures and not lots of text. Any learners who might have unidentified learning difficulties might find their coping strategies stop working in this new environment.

<https://www.dafont.com/lexia-readable.font>

Tools:

Socrative - <https://socrative.com/#login>

- Polling
- Quizzes
- Exit tickets

Ziteboard - <https://app.ziteboard.com/> - Interactive/collaborative whiteboard

Miro - <https://miro.com>

Class flow - <https://classflow.com/en-gb/> - manage class activities online

Screencast-o-matic - <https://screencast-o-matic.com/> - create screen recordings, for creating content

Session Planning

Make use of their workspace. In a virtual classroom, you can take advantage of their surroundings. Doing a session on health and safety? then add a ten-minute activity where they have to go around their workplace and take pictures of hazards? There will be things you can do virtually which are impossible in a regular classroom environment.

Time Chunk If you're presenting as a video then you're competing with ted talks and youtube. The Pomodoro technique can be excellent for this. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro_Technique

Break your lesson into 30-minute slots, give each an objective. roughly 10 minutes delivery of theory, 10 minutes activity/consolidation, 5 minutes checking learning and 5-minute discussion repeat per objective. The activity can be something simple as a discussion, the use of interaction and discussion is more important with remote learning as it can be more anti-social both for the teacher and the learner. plan for interaction and discussion but control it well.

Start the session a few minutes early so that everyone can be in and ready to start, and any technical issues don't impact the session. 10 minutes is usually enough.

End with an exit ticket

Socrative does a good online exit ticket, which lets you do a basic assessment of how well learning has gone.

online courses and resources

There are a variety of resources which might help learners with the technical subjects being delivered. These can help significantly with activities and the 20% OJT.

Populate Links here:

e-learning

If you have a VLE then it will be its time to shine.

Moodle is free and reasonably easy to set up

https://docs.moodle.org/38/en/Step-by-step_Installation_Guide_for_Ubuntu

Remote 1-2-1s & Mentoring

You can use remote software to engage in virtual mentoring sessions rather than face to face visits. Note that the current exceptional times may well present unique situations/experience for learners. They could be asked to step up in the face of staff absences, they could be dealing with a lot of Activities which are unique to disaster management. You can get them to record video for this and submit it into their portfolios. Especially those on project management or CyberSecurity Technologist (Risk Analyst)

Assessments and End Point assessments

These will still need to be done in a controlled environment and supervised. With the current situation, the government will allow apprentices to have a break in learning if they cannot be assessed due to coronavirus

A brief note on security

the temptation to collaborate can lead to documents being shared via dropbox etc. which should not be shared via that means. e.g. PII being shared via dropbox to get to a remote worker. Do not do this.

Your team

'Forming, norming, performing' for remote teams:

<https://blog.insynctraining.com/adapting-tuckmans-model-for-global-virtual-teams>

Links:

Leading EdTech Strategists/Consultants based in Midlands area - cooperative approach to sharing good practise for benefit of all Multi Academy Trusts/schools nationally:

[@EdTechAdviceUK](#), [@NeilLimbrick](#), [@MSetchell](#), [@PShawLtd](#)

Provider of Community Portals for most of UK's regional networks of School Business Managers (owned by Neil Limbrick). SBMs are charged with coordinating school decision-making re: COVID-19 for all schools/MATs:

[@EducationCol](#)

Essential tool for checking how safe apps/services are for different age groups as part of schools' statutory Safeguarding duty. Could be important if teachers are forced to divert from usual tools available in schools.

<https://www.common sense media.org/>

Consider less well connected pupils at this time:

<http://joanganzcooneycenter.org/2016/10/26/reframing-the-digital-divide-why-quality-of-access-matters/#.XmkGxt1mWLQ.twitter>

Remote worker resources

Resources for designers:

Designers In Need of Work

If you need to hire a designer - please select one of these talented people whose work has been affected by the coronavirus:

Need work:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/1/d/1g1kDk2Mm4eU1uLWEmsBGVR89yi1J83UBcJea6rbmHvA/edit#gid=0>

Available for work:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1I4TXsKZKEaO_2BJcxBiIAJNt5aXOFD6GjsEol8gCziw

Remote Job Boards

There are a growing number of remote dedicated sites.

- Remote - <https://remote.com/remote-jobs>
- Remote IO - <https://www.remote.io/>
- Remote Hub - <https://remotehub.io/>
- Pro Remote Jobs - <https://proremotejobs.com/>
- Remote OK - <https://remotek.io/hire-remotely>
- Remotive - <https://remotive.io/>
- We Work Remotely - <https://weworkremotely.com/>
- Working Nomads - <http://www.workingnomads.co/jobs>
- Authentic Jobs - <https://authenticjobs.com/#types=7,1&category=3&onlyremote=1>
- Hire Academics - <https://twitter.com/hireanacademic>

Job Sites Around the World

Add 'Remote Work' to your status, location, bios or account name. Or filter by 'remote' work.

Jobs Boards - Companies share their job opportunities:

- The Dots - <https://the-dots.com/jobs/search>
- Glassdoors - <https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Job>
- Dribbble - <https://dribbble.com/jobs>
- Behance - <https://www.behance.net/joblist>
- Malta - <https://www.malt.com/>
- Angel List - <https://angel.co/jobs>

Design Directories - Designers share their portfolios + availability:

- YunoJuno - <https://www.yunojuno.com/>
- Black Book - <https://www.blkbnk.co/>
- Ilovecreatives - <https://ilovecreatives.com/>
- Women Who Design - <https://womenwho.design/>
- People Per Hour - <https://www.peopleperhour.com/>
- My Opportunity - <https://www.myopportunity.com/>
- Topal - <https://www.toptal.com/>
- Working not Working - <https://workingnotworking.com/>

Remote Arts & Cultural Activities

Don't get board! Organise a #remotedate with a friend, family, colleague or a crush during this time of self isolation

Check out this list of virtual entrainment #stayathome

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19PD7Kil-WAhk30kqV3jCnuyZ5wAsZUyj_gpyqAh-5rk/edit#gid=0

Remote Resources

Remote Design Podcasts

- [Remoter Podcast](#)

Remote Friendly Companies

- Extensive list here: <https://github.com/jessicard/remote-jobs>

Consult remotely

- Provide your expertise to people around the world via [Clarity.fm](https://clarity.fm)

Data on remote working:

Surveys:

Buffer 2019 remote work survey: <https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-work-2019>

Physical fitness and exercise

When exercising from home

With thanks to James Neil Thomas (Personal Trainer / Gym Manager at the Ministry of Justice)

Health & Safety

- Make sure the space you are using is clear of any sharp corners and objects
- Make sure you are wearing clothing that is suitable - i.e. breathable, loose.
- If you decide not to wear trainers make sure you wear either non-slip socks or exercise on a non-slip floor
- All you need is roughly a 1m x 1m space
- Open windows for ventilation
- If the heating is on you will want to turn it down a little so that you do not over heat. Also, take others into consideration when setting the temperature
- Make sure you keep yourself hydrated.
- Secure anything that could potentially fall and break (especially anything of sentimental value)
You don't want to be the person who starts any arguments:-)

Exercises - Pyramid circuit

Pyramid circuit training involves adding or subtracting: exercises, repetitions, rest periods or changing the weight after every round or set. Using Pyramid workouts is an effective way to get more out of your workouts and to add in a little fun along the way.

Start doing each set of exercises once, for 20 secs, then for 40, then for 60, then for 40, then for 20, and do this twice.

Or you can increase reps and then decrease them again on the way down.

Beginners to intermediate

- Walking on the spot (warm up)
- Press ups
- Reverse curls
- Squats
- Tricep Extension with a towel
- Bicep curl with a 1ltr or 2ltr bottle of water

Intermediate circuit

- Jogging on the spot (warm up)
- Plank to press 5 x each arm
- Reverse curls
- Lunges
- Tricep extension with towel

- Bicep curl into Arnie press (with water bottles)
- Mountain climbers

Advanced

- Mountain climbers
- Press-ups -narrow / wide
- Reverse curls
- Squat Thrusts
- Tricep extension with towel
- Bicep curl into Arnie press (with water bottles)
- Side plank
- Burpees

Tips

Doing something is better than nothing - walk round the garden, climb the stairs, do some press-ups, just don't spend all day sitting in the same position. Youtube is also a great resource for relaxing workouts such as yoga as well as dance workouts which can also get you energized and in an upbeat mood, depending on what you need. Simply search for the workout you are interested in, and the length of time you would like to work out for e.g "30minutes Afrobeat workout", "20 minute dancehall workout", "15 minute abs workout" etc.

Keep moving every hour - set a small goal to achieve instead of a big workout

Set a reminder to go off every hour, named after the exercise you need to complete

([Alarmed ~ Reminders + Timers on the App Store](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/alarmed-reminders-timers/id371886784) apps.apple.com › app › alarmed-reminders-timers can help you do this)

Useful exercise links:

Exercises to increase strength:

<https://breakingmuscle.com/fitness/increase-strength-by-integrating-yoga-10-essential-postures-for-strength-athletes>

Alarmed (for hourly alarms) App:

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/alarmed-reminders-timers/id371886784>

Beginners kettlebell workshop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnyanarNAAM>

50 Exercises for a Bodyweight Workout You Can Do Anywhere:

<https://greatist.com/fitness/50-bodyweight-exercises-you-can-do-anywhere>

Bodyweight exercises for runners:

<https://www.runnersworld.com/training/g23341982/best-bodyweight-exercises/>

Free exercises for the (semi) serious:

<https://www.bodybuilding.com/content/avoiding-the-gym-heres-a-week-of-free-follow-along-workouts.html>

Exercise and your mental state

Isolation is a perfect opportunity to take time for yourself. Think of it as a holiday at home, some much deserved time off from the demands of everyday life. Remember this will all blow over, nothing is forever. But in the meantime be patient, kind and gentle with yourself. One of the most kind and beneficial things one can do for oneself is to learn to relax more easily and more deeply. Luckily there are infinite resources online which can help one learn this skill. In fact you're spoilt for choice, so I've included below a few short videos which I've found to be the greatest introduction to the practice. Even done once, these practices can have a radical effect on your mental and physical health and wellbeing. I hope you enjoy them.

Mindfulness based stress reduction body scan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kFWd4wvi18>

This short video walks you through awareness of your body, it can be done laying in bed, or on the floor and only takes 30 minutes.

Mindfulness based stress reduction yoga 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pYoDdUijY8

Mindfulness based stress reduction yoga 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PElmyy_kwN0

These two very gentle and very easy yoga classes can be done by anyone, on the floor or seated, each one is only 30 minutes and provides enough movement to feel yourself in your body and reconnect with what matters in the present.

Kelsang Jampa Guided Meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz57mdSPgMI&t=1s>

A 15 minute minimally guided meditation which can be done sat down or laid on your back.

Free Yoga Nidra app

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/yoga-nidra-relaxation-lite/id444707986>

This app is very simple, it has a single button you can push for a ten minute body scan meditation that can be done laying down in bed or on the floor. I recommend doing this just before you sleep and/or when you first wake up. Even one use is enough to feel deeply relaxed but daily practise is where the lasting benefits are found.

10% Happier (normally a subscription platform) is offering free daily meditation sessions:

<https://www.tenpercent.com/live>

YouTube Remote Work Survival Kit

YouTube Remote Work Survival Kit exercise playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNUD4vYrg0ze71wl1kVXfPNobRkrvXgva>

Media and Links

YouTube remote work playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNUD4vYrg0zchOY7Se1KI7i6ucw48oFdP>

UK media say:

Daily Mail Femail article:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8095501/British-workers-share-tips-working-home.html>

Refinery29: Tips for Working from Home during Coronavirus:

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/03/9538846/work-from-home-coronavirus-tips>

New York Times: Sorry, but Working From Home Is Overrated:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/technology/working-from-home.html>

BBC News: Tricks and Tools for Better Working From Home:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51804354>

Guardian emotionally preparing for a locked down family:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/the-family-lockdown-guide-how-to-emotionally-prepare-for-coronavirus-quarantine>

Home Working News feed from aggregator:

<https://www.newsnow.co.uk/h/?search=Work+from+home&lang=en&searchheadlines=1>

Will the Coronavirus Response Mark a Turning Point for How Agencies View Remote Work?

<https://www.adweek.com/agencies/will-the-coronavirus-response-mark-a-turning-point-for-how-agencies-view-remote-work/>

Generic articles (useful, but general, advice):

General:

Do's and do not's of remote working:

<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/the-dos-and-do-nots-of-remote-working>

Coping with Coronavirus anxiety:

<http://www.alibinns.co.uk/resources/2020/3/11/how-to-cope-with-anxiety-about-coronavirus-cov-19>

[Owning It: Covid19 anxiety coping skills](#)

How coronavirus could force the work-from-home movement:

https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/2/26/21153343/coronavirus-covid-19-work-from-home-remote-pandemic?utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin

Articulate have made this open, general e-learning guide to Coronavirus for any org to use to inform their staff: <https://examples.rise.com/coronavirus/index.html#/>

Coronavirus: Four things to consider when encouraging home working:
<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/coronavirus-home-working-considerations/>

Did you know Deliveroo have a 'contact free' option:
<https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/techcrunch.com/2020/03/12/europes-deliveroo-and-glovo-switch-on-contactless-delivery-during-covid-19-pandemic/amp/>

Stress-testing your freelancing against coronavirus:
<https://theprofessionalfreelancer.substack.com/p/stress-testing-your-freelancing-against?token=eyJ1c2VyX2lkIjoxOTg5OTM2LCJwb3N0X2lkIjozMTE0MzEsl8iOiJiZnVvRSIsImhhdCI6MTU4NDA5NTg1OSwiZXhwIjoxNTg0MDk5NDU5LCJpc3MiOiJwdWltNTM4MyIsInN1Yil6InBvc3QtcmlhY3Rpb24ifQ.lenPq5xQg9-igkKi-RuibmMdx3dxsVe54J6AAsjgFY>

Trello board of remote working ideas and links curated by Joanna Choukeir
<https://trello.com/b/eihCrJNd/covid19-uk-toolkit>

List of free elearning resources around coronavirus and best behaviours:
<https://www.learninglight.com/coronavirus-elearning-courses-resources/>

General suggestions for content:

-Digital accessibility best practice: try to avoid pasting long hyperlinks into documents, instead embed links into text. A good source of guidance for this can be found on [the University of Minnesota's Accessibility web page](#). This helps the document to look more aesthetic and it's also beneficial to people who use assistive technology.

Backlog of things to do:

Taxonomy:

- Add Sections e.g. Education, Transport
- Add Specifics by role e.g. worker, manager, owner...
- Add Specifics by organisation e.g. school, business...
- Add specifics by business: e.g. law firm

Styling

How to...

Campaign to share, what to share, who with

Add GP surgery section including that virtual meeting tool

Health and Well-being - anyone have any HR specialists that would be willing to talk about anxiety, fitness, counselling approaches especially for managers managing teams.

Virtual team meeting etiquette guide. E.g. formal meeting Vs friendly catch up.

- It's not the same as being in a room with people.
- Formal meeting, have an agenda
- If in a multiparty meeting mute your microphone if not talking.
- Meeting chair keep an eye/ ear to make sure everyone is engaged
- Limit the numbers if you want discussion.
- If you are doing a broadcast to a team, allow for feedback and comments. Often written feedback in the meeting chat function is OK.
- Communicate cancellations or postponements to meetings, preferably ahead of time. Nothing quite raises anxiety levels than waiting on a call for someone not planning to attend.

Contributors:

Below is the list of those who have voluntarily contributed to the Remote Work Survival Kit and have also volunteered to provide their details.

Due to the rapidity and scale of this collaboration, it is possible that this is not a comprehensive list of contributors. It is also not a space to sell, spam or plug, rather an opportunity to demonstrate the critical mass and the proof that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

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Finally:





Remote Working

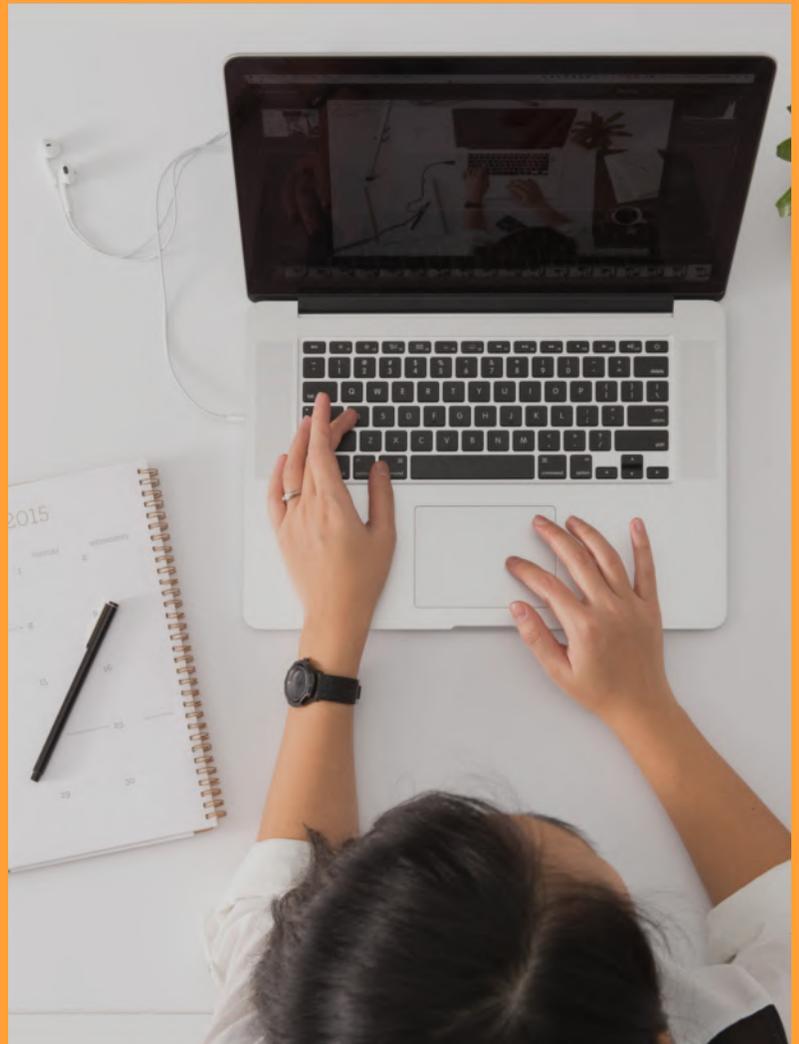
The Ultimate Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Myths About Remote Working	02
How to Succeed as a Remote Worker	04
How to Find a Remote Job	22
How to Prep for a Remote Job Interview	26
Conclusion	27
About Us	28

Remote working is becoming an increasingly popular method of working. It is predicted that by 2027, [the majority](#) of the US workforce will be working remotely. The office work lifestyle is familiar to most people: get dressed in your company clothes, commute to work, work in a room with a few other people, take scheduled breaks, et cetera. But remote workers don't encounter most of those situations. They don't need to get dressed in company attire or commute to work. But it can be difficult for remote workers to navigate working away from the office. Best practices are not as well defined because remote working — at least in its current form — is still relatively new, so it can be difficult to know how you should act as a remote worker.

There is no single formula for how to become an efficient remote worker. Everyone will work at different times and have different tips on how to make the most of their time.



Indeed, one of the major benefits of remote work is the flexibility it affords. That said, there are a few common practices you can expect to use as a remote worker.

In this guide, we've compiled the best practices for remote workers, ranging from how to participate in meetings to how you can find a job as a remote worker. If you're working from home or aspire to do so, this guide is for you.

Myths About Remote Working

Before we explore how you can become a great remote worker, we should first look at some of the myths about working remotely. Indeed, many people are skeptical about remote working, and some of that skepticism has led to myths being spread which paint an inaccurate picture of the true nature of remote work.

Here are a few of the myths remote workers often hear and why they're misguided:

Myth #1: Remote Workers Need to Prove They Work

In a traditional workplace, your boss can easily find out if you're working. Your boss can walk up to your desk and look at your computer screen or she can call you into her office to discuss what you're working on. However, this is not the case if you're a remote worker. Your boss can't easily check up on you. As a result, many people believe remote workers need to consistently prove they're working so their boss knows they're doing their job.

This myth is dangerous because it leads people to believe they need to be always-on and respond to every email or notification as soon as possible. Many remote workers tend to be available almost all of the time so they don't build the impression they're not working as they should be. This can cause a number of problems.

Firstly, remote workers can often find it difficult to do any deep work when they are thinking about the fact that others may want to know if they are working. Secondly, responding to notifications during every moment you have can make it difficult for you to achieve a good work-life balance.

Remote workers are the same as regular workers. They have to work the same hours, and they have the same work to do. Sure, they're not in an office, but that doesn't mean they need to constantly prove they're working. If you feel you need to prove that you work, realize this: the proof lies in your outputs. Don't feel that you need to prove you're working every moment of the day. If you can meet your goals for the week, everyone will know you've been working. Also, you should set aside some time in your calendar for deep work and tell your coworkers you won't be available during that time. Or set your status on Slack when you're working on something and do not want to be distracted.

Myth #2: Remote Workers Are Available All Day

Many people assume that working remotely means you are available all the time. After all, if you work from home and spend a lot of time in your home, then it seems reasonable to assume you would be happy to work or respond to a message outside of traditional office hours. However, this is completely false. This myth has caused many remote workers to spend more time working than they need to. This is because their home is their office, and when they're at home, they feel as if they should be working like they would in an office.

If you're a remote worker, you should set office hours just like everyone else. Those hours may be different than others — for example, you may like to set aside two hours each evening to work — but you need to establish them. And make sure everyone knows when you will be working. Take the lunch breaks you need and move away from your work computer after hours. Don't respond to messages if you're in the middle of watching a movie before you go to bed — create a barrier between work and the rest of your life.

Myth #3: Remote Workers Are Lazy

This myth follows from the myth that remote workers need to prove they're always working. Many people believe that if someone is not sitting at a desk in an office, then they are not actually working. However, this myth is also false.



Just because you're not sitting in an office, that does not mean you're incapable of doing great work. If a remote worker spends time setting good goals and deadlines, and they keep the team updated with their progress, there is no reason to assume they're lazy.

Further, people can be lazy in an office too. Most office workers will be able to name a few occasions where either they or one of their coworkers has become distracted and accomplished very little in a day because they were tired or bored. The best way you can address this myth is to work hard and do your best to meet your goals. When you have proof you've been working, nobody can dispute that you've been productive. Interestingly, the Global Workplace Analytics Costs and Benefits survey found that teleworkers in a large number of companies are actually between **35 and 40 percent** more productive than those working in an office.

How to Succeed as a Remote Worker

In the past two years, there has been a 79 percent increase in LinkedIn job posts advertising flexible work arrangements, which means more remote workers are expected to enter the workforce soon. Although it takes some practice, it is possible to become a successful remote worker who has a good work-life balance.

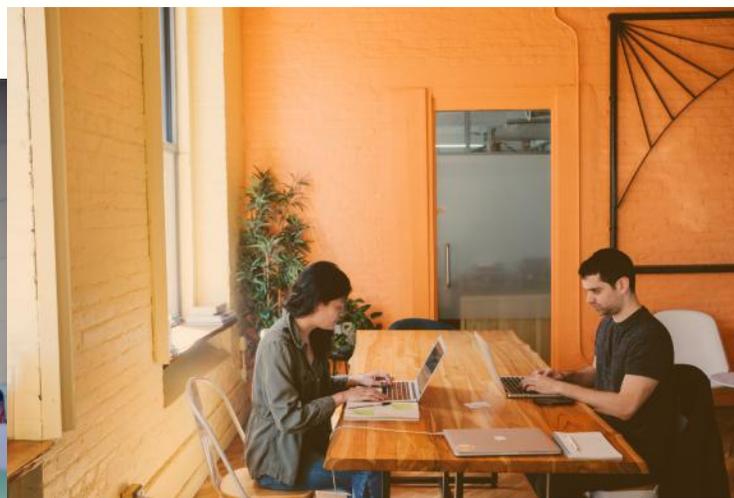
Remote working is very different from working in an office, so there are a few things you'll need to be aware of to ensure you're an effective contributor as a remote worker. In this section, we've broken down a few of the key elements of remote working and shared how you can overcome the core challenges associated with being a remote worker.

How to Succeed as a Remote Worker



Experiment With Your Work Setup

As a remote worker, you have a lot of flexibility over how you work. Whereas a traditional office-bound worker would have to work at a certain desk and wear certain clothes, you have more freedom over your choices in where you work, what you wear, and other aspects of the job. One of the first things you should do as a remote worker is experiment with a few different work setups to see which one works best for you. Office workers have a specific set of standards they have to meet and a certain schedule, but you have the ability to choose how your schedule is set up.



It can be easy to assume remote working means you sit at a desk and stay there for hours until you have accomplished all of your tasks. However, this does not set you up for success. You'll quickly get tired and bored of your work, and you may even burn out. So, you should spend time trying out a variety of different setups as a remote worker so you can be as successful as possible. The best way you can avoid burning out or getting into a rut is to try out new things and see what works best for you.

The first thing you can experiment with is when you start. Try starting early in the morning and working through the early afternoon; try working a few hours in the morning and a few in the evening. If you're an early riser, you can work more hours during the day; if you're a night owl, you may want to stay up late to get your work done. You can also experiment with working from different places, such as a co-working space or a cafe, and see whether you're more or less productive when you're not bound to a desk in your house.

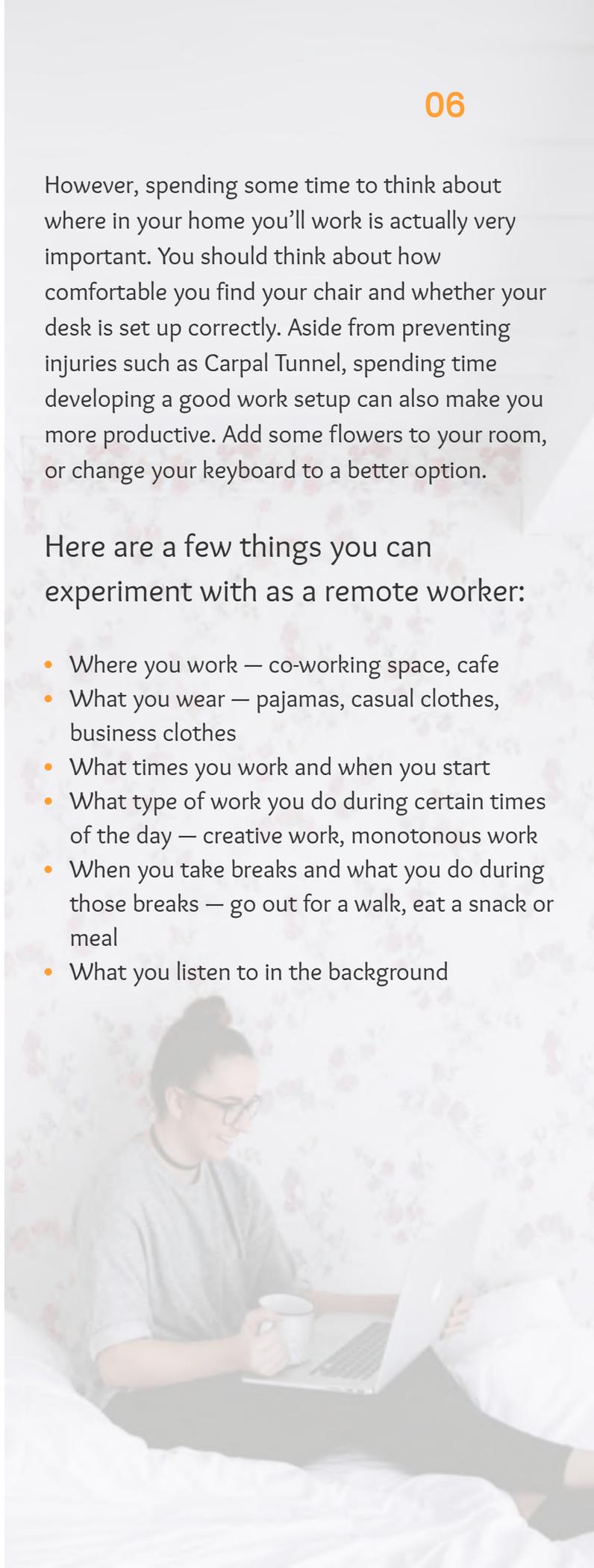
Another thing you should consider is at what times of the day you find it easy to do certain tasks. I prefer to do my creative work — writing — in the morning, when I'm most awake and alert. Then, I do my administrative work in the afternoon and during the evening. You should figure out when you would prefer to do creative and administrative work and develop your schedule around that. Try different break times and work intervals to figure out what's best for you.

You should also spend some time working on your home office setup. According to Buffer's [State of Remote Work 2019](#) report, 84 percent of remote workers work from home. But not everyone has a good work setup. Many remote workers — myself included — have at least once felt they should just sit at a desk in their house and work without customizing your workspace.

However, spending some time to think about where in your home you'll work is actually very important. You should think about how comfortable you find your chair and whether your desk is set up correctly. Aside from preventing injuries such as Carpal Tunnel, spending time developing a good work setup can also make you more productive. Add some flowers to your room, or change your keyboard to a better option.

Here are a few things you can experiment with as a remote worker:

- Where you work — co-working space, cafe
- What you wear — pajamas, casual clothes, business clothes
- What times you work and when you start
- What type of work you do during certain times of the day — creative work, monotonous work
- When you take breaks and what you do during those breaks — go out for a walk, eat a snack or meal
- What you listen to in the background



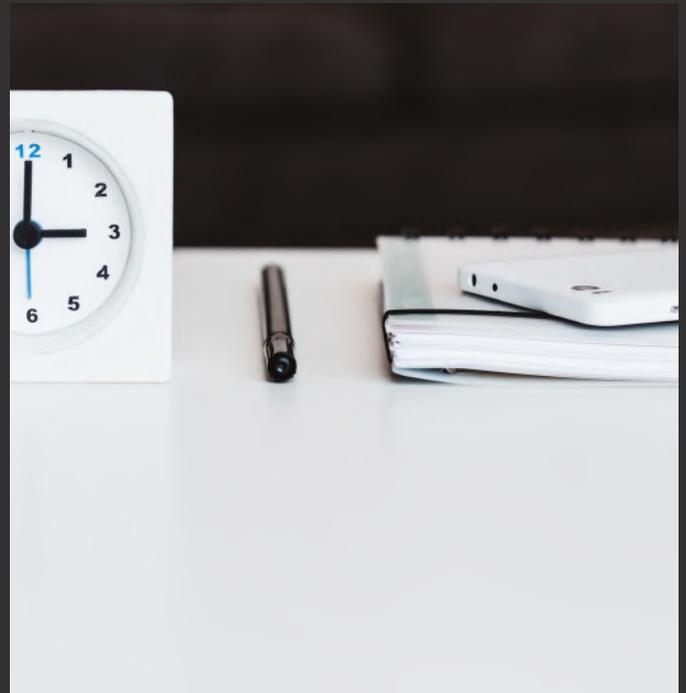
Create Work Boundaries

It can be easy for remote workers to lose their grasp of a work-life balance. Because many remote workers work from home, many begin to associate being at home with working. You wake up and start working, and you don't want to stop because you're still in your office — your home. But this is not sustainable. As a remote worker, it's crucial that you develop boundaries between your work and the rest of your life. If you don't, you can work too much and end up feeling as though you are bored of your work.

Here are a few tips on how to create good boundaries between work and home:

1. Establish Clear Office Hours

Even though you're not working from an office, you should still set up some office hours. Decide what times you'll be working and when you finish for the day. And when you're finished, make sure you do not complete any more work tasks. The more you get used to having office hours, the easier it will be for you to transition from working to relaxing after your work day is finished.



You should also share your office hours with your family. Because you work from home, they may feel as if you're always available. Make sure they understand that you do need to work during certain times of the day, and give them a schedule of when you will be working if they need it. This will reduce the chance a family member calls you up to do something for them when you're supposed to be doing deep work.

2. Create a Dedicated Workspace

It can also be helpful to set up a dedicated place where you'll work from during your day. Many remote workers decide to work from their regular desk because everything is already set up. However, this often results in the lines between working and doing other things become blurred — you quickly associate sitting at your desk with both working and relaxing.

You should try to set up a specific place in your house where you work, which is different from where you relax. Don't work on your couch if that is also where you go and watch television. Rather, work from a table or a desk somewhere in your house so you know that when you sit down in that spot, you should get to work.

3. Use Props

Some remote workers use an object to help trick their brain into thinking it is time for work and time to relax. For example, you could wear a certain pair of shoes during the time you are supposed to work. Over time, your body will get used to the fact you wear those shoes when you work, and so when you are not wearing those shoes, your brain will know it is time for you to relax. This could be anything, whether it be shoes, a shirt, or something else.



4. Turn Off Notifications

When you receive a notification, you can often feel as if you should respond to it immediately. Even when a notification is not important, our brain can feel tempted to respond because doing so feels great — we have accomplished another task. However, this can make it difficult for you to develop a balance between work and life. Therefore, you should turn off your notifications for work-related tasks at certain times of the day. After your office hours are complete, you should set your Slack or other chat app to “do not disturb” and do the same on any other applications you use for work. Many tools also allow you to set a work schedule so this will happen automatically.

If you turn off your notifications when you're not working, it will be easier for you to relax. You will not have to feel as if you're always working, and after the day is over you won't have to worry about another notification that may arise and make you feel stressed. If you are finding this difficult, you may want to tell your co-workers that you're going to turn off your notifications during certain times. And you can tell them that if they need you urgently — for a real emergency — then they can contact you in a certain way, such as calling you directly on the phone. Also, telling coworkers you're going to turn off your notifications can act as a source of accountability. If you do respond, a co-worker might ask why you didn't just wait until your office hours started.

Prepare for Your Meetings

Meetings are an important part of remote working. While chat applications such as Slack are good for communicating, these platforms lack many of the benefits of a traditional meeting. For example, it can be difficult to detect tone in a Slack chat — two people could interpret a message in two different ways — whereas it's easier to detect tone when you see someone's face and can hear their voice. Thus, it's important to set yourself up for success in your remote meetings.

The first thing you should do is leverage video as much as possible. In person, you know if someone isn't focusing on a meeting — they will be focusing on something else or may look tired. Although it's more difficult to detect if someone is focused during a remote call, it's still possible. However, without video, the person on the other end of the call could be doing anything — making lunch, preparing to go out for a run, et cetera. So, you should try to keep your cameras on during your remote calls. Doing so will not only allow you to show the other person you're focused on the meeting, but it will also help you stay fully engaged with the call.

Also, this may seem obvious, but you should wear good clothes when you're on a video call. Many remote workers often wear a shirt and pajamas on the bottom. However, this can lead to embarrassing moments if you have to stand up and do something else. Make sure you're always wearing professional clothes in calls.

It is also important for you to set up your camera correctly. We send up to 10,000 non-verbal cues per minute in face-to-face interaction. Thus, turning on your camera is an essential part of effectively communicating with your team. Make sure your room has adequate lighting so people can see your face and that your full face is visible. You may want to try out a few different setups to ensure the person on the other end of the call can see you easily. This will also make the call less awkward — if you can't see someone's hair, you will be tempted to think about it rather than the content of the call.

We send up to 10,000 non-verbal cues per minute in face-to-face interaction.



There are a few other things you should keep in mind when participating in a remote call.

1. Focus on the Call

It can be tempting to send an email or read through Slack while you're on a call. However, this will make it more difficult for you to focus on the call and retain important information. In addition, hearing someone do something else on the other end of a call can make the other person feel as if they're not being valued because nobody is listening fully to what they are saying. Try to focus solely on the call at-hand. Take notes if you need to, but be sure to do so with a notepad so you are less likely to be distracted by something else.

2. Everyone Should Be Remote

Remote meetings can be difficult if half of the team is in an office and the other half is working remotely. The people in the room will be tempted to start talking among themselves and may forget to fully involve all of the people dialing in remotely. If you're attending a remote call with multiple participants, ask everyone to dial in. Ask the people who are in the office to call in from multiple rooms or conference rooms.

This is important for a couple of reasons. Firstly, everyone will feel equal — everyone is calling in and will have the same experience. Secondly, no side discussions can take place that may leave out other people who are calling in remotely. Before you have a big meeting with your team, make sure you talk with them about how they are arranging the meeting and check in to ensure they are taking into account the remote workers present on the call.

3. Take Notes

Like traditional meetings, you should take notes of what's happened in a meeting. Write down the main points you've learned from a meeting, including any action items. You should also feel free to share these notes with anyone else who was on the call. This will not only make sure everyone has a record of what happened, but it will also ensure that all the remote workers are on the same page.



Create Accountability for Yourself

When you're working in an office, you're surrounded by other people who could check in on your work at any moment. This can create the accountability you need to stay productive throughout the day — the fear of being found unproductive can discourage you from wasting your time. As a remote worker, you won't enjoy such a source of accountability.

Thus, you need to create some source of accountability so that if you get distracted, you will be able to notice it quickly and get back to work. There are a couple of ways you can do this as a remote worker.

1. Set Time Blocks

One of the most effective ways to stay accountable to your goals is to set blocks of time during which you will complete a task. For example, you could say that you're going to finish writing an article for the company blog tomorrow morning. And during that time, you will only focus on that article. This means you know when you need to work and what you are expected to do during the time you set aside. Thus, you are less likely to get distracted and do something else — you have already said you're going to accomplish a task during the period of time.

2. Use Your Calendar

I like to block time in my calendar for certain tasks. For example, each morning I set aside a few hours to write; each evening I have certain blocks of time open for work and personal calls. This means I know what to expect during each time in the day, and I have a single record of all of the things I need to do each day. Set aside time in your calendar for work and label what task you will complete during that time. You may also want to block out time for breaks, which will ensure you're not working too much and miss out on your breaks.



3. Commit Publicly

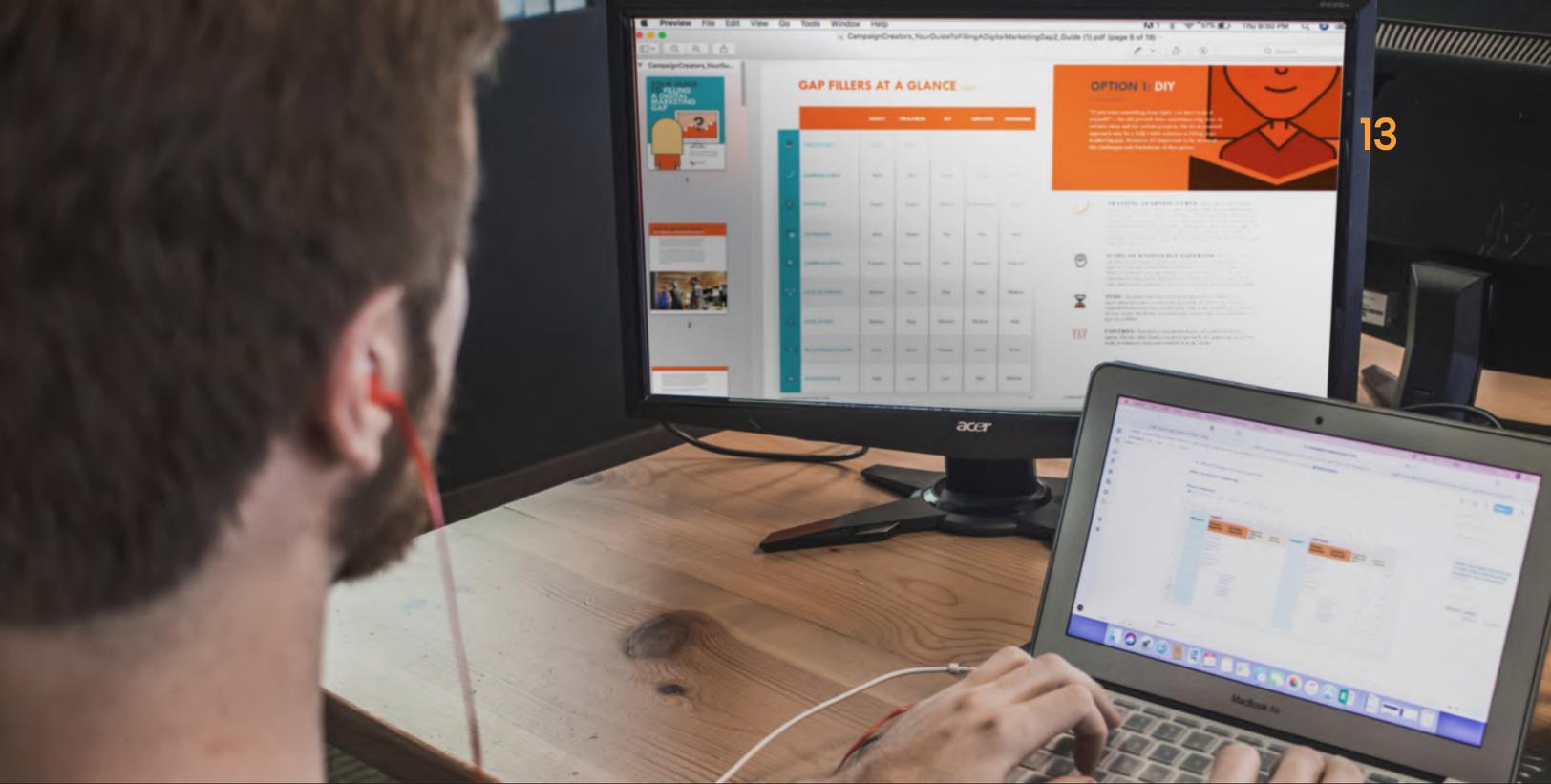
When you have a task to complete, commit publicly to completing that task. Send a message in your company Slack which says what task you're going to be working on and how long you will be working on that task. If you've told other people what you'll do, you're much more likely to do it, rather than having to tell your co-workers you got distracted and fell behind.

A good way to use this technique is to do daily standups in Slack or whatever chat app your organization uses. You could send a message at the start of every day listing all of the main tasks you hope to accomplish, which will ensure you stay on track toward achieving your goals. Doing this will also allow you to create a record of what you have accomplished and when, which can be useful to reflect on when you're considering how long it may take to finish a future task.

4. Use To-Do Lists

To-do lists are also good tools for remote workers. Keeping a to-do list allows you to maintain a list of all the tasks you want to complete, so you know exactly what you need to do each day. And writing these tasks into a list will encourage you to think twice about whether a task is important or whether it needs to be done on a certain day, freeing up time to work on what matters most. You can also share your work to-do list with other people in your team, and if they notice you have a lot of tasks, they may be willing to do one for you.





Be Visible At Work

As a remote worker, you should try to make yourself as visible as you can. Being visible will make it easy for other people to find out what you're working on. This is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it will help keep you accountable — if people know what you're working on, you're more likely to finish. Also, being visible will make it easier for other people to assign you tasks. If they see your schedule and know you're busy, they may assign a task to someone else.

There are a couple of ways you can make yourself more visible to your team as a remote worker.

1. Check-in With Your Team

You should try to let your team and your boss know what you're working on as much as possible. Send daily standup messages so they know what tasks you are going to be working on today. This will make it easy for them to find out who is working on what tasks in a single day. And it will make it easier for your co-workers to know who to reach out to if they need to ask a question about a specific project.

In addition to sending a daily standup, you should also try to be responsive when someone sends you a message. If you receive a direct message in Slack from a team member, reply to them. If you're working on an important task and need to focus, tell them you will get back to them soon. Otherwise, help them out as appropriate. The other person will then know you're working because you're responsive to their messages. If someone asks you a question, the faster you respond, the more visible you are. This doesn't mean that you should be available all day every day, but rather that you're willing to jump in to answer messages whenever you have the time.

2. Celebrate Your Wins

If you're working in an office, it's easy for you to share your wins. When you're working remotely, however, it can be more difficult. Whenever you complete a big task or do something important, tell your team and encourage them to celebrate with you. This will not only allow the rest of your team to stay updated on your progress, but it will help you feel like you're part of the team — everyone will be celebrating your success.

3. Schedule Frequent Meetings

It can be easy to forget to have video calls with your team if you have a lot of work to get through. However, having frequent video calls is a great way to stay visible. This does not mean you should schedule calls merely because you want to stay visible, but rather that whenever you think you need to talk with a team member, you should feel free to schedule a call. I like to make sure I have a call at least once every two weeks with my boss to make sure I am on track; although sometimes those calls are more frequent depending on what work needs to be done.



There are a few other things you can do to stay visible as a remote worker. You could set your Slack status so people know what you're doing. Or you could just be generally visible in Slack and ready to respond to people's messages. You could also reach out to your boss and ask whether or not they feel as if you're visible enough to the rest of the team. Your boss may then be able to give you some useful feedback about what you can do to improve.

The important thing to note about remote working is that it is your responsibility to stay visible. Your manager and co-workers will have other things to do aside from checking in on you. As a result, you have a responsibility to be visible to your co-workers and respond to messages as appropriate. Your default position should be to be as open to other people as possible.

Communicate Clearly and Effectively

As a remote worker you need to spend time thinking about how you can best communicate with your team to ensure you share all of the information your team needs when they need it.

There are a few things you should keep in mind when communicating as a remote worker:

1. Use Synchronous Tools

You should try to make the most of synchronous tools when you need to work on a task with another member of the team. Tools such as Google Docs and Dropbox Paper allow a few people to work on the document at the same time, write comments, and make any changes. This means you can work with other members of your team without having to be in a call with them. If you have a collaborative task you want to work on, you should consider using synchronous tools to help you. Virtual white board tools and other note taking platforms can also be helpful as a remote worker.

2. Document, Document, Document

Remote workers should document more than they usually would. This is because remote workers are at greater risk of misunderstanding something someone has said.

The causes for this vary — from picking up the wrong tone in a message to not asking for clarification when you need it. You should take down more notes than you usually would. This will make sure everyone is on the same page and understands what you're trying to communicate.

If you have something important to say in Slack, don't be afraid to say it a few times to make sure everyone understands. Or if you're working on an important task, take down extra notes to ensure everyone knows what you're trying to say. Another thing you can do is ask people "do you need any clarifications?" before you move onto the next item. Doing so will maximize the chance everyone walks away from an interaction with the right information.

Documenting isn't enough, though. You should also share your notes with other members of your team, discuss them, and allow them to ask you questions if they're unsure about something.

You should also be sure to tell your team how you're feeling. As a remote worker, it can be easy to become too focused on the work that you forget to take into account your emotions. However, this can quickly lead to burnout or your emotional concerns disrupting your work or interactions with team members. You should share what is going well with your team as much as possible. And you should tell them what is not going well. You should also reach out to your team when you need help — it's better to ask for help than be stuck on a task for a day and get stressed.

Work on Your Health

FlexJobs' 2018 [annual survey](#) reported that 90 percent of 3000 respondents said that a flexible job would have a "huge improvement or positive impact on their overall quality of life." Indeed, remote working has the potential to significantly boost your mental health. However, when you actually start working remotely, it can be difficult to balance your work and life. Thus, it's important to work on your health.

When you're working in an office, you'll always be out and about. Perhaps you will only walk to your car and from your car to your office, or maybe you walk to work. Either way, you will be out in nature for some period of time. But when you're working from home, you don't have to walk to work or drive anywhere and walk around. You could spend your entire day in your home.

Working in an office also makes it easy for you to develop a routine. If you're driving to work, you can stop off at the gym on the way home, or you can stop for your favorite coffee on the way to work. Remote workers, however, need to spend extra time building these habits and routines.

As a remote worker, it is easy to stay at home most of the day, wear comfortable clothes, and work for the entire day. This is not sustainable and can lead to burning out quickly. There are a few things you can do as a remote worker to ensure you don't fall into this trap and maintain healthy routines while working.

The first thing to note is that you should be focused on building routines, rather than meeting health goals. A goal is something you aim to do, after which point there is no more work to do. A routine is something you do on a frequent basis at a certain time, and the more you execute on a routine, the more likely you are to keep going.

When you're working remotely, it's important to take some time to focus on your health. Make sure you have some time in your day to go out for a walk or do some other exercise. You should aim to get outside for at least a few minutes each day. Taking breaks away from work can also help you be more creative and work harder when it comes time to get back to work.

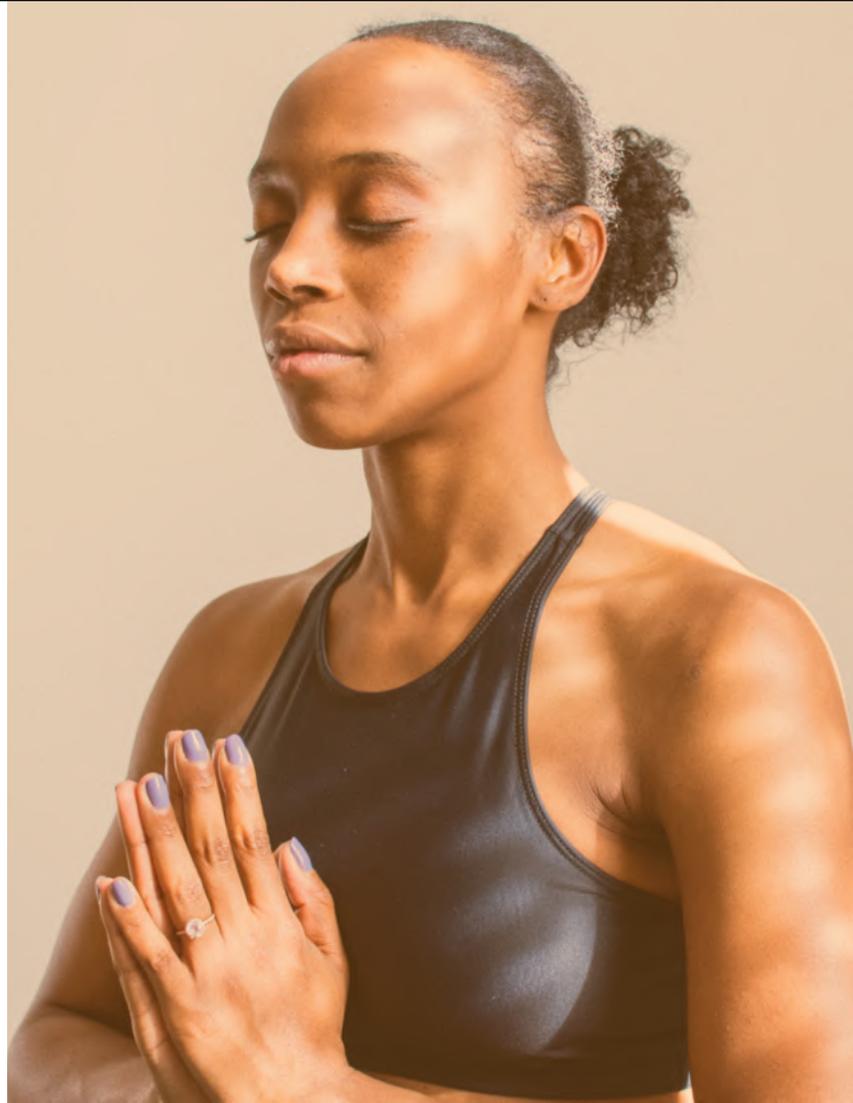
Another thing you should keep in mind is staying hydrated. It can be easy to stay focused on your work, lose track of time, and realize you haven't had any food or water for the last few hours. One thing you can do to make sure you drink enough water is set a timer on your phone which will remind you to drink water at certain times of the day.



90 percent of 3000 respondents said that a flexible job would have a "huge improvement or positive impact on their overall quality of life."

Here are a few other things you can do to stay healthy as a remote worker:

- Try meditation — spend five or ten minutes each day practicing mindfulness or meditation. Use an app like [Headspace](#) or [Calm](#) if you want some guidance to get started.
- Eat lunch away from your desk — do not allow yourself to work during lunch.
- Eat nutritious food — rather than eating snacks all day, prepare good and nutritious meals to eat.
- Walk around every hour — this will give you an opportunity to stretch and stay active throughout the entire day.
- Take frequent breaks — plan when you will take breaks, and move away from your desk during those breaks.





Set Clear Responsibilities

Communication errors can cause a series of problems in a workplace. If you've forgotten to tell your team you're working on a certain task, someone may already be working on it. Or maybe you've been working on a project only to realize that you've missed one of the core specifications your boss told you to meet. Remote teams can find it more difficult to communicate because coworkers can't walk up to your desk and ask for clarification — they need to send you a message. And even messages can be misinterpreted. Thus, it's key to define your responsibilities and keep your team in the loop with regard to what you're working on.

Firstly, you should define the exact responsibilities of each team member. Make sure everyone is on the same page with regard to what they should be working on, who they should be working with, and when certain tasks should be completed. You should also make sure there's a written record of these responsibilities.

You should also feel free to talk to your team if you're confused about what you should be doing. If you're unsure whether you should be working on a task or what you need to do to complete a task, ask someone else on your team. Instead of spending your whole day worrying about how to approach the task, ask for help. Message team members on Slack and ask them any questions. Or, if you need a lot of help, schedule a video call so you can speak with your team verbally and ask for any specific clarifications.

Talk With Your Team

This one may sound obvious, but remote workers often find it difficult to stay in touch with their team. Remote workers cannot ask their co-workers to meet in a conference room to discuss something — they are in different buildings, perhaps even different countries. You should make sure you're staying in contact with your team and working with them as much as required. This will not only help boost your confidence about your work, but will also make you feel more like a part of the team.

In addition to talking with your team about work, you should also try to get to know them as people. Office workers learn a lot about their coworkers because they can observe each other and often ask questions just to make conversation. But as a remote worker, the communication dynamics are different.

It can feel unnatural to ask your remote team about their personal lives when you're working. But doing so will help you feel more included and develop stronger bonds with the rest of your team.

There are a few ways you can make time to talk with your team about their lives:

1. Schedule Check-ins

At the end of meetings, spend some time talking with your team members about their lives. Ask about how they're doing, how their last vacation went, what music they like listening to, et cetera. This only needs to be a few minutes, but it can help you develop closer relationships with your team. You need to be deliberate with how you interact with them and make time for personal conversations.

2. Have Personal Calls

Don't feel as if every call you have with your team should be about work. One good way to get to know your team better is to have entire calls dedicated to learning more about each other. You could schedule a weekly Zoom catch-up when you share how things have been going in your personal life and listen to your team member's stories. Or you could schedule a 15-minute call each day with one of your coworkers to get to know each other one-on-one. There are even dedicated apps in Slack such as [Donut](#) which pair you with a co-worker at random to talk with.



3. Ask Your Boss to Host a Town Hall

Town halls — common in politics — are events where a large group of people get together, and the crowd can ask questions about the leader and their work. In a company, you can use a town hall as an opportunity for the executive team to share their ideas about the company, information about employee anniversaries, and more. And you can use town halls to give new employees the chance to introduce themselves to the rest of the team. These events are usually semi-formal and give people the ability to see the rest of the company.

Ask your employer if they can schedule a town hall on a frequent cadence — for example, each quarter — where you can see all of your co-workers at once and hear updates from around the company.

4. Company Offsites

Trello, a task management company, hosts remote team “offsite” events which gives people the ability to learn more about their team. In a traditional offsite, the entire office would be out for a day or a week and would participate in a series of activities with the rest of their team. However, when you have team members all around the world, it can be difficult — and expensive — to host such an event.

Trello has a summer day off where co-located office members go to the beach, and remote workers receive a stipend to go on their own adventure.

If you work closely to the office but remotely, this gives you the opportunity to spend a day with the rest of your team. If you work remotely, the stipend may allow you to travel to the offsite, or participate in your own form of activity.

You can also share photos from your personal life in Slack to help get to know your coworkers better. Or you can opt for video calls in as many cases as possible to ensure you can see your coworkers face-to-face.

There are many different ways you can stay engaged with your team, but it takes some extra effort because you’re not working in an office. That effort will pay off in the stronger bonds with your teammates.



Take Time to Socialize

Many remote workers can become introverted. Working from home all day, wearing comfortable clothes, sitting with your cat on your lap. These things can all make you feel as if you could spend an entire day in your house. According to Buffer's "State of Remote Work 2019" survey, [19 percent](#) of remote workers who participated reported that loneliness was their biggest struggle as a remote worker.

In addition to being unhealthy, this can also damage your social relationships. When you are in an office, you can interact with other people easily. However, remote workers do not enjoy this luxury, and they need to go out and make their own social time.

There are a few ways you can socialize as a remote worker:

1. Block Off Time to Socialize

Take some time out of your calendar for socializing, during which you will do no work. Each week you should plan ahead what you're going to do during that time so you're more likely to actually get out of the house and socialize with others.

Plan to go to the movies with your friends, or plan a game night at another friend's house. As you get out to socialize more often, you will find it easier to do so.

3. Work at a Coworking Space or Cafe

If you need to socialize more often, you could try to go to a coworking space or a cafe once or twice a week to work. In these environments, there will be other people you can interact with. For example, you can talk with the waiting staff at the cafe, and you may run into a few of your friends. Or you can speak with a few other people who are working at the same coworking space. Don't spend all of your time inside working alone. Instead, make time to go to these types of social environments and talk with others.

4. Attend Local Events

Especially if you're in a city, there will be many community events you can attend. Perhaps your local game store hosts a game night, or maybe your local library hosts public readings. These types of events give you the ability to get out of the house and do something you care about. Most importantly, you will have to interact with other people. If you don't have any local community events to attend, you could instead attend a big conference or event in another city once every few months.

You could even arrange an in-person meetup with other remote workers in your city. This will allow you to not only socialize with others, but also hear other people's experiences with remote working and learn their best practices and tips.

How to Find a Remote Job

If you're interested in working remotely, there are a few ways you can find a job that supports remote working. Before you start looking for a remote job, you should first ask your boss whether or not they would be able to support you working remotely. While they may not always say you can work from home entirely, they may be willing to allow you to work from home a few days a week.

Here are a few tips on how to find a job as a remote worker:

Types of Remote Work Companies

Before you start looking for jobs, it's important to know the different types of remote working you may encounter.

Fully-Distributed Team

The first type of remote working you may find is a fully-distributed team, which is a company that has no main office, and only hires remote teams. These companies have a lot of experience with remote working and are very accepting of people who are looking to work remotely.

Remote-First Team

The second type of remote working is a remote-first team, which is a company with a majority-remote team, but also has a small office. These teams also have a lot of experience with remote working. Plus, they have an office you can work from if you're ever visiting the city where they're based.

Remote OK Team

The third type of remote working is a "remote OK" position, where most of the team is in an office but some people work remotely. These companies often have some experience with remote working, but not as much as remote-first or fully-distributed teams.

One of the main challenges of working in a "remote OK" position is that it can be easy for you to feel left out and like you are not part of the team.

The fourth type of remote working is working from home. This is one of the most common types of remote working, where everyone works from an office, but employees can work from home a few days a week. This type of remote working has existed for years, and allows employees to benefit from both working remotely, and working in an office environment a few days a week.

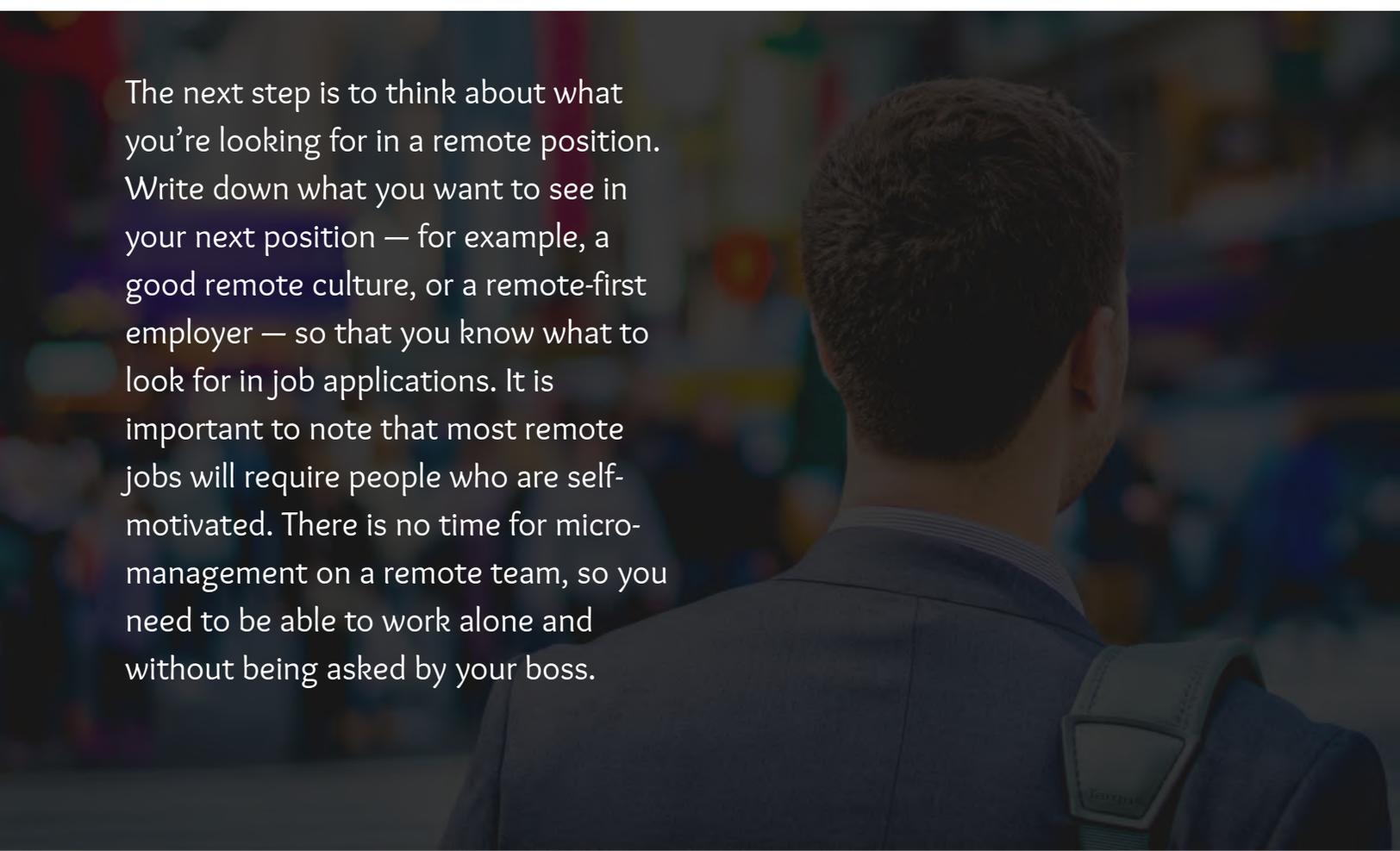


Figure Out Your Working Style

You cannot start looking for jobs until you know what your ideal remote working job looks like. In order to figure that out, you must first consider how you work best. Do you like waking up early and getting a head start on your work? Do you prefer to work traditional office hours? Or do you want to work during the night while your team is sleeping? You need to think about this in advance because many companies have specific policies around how remote workers will work.

For example, a remote employer may want you to be available during “core hours” — a few hours each day where everyone in the team can interact because they are all working. Or maybe your employer is operating in a different timezone and needs you available for one hour during each evening. Before you start applying for jobs, think about when you would be willing to work, and whether you would be able to compromise on that schedule.

The first step is to take a note of the exact hours you want to work and what time zones may be applicable. Many positions will ask that you work during a certain period of time each day so the employer knows when to host town halls and other meetings. You should also figure out how many hours you can work each week, which may be more or less than you would in a traditional position. By figuring out these things in advance, it will be easier to find remote positions which meet your specific requirements.



The next step is to think about what you’re looking for in a remote position. Write down what you want to see in your next position — for example, a good remote culture, or a remote-first employer — so that you know what to look for in job applications. It is important to note that most remote jobs will require people who are self-motivated. There is no time for micro-management on a remote team, so you need to be able to work alone and without being asked by your boss.

Edit Your Resume and Portfolio

After thinking about what you're looking for in a remote position, you'll need to make a few changes to your resume and your portfolio. Firstly, you should ensure both your resume and your portfolio are up-to-date. Every time you change jobs, launch a new project, or acquire a new skill, be sure to include that change on your resume and your portfolio.

When you're applying for a remote working job, you should read the job description thoroughly and make a list of the things the employer is looking for. Then you should include any of those things you are skilled at on your resume. While you should do this for any job, it is especially important as a remote worker, as some of the skills requested by a remote employer may be specific to people who work remotely.

You will also need to make sure your resume includes skills which are valued by remote employers. For example, you should highlight your good communication skills, ability to motivate yourself, and your teamwork abilities over other qualities which aren't relevant to remote workers. You should also mention these skills prominently on your portfolio.

In addition, you should also mention any tools you are comfortable using. Any communication tools, project management applications, video conferencing platforms, and documentation tools you can use proficiently should be mentioned on your resume. This will demonstrate to an employer you will be able to easily transition into the team as a remote worker, and you will not require training on the core technologies the team uses.

Some of the tools you may want to mention include:

- Slack
- Zoom
- Trello
- Skype
- GSuite
- Confluence



Sourcing the Perfect Remote Job

Remote jobs are becoming increasingly common. Many companies now offer part-time remote working opportunities to their employees, and other types of remote working. Indeed, in 2016, 43 percent of American employees said they spent at least some time working remotely. However, the places you go to look for a remote job may be slightly different than the tools you would use to find a normal office job.

LinkedIn, Angellist, and other job platforms include filters which will allow you to find jobs which accept remote workers. However, there are other platforms that focus specifically on remote jobs which you may find more helpful. Here are a few of the top remote job sites:

WWR

flexjobs

REMOTE.CO
grow remotely

1. We Work Remotely

[We Work Remotely](#) is one of the largest remote job boards, and includes remote jobs in a variety of different positions. The site connects over 130,000 monthly users with remote jobs, and also includes a series of resources designed to support current and future remote workers.

2. Remote.co

[Remote.co](#) is a hand-curated list of remote jobs. Remote.co includes jobs in a wide range of positions, from customer service to HR roles. The Remote.co site also has a good search feature which makes it easy for you to find the right job.

3. FlexJobs

[FlexJobs](#) has dozens of remote jobs categories, and has jobs for all types of remote workers, from freelancers to full-time jobs. FlexJobs also screens their jobs before posting, which ensures the site maintains a high level of quality.

After you know where to look, and you have prepared a resume and portfolio which reflects your remote working skills, you can get started and apply for jobs. Spend some time to think about what you are looking for in a remote position, and search for jobs which match that specification. Once you find a job that you find interesting, adapt your resume to the specific requirements for that job.

How to Prep for a Remote Job Interview

A remote job interview is different than a traditional interview in your office. Aside from being interviewed via a video conferencing tool, the communication dynamics are also very different. That said, there are a few tips you can use to help prepare for a remote job interview:

1. Eliminate Distractions

Before your interview is scheduled to begin, make sure you're in a calm and quiet area where you will not be easily distracted. You should also make sure you have a good internet connection so you won't drop out of the interview. Distractions will not only make it more difficult for you to do your best in the interview, but they will also distract the interviewer on the other side of the call.

2. Know About Remote Working Tools

During your interview, you may be asked about one or more remote working tools. Make sure you know the basics of some remote working tools in case you are asked any questions about these tools. Indeed, interviewers will want to see a candidate who has at least a basic knowledge of the tools they will be using, which will send a signal about a candidate's capability to work remotely.



3. Communicate as Much as Possible

As we previously discussed, you may have to over-communicate as a remote worker to ensure everyone is on the same page. The same applies in remote job interviews. You must be able to communicate effectively in your interview. Aside from the fact your interview will be conducted remotely, the same types of questions will come up that would be asked if you were in the office. The only difference is you may have to use a collaborative work tool to showcase your work if you're doing a technical interview — there is no whiteboard for you to use if you're doing a remote interview.

Remote working is becoming a more popular method of working. Remote working allows us to become location-independent and contribute to a company without having to commute, or work in the same place as everyone else. People who cannot afford to move to another city, or who do not like the 9-to-5 work schedule, or who need flexibility in their schedule are turning to remote working to access the best jobs for them.

Although it can be difficult at times to work remotely, the flexibility remote work offers is worth it. And, there are even more resources available online to help people who are working remotely or who plan to do so.

Above all else, if you work remotely, enjoy it! Embrace the ability to work from home. But make sure you develop a healthy routine, and you take into account the tips we have covered in this guide.



About Us



Career Karma helps people interested in breaking into careers in technology find the best job training for them, starting with coding bootcamps.

With the free Career Karma app, you can discover peers, coaches, and mentors to help accelerate your career in technology. Career Karma also publishes comprehensive insights into how to pick the best coding bootcamp and break into a career in technology.



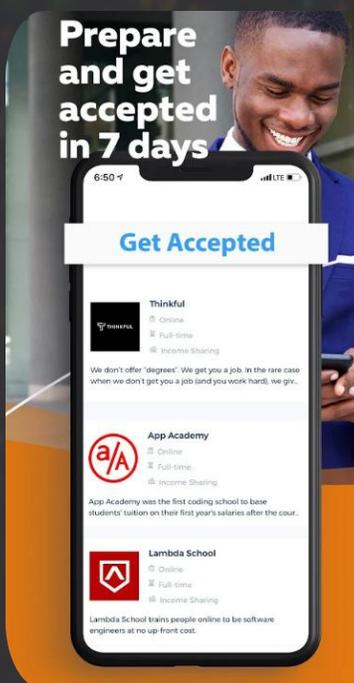
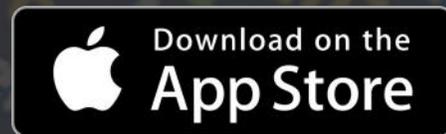
James Gallagher is a researcher at Career Karma, where he focuses on student debt, higher education reform, and how Income Share Agreements can make higher education more affordable. James analyzes market trends influencing the higher education landscape, and his research involves studying Income Share Agreement policy, accountability in higher education, and various proposals for mitigating the rise of student debt.



If you've made it through our whole guide, you're started down the exciting path towards becoming a Software Engineer! But you probably still have a few questions.

We have more information about this and other tech careers, as well as some next steps for you to take, in the **free Career Karma app**.

Download today for access to a community of peers, coaches, and mentors who will support you in your journey to a new career!



Whitney Johnson

Leading Remotely

Make the most of your distributed workforce.

Leading Remotely

Make the most of your distributed workforce.

BY WHITNEY JOHNSON

Shortly after the turn of the century, I left Wall Street to work from home.

My husband had finished his Ph.D., and his best job opportunity was in Boston, not New York City. Well established in my career as an investment analyst, with an *Institutional Investor* ranking, I wanted to continue to work for Merrill Lynch and was able to persuade my boss to let me work from our new home in Boston.

This doesn't sound especially exotic today, but it definitely was then.

Relatively few people were working remotely; fewer still were working for large, fast-paced, team-collaborative companies that way. The technology was available, of course, but compared with the tools of today, it was primitive. A tech specialist from Merrill Lynch had to come to my home and spend a full day getting me set up.

These days, the organizational challenges are more difficult than the technical ones. And now that I run my own company, with employees in more than five states and the possibility of expanding internationally, I'm thinking about these issues not just as an individual contributor but also as a manager.

For my firm, home base is Lexington, Virginia, but only 15% of us are co-located, so most of our work is done remotely. We're certainly not alone. A 2018 study found that 70% of professionals globally are telecommuting at least once a week; 53% work remotely half the week or more.¹ Swiss office service provider IWG, sponsor of the study, clarified that the numbers refer to full-time employees — not freelancers and the self-employed. Add these other types of workers, hired on a temporary, part-time, or contract basis as critical contributors to many business teams, and the number of remote employees balloons.

We shouldn't expect this trend to slow, much less reverse. Leaders must evolve strategies for managing both people and technology in an increasingly distributed workforce.

The Challenges

Leading remotely involves grappling with problems in several key areas:

Communication. When a company has employees all over the country or world, it's understood that time differences can add a layer of complexity to the logistics of everyday communication. However, there are more subtle, and oftentimes more important, complications to consider when managing remote employees.

For one thing, when time zones don't match up, less information can be transmitted

in a given period, which means we as managers need to be aware of how this might affect the pace of project development. For another, in text-based communications like email or instant messaging, we're unable to convey as much meaning as we can through vocal tone and cadence, facial expressions, and physical gestures — tools we normally take for granted in face-to-face conversations. Even our more robust methods of communicating virtually, like audio or video chats, don't give us a broad view of body language.

As a result of those fundamental differences, miscommunication will almost certainly be more common among remote colleagues than in a traditional office. Our words alone rarely transmit as much meaning or information as we think we're conveying. We must continually strive to make all communication as clear and consistent as possible.

But we also need to be patient with our employees and ourselves when miscommunications do occur. I recently hired a new assistant to help with research. She's capable and has a lot of potential to grow in her role, but every week I cause a misunderstanding because I've assumed she understood my feelings and intentions behind sending a certain email, for instance, or I've failed to give her enough information about how to send a package. I need to remember that distance can make the onboarding process even more difficult than usual. As we both go through this transition, I try to stay aware of these dynamics, provide clear guidance up-front for each project, give immediate feedback on tasks as my new hire completes them, and praise her for the things she's doing well. Despite the awkwardness of this adjustment period, she's told me that the "hands-off" nature of the onboarding has helped her grow immensely. Because she can't simply go to the next cubicle over to ask for help, she's forced to problem solve on her own.



Finally, we all have different comfort levels with technology and our preferred modes and styles of communication. It takes time to understand the idiosyncrasies of each employee, not just new hires, and to reconcile those quirks with our own. Some employees may prefer email, some texts, some phone calls, and others video calls. If we don't invest the effort to meet them where they are and speak their language, then we miss out on opportunities to connect with employees on a deeper level.

Project management. Having good systems and people in place to handle project management is essential for any organization — but it's even more crucial for remote groups, especially given the communication challenges I've just described. For my own company, I've found tools such as Slack (which separates communications by topic so that employees can stay informed about the projects concerning them) and Asana (which allows us to share quick and efficient status updates on each of our projects) to be indispensable.

While digital tools facilitate remote project management and collaboration, they can also make it harder to tell what each person is actually contributing. With onsite employees, managers can simply visit people at their desks to have a better grasp of what they're doing. But with off-site employees, we need to be proactive in reaching out and teach people how to manage up effectively so they can advocate for themselves. Relying solely on updates via digital tools can lead to under- or over-appreciation in the best-case scenario and misattribution and resentment in the worst. Staying in close contact with people can help avert some of these problems and give leaders a more complete picture of everyone's contributions.

Talent development and management. In my thinking about how to effectively manage people along what I've been calling their "S-curve of learning,"² I've come to appreciate the importance of

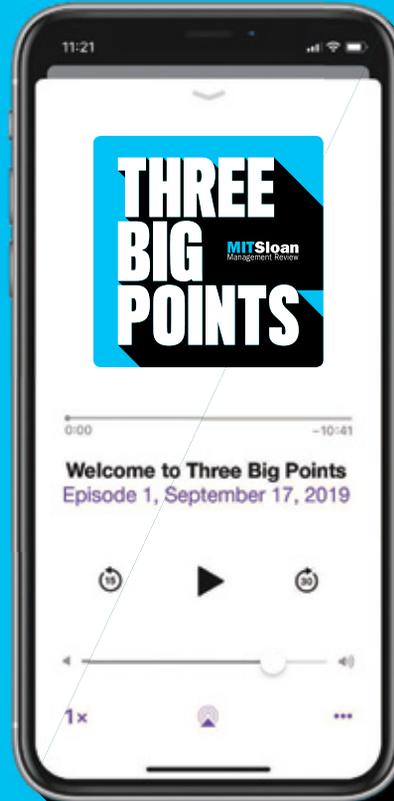
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Leading Remotely (Continued from page 19) having some employees who are at the launch point of their curve. Not only do they generate fresh ideas, they also help companies continually disrupt themselves so they can keep innovating in their fields. Despite my belief in this and the benefits shown in research, it's hard to resist hiring a team of seasoned pros who are at the high end of their curve, who possess a full tool belt of skills, and who have a history of strong performance. It's especially tempting in a remote setting to seek out people who require little to no training or oversight. I always try to push against this natural bias and make sure I have the proper systems in place to train and mentor new hires in order to cultivate their skills and gain their valuable insights.

However, I also have many employees who are at the high end of their S-curve. For them, I have to make sure I'm constantly taking their temperature and managing their engagement level with novel tasks. This helps maintain productivity and fend off boredom, which can be a greater challenge for offsite employees, given the lack of workplace camaraderie.

IT support and service. Since moving to rural Virginia, I've learned the hard way how much we take easy access to high-speed internet for granted. On numerous occasions, I've had to reschedule podcast interviews or make the 20-minute drive to my husband's office to do a webinar because the connection at my own house just wouldn't cut it. This rude awakening to the non-universality of good internet has led me to reevaluate assumptions that I used to make (and probably continue to make) about the availability and reliability of technology across my business.

As managers, we cannot assume that all of our remote employees will have equal access to reliable technology, internet, and (if they're contractors) tech support. And even if they do, systems sometimes fail. It's vital to have a good understanding of everyone's situation and construct backup

plans to use in the event of technical difficulties, which always seem to happen when we least want them to.

Why Bother?

Given the list of challenges, it may be tempting to question whether engaging with remote employees is even worth it. In my experience, it is. The concerns are valid, but over the years, I've reaped considerable benefits from having a largely remote staff.

Allowing people to work remotely means that you are not limited to the talent that's near you geographically. If

We all have our preferred modes and styles of communication. It takes time to understand the idiosyncrasies of each employee and to reconcile those quirks with our own.

you're introduced to a skilled sound engineer on the other side of the country, or if you have an acquaintance who could, with a little bit of training, become a great COO but lives in Singapore, those people can be viable employees or business partners instead of impossible collaborators.

Face-to-face interactions tend to be richer, as well, because more thought goes into planning them when team members aren't colocated. These encounters can't happen simply by chance — we have to carefully arrange a time for and understand the purpose behind each in-person meeting. Given all this planning and forethought, I've found that my employees are much more likely to be truly engaged in the meeting — offering suggestions and valuable insights and really listening to

what I say. Instead of being brushed aside as everyday chatter, the words spoken in these meetings have real power.

There's an unexpected upside to leading remote employees, too: When colleagues don't share the same physical space day after day, there's a distinct lack of workplace drama. I've found that this decrease in unnecessary conflict increases productivity and reduces the drain on everyone's emotional energy. That isn't to say that brick-and-mortar workplaces can't be energizing — many are. But without a physical stage for gossip, intergroup antagonism, and the like, such issues are less likely to materialize.

DIGITAL TOOLS MAKE working from home possible and contribute greatly to the flexibility of both organizations and individuals. But remote work is like a genie in the lamp of the digital revolution. Once released, there's no stuffing it back in. We must learn to lead an increasingly large cadre of workers at home. And yet, if we effectively harness the strengths of this workforce while taking steps to minimize the drawbacks, we managers will find ourselves with an extremely motivated team who is willing to put in the time and effort to make the relationship work.

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Five Ways to Improve Communication in Virtual Teams

New research reveals simple strategies that boost performance.

FALL 2018 ISSUE

N. Sharon Hill
Kathryn M. Bartol

Five Ways to Improve Communication in Virtual Teams

N. SHARON HILL AND KATHRYN M. BARTOL

New research reveals simple strategies that boost performance.



As collaborative technologies proliferate, it is tempting to assume that more sophisticated tools will engender more effective virtual communication. However, our study of globally dispersed teams in a major multinational organization revealed that **performance depends on how people use these technologies**, not on the technologies themselves.

We asked team members to rate one another on virtual communication behaviors culled from a growing body of

research on virtual teams. Peer assessments focused on five best practices: matching the technology to the task, making intentions clear, staying in sync, being responsive and supportive, and being open and inclusive. (Participants had worked together for some time and had been tasked with improving key business processes.) Individual scores were averaged to determine team scores.

When controlling for past experience on virtual teams and level of technology support available, we found that teams with higher scores on the five behaviors also received higher ratings from their leaders on producing quality deliverables, completing tasks on time, working productively together, and meeting or exceeding goals. Results indicated a linear relationship across the board: For every 10% that a team outscored other teams on virtual communication effectiveness, they also outscored those teams by 13% on overall performance. Although the research focused on dispersed teams, we believe the same strategies can help colocated teams, which increasingly depend on virtual collaboration tools.

Let's look at each of the five behaviors in detail. They may seem basic at first glance, but we've observed that they are often overlooked. When teams are informed of these

simple strategies and take steps to implement them, they outperform teams that don't.

1. Match the technology to the task.

Teams have many communication technologies at their disposal, ranging from email and chat platforms to web conferencing and videoconferencing. People often default to using the tool that is most convenient or familiar to them, but some technologies are better suited to certain tasks than others, and choosing the wrong one can lead to trouble.

Communication tools differ along a number of dimensions, including information richness (or the capacity to transfer nonverbal and other cues that help people interpret meaning) and the level of real-time interaction that is possible. A team's communication tasks likewise vary in complexity, depending on the need to reconcile different viewpoints, give and receive feedback, or avoid the potential for misunderstanding. The purpose of the communication should determine the delivery mechanism.

So carefully consider your goals. Use leaner, text-based media such as email, chat, and bulletin boards when pushing information in one direction — for instance, when circulating routine information and plans, sharing ideas, and collecting simple data. Web conferencing and videoconferencing are richer, more interactive tools better suited to complex tasks such as problem-solving and negotiation, which require squaring different ideas and perspectives. Avoid trying to resolve potentially contentious interpersonal issues (telling people when they've made a mistake, are not pulling their weight, or

that they have upset a teammate) over email or chat; opt instead for richer media to navigate sensitive territory. In short, the more complex the task, the closer you should be to in-person communication. And sometimes meeting face-to-face (if possible) is the best option.

2. Make intentions clear.

Most of our communication these days is text-based. Unfortunately, when text-based tools leave too much to interpretation, common biases and assumptions can cause misunderstandings and lead to unhealthy conflict that hurts team performance.

Intentions get lost in translation for several reasons:

- **People tend to be less guarded and more negative in writing.** When we cannot see the response of the person receiving the message, it's easier to say things we would not say in person. Emboldened by technology and distance to complain, express anger, or even insult one another, team members can be more negative in writing than they would be face to face.
- **Negativity goes both ways.** People on the receiving end of written communication tend to interpret it more negatively than intended by the sender. Emotions are expressed and received mostly through nonverbal cues, which are largely missing from text-based communication. **Research suggests** that recipients of an email that is intended to convey positive emotions tend to interpret that message as emotionally neutral. Similarly, an email with a slightly negative tone is likely to be interpreted as more intensely negative than intended.

- **People read with different lenses.** In written messages, we often assume that others will focus on the things we think are important, and we overestimate the extent to which we have made our priorities clear. Unfortunately, it's easy for critical information to get overlooked.

To prevent these biases from causing problems on your team, ensure that you are crystal clear about your intentions. Review important messages before sending them to make sure you have struck the right tone. Err on the side of pumping up the positivity or using emojis to convey emotion to mitigate the tendency toward negative interpretation. Go out of your way to emphasize important information, highlighting parts of the message that require attention, using “response requested” in the subject line, or separating requests into multiple emails to increase the salience of each one.

3. Stay in sync.

When team members don't interact face to face, the risk of losing touch and getting out of step is greater. This can happen for **a number of reasons**. First, when teams are not colocated, it's more difficult to tell when messages have been received and read, unless receipt is specifically acknowledged. Second, communication failures can lead to uneven distribution of information among team members. Individuals might be excluded from an important team email by mistake, for instance, leaving them unwittingly in the dark. Third, the lack of frequent in-person contact can create an out-of-sight, out-of-mind effect in which team members become distracted by local demands and emergencies and forget to keep their distant teammates informed. When one team member goes

silent, the others are left guessing. Without accurate information, people often assume the worst.

Your team can overcome these challenges by prioritizing keeping everyone in the loop. Maintain regular communication with team members, and avoid lengthy silences. Proactively share information about your local situation, including unexpected emergencies, time demands, and priorities. Acknowledge receipt of important messages, even if immediate action isn't possible. And give people the benefit of the doubt. Seek clarification to better understand others' behaviors or intentions before jumping to conclusions. For instance, check in with your teammate who hasn't responded to your time-sensitive message — maybe it hasn't been received, or perhaps something urgent came up.

4. Be responsive and supportive.

The paradox in dispersed teamwork is that trust is more critical for effective functioning — but also more difficult to build — than in more traditional teams. Trust between teammates in the same workspace is influenced to a large extent by familiarity and liking; however, in dispersed teams, **people must signal their trustworthiness** by how they work with others on a task. To help develop trust on a virtual team, encourage everyone to respond promptly to requests from their teammates, take the time to provide substantive feedback, proactively suggest solutions to problems the team is facing, and maintain a positive and supportive tone in communications.

5. Be open and inclusive.

Dispersed teams are more likely to have members from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. While diversity can result in a greater variety of ideas, which boosts team creativity and performance, virtual communication sometimes **discourages team members from speaking up**, making it challenging to capitalize on these benefits. Virtual tools reduce the social cues that help team members bond, which can diminish motivation to share ideas and information. People may also hold back when they can't directly observe teammates' reactions to their contributions. In addition, when dispersed teams consist of subgroups at different locations, there is a natural tendency to communicate more within a local subgroup than across the entire team. This can be particularly challenging for leaders, who may be criticized for unfairly giving more attention to local team members.

To reap the benefits of your virtual team's diversity, focus on communicating as openly and inclusively as possible. Involve the whole team in important communications and decisions. Actively solicit perspectives and viewpoints from all team members, especially those in other locations, to demonstrate openness to different ideas and approaches to a task. And when working to resolve differences of opinion, seek to integrate the best of the team's ideas.

The Role of Leadership

Don't assume that everyone on your team is aware of potential pitfalls with virtual communication or of the five key behaviors that improve performance. We suggest creating a team charter that describes how you will work together. Specify technologies the team will or won't use for different tasks ("Don't use email to discuss sensitive interpersonal issues"); standard formats and etiquette for written communications ("Highlight or bold to emphasize action items in emails"); plans for keeping everyone in sync ("Let the team know ahead of time if a commitment or deadline cannot be met"); expected time to respond to requests ("Acknowledge receipt within 24 hours"); and types of communication that should always be shared with everyone ("Use the 'would you want to know?' rule of thumb"). We've found that clearly conveyed norms do make a difference.

Our research also shows that people with prior experience in collaborating virtually had higher virtual communication ratings. Leaders can rely on those team members to model effective behaviors — and can model the behaviors themselves — to raise the whole group to a higher standard.

An adapted version of this article appears in the Fall 2018 print edition.

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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Remote Work

Lessons from a team of over 200 remote workers

By Wade Foster and the Zapier Team



The Ultimate Guide to Remote Work

How to Grow, Manage, and Work with Remote Teams

Zapier

This book is for sale at

<http://leanpub.com/zapierultimateguidetoremoteworking>

This version was published on 2019-04-03



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Working remotely and running a remote team seems like black magic to many. Yet at Zapier, we've been working remotely since our founding in October of 2011. This book shares everything we've learned about running a remote team—our successes and our failures.

Beginning as a series of posts on the Zapier blog, this book is an ongoing work about our experiences as a remote team, with much of the book written by Zapier CEO Wade Foster along with chapters from our team members and other remote employees. We'll update it periodically so you can learn how our thinking and processes change as we've grown from three to 200+ people and beyond, and we'll keep the older versions of each chapter archived so you can learn with us over time.

Who Is This Guide For?

Whether you currently work in or run a remote team, or you hope to work in or run a remote team in the future, this book will have nuggets of wisdom that you can apply to your current situation.

Written by Wade Foster, with content from Danny Schreiber, Matthew Guay, Melanie Pinola, Bethany Hills, Alison Groves, Jeremey DuVall, and Belle Cooper. Edited by Danny Schreiber, Matthew Guay, and Melanie Pinola. Last updated on March 30, 2019.

Contents

Chapter 1: How to Run a Remote Team	1
Chapter 2: How to Hire a Remote Team	13
Chapter 3: How to Build Culture in a Remote Team	25
Chapter 4: How Successful Remote Teams Evaluate Employees	37
Chapter 5: How to Build Strong Relationships in a Remote Team	43
Chapter 6: How to Run a Company Retreat for a Remote Team	51
Chapter 7: This is What a Remote Office Looks Like	61
Chapter 8: How to Work Faster in a Remote Team	72
Chapter 9: How to Find Your Optimal Work Environment and Boost Productivity	89
Chapter 10: How to Work in Different Timezones	97
Chapter 11: How to Avoid Burnout in a Remote Team	122
Chapter 12: How to Thrive as an Extrovert on a Remote Team	136
Chapter 13: How to Find and Get Hired for a Remote Job	145
Chapter 14: The Remote Workers' Toolkit	162
Chapter 15: A Special Thanks To Those Who Share	178

Chapter 1: How to Run a Remote Team



Since October 2011, Zapier has grown to over 200 employees. You can read previous versions of this chapter written when [our team size was 20](#) and [our team size was just 6 people](#), to get a feel for how our remote team has scaled.

Many companies, such as Automattic, Buffer, and GitLab are successful as [100% remote teams](#). Yet it's still not a common company structure and, unfortunately, information about how to set up remote work so that you and your team can be successful is still scarce. We want to share what we've learned so far.

Zapier has always run as a remote team. We've grown from three founders to over 200 people working remotely in 20 countries. We've gotten a lot of questions about how we make it work, so this chapter will explain that.

Now, if you want to debate what's best—remote work or co-located work—this

chapter isn't for you. But, if you want some ideas on how one team has set up their team to be successful at remote work then stick around. *This chapter is for you.*

Our Journey

From day one, Zapier has always been a distributed team. Even though I and my co-founders Bryan and Mike lived in the same city, we had different schedules and were bootstrapping Zapier on the side of our day jobs and school. We worked on Zapier in every spare moment we each had, but those moments didn't magically line up at the same time where we could work in the same room, so by necessity we became a remote team.

In June of 2012, we were accepted into Y Combinator and moved into a shared apartment in Mountain View, California. The next three months were the only period in our company's history where everyone has been in the same city at the same time.

In August of 2012, Mike moved back to Missouri while his girlfriend (now wife) was graduating law school, and in October of 2012, we started hiring. And since we were already a distributed team, it made sense to keep moving that way since we could hire people we knew were awesome, but just didn't live in the places we lived.

Our first hire was [Micah Bennett](#), Zapier's head of support who lives in Chicago. Between October 2012 and July 2014, we added eight more people to the team, with members living in Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Tennessee. And then we had our first international hires in August 2014, with writer [Matthew Guay](#) based in Bangkok, Thailand and full-stack engineer [Rob Golding](#) in Nottingham, UK.

Over the years, we've learned a few things about building and managing a remote team. There are others with more experience at this than us and with larger teams (Auttomatic, for example, has over 850 employees in over 60 countries). Our story and companies like these have proven that it's possible to scale even when you're fully remote. Whether you're a small team or a large one, if you want to dip your toes into remote work, consider this your crash course.

3 Ingredients of a Successful Remote Work Setup

It's highly unlikely you could pluck any random set of people, at any random moment in history, dispersed around the globe, put them together, and expect them to build something amazing.

We've found there are three important ingredients to making remote work, well, work: **Team**, **Tools**, and **Process**.

Team

By far, the most important ingredient is the team. Not everyone can work well in a remote environment. Not everyone can manage a remote team (though I suspect with a bit of time and learning, a lot of managers could figure out how to make it work). Therefore, it's important to assemble a team that's capable of executing in a remote environment. Here's what has made the best remote workers for us:

1. Hire Doers

Doers will get stuff done even if they are working from a secluded island. You don't have to give doers tasks to know that something will get done. You'll still have to provide direction and guidance around the most important things to be executed, but in the absence of that, a doer will make something happen. One of Zapier's [core values](#) is "default to action"—teammates who embody that value get work done.

2. Hire people you can trust

Remote work stops working when you can't trust the person on the other end of the line. If you continually find yourself worrying what someone is doing, then you are spending brain cycles focusing on something other than the product or customers. Trust is key.

3. Trust the people you hire

The flip side of this is you also need to exhibit trust with the people you hire. As a manager, you need to learn to manage by expectations rather than by "butts in seat," so make sure you can show trust in those you hire.

4. Hire people who can write

In a co-located office, a lot of information is shared in person. In a remote situation, almost everything is shared via written communication. Communication is one of the most important parts of remote team. Therefore, good writers are critical to a team's success.

5. Hire people who are ok without a social workplace

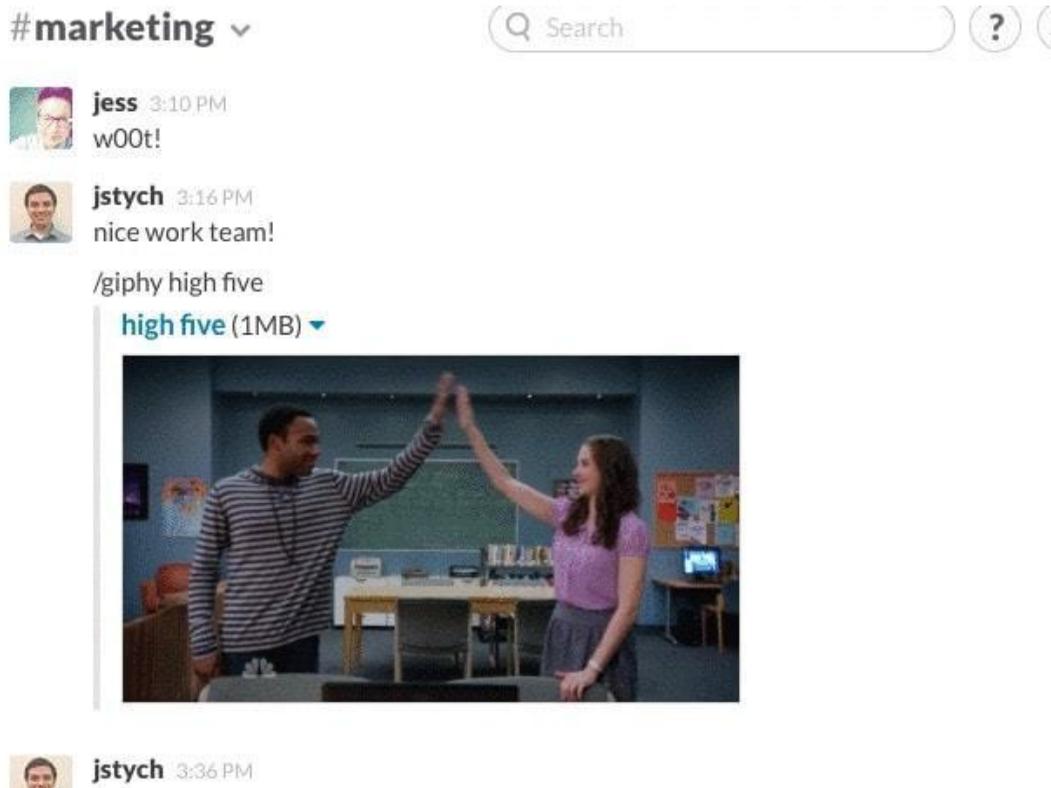
It'll be important to try to create some social aspects with a remote team. But the truth is that remote workplaces are usually less social than co-located ones. People on remote teams need to be ok with that and have their own social support system. And the best remote workers will thrive in this type of environment. That said, as you grow you might find multiple people in cities and some social environment will emerge. For example, we currently have several people in Austin and Portland who routinely meet in person for co-working and other social events.

Software/Tools

In a co-located facility, you can always round up the team for an all-hands meeting to steer everyone on track. In a remote team, you'll need the right tools to make sure everyone stays on the same page and can continue to execute without a physical person standing next to them.

Here are some tools we've found handy as a rapidly growing team. While the exact tools aren't super important, you likely will need a tool in certain categories like group chat and video conferencing to make remote successful. These tools have changed quite a bit over the years. (Check out previous versions of this post to see what's changed.)

1. Slack



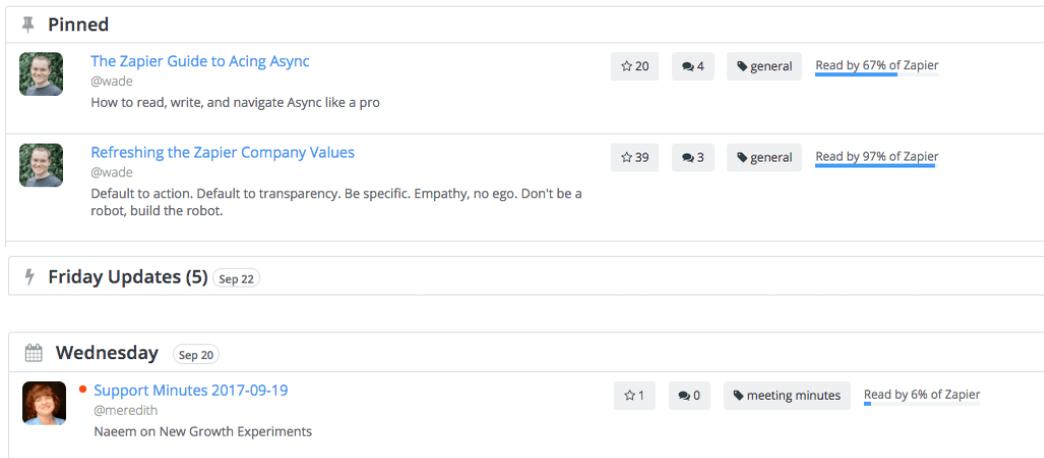
Chilling in Slack

Slack is our virtual office. If you're in Slack then you're at work. A group chat room like Slack is also great at creating camaraderie.

Depending on your team size, you'll want to make use of channels in Slack as well. At a certain size, it can start to get noisy, so it makes sense to section off rooms into things like "water cooler", "engineering", "marketing", etc. I would hold off on this as long as possible, though, when you're a small team.

At around 10 people, we started creating multiple channels. We now have over 100 channels. Active ones include functional channels like #marketing, #support, and #hacking, along with project-specific channels like #team-growth, and social channels like #fun-cooking. Prepending Slack channels with words like "fun-" or "feed-" help organize and communicate to new teammates what can quickly become an unruly list of channels in Slack.

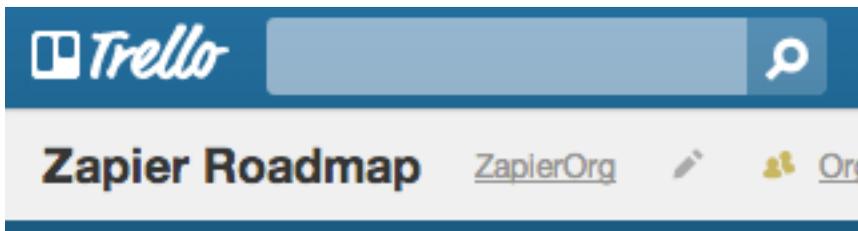
2. Async



Zapier Using Async

Async is an internal tool we built. It's sort of like a blog meets reddit. This is the place where we surface important conversations that might get lost in the fast-paced Slack. It replaces internal email and acts as a great archive for anyone on the team to reference old discussions and keep up with company updates. Slack is where we talk about work, while Async is where we share work with the rest of the team.

3. Trello



Zapier Roadmap

Trello acts as our default roadmap. Anytime we have something we'd like to do, we add it to a to-do list in Trello. In most situations, you'll find yourself creating way too many cards trying to do too many things. The trick we use to avoid getting card overload in Trello is each card needs to have a detailed description of what the feature is, why it's important, and what the results of a successful implementation of this feature should look like.

We also use Trello boards for keeping track of our marketing campaigns, support documentation, and really any project that needs to get done.

This works great for remote teams, because if anyone in the company is looking for something to do, they can just go pick a card off the Trello board and know that it's going to be a positive feature for the product/company.

We love Trello, but there are also other [great project management apps](#) that you might use too. And as we've grown, certain teams have found they prefer certain tools to Trello for managing projects or processes. We haven't felt the need to standardize, so give teams the opportunity to use the tools they feel most productive with.

4. GitHub

We use Issues and pull requests for specific purposes at Zapier. Much like how [GitHub uses GitHub to build GitHub](#), we use GitHub to build Zapier. GitHub houses all code related project management. Pull Requests are how we ship feature, while issues are reserved for bugs only. Feature requests and planning happen in Trello, a planning doc, or another tool like Airtable.

5. 1Password

Since we have logins to hundreds of services—those we use as a company or integrate with as part of our service, it's helpful for anyone who walks into the company to be able to access any of them without having to fire off an instant message or wait for an email reply. With 1Password, any teammate can log in to any of the services we use or integrate with without having to know the login credentials.

6. Google Docs & Quip

For almost any other documentation, Google Docs is great. We share spreadsheets for ad hoc analysis of key metrics. We share spreadsheets with team info and other vital info that might be used later. We share documents for contracts and records. Anything that might get used multiple times should be documented, and Google Docs is an easy, shared environment to make that happen. All you need is a Google account (or, in a company setting, a Google Apps account.)

Google Docs is not ideal for organization and collaboration, though. We've found Quip great for our internal knowledgebase. Any documentation that needs to teach someone how to do something—such as how to do QA testing

or format a post for the blog—gets added to a Quip doc and folder so others can quickly access the collective brain of Zapier.

7. Zoom

We've tried a bunch of video conferencing tools over the years, from Google Hangouts and Skype to GoToMeeting. As we've grown, we've found Zoom to be the most reliable and clear for large group video calls. We have a weekly all-hands meeting in Zoom that's essential for putting faces behind the names of our many teammates and gives us all a chance to just hang out for a bit as a company, virtually.

8. HelloSign

Every now and then, you and your employees might need to sign something. Spare yourself the hassle of printing out the document, signing it, scanning it back onto your machine, and sharing the document with the next person that signs and instead just use HelloSign. It'll make your head hurt a lot less.

9. Help Scout

Everyone at Zapier has a weekly customer support shift, because we believe [this "all hands support" enhances our customers' experience and our own product understanding](#)—we experience Zapier the product as our customers do. Help Scout is the tool we use to support our customers day in and day out. Its reporting features help us find ways we can be more efficient in our ticket responses, tags help us categorize conversations, and integrations (of course) with other apps make sure we can keep on top of support requests in our favorite communication tools.

Processes

The third ingredient in a powerful remote team is process. I know most people don't like to think about process, and process might feel boring and rigid. But if you think of process as "how we work," it starts to feel more powerful.

Good processes let you get work done in the absence of all else. It provides structure and direction for getting things done.

That doesn't mean processes should be rigid, unchanging, or pointless, though. Process, at a small company, is more about providing a feedback loop so

that you can measure progress for both the company and the people in the company.

Here are a few of the processes we use to run Zapier. Or as I like to call them: *How We Work*.

1. Everyone does support

The customer is our lifeblood. We strive everyday to solve our customers' problems and help make their job just a little bit easier. When everyone on the team does support, everyone gets to hear the voice of the customer.

Also, the people who build the product also end up supporting the product. If a customer is angry about a bug, then the person who introduced said bug is going to hear about it and fix it right away.

[Read more about how we do support here.](#)

2. A culture of shipping

As we've grown, maintaining a culture of shipping has been crucial. The best way we've found to do this is to keep product teams small. To keep the focus on shipping, we divide up into small teams—usually 3 to 8 people with differing skill sets. The base roles are a PM, an engineer, and a designer.

These teams have a singular mission, for example, improve onboarding. They then have full autonomy to set their own roadmap to make this happen. With that autonomy, they also hold responsibility for the success of their initiatives. This works well, since small teams can move and ship fast and also appreciate the autonomy and responsibility for their own projects.

3. Weekly Hangouts

Every Thursday morning or afternoon (rotating every week to accommodate people in different time zones), we get together for lightning talks, demos, and/or interviews. With over 200 people in seven major departments and even more smaller teams, it's hard to see everyone on a weekly basis. These hangouts are a chance to say "hi!" to folks you may not normally see.

These hangouts are also a good chance to learn something new. Each week, someone inside the team does a lightning talk or demo on something interesting. We've had folks share their latest project, new teammates share fun facts about themselves and their backgrounds, and leadership members conduct well-being workshops through these hangouts.

Many teams do these weekly meetings as All-Hands Meetings. In a remote team that's across many timezones, this becomes an exclusionary event. As a result, this meeting becomes more about camaraderie and showing off the work of the company. We record these so folks who can't attend are able to catch up. But we're careful to avoid core strategic topics which typically are discussed in Slack, Async, or a Zoom call that can make sure to incorporate all the relevant teammates for that decision.

4. Pair Buddies

As we've grown, it can be harder to know all your teammates. One easy way to mitigate that is to have folks on the team get paired up with one other teammate or two at random each week for a short pair call. We use [Donut](#) in Slack for this to chat about life, work, or whatever random thing seems interesting. Sometimes cool new product features come out of these, other times it's just good fun. Regardless, it helps everyone better know their teammates.

5. Weekly One-on-Ones

In every job I ever had (even co-located ones), there wasn't enough feedback between me and my supervisor. So at Zapier, we set up a recurring weekly event with each team member I manage where we both jump on Zoom to chat about how work is going. These one-on-ones follow roughly the format outlined by the [Manager Tool's podcast](#).

We use a feedback tool called [Small Improvements](#) to run our 1:1 sessions.

In the past, I did one-on-ones with everyone. However, around 15 people, this got to be too hard to keep up with everyone on a meaningful level. At 15, I split my focus on the support and marketing team while Bryan and Mike focus on the engineering and product teams respectively. As we've scaled, we've built a more traditional management structure. So I have people in roles that report to me, including: CTO, CPO, CFO, CMO, Chief Growth Officer, Platform Lead, VP of Support, and VP of Engineering. These people all have teams that report to them as well. This more formal hierarchy has helped keep everyone on the team feel more engaged with the company because they have a manager that can help make sure to align their own career interests with the strategic goals of the company.

6. A culture of accountability

People often ask “how do you know if employees are actually working?” Any easy way we know is with Friday updates. Each Friday, every person on the team posts an update to Async about what they shipped that week and what they are working on for the next week.

This makes it easy to keep in the loop on projects and also holds everyone at Zapier accountable to everyone else to do their part.

7. Building culture in person



The Zapier team in New Orleans

In person interaction is valuable for any team. There is definitely something unique that happens when teammates can work on something in person—tap someone on the shoulder and point to your screen to go over something, or share downtime with [fun games](#) and casual banter. So we strive to bring the team together two times a year somewhere cool.

We’ve visited Florida, Washington, Colorado, Alabama, Utah, Texas, Vancouver, Toronto, and New Orleans on company retreats.

In addition to the all-company get togethers, departments hold their own retreats and small groups of us might get together on an ad hoc basis throughout the year to coordinate the start of a major project or feature. Usually this is just one person jumping on a flight to visit another person or, if more than a couple of staff members live in close proximity (we have many teammates in Austin and Portland, for example), they’ll have impromptu co-working sessions.

If this seems expensive, that’s because it is. But the great part is that you’ll likely have the money to cover this plus more since you don’t have to pay for a central office that everyone is working in.

8. Automate anything that can be automated

The core of Zapier is automation. There are a couple reasons why we automate things. One, it allows us to keep the team size small since we don't need people on staff to perform repetitious, mundane, and boring tasks. Two, it lets teammates focus on high impact work nearly all of the time rather than figuring out less impactful things, like the proper deploy commands. Our philosophy is: If you're going to do something two or more times, automate it so you can eliminate busywork and do more meaningful work. We believe these so strongly that one of the [Zapier core values](#) is "Don't be a robot, build the robot."

Hopefully, this chapter's insights into how one team manages a remote team inspires you. Don't take this as universal truth, though. One of the beauties of a remote team is that because remote work feels like an experiment, everything else feels like it can be more experimental too. So go ahead and experiment! The biggest wins aren't usually found in a post on the internet, but in what you discover on your own. And if you have tips, tricks, or best practices of your own, we'd love to hear them, too—we're [@zapier](#) on Twitter.

Written by Wade Foster

Chapter 2: How to Hire a Remote Team



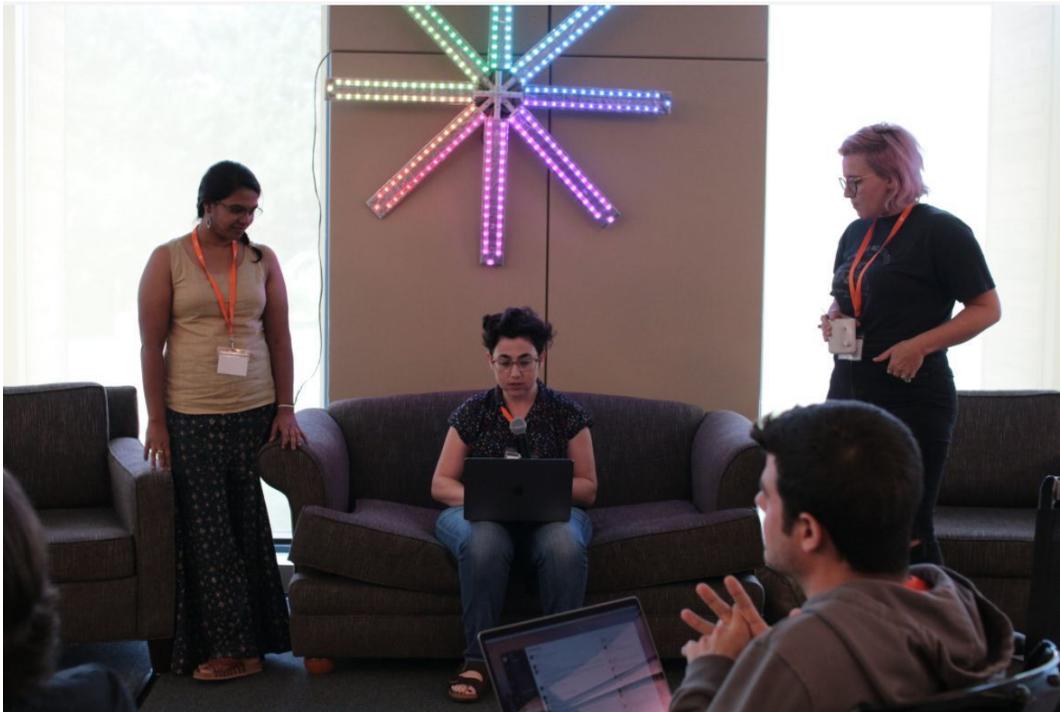
Since our beginning in October 2011, Zapier has grown from three founders cramped in a small apartment to a team of over 200 around the world. Along the way, we've picked up a few tricks (and things to avoid) to make building a remote team easier.

This chapter covers:

- Defining Characteristics of a Top-Notch Remote Worker
- How to Write an Attractive Remote Job Post
- How to Find Remote Candidates
- How to Hire a Remote Employee

The photos in this chapter are from our [team retreats](#), which we hold every 6 months for in-person interaction.

Defining Characteristics of a Top-Notch Remote Worker



Some of our teammates working together

Not everyone is cut out for remote work, so before you begin hiring people for a remote position you'll need to consider the skills it takes to be successful in this type of environment.

Great remote workers have a few traits that make them successful:

- **Propensity towards action:** This is the type of person that devoid of a task list given to them, they'll find something meaningful to do.
- **Ability to prioritize:** Often times, important tasks can be unclear when working remotely (especially at a startup). An individual who can focus on the right tasks and knows to ignore less impactful ones will do well.

- **Proficient writing:** Most communication in a remote team happens via text—email, team chat, or one-on-one private messages. If someone struggles to write clearly and concisely, they'll struggle in a remote team. Equally as important is being able to show tact in written communication too. It's all too easy to come off as curt via text. Liberal use of emoticons can go a long way.
- **Trustworthy:** If you can't trust the person, then not being able to see them every day is going to cause you to lose sleep. Make sure you trust who you hire.
- **Local support system:** If the only support system someone has is their work one, then being in a remote environment will likely make them go crazy. You need people who have outside support systems so they have people they can interact with on a daily/weekly basis.

[Joel Gascoigne](#) and the team at [Buffer](#) have found that people with these traits often come from freelance, contracting, or startup backgrounds. We've certainly found that to be true, too. 10 of our first 13 hires at Zapier had startup or freelance work in their background—and several staff members started out freelancing for Zapier before joining us full-time.

How to Write an Attractive Remote Job Post



Team retreat presentation

Before you start sourcing candidates, you want to make sure to do a good job at defining the position. Oftentimes, companies throw up a generic job opening for a marketer or developer, which doesn't really help the candidate decide if they want to work for your company or not. Since remote companies don't have a local reputation, it's up to you to sell your company just as much as the role.

When it comes to defining the position, the best way to do this is to first fill the position yourself, even if it's only for a week. The work you do will help you understand what's involved in this role at a much deeper level.

This is a trick that [Basecamp](#) (formerly 37signals) uses when hiring for a new role. [Jason Fried](#), the company's co-founder, [explained this practice](#) in a Reddit AMA.

When it comes to an all-new position at the company, we like to try to do it first with the people we have so we really understand the work. If you don't understand the work, it's really hard to evaluate someone's abilities. Before we hired our first customer service person, I did just about all the customer service for two years. Before we hired an office

manager, David and I mostly split the duties. That really helped us know who would be good when we started talking to people about the job.

By doing the role you are hiring for, you'll also be able to write a more compelling job description and be better able to define how the role relates to the company and its success.

As a result, your job posting will be a detailed listing that explains the ins-and-outs of what you do as a company. This might turn some people away, but those people wouldn't have been a good fit anyway. Instead, you'll get applicants that are much more invested in being a part of your company.

Also, in the job posting, ask them to apply in a unique way—don't just ask for resumes. (In fact, at Zapier, [we don't ask for resumes at all](#). Instead, try to make the application process prove their abilities for the job.

For instance, when hiring for our business development position we had candidates that tested the basics of the role's partner duties, with questions like:

- Why are you applying for this role? What makes you excited about Zapier?
- How would you prioritize these upcoming integrations and why? Office 365, Flickr, Marketo, Wunderlist, Pocket, Ontraport, Hootsuite, and Joomla
- How would you get in touch with the following people (don't actually contact them): Editor at Lifehacker, Andrew Warner, CEO of Slack?

And rather than asking for a cover letter upfront, we asked them to write a sample pitch email to a partner.

People excited about your company are willing to complete these extra tasks, often with enjoyment. Those who aren't a good fit just skip your post or forget to do it, turning the unique application process into a filter.

For all our job postings, we also want to convey our company culture. So we also post [our commitment to applicants](#), which includes our promise to respond to every candidate, [our culture and values](#), [how we have been working on hiring for diversity and inclusivity](#), and the [Zapier code of conduct](#), which boils down to everyone treating each other professionally and with respect. Putting these out in the open has helped candidates feel more comfortable taking that leap of faith when applying for a job.

How to Find Remote Candidates



It's impossible to hire if you don't have candidates for the role, of course, so the first thing to consider is how people will find out about your open position. Here's where we've had the best luck.

- **Our Networks:** People you've worked with in the past are great candidates to join up with you. This is especially true if you enjoyed working with them and want to work with them again. Also, ask customers, partners, investors, family, friends, and anyone you think might be helpful if they know of any good candidates. Often times, people aren't actively looking for jobs, but they will confide in a friend that they are unhappy in their current role.
- **Local meetup groups:** It's a bit odd to recommend local recruiting for a remote team, but this has worked out well for us. We're well connected with Missouri dev meetup groups since the founding team has strong ties

to the region. Many of the people in the area are excited about Zapier and stay in touch with what we do.

- **Your own userbase:** If you're fortunate enough to have a large userbase that matches the credentials you need, then it can be a great place to recruit from. We do this by adding a "hey, we're hiring!" link in emails that go out to customers and blog readers as well as on our website. This drives dozens of daily applications when we have open positions. Additionally, your users are likely a strong culture fit since they are already more familiar with your company and how you operate.
- **Your blog:** We don't publish positions on our blog but still see our increased content efforts pay off in the hiring process. To our surprise, almost every candidate mentions the blog as a reason they want to work at Zapier. In fact, an informal internal survey found that 1 in 10 current team members were led to apply to Zapier through something they read on our blog or in eBooks like this one. Many of our posts are about efficiency, productivity, and working better with the help of apps and automation—and people who are excited about those topics tend to make great remote workers.
- **Blog posts about your company:** Similar to the above, we sometimes write about how we work (like what you're reading right now). The people who connect with how we work get excited enough to search for how they can work alongside us.
- **Ask teammates to help with sourcing:** Some companies take a really aggressive stance and [mine every employees' social networks](#) for potential job candidates. I haven't found this to be necessary. Instead, simply ask teammates to help spread the word and with the goal of getting an awesome new teammate. Oftentimes, people are excited about working with and helping pick out their new teammate, so including them in the process is a net benefit to all.
- **Job boards:** As a last resort, job boards can be a source of candidates. Often these have bottom of the barrel candidates who are constantly job hunting and mostly looking for any job—particularly if it lets them work from home, not your job in particular. But you can occasionally strike gold here.
- **Share, share, share:** Use Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, AngelList, and any channel you have access to to let people know that you're hiring. The more spread you can get, the more likely your job post will stumble across the right person's desk.

Sourcing candidates is often a harder task for remote teams than you'd think. Since you don't have global connections, you're a small brand, and local ties can be hard to come by, too, it can be hard to get the word out about your company and your positions. Take advantage of every channel you can find to get the word out and keep track of where the good candidates come from. Then make sure to utilize those in the future.

How to Hire a Remote Employee

If you've done everything up to this point, then you should start to see applicants roll in. This is where the real challenge starts—it's time to make the hire. First, you'll need to sort through dozens, hundreds, and maybe thousands of applicants to find the person you want. (Fun fact: at Zapier, we average over 1,000 applicants a week for our open roles. We've been lucky to have a great talent pool to choose from.)

Hiring is time-consuming, but it might be the most important thing you do to make sure your team succeeds.

1. Sort Through Applicants in a Project Management Tool

We've borrowed heavily from how [DoSomething runs hiring with Trello](#). I suggest managing the hiring pipeline in a project management tool—Launchpad LA, for example, [uses Asana](#)—so that everyone on the hiring team can see the candidates, comment on their application and feel involved in the process. As a remote team, you don't get those in-person, team conversations about candidates, so finding one spot to have those chats puts everyone on the same page.

We use [Greenhouse](#) to manage the hiring process, but previously we used Trello boards for each open role with a Zapier integration that [automatically creates a Trello card](#) for candidates in the "Applied" column.

Next, we nominate someone to run point for hiring for that position. They are in charge of all the initial screening and, together with our Recruiting team, making sure the ball never gets dropped in the hiring process. This role is

important. Without someone filling this role, it's highly likely that candidates will get slow response times and the ball will be dropped. I know we had this happen before having people dedicated to this role.

That said, just because someone is running point for the position doesn't mean you don't want other teammates involved in the hiring process. In fact, the exact opposite—you want to get other teammates involved to independently evaluate candidates to help reduce bias.

2. Invite Top Candidates to a Video Call Interview

The recruiter and the hiring manager and other teammates reviewing applications select candidates for the next steps, a recruiter interview. If the candidates pass that, we ask them to the job fit interview. We use a rubric to do that. For example, when hiring for a Customer Champion, we evaluate candidates using a 1-3 scale for: persistence, knowledge, empathy, attention to detail, and Zapier usage.

In the job fit interview, we get to know the candidate a bit better and ask questions to see if they would succeed in a remote environment. These are best done synchronously, so make the most of your time and schedule these back-to-back. Doing so helps you more easily compare candidates, as well.

Pay special attention to how well the applicant communicates during this part of the process. Effective communication is so key in a remote position that the little things are a sign of a person who might or might not be a great fit. Potential warning signs are individuals who are poor at following up via email, forget when the interview was scheduled, or aren't flexible with an interview time.

[Matthew Guay](#), for example, is a U.S. expat based in Bangkok, which means his work hours are completely opposite of ours in the States. But during the interview process, he was more than happy to stay up late in order to meet our whole team on a conference call. His quickness to schedule and flexibility played a role in his hiring.

3. Put Top Candidates to the Test with a Project

After these video call interviews, a few candidates have likely emerged as the strongest applicants. At this point we like to put them to the test. Depending on the role, we'll devise a task that is of moderate difficulty and indicative of the types of activities they'll do on a day-to-day basis.

For engineers, that might be using the [Zapier Developer Platform](#) to add a new service. For marketing, that may be writing a blog post in collaboration with someone on the team.

If it's obvious that this isn't necessary, we might skip this step, though it's often a good way to get a feel for working together even for great candidates.

More often than not, the task requires the candidate to interact with folks on the team—maybe even more than a couple of times. That way, you'll get a sense of how they communicate and collaborate.

The test should take only a few hours. We want to be cognizant of everyone's time.

4. Check References and Make an Offer

Before making an offer, we send out an anonymous survey for a reference check using [SkillSurvey](#). That helps get honest feedback on candidates from their references.

Throughout this process, which takes on average 29 days to hire or 3.5 days to reject an application, we update applicants on the status of their application before making the final hiring call and closing out the job opening.

5. Bonus: Have New Teammates Meet the Whole Team



Previously, we had candidates meet the team with a short lightning talk on a topic of their choice. Unfortunately, with our now-rapid hiring pace and such a large team, this weekly intro isn't feasible. New teammates, however, do introduce themselves in their first weekly hangout with the team, sharing where they're from, a bit about their background, and anything fun they want to mention.

More Remote Hiring Resources

One thing you'll note is that we never meet the individual in person during the hiring process. For our first five hires, we did meet candidates in person. We found this was helpful but ultimately wasn't critical. What it did add was cost, coordination headache, and time. If you wanted to interview three people face-to-face, that could take up to two weeks to manage. The first person in the interview process would then be waiting two or three weeks before knowing if they got the job or not. So now we do everything via Zoom and email. This works swimmingly.

If you're interested in how others hire in remote teams, here are how companies I admire do this:

- **Leo Widrich** on [how Buffer hires](#)
 - **Gregory Ciotti** of Help Scout on [how to make hiring less of a headache](#)
 - **Tommy Morgan** on [how Treehouse hires developers](#)
 - **Alex Turnbull** on [how Groove hires top talent](#)
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Chapter 3: How to Build Culture in a Remote Team



When it comes to remote teams, culture is a huge topic. Common knowledge *suggests* that co-located teams have an easier time building culture compared to remote teams.

In fact, I've even had co-located teams tell me their culture problems were solved by simply buying a foosball table. Though I challenge the truthiness of that statement, I don't think there's a quick path to building company culture, and remote teams certainly aren't an exception.

With co-located teams, it's easy to ignore culture building with the expectation that it will naturally happen. In 99% of situations (made up number), this is simply not true, but by the time a co-located team realizes it, it might be too late to repair their culture.

With a distributed team you know going in that culture will be hard to build. As a remote team, you don't delude yourself thinking that culture will magically happen. You go in eyes wide open. If a strong culture doesn't develop

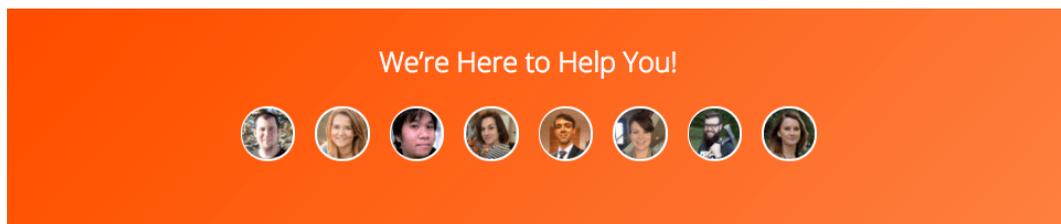
it's not because you didn't try, it's usually due to another reason.

With that in mind, how can you go about building culture when there are thousands of miles between teammates? Here are seven principles that work for us at Zapier.

1. Culture Is About More Than Ping Pong Tables

The first thing to realize is that your culture has to be built around more than ping pong tables. Games and other group activities that lend themselves to being in person are simply not a possibility on a day-to-day basis for remote teams. Therefore, your culture has to be built around something more than playing table tennis to unite the team.

2. Culture Is About How You Work



Everyone that works on Zapier has bought into the belief that you come to work for the work, not for the ping pong. Most of your time at work is going to be work, so the work has to be rewarding by itself. Here are examples:

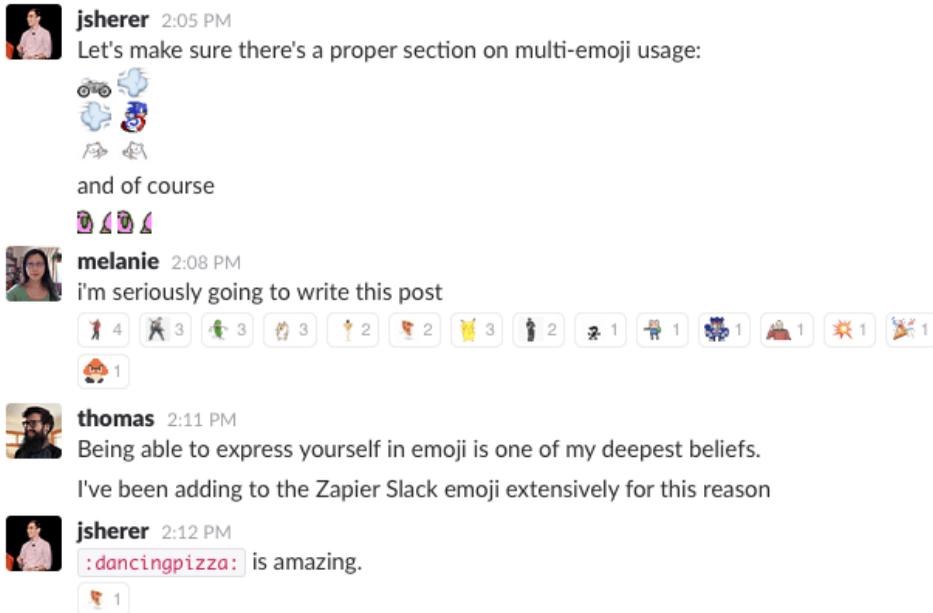
- How we talk to customers (is speed more important than quality?)
- How we communicate with each other (is this a phone call conversation or an email conversation or a chat conversation?)
- How much work do you do (do we work 40 hours or 80 hours?)

Those decisions and values create culture in remote companies more than a ping pong table would because our work is our lifeblood.

3. Tools Allow for Collaboration and Fun

A co-located office develops its own personality through inside jokes, shared experiences, and a collaborative environment, such as a meeting room with whiteboards. A remote team needs to develop something similar. The easiest way to do this is with your day-to-day toolset. Here are some tools we love that have helped build our culture.

Slack



jsherer 2:05 PM
Let's make sure there's a proper section on multi-emoji usage:

and of course

melanie 2:08 PM
i'm seriously going to write this post

 4  3  3  3  2  2  3  2  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1

 1

thomas 2:11 PM
Being able to express yourself in emoji is one of my deepest beliefs.
I've been adding to the Zapier Slack emoji extensively for this reason

jsherer 2:12 PM
`:dancingpizza:` is amazing.

 1

Slack

[Slack](#) is our virtual office. It's the online version of the water cooler—where random work discussions happen, but also where we banter back and forth about the news, jokes, and pop culture. The best part of Slack is that our water cooler discussions are always accessible. Nothing gets lost. And there's no “behind-your-back politics” that happens in many co-located offices.

We make [heavy use of emoji in Slack](#) as well.

GIFs and Memes



Cats ping pong

Most online communities have a go-to set of GIFs and memes they love. Zapier is no different. Being able to drop a relevant GIF or meme seconds after a timely Slack comment is one of the more spectacularly amusing things that happen in our little digital office place. Slack, in particular, has a great Giphy integration where you start a message with `/giphy` followed by your search term and you can insert a relevant (or often times a not so relevant) GIF.

And if you're so inclined, you can also automate your GIF game with [the Giphy integrations on Zapier](#).

Async

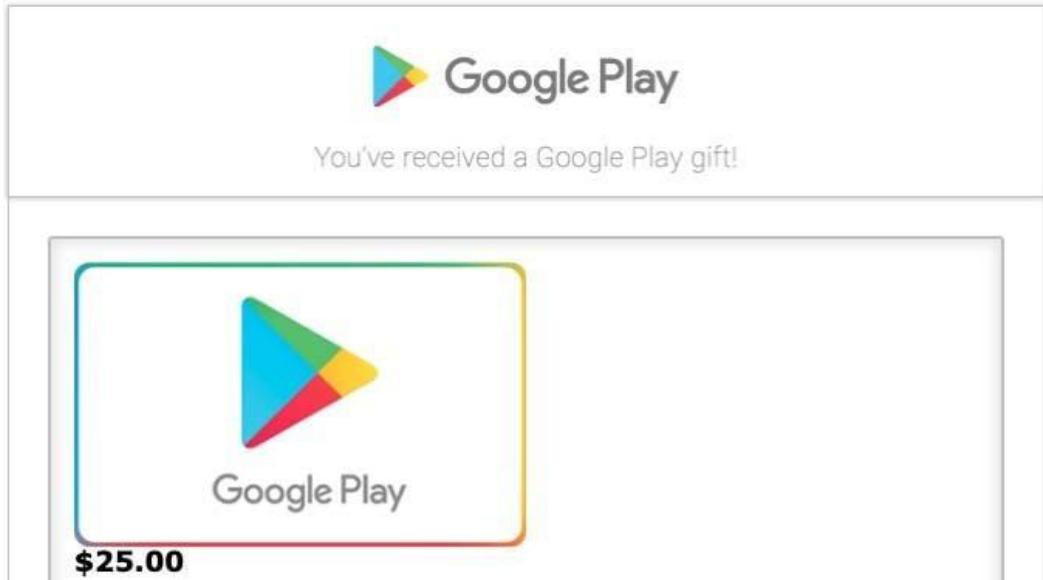
Our internal blog tool, called Async, was inspired by [P2](#), a WordPress theme [Automattic uses](#). Async makes it really easy to post updates. We use it to replace all our team emails. The asynchronous nature and threaded comments make it a lot easier to share things—from posts welcoming new teammates to discussing architectural scaling issues—Async helps keep everyone on the same page. It's almost like our own mini version of Reddit.

Hangouts, Pair Buddies and Zoom

Chat is awesome, but being able to talk in real time and visually see someone is still pretty important for some issues. Slack calls for quick, ad-hoc one-on-one meetings or Zoom for bigger team meetings make it easy to work in real time. During these chats, it's always fun to have a five-minute personal checkup just to see what the other person/people are up to.

Pair Buddies are a weekly random pairing with 2-3 people on the team that allows you to catch up on work, life, or anything else. We use [Donut](#), a Slack app, for the random pairings. Pair buddy chats help keep some semblance of the office social life as part of work and encourage people who work in different departments to get to know each other better.

Music and Books Perks with Tango Card



Tango Card GooglePlay Gift Card

One of our favorite services is [Tango Card](#) (also called Rewards Genius). The service makes it really easy to give perks to your employees. We've given everyone premium Spotify, iTunes, or Google Play credits, which is great since many remote employees love to listen to music during the day. Having music handy also makes it fun to share what everyone is listening to and hear what sort of eclectic tastes everyone has.

And because just about everyone on the team is an avid reader, staff can also choose to use their credits at Amazon, iTunes, or Google Play which they can use for eBooks. Well-read teams are happy and productive teams.

4. In-Person Meetups Are Still Important



Zapier retreat

We get the whole gang together twice a year for a company retreat. During the retreat, we do things that help foster our culture. Things like [playing board games together](#) and hiking as a group have helped us learn more about each other and our families—it's knowledge we wouldn't have gained in a normal week.

5. Local Community Sponsorship Shows Presence



Startup Weekend Sponsorship

We haven't done this a ton, but when we have it's worked. We've sponsored [dev/como](#), which [James Carr](#) runs, a handful of times and we've also made sure to [go back and sponsor Startup Weekend Columbia](#) every year. We've also donated an afternoon of our time to a non-profit during our retreats to give back.

Any time someone on the team wants to do something like this in their city, we're happy to sponsor. I imagine as the team grows even more we'll be fortunate to help foster many local communities around the globe.

By doing this, team members feel more like there is a local presence in their hometown.

6. Trust Is the Foundation

Remote teams have to trust their teammates. There is simply no way around it. The beauty of trusting your teammates is that oftentimes your teammates reward you. Most people genuinely want to do a good job. In a remote team, there aren't any silly rules about having your butts in a seat during certain hours of the day. This means at the end of the week you either have something to show for your week or not. This means you trust that your teammates are getting something done. But also your teammates trust you. To earn that trust you want to make sure you have something to show for your work each week.

Along with that: Being public and transparent about your [company's values and culture](#) goes a long way towards establishing trust in a distributed team and also for hiring people who will thrive at your company.

7. Getting Things Done

Friday - 3/22

New Tab

 **Shawn's Friday Update - March 22**
By Shawn Cook in Friday Updates on 3/22/2019
Starting to create designs and work on project related tasks

 **SXP Weekly Update - 3/22/2019**
By Noah Manger in Friday Updates on 3/22/2019
Ready to add the guide for users in the new editor | Purchased our community tech | Planning the help center redesign

 **Stephanie's Friday Update: March 22nd, 2019**
By Stephanie Briones in Friday Updates on 3/22/2019
Design Systems decisions and processes & interviews with Sr. Product Designers

 **Brandi's Friday Update 3/22/19**
By Brandi Shuttera in Friday Updates on 3/22/2019
Some in-person co-working and OKR work

Friday update

Getting things done tends to be a by-product of trust. Because there is an implicit trust in your teammates and because there is no other way to measure results in a remote team, the team inherently evaluates each other on what was completed that week. We do this by sharing weekly updates on our internal blog (Async) every Friday—I bet you can imagine how it would feel to be the only one with nothing to show. That feeling creates a desire to finish something important each week.

As remote teams get more popular, I expect we'll hear more about the cultures in remote teams and how they develop differently from co-located teams.

Written by Wade Foster.

Ping pong photo by [Wonderlane via Flickr](#).

Chapter 4: How Successful Remote Teams Evaluate Employees

A look inside Automattic, GitHub, and Help Scout



This chapter was contributed by Automattic Happiness Engineer Jeremy DuVall

During my first full day of work at [Automattic](#), the only thing running through my mind was “Am I going to get fired?”

That’s an unusual feeling, especially when you’re hours into a new job. To clarify, this had nothing to do with Automattic or any of my coworkers. They were all friendly and welcoming, encouraging me to take my time getting adjusted to my first remote position.

Still, I had this lingering fear in the back of my mind: I was used to seeing my coworkers and supervisors on a daily basis, and using in-person skills to feel

out how I was doing. Now, I was missing those seemingly crucial cues, and that made me fear the worst.

I was suffering through [Imposter Syndrome](#)—the feeling that I was a fraud, that I wasn't worthy of my position, and that sooner or later, someone was going to find out.

I had a sneaking suspicion that I couldn't be the only one who felt this way. After interviewing leaders at established remote teams, my suspicions were confirmed: This feeling is largely normal. "The struggle is real. Those first few days working remote seem so awkward, and you'll spend at least 10% of your time wondering if you're doing the right thing," confirms [Greg Ciotti](#), Content Marketing Lead [Shopify](#) and former marketer at [Help Scout](#).

So I started thinking: Is there any way to prevent Imposter Syndrome in remote teams? And what's it like for managers who need to evaluate these conflicted remote employees? Here are some best tricks of the trade from companies like [Help Scout](#), [GitHub](#), and [Automattic](#).

Make New Teammates Feel Welcome from the Start

Remote environments can be intimidating for new employees, particularly if they're coming from a traditional, co-location office setting. One practice that helped me early on at Automattic was having a veteran employee as a "buddy" to help me navigate the uncharted waters.

I'm not alone in my desire for camaraderie in remote workplace. Ciotti recommends the buddy approach to help new employees feel welcome. There's even science indicating that [employees who have friends at work](#) "get sick less often, suffer fewer accidents, and change jobs less frequently."

Ciotti offers five tangible takeaways for buddies paired up with new employees:

1. Shoot the new employee a quick email before they start to welcome them to the team. Don't use email? [Slack](#) or any other communication tool will work.

2. Offer to be available for any random questions—even the ones that seem silly. (Speaking from experience, new people tend to hesitate on asking genuinely important questions.)
3. Check in with them on your team’s chat app every couple of days in their first week to see how it’s going. (My buddy and I checked in with each other once every two weeks, always on a Friday.)
4. Tell them about your team retreats or what it’s like to hang out with the team in-person. (In my case, my buddy and I chatted about “Grand Meetups,” the annual all-person gathering at Automattic.)
5. Share some “unwritten rules” like the difference between the #general and #offtopic communication channels in Slack. (Similarly, my buddy enlightened me on Automattic’s #BurritoFriday tradition.)

Above all, buddies should make new employees feel comfortable and act as a go-to for questions employees might otherwise feel embarrassed to ask.

Measure Output, Not Input

[Matt Mullenweg](#), CEO of Automattic, has some strong doubts about the normal 9-to-5 grind. “If someone shows up in the morning dressed appropriately and isn’t drunk or asleep at his desk, we assume he’s working. If he’s making spreadsheets and to-do lists, we assume he’s working really hard. Unfortunately, none of this gets at what an employee actually creates during the day,” Mullenweg says in a [Harvard Business Review post](#).

One potential solution to this conundrum? Have managers hover over employees either by roaming up and down the aisles in a traditional sense or obsessively checking to see when someone logs in or out. According to Ciotti, that’s the shortcut to burnout:

Fires only burn when they have room to breathe, and you’ll end up suffocating enthusiasm, motivation, and camaraderie by looming over people all day, every day.

Instead, productivity at Automattic is measured by output, not input.

“At Automattic we focus on what you create, not whether you live up to some ideal of the ‘good employee,’” explains Mullenweg. For developers, that might mean looking at how many commits they’ve had over a given time period. For the support staff, that could be total number of tickets answered. The underlying message is to find a metric outside of *hours spent* to evaluate productivity.

Look to the Team for Feedback

When gathering employee feedback, it’s crucial to remember that the relationship isn’t just between supervisor and employee. Each employee has a string of relationships with their fellow co-workers. [Phil Haack](#), software coach and author, said he heavily relied on this team atmosphere to evaluate performance when he was an engineering manager at [GitHub](#). He explains that when you create a strong team, it’s easy to see who isn’t pulling their weight.

For performance reviews, Haack asks each employee to send him a list of three to five co-workers they would like peer feedback from. He then asks those co-workers to provide feedback for the individual in three categories: Start, Stop, and Continue. Each box should focus on behaviors that match the title (behaviors someone might want to stop, for example). Haack adds the boxes aren’t mandatory. “If you have three categories, the temptation is to put something in each. You might not feel very strongly that someone needs to stop doing something.” In that case, employees can just leave a box blank.

Haack takes those bits of feedback and distills them down into major take-aways, combining duplicates and making sure feedback is worded in a useful manner. The end result is a collection of behavior-based feedback from individuals you work with daily.

Two elements are crucial. First, the format (Start, Stop, and Continue) provides a framework that makes a difficult task (giving peer feedback) easier. The main purpose is to help employees organize their thoughts. Second, the feedback should be focused on behaviors, not personalities. The former is something an employee can improve; the latter isn’t.

Ask for Self-Evaluations

When performing a review, Haack considers three points of view:

1. His own opinions.
2. Thoughts from co-workers.
3. A self-evaluation from the actual employee.

Self-evaluations often get a bad rap. As professional relationship author [Keith Ferrazzi](#) explains in an article on [Harvard Business Review](#), employees tend to fall in one of two traps (potentially both). First, they become a victim of the Overconfidence Effect, which causes them to overestimate their competence in a given area. Second, they're likely to make a [Fundamental Attribution Error](#), pinning their successes on talent and wisdom while failing to acknowledge environmental factors.

To combat this, Haack uses all three points of view. The goal of the self-assessment isn't just to see how great everyone perceives they are, but rather to see if the three points of view match up. "The point of that was to help me understand how people saw themselves, how others saw them, and how I saw them and see if there's a big disconnect there," he explains.

Self-evaluations have their flaws when used as the sole assessment method. However, in conjunction with team reviews and the opinions of the team leader, they help to complete the 360-degree view. They also reassure employees that their voice is being heard.

Provide Feedback Often

"I spent a lot of the six months hoping I didn't get fired." That's not something you want to hear from one of your employees, but it's a real conversation Haack had with someone during their first official feedback session.

If employees are more familiar working in an office environment where they receive feedback daily, the silence in a remote position can be the perfect

breeding ground for Imposter Syndrome. It's easy to assume the worst about your work when you don't hear otherwise.

Everyone I spoke with for this chapter emphasized the benefits of giving regular feedback outside of formal reviews. Why? Because regular feedback lets employees know where they stand, gets everyone on the same page, and reduces the chance of a surprise during a more formal review.

When Haack was at GitHub, he had regular one-on-one meetings with his distributed team (they live all over the world) using a video conferencing software called [Blue Jeans](#). At Help Scout, team leads have scheduled weekly reviews with everyone in their department. They chat about what has gone well since the last check-in and what's looming on the horizon.

Regardless of whether you check-in with employees daily through a chat app, schedule weekly video sessions, or meet in-person monthly, the key is to provide continuous feedback rather than combining it all into one surprising review at the end of the year. Ciotti does offer one important caveat, "We hold the opinion that you should share praise and own blame." Hold performance-oriented discussions in private, not in public.

Trust

One common thread that runs deep across every method of managing a remote team: trust. Employees need to trust that their managers are looking out for their best interest. Managers need to trust that their employees are engaged and motivated at work. Part of this trust is built during the hiring process—selecting candidates who are self-motivated—and the rest is built over time with each positive interaction.

Just like in-person office cultures, remote office cultures can differ wildly.

Written by Automattic Happiness Engineer [Jeremy DuVall](#)

Header photo by [Kevin Morris via Flickr](#).

Chapter 5: How to Build Strong Relationships in a Remote Team

This chapter was contributed by Automattic Happiness Engineer Jeremy DuVall



If you work in a remote team, one of the aspects you quickly notice is the importance of communication. Finding the best ways to communicate with your team is imperative when you're not working face-to-face, because you're missing most—if not all—of the context of each person's situation.

If you're in an office with your teammates, for instance, you'll notice if someone is especially quiet and withdrawn. And if that's a common behavior pattern, you'll know that it's a tip-off that they didn't sleep well last night and need some

space or that they're especially stressed and could use a chat to share their concerns.

You'll also notice details like noise levels in the office or distracting roadworks noise outside. You'll be able to tell when someone's really focused on their work versus when they're open to interruptions.

As humans, we're great at picking up on these signals. We practice this every day in our interactions and use people's body language and tone of voice to inform the way we communicate with them.

But in a remote team, you lose a lot of that context, so you need to find ways to make up for it. Let's take a look at some ways to build strong connections with your teammates when they're far away.

Building Rapport Remotely

When you start a new job in a remote team, it can feel very strange. Although it might be less confronting than working in a new office full of people you don't know, it can also be more isolating, as you don't have an easy way to get to know everyone quickly—especially those you don't work with directly.

Eventually, you'll make the rounds and have some interaction with everyone, and perhaps even meet them in person at a [company retreat](#) like Zapier holds every few months. But how do you go about building a rapport with people you've never really met?

Let's start with some standard methods for building rapport, and look at how we can apply them to a remote working situation.

Robin Dreeke is the founder of People Formula, former Head of the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Program, and author of *It's Not All About Me: Ten Techniques for Building Quick Rapport With Anyone*. In his book, Dreeke explains some of the [most basic ways to build rapport with others](#), including smiling, tilting your chin lower so you're not looking down on them, matching their handshake strength, and slowing down your speech so you come across as being more credible.

All good tips, but not very useful in a remote setting. So what *can* we apply to a remote situation to help us build strong relationships with our teammates? Well, Dreeke suggests a few things that we can use.

First, Dreeke points out that meeting someone new can be overwhelming when you have no time constraint on your conversation. Because we're [wired to look for threats](#) in any new situation, our first reaction to meeting someone is to be wary of them until we start building up some rapport. Establishing an artificial time constraint can help ease the pressure of a conversation with someone new, according to Dreeke.

If you're setting up phone or video calls to meet your new teammates, try setting a time limit of 15 minutes.

Another tip from Dreeke is to validate others by listening to them and suspending your ego. "True validation coupled with ego suspension means that you have no story to offer, that you are there simply to hear theirs," he writes.

We [love to talk about ourselves](#), especially to good listeners, but this means we're often ready to respond with our own related stories when our conversation partner finishes talking. According to Dreeke, ego suspension means putting aside our own desires to contribute to the conversation and instead asking [short, open questions](#) like *how, when, and why*.

[Studies have shown](#) that listening carefully and asking the person you're talking with to expand on what they're saying will make you more likable and more likely to be chosen for future conversations.

So, in summary:

- set a finish time before starting a conversation with someone new
- listen without interrupting or sharing your own stories
- ask short, open questions

Relying on Text the Right Way

Your team might rely on tools like Skype or Zoom for video and voice chats, which will give you a chance to use those rapport-building strategies we just discussed. Voice and video calls can help you feel more in touch with your team and avoid the issues of asynchronous communication like time lags or misunderstandings.

But you'll likely spend a lot of your day communicating with text. Whether it's in [Slack](#), [Basecamp](#) shared documents, emails, or GitHub issues, text tends to be the most convenient way to keep in touch with your teammates without interrupting them.

Need a team chat app? Find one in Zapier's roundup of [The Best Team Chat Apps for Your Company](#).

Effective written communication is such an important part of remote working that it's often part of what remote companies look for when hiring. For instance, [Automattic](https://automattic.com) Happiness Engineer Andrew Spittle shares:

Text is our predominant communication mode and we look for strong writing skills in applicants. On the support side that's key since text is not just how we communicate with customers but also with each other. Our interview process is all done through text chats, too, as a way to evaluate that ability.

In a remote setting, you need to be able to get your point across clearly and simply, show empathy and understanding, and be efficient to avoid wasted time, since you may be waiting across timezones for your team to reply anyway.

Here are three suggestions for connecting with remote team members through text:

1. Stay Up to Date

When your teammates are working on the other side of the world, you get used to waking up or coming back from lunch to a full inbox and messages flowing in from your team chat, shared documents, and various other places. This can be overwhelming, so finding ways to keep on top of what's going on is imperative for communicating efficiently with each other.

The distributed [Stripe](#) team [shares most internal emails](#), which means everyone has a very full inbox to work through daily. With over 400 email lists in the company, there's a lot to organize at Stripe.

One of the approaches Stripe takes [for scaling transparent emails](#) for scaling transparent email is to create archive lists where otherwise irrelevant emails are CC'd to. This means if you're setting up a meeting with someone you don't have to flood everyone's inboxes with your back-and-forth emails, but later on, everyone has access to that information if they need it. Here's how Greg Brockman, Chairman and CTO of OpenAI and former Stripe CTO [explains it](#):

The goal isn't to share things that would otherwise be secret: it's to unlock the wealth of information that would otherwise be accidentally locked up in a few people's inboxes. In general, if you are debating including an archive list, you should include it.

(Buffer also uses a transparent email process. You can read about how it works [on the Buffer Open blog](#).)

2. Remember Hanlon's Razor

A razor is a concept used in philosophy to help us strip away possible explanations (hence the name) for a phenomenon. [Hanlon's razor](#) refers to the idea that we should always assume ignorance before malice. That is, if someone does something wrong, don't assume they purposely meant to hurt you. It's just as likely (perhaps more so) that they simply made a mistake.

This is especially important in situations where you're missing context. If you're communicating via text with co-workers who are multiple time zones away, try to always assume ignorance before malice if you have a misunderstanding.

In my own experience, this has happened several times. When I worked remotely for Buffer, I would often jump on a call with Leo to discuss something we'd disagreed about, only to realize we weren't on the same page at all, and it had all been a misunderstanding.

Asserting Yourself When Needed

Perhaps the hardest, yet most obvious, way to compensate for the lack of context in remote communication is to be more forward and open than you

normally would. As I mentioned in my example earlier, working with someone in an office makes it easier to pick up on their mood and know when they need some time alone. When you work remotely, you're going to bug people by chatting to them when they're not in the mood—it's unavoidable. Being respectful of others is just harder when you have less information to inform your decisions.

To cut down on that problem, we need to find ways to share that context explicitly with each other. A good way to go about this is to set up rules ahead of time.

Here's an example from my own experience: my co-founder [Josh Sharp](#) and I use [Viber](#) to communicate throughout the day. Sometimes it's a quick message here and there about grabbing some lunch or heading out for a meeting. Other times, we have real-time chats for hours about our work. Because Viber is our "always on" channel for communicating, we have to explicitly remove ourselves from being available if we need uninterrupted work time. To avoid anyone getting offended by a frustrated request that they shut up for a while, we came up with a code word.

"Tree time" is what we call our uninterrupted work time. I don't remember where the name came from now, but I think it had something to do with a hypothetical scenario where one of us runs up a tree to get away from the other... Regardless, this is now our code word. If one of us asks the other for some "tree time", it means "don't get offended, but I'm finding it hard to concentrate and I really need some uninterrupted time to focus on what I'm doing."



Tree Time chat

Because we set up this rule ahead of time, we both know it's an option. Anytime we feel the need for some peace and quiet while we work, we know we can fall back on *tree time* without having to explain ourselves or worry about offending the other person because we don't want to chat right now.

Being open about what you need can be really hard. Most of us aren't used to being so upfront with our teammates. But keep in mind all the information *you* have about how you feel and your current needs that your teammates don't have.

It's up to you to fill in that gap so they can communicate with you in the best way.

Another good example of setting this up in advance is what [the Basecamp team](#) did when it introduced phone support. At first, the support team was wary of

adding the extra pressures of phone support to their workload. How do you do phone support when you work remotely from cafés?

Basecamp didn't want the support team to lose the benefits that come with remote working, so they set up some guidelines ahead of time. One is that team members can take breaks to work outside, in cafés, or just away from the phones, and the rest of the team will cover for them. Making this rule in advance means team members know it's an option and can ask for it when they need some space.

We've covered a lot of ground in this chapter. Through all the examples I've included you can see that each company handles remote working in different ways. The most important thing I've learned from working remotely myself is that each team, and each member within that team, needs to find the way that works best for them.

Experiment with different options to find what works best, but remember the most important lesson: Find a way to share the context of your situation with your teammates. They need all the information you can give them to work with you in the best way they can.

Written by Hello Code cofounder [Belle Beth Cooper](#)

Microphone photo via [Ryan McGuire](#)

Chapter 6: How to Run a Company Retreat for a Remote Team



One of the downsides of being a remote team is that physical interaction doesn't happen unless you make a dedicated effort to get the team together.

While we firmly believe that day-to-day work does not need to happen in person, we do believe that some things happen easier when in person. Because of that, we get the whole team together for a company retreat twice a year.

We've now run 10 company retreats for team sizes of 7, 10, 14, 19, 27, 34, 45, 68, 95, and 185. Here's everything we've learned to pull them off.

1. Why Should You Run a Company Retreat?

Big, full-company retreats are tough to coordinate and expensive, so why even bother?

Ultimately: because some things are just better done in person. For instance, it's hard to have an impromptu, deep conversation with a teammate over Google Hangout about their kids, some random idea you've had improving a secondary process in the company, or company values. All those things tend to naturally happen in person, while they don't happen in a remote team unless you force it.

Also, retreats are a ton of fun. Since you don't see everyone on a daily basis, it's exciting to have everyone around for a week-long excursion where you can talk shop and learn more about each other as people in an everyday setting.

2. Where Should You Hold Your Company Retreat?



Mt. Rainier Company Retreat

Wherever you want!

So far, we've had company retreats in California, Washington, Florida, Colorado, Alabama, Utah, Texas, Vancouver, Toronto, and Louisiana—and departmental retreats in other locations.

When choosing a place for your company retreat, there are a few things to consider:

1. Make it somewhere easy for folks to get to (that is, less than a two-hour drive from a major airport).
2. Go somewhere that can hold everyone. When we were a smaller team of under 30 people, we were able to do AirBnB and HomeAway houses (hotels can feel sterile, but houses feel inviting.) As we've grown, we've had to broaden our search for places that could accommodate larger groups in one spot while also still providing that sense of privacy and closeness. Our People Ops team has done a great job scouting locations based on these criteria and others, such as our need for a large conference room, fast and reliable Wi-Fi (at least 100mbps up and down), and breakout rooms to work on projects together.
3. Don't worry so much about being close to tons of activities. We used to think having a large city nearby would be important but then realized we rarely took advantage of the full city amenities.
4. That said, do have some activities very near the retreat location. Beachside houses, resorts near hiking trails, or places with big games rooms (pool, ping pong, etc.) are great because people can entertain themselves in downtime without driving places.

Ultimately, though, go with what suits your company. I know some companies travel overseas or some bring everyone into headquarters.

3. How Long Should Your Company Retreat Last?



Brainstorming workshop at one of our recent retreats

It depends. You need to be respectful of people's time. After some iteration, we've found four full days plus one optional "fun" free day, bookended by two travel days to be a good fit. People with family and kids aren't too inconvenienced, and it's long enough to do something meaningful. We have biannual retreats, one in the winter and one in the summer. Every year, the retreat weeks alternate to avoid these days always falling on someone's birthday or other family celebration.

As you grow, another thing to consider is staggering travel days. We have the founding team plus international travelers come in a day early. This means customer support for Zapier isn't abysmal for one day while everyone is traveling, and we can prepare the location with food since we're there a bit early.

4. What Should You Do During Your Retreat?



Zapier hackathon presentation

It can be easy to default to doing the things you always do on a day-to-day basis at work. But that would be a waste of an opportunity.

We decided early on that we should do things during the week that we can't do together—even if it was at the expense of making progress on Zapier itself. After all, we work on the product every other day of the year. For one week it makes sense to take some time off and work on the team which is just as important as the product itself.

Some of the best activities we do are mostly unrelated to work.

We [play party games](#), such as [Mafia](#), have karaoke nights, and have hiked Mt. Rainer, skied, swam in the ocean, and visited the USS Alabama together. Doing something physical is a great way to learn more about each other, but we've also done food tours and even visited an old Texas ranch that's used as a movie set.

We also spend time doing work-related things or discussing issues important to us.

Previously, we paired a mini-conference with a hackathon. Here's how we did it:

1. Before the retreat, all team members suggest projects for the hackathon that anyone at the company can work on. This project should be something that can be significantly developed, if not shipped, in three days.
2. After the project suggestions are in, each department (e.g., support, marketing, product, engineering) votes on the top hackathon project the company should work on.
3. From that list, each person in the company selects the top project they would like to work on (plus 2 alternatives) at the retreat. Hackathon teams are assigned based on this.
4. During the retreat, each hackathon group works on their project over the course of 3 working days or afternoons.
5. At the end of the week, each group presents what they built.

Some examples of hackathon projects that have come out of our retreats are new features like [Formatter by Zapier](#), [a guide to using Zapier](#), and accessibility enhancements in our product.

Most recently, we experimented with replacing the hackathon with an “unconference.” While the hackathons encouraged collaboration with people from different teams and let us experiment with things that might not have otherwise gotten attention, they've been difficult to plan as we've grown. So for our last retreat, we decided to try unconferences instead. As Meghan Gezo, HR/People Ops Specialist, explains:

An unconference is a participant-driven meeting that lets attendees decide what gets discussed. Rather than locking everyone into a set schedule and set topics, the unconference lets everyone decide what topics are important to talk about. It also lets everyone participate in the discussion instead of just one person or a panel of people. Even if a topic ends up with only a few interested people, it can still be really useful to everyone involved!

Here's how it works:

- Each unconference lasts 40 minutes, with one lead/facilitator and one note taker.
- Before the retreat, everyone is free to suggest topics (via a spreadsheet) and nominate the lead person, which could be themselves
- At the unconference, participants are encouraged to share ideas in the conversation.

Some of the topics covered at the last retreat include:

- Productivity and Energy Management
- How to Make Data Friendlier
- How Zapier Experts Use the Product
- Managing Diverse Time Zones
- How to Win The Price Is Right

After doing a couple of retreats, we've found that the best retreats combine something everyone on the team can work on in person along with multiple activities that help the team get to know each other better. Like our Game of Thrones viewing party:



GoT

5. What About the Cost of the Retreats?

Obviously, cost is a big consideration for doing a trip like this. Keep in mind, though, that a typical remote team saves tons of money each month by not having to pay for an office (or paying for a much smaller one than you'd normally have to have if you're a partially remote team). We decide to invest money we save on office-related expenses into company and department retreats because of the invaluable team-building these experiences provide. At the same time, we try to keep spending on retreats reasonable; keeping everyone happily employed is more important than sending everyone to luxury resorts overseas.

Retreats aren't cheap, but what's even more expensive is having a remote team that doesn't work well together. Ultimately, the cost of the trip is well worth it in my mind, but you have to make that choice based on the constraints of your own business.

Getting Feedback on the Trip



Unconference team photo

If you're planning to keep doing retreats as you grow, then you'll want to make sure the retreats keep getting better. The way to do this is to ask for feedback.

For example, the feedback we got from our first company retreat was that since we paired the trip with a conference, everyone spent a ton of time doing their own thing at the conference and by the time we all were able to regroup at the place in the evening everyone was really tired. So we decided not to do retreats alongside conferences again.

Here are some questions that are useful to ask the team after a retreat:

1. What was awesome about the trip? Be as detailed as you'd like.
2. What should we do differently the next time around? Be as detailed as you'd like.

3. In retrospect, did you like the unconference structure? What was good? What could be improved?
4. We had a handful of roundtables this retreat. What was good about these? What could be improved?
5. How did your team day go?
6. Any other comments?

Based on feedback from our previous retreats, we've learned that teammates most enjoyed meeting and hanging out with everyone, having an entire venue to ourselves, lots of food options, and a range of roundtable topics.

Doing a company-wide retreat is a big event, and our People Ops team spends a lot of time planning it—about a year in advance. But it's a lot of fun. If you run a remote team, I would highly encourage you to consider planning one for the next year. I think you'll find it well worth it, and your teammates will love your company even more for it.

Written by Wade Foster

Hoon Park, Customer Champion (Austin, TX)



Bill Merrill, Product Engineer (Seattle, WA)

 **billmer...**
Office Nomads [View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)

13 likes
billmerrill

@zapier coworkers asked about my work space at @officenomads. #zapierlife

Rob Golding, Senior Product Engineer (Nottingham, UK)



Kirk Godfredsen, Customer Champion (Seattle, WA)



Kim Kadiyala, Marketing Specialist (Fort Lauderdale, FL)



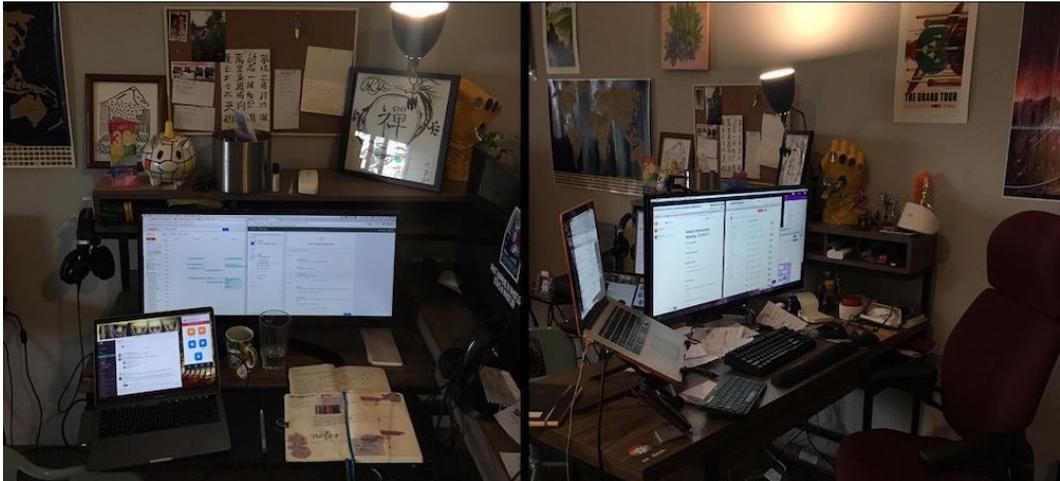
Erin Chock, Customer Champion (Portland, OR)



Vicky Cassidy, Platform Lead (Madison, WI)



Zen Ren, Platform Support Lead, and Zé João Proença, Partner Success Specialist (Austin, TX)



Two workspaces in one!

Additional Thoughts

It's fascinating to me that all of us work great together. But if forced to be in an office with one another for 250 days a year, we might not like working with each other quite as much.

Working distributed thus helps everyone optimize their environment in a way that suites them best while not distracting others on the team.

See [more team photos at #zapierlife on Instagram](#).

Written by Wade Foster

Chapter 8: How to Work Faster in a Remote Team



“OK, I’m done.”

I vividly remember reading that short, punchy sentence again and again in my first few weeks at Zapier, each time pursing my lips, scrunching my forehead and thinking, “How did Wade finish that task so fast? Geesh, I’m slow.”

Zapier is my first job on a remote team. Prior to my time here, I spent two years in a co-located corporate cube farm and four years in a regional media company. Never, though, had I been a part of an organization in which each team member is on their own, dictating their own hours, office setup, and work environment.

For my boss—Zapier co-founder [Wade Foster](#)—and the half-dozen other individuals on the team when I joined, this freedom gave rise to a higher level of productivity, too. Or so they felt.

“Non-remote work defaults to the highest distraction communication first, which is in-person. Remote work defaults to the lowest, which is no commu-

nication,” said Zapier co-founder [Mike Knoop](#) when I asked him if he felt he worked faster in a remote team.

“Fewer distractions lead to faster work,” Mike added. “You have to purposely decide to enter into more distracting conversations.”

For Wade, it’s been a similar experience.

“Fewer distractions,” he said when asked the same question. “I don’t get sucked into side conversations. No one plays crappy music really loud. I don’t get hit in the head with a Nerf ball.”

“Things are more to the point,” he added.

Of course, those are Zapier co-founders speaking; they are, without a doubt, biased on this topic. So what about my teammates at Zapier or members of other remote organizations: Do they find the distributed team structure increases productivity? And if so, why? I went searching for input.

Are You More Productive?

Have you found working on a remote team has resulted in you working faster, more productively? If yes, how? If no, why do you think not?

That’s the question I sent out to a dozen colleagues in the remote working world. Tabulating the nine replies that came back, six individuals said “yes,” two said “yes and no,” and one replied he “wouldn’t say that working with a remote team has really affected the pace of my work.” And though these nine answers vary, there is a constant theme: a remote working environment *allows* for a faster pace of work. Whether or not that’s the intention of the remote employer, it’s the common outcome.

[Belle Cooper](#)—co-founder of Hello Code based in Melbourne—summed it up best in her response.

“Working remotely has definitely led me to find ways to work faster,” Cooper says. “It didn’t happen naturally as a result of remote work, but the freedom of remote work means I can experiment with different work spaces, different work times and approaches, and find what works best for me as well as what helps me work fastest.”

“It didn’t happen naturally as a result of remote work, but the freedom of remote work means I can experiment ... and find what works best.” - Belle Beth Cooper

Complementing Cooper’s take is [Zach Leatherman](#), an Omaha-based web developer part of the remote [Filament Group](#) team, who points out that it’s a two-sided equation.

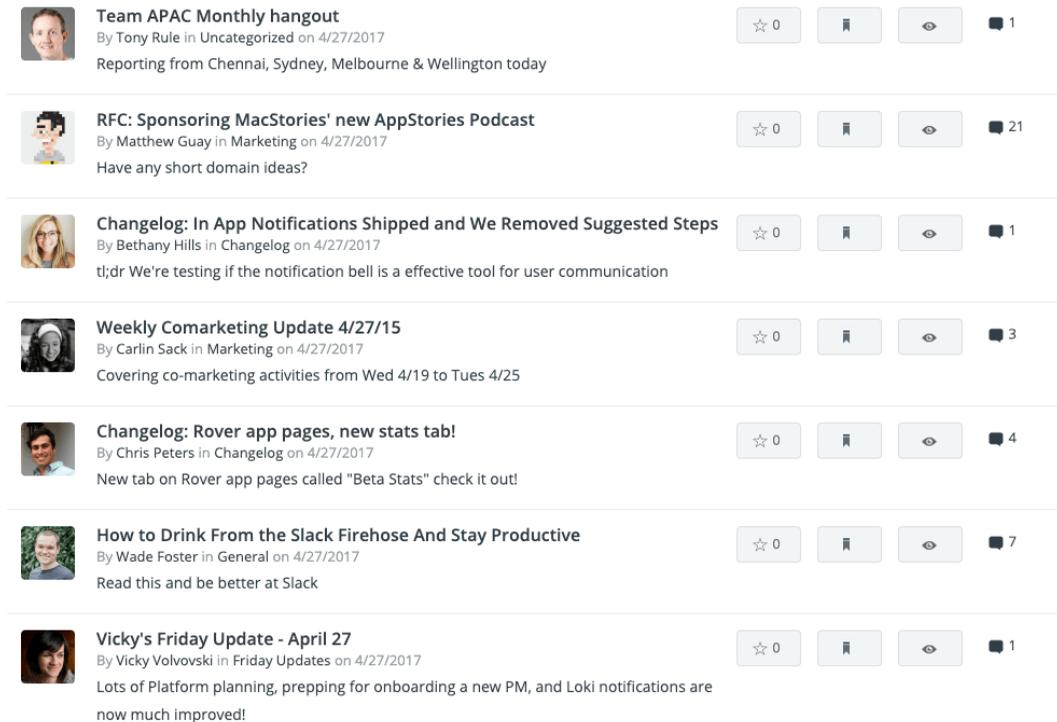
“In my opinion, remote work can only succeed in environments that have little red tape and low barrier to decision making,” he says. “If employees don’t have freedom and independence to make decisions, remote work will be less effective.”

So when both parties are present—the freedom-giving remote employer and the productivity-seeking remote employee—work happens at a faster pace. Could it be that simple? The trait “propensity towards action” is, after all, one that we look for in candidates when [we’re hiring](#).

We could boil it down to that, but it would leave out some of the unique characteristics that define remote work. Knoop’s comment, for example, is that remote work inherently cuts down on distracting conversations because a majority of the communication is written rather than verbal. So whether or not the individual has an aim to increase their productivity, when they’re in the remote environment Knoop describes, they’ll be more productive.

Putting that to the test, I asked my teammates and a group of nine colleagues for examples of how being part of a remote team has helped them work faster. Here are eight of the ways they offered, followed by a few ways in which they work slower, too.

1. Pull Internal Communication Out of Your Inbox



Team APAC Monthly hangout
By Tony Rule in Uncategorized on 4/27/2017
Reporting from Chennai, Sydney, Melbourne & Wellington today

RFC: Sponsoring MacStories' new AppStories Podcast
By Matthew Guay in Marketing on 4/27/2017
Have any short domain ideas?

Changelog: In App Notifications Shipped and We Removed Suggested Steps
By Bethany Hills in Changelog on 4/27/2017
t!;dr We're testing if the notification bell is a effective tool for user communication

Weekly Comarketing Update 4/27/15
By Carlin Sack in Marketing on 4/27/2017
Covering co-marketing activities from Wed 4/19 to Tues 4/25

Changelog: Rover app pages, new stats tab!
By Chris Peters in Changelog on 4/27/2017
New tab on Rover app pages called "Beta Stats" check it out!

How to Drink From the Slack Firehose And Stay Productive
By Wade Foster in General on 4/27/2017
Read this and be better at Slack

Vicky's Friday Update - April 27
By Vicky Volvovski in Friday Updates on 4/27/2017
Lots of Platform planning, prepping for onboarding a new PM, and Loki notifications are now much improved!

Each Friday, Zapier team members recap their week with a post on the company's internal blog.

Think about the number of words you speak each day—3 minutes of conversation with your favorite barista, 15 minutes on a conference call with a new client, 30 minutes unpacking your day with a friend or your spouse over dinner. Now imagine typing all of those conversations out in email form. That's the majority of remote communication.

By default, these conversations and others like it fall into your inbox and pile up, waiting for you to read and reply. And that's exactly what you do—a [survey conducted by McKinsey Global Institute in 2012](#), for example, found that 28% of a professional's work week is dedicated to reading and answering email. That's the highest time allotment outside role-specific tasks, which clocks in at 39%.

One of the best things we did early on to thwart this imminent mess of email as the Zapier team grew, was take an inventory of which conversations belonged in our inboxes and which ones belonged elsewhere for the sake of context and convenience. The result: Only two types of internal emails remained. (The emails: team feedback following an applicant's group interview and announcements of new hires.)

Company and department updates, project specs, design mock-ups, and individual "Friday Update" reports moved from email to our [private internal blog](#), and the aggravating "Reply All" emails that accompanied them became easy-to-read threaded comments. Team and department feedback, along with questions and discussions, moved to team collaboration and chat app [Slack](#), which replaced one-on-one email threads with its private messaging feature, too. And Slack even became the place we find out about new public and private blog posts with a Zapier integration.

It's tough to put a total "time saved" figure on the email changes inside our team, but that's ok because it's not the only—or even the best—result. What's best is the order it brings—assurance that when there's a new email, it's meaningful, and when there are five replies to a department update on our internal blog, they're quick to read (and "like," too).

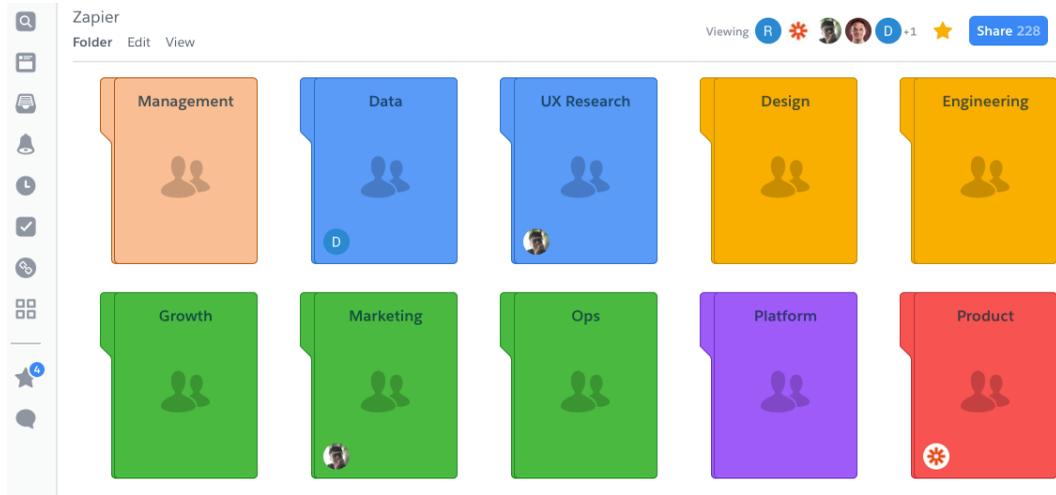
Or as [Andreas Klinger](#), Head of Remote at [AngelList](#), puts it: "Communication feels cheap to do but often adds up to a lot of time costs and very often only results in more communication (unless framed in processes)." Streamlining communications and cutting down on the back-and-forth emails is the true benefit of pulling communications out of your inbox.

"Communication feels cheap to do but often adds up to a lot of time costs." - Andreas Klinger, Product Hunt

That said, your team might not need to pull internal communication out of your inbox to find benefits. The team behind payments remote-friendly company Stripe kept their email intact but [added structure](#) such as [advanced Gmail filters](#).

Slack works for our team—it keeps us out of the inbox and frees up our time to work on more important projects. But what matters is finding an efficient communication model for you and your team.

2. Rely on the Right Tools



The Zapier team turns to Quip anytime it needs to document a process.

We love apps at Zapier. We're constantly playing around with them, [integrating them into our own platform](#), and trying them out in our workflows.

So as we moved email threads out of our inboxes, we needed to find an app for each convo. Slack absorbed most of the load, but not all. Progress updates around our editorial calendar moved into [Trello](#), a highly customizable project management tool. Step-by-step guides teaching fellow co-workers, for example, how to instigate a [drip campaign](#) moved into [Hackpad](#), a collaborative documentation tool, and then into [Quip](#) when Hackpad shut down. And before we relied on our private internal blog for weekly updates, we used [iDoneThis](#), an app that makes it easy to record the tasks you accomplished.

When your remote team lands on the right tools, you can really get in the groove. That was an experience shared by [Matthew Makai](#), a remote employee on Twilio's team, another company that's split between co-located and distributed employees.

"My colleague Ricky Robinett and I wrote [this blog post](#) on our new TaskRouter API together while he was in NYC and I was in D.C.," Makai says, noting several other colleagues gave their input on the piece, too.

"I felt like we were more efficient than if we were in-person because we had a mastery over our communication tools, including Google Docs, Trello, Flowdock, and video chat. If we were in the same room, I don't believe it would've worked as well because the writing-review-revision feedback loop is inherently asynchronous, so we all worked on our own schedules."

"We were more efficient than if we were in-person because we had a mastery over our communication tools." - Matthew Makai, Twilio

[Scott Hanselman](#), a Microsoft employee who works remotely from Portland, best sums up the remote worker's approach to [trying and using tools](#) when you need something outside your essential toolkit.

"We use Lync at work, but I also use Skype, GChat, Join.me, straight VNC, Windows Remote Assistance, CoPilot and a dozen others," he says. "If one doesn't work for some reason, don't waste time, just move to the next one."

Once again, the time savings of being remote might come directly from being remote, but perhaps also because you're forced to try new tools that work great remotely *and* can also speed you up.

See Tools of Remote Teams: Google "[remote team tools](#)" and you'll discover what's working best for the teams at [Ghost](#), [Buffer](#), [Hanno](#), [Groove](#), and others.

3. Use Differing Schedules to Your Advantage

Makai, in the quote above, found that the flexible schedule that comes with a remote team speeds up his writing and editing process. And he's not the only one: Among the individuals polled for this piece, the most popular answer for how remote work enables individuals to work faster is the ability to decide one's hours.

IDoneThis founder [Walter Chen](#) uses his adjustable schedule to get over his "2 p.m. post-lunch lull."

"When I was a lawyer, I had to close the door of my office and put my head down on the desk for a quick nap. Still, you can imagine that the head-down

on the desk nap isn't as refreshing as it could be," he says. "Now that I work remotely, I'm able to lie down for a nap or go to the gym for a quick workout, which gives me a huge energy boost."

[Joe Stych](#), a Minneapolis, Minnesota-based team member at Zapier, has a different take on the schedule offered by remote companies, one that means maximizing his allotted time.

"At my old job, productivity was zero after 4 p.m.—I was counting down the minutes until I got in my car or just refreshing my email to make sure my boss didn't send me something," Stych says. At Zapier, he's nestled in his home office, working until he signs off Slack.

For some teams though, making the most of the schedule doesn't mean working when most productive, but always staying productive because you can work around the clock.

"We're spread over a number of different time zones all over the world, so our development is 24/7," says Groove founder and CEO [Alex Turnbull](#). "Even when those of us in the U.S. are sleeping, our developers in Europe and South Africa are hustling. Customers can get help at any hour, and production never stops."

Inside Zapier, we take advantage of this benefit, too. My marketing teammate [Matthew Guay](#), for example, is based in Thailand, so our clocks are opposite—when it's 8 a.m. in Omaha, it's 8 p.m. in Bangkok. At the end of the workday, I'll often hand off a piece to Matthew for editing. When I wake up the next morning, it's all marked up. Never in my many years on an editorial team have I had the quick workflow offered by this unique situation.

4. Skip the Commute

"We save, collectively, dozens of hours each week on commuting," says Groove's Turnbull. "Those hours go into getting things done, and over time, that amounts to massive, massive wins."

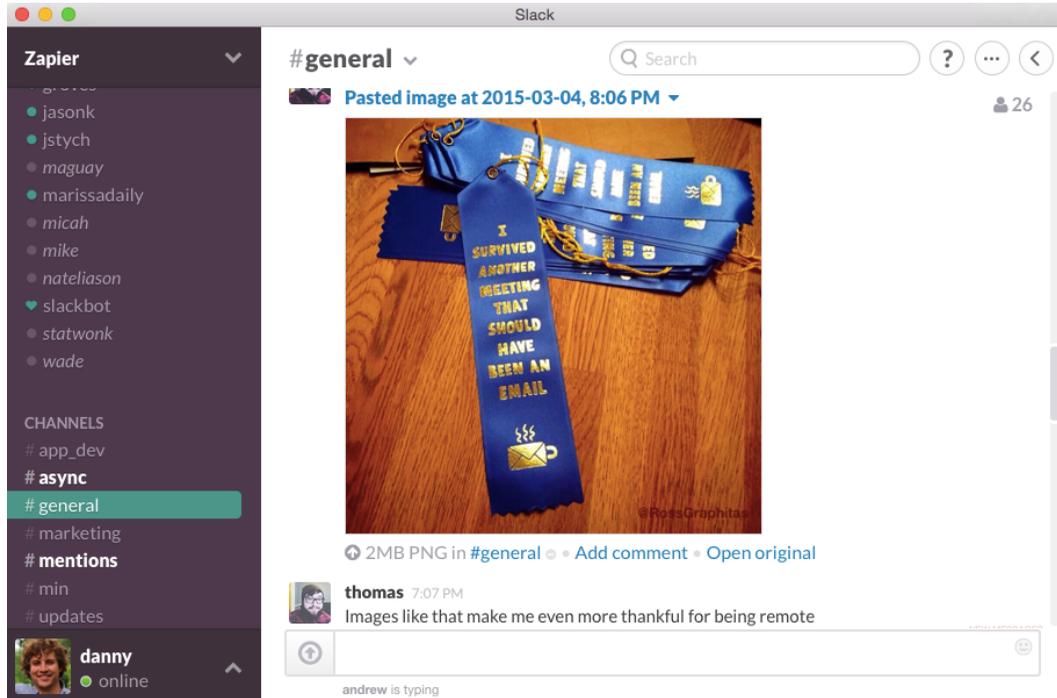
Zapier co-founder and CEO Wade Foster has a similar take. "I jump right into work when I'm ready. And leave when I'm done. There's zero friction between working and not."

“We save, collectively, dozens of hours each week on commuting.” -
Alex Turnbull, Groove

While this is perhaps the most-heralded aspect of remote working, it might be one that’s underutilized, as well. In essence, the commute, be it 15 minutes or 50 minutes, is found as an excess when you’re remote working. Why spend time in the car when you can get right down to it at your home office?

Applying that same principle to other activities yields a productivity boost, as well. Instead of leaving your office to grab lunch, for example, prepare it that morning, as if you were commuting. Rather than go for coffee in the afternoon, rely on a thermos or switch to tea, which makes preparation easy. Look to cut excess from your team’s processes, too. Instead of holding that weekly stats recap meeting, for example, spin up an internal blog post that details the numbers.

5. Cancel Meetings



“Hey, can you hear me?” ... “How about now?”

You’d never say that when you’ve stepped aside for an impromptu meeting, but it’s a common occurrence when starting up a video conference call. This annoyance is surprisingly helpful though: You purposely try to avoid putting yourself in that scenario. Yes, as if [meetings weren’t bad enough](#), now you have to put up with fussy software that multiplies meeting pain.

So the best thing to do is ask yourself: Do we really need that meeting?

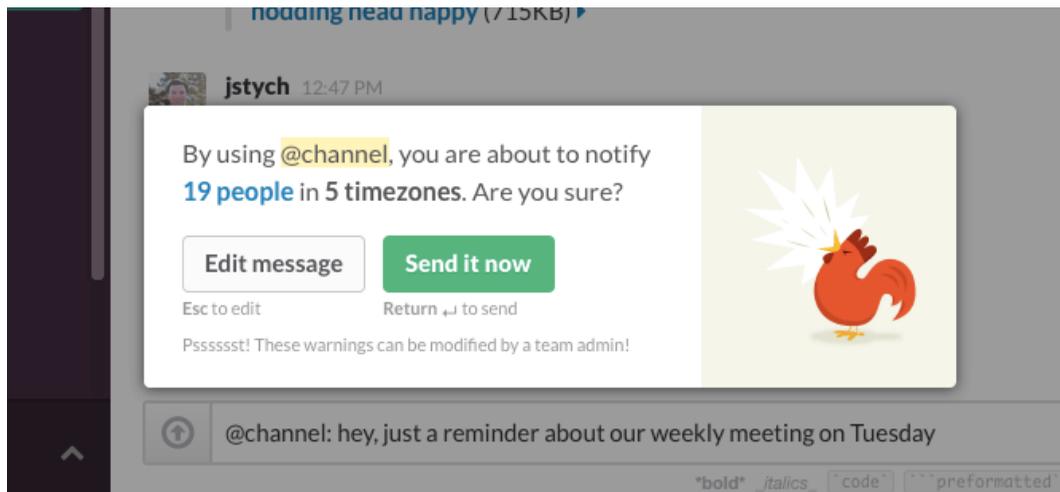
Start asking yourself that question and you’ll start earning back dozens of hours monthly. (That’s a potential [7,000 hours back](#) for the unnamed organization in a report by [Bain & Company](#)).

The team at iDoneThis reconfigured their weekly meeting after giving it a second thought. They knew they wanted to hold a regular meeting for some

important face-to-face contact, but the content of their meetings was ineffective.

“Since we didn’t set forth a specific enough protocol or purpose, the Hangouts were unfocused, devolved into rambling discussions about product, and ended up wasting our time,” writes former iDoneThis team member [Janet Choi](#). After consideration, they changed up the format to a more effective weekly show-and-tell session.

6. Think Before You Send



With a majority of communication on a remote team being in written form, you start to notice something about how you talk with your teammates: You put more thought into it. It’s hard to just spout something out; you first must type it out, read what you’ve written, and then hit “send” or “publish.” Those extra little steps add a helpful filter to your conversations. You end up thinking before you speak, yielding clearer and more concise communication. It’s probably no surprise then that “proficient written communicator” is among the skills we look for when hiring at Zapier.

This is a tactic that can work for in-person teams, too. Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, for example, bans Powerpoint presentations in meetings. Instead, he requires

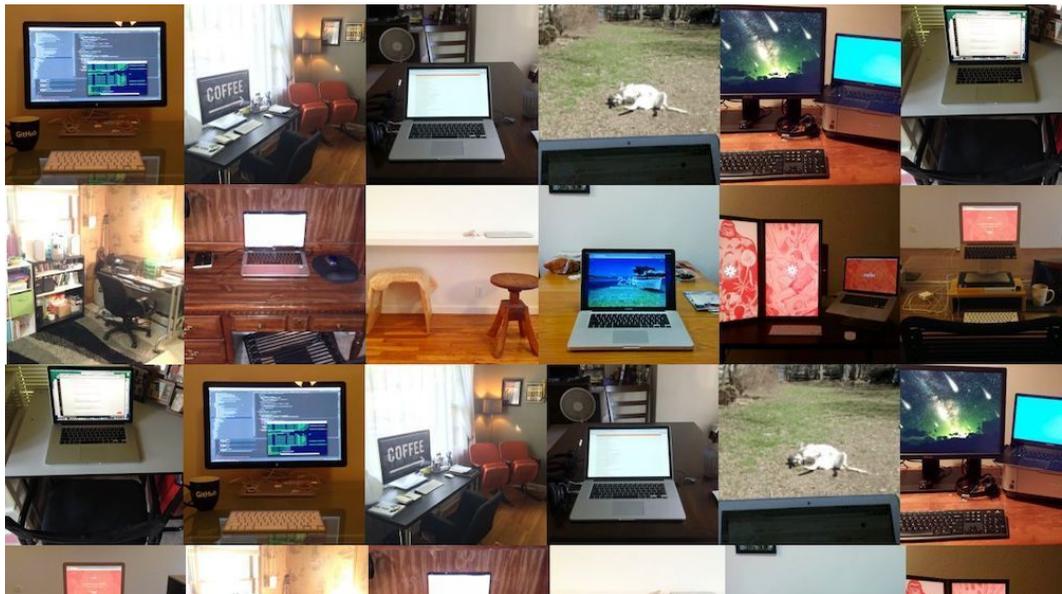
each attendee to come prepared with a memo, which is then read by the others before the meeting starts.

“Full sentences are harder to write,” Bezos [says in a Fortune article](#). “They have verbs. The paragraphs have topic sentences. There is no way to write a six-page, narratively structured memo and not have clear thinking.”

If your company relies on a [team chat application](#) like Slack, you’ll see this benefit, too.

“Things are more to the point,” says Zapier’s Foster. “In-person meetings tend to have lots of chit-chat, *how’s the weather* talk. In chat, you skip over most of that and get right to the point.”

7. Set Up Your Best Environment



The home offices of the Zapier team vary dramatically.

“If you ask people the question, ‘Where do you really need to go when you need to get something done?’ you typically get three different kinds of answers,”

says [Jason Fried](#), the founder of Basecamp and co-author of bestselling book *Remote: No Office Required*. One answer is a place, location or room, such as the porch or the coffee shop; another is a moving object, such as a plane or train; and another is a time, really early in the morning or on the weekends.

“You almost never hear someone say ‘the office,’ but businesses are spending all this money on this place called the office and they’re making people go to it all the time. Yet people don’t do work in the office.”

“It’s like the front door of the office is like a Cuisinart and you walk in and your day is shredded to bits.” - Jason Fried, Basecamp

Fried, who [delivered these words on stage](#) at TEDxMidwest 2010, says he’s been asking people this productivity question for about 10 years.

The office, he says, is where “work moments” happen, not work days. “It’s like the front door of the office is like a Cuisinart and you walk in and your day is shredded to bits because you have 15 minutes here, and 30 minutes there and then something else happens and you’re pulled off your work ... and then it’s lunch.”

Take those distractions away, and you can be a lot more productive. “People need to be able to be away from the distractions of the workplace to actually work and get things done,” says Zapier Managing Editor Melanie Pinola, who pointed me to Fried’s talk. “When I first started telecommuting, I found myself finishing my tasks much earlier than I had previously and ended up taking on more responsibilities...from home, because I just worked better in this environment.”

Aside from the ability to dictate their schedule, the ability to control their environment is also a main factor for many remote workers’ productivity.

“Having a quiet day at home to write means I get work done way faster,” says [Jimmy Daly](#), a Tucson, Ariz.-based content marketer.

Working from home allows you to quickly change your surroundings, too.

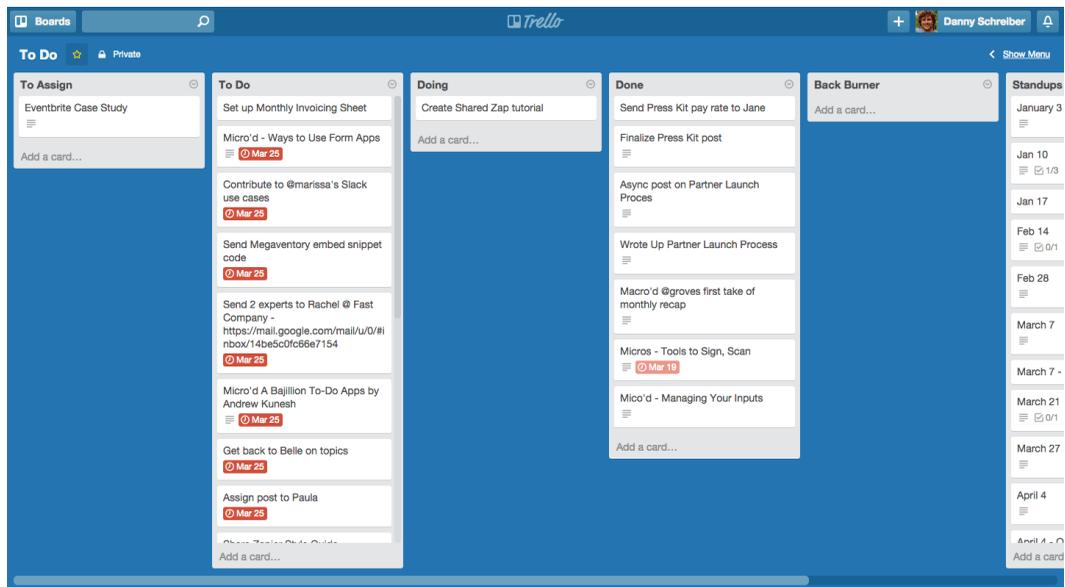
That’s an upside Zapier’s Guay has found. “Stand while you work or sit. Kneel at a table if that feels right for a bit. Sit back on the couch to edit or walk around the house with a draft to read over. Use speakers for music if you want...or have perfect silence.”

Remote work also doesn't need to be restricted to your own abode—go wherever makes you productive.

“Often just being at home can drive you nuts,” writes Microsoft’s Hanselman. “I try to get out a few times a week. I’ve worked from the mall, from Starbucks, from McDonald’s (free wi-fi, sue me) and from a park bench. I find that just having people walking around makes me feel more productive.”

Related: [Learn the best way to organize your desk and home office for maximum productivity and ergonomics.](#)

8. Own Up to Your Productivity



Whether it's working in your own home or a nearby coffee shop, there's another aspect that pushes remote employees to work faster: You're responsible for your productivity. Gone are the regular meetings and brainstorming sessions in "Conference Room 3B," and no more can you pull up a spreadsheet and stare at your screen to appear engulfed in busy work. You now must own up to what you did and didn't accomplish.

That's what motivated Cooper cut down the time it took her to write a blog post [from two days to four hours](#). She saw Buffer co-founder [Leo Widrich](#) churning out posts at a much faster pace than her, so she examined what could be holding her up. Between cutting out excess research and distractions like email, Cooper eventually narrowed in on how to author a quality blog post in the least amount of time necessary—just one morning.

"Now that I've proven to myself over and over that I can write a post in a morning without dropping my quality, they're a lot less formidable in my mind," writes Cooper. "I think that makes a huge difference to how I work."

Personally, I've recently found keeping a tally of my to-dos on a Trello board helps me stay focused on what's most important that day. It also saves time at week's end, too, since I use a Zapier integration to copy all the cards in the "done" Trello column to a Google Doc, which I pull out each week. The average time it takes me to write my weekly recap for our internal blog instantly went from around 40 to 20 minutes.

It's a stretch to say all remote workers are inclined to be more productive, but the topic itself has become a theme on blogs of remote teams—including [Trello's](#), [RescueTime's](#), and, yes, [Zapier's](#) blogs.

Not So Fast... What Doesn't Work About Remote Work

As a remote worker myself, I'll admit to being biased in this piece and giving the most attention to the upside of the working arrangement. But there are downsides, too.

"There are times, of course, where working together would be faster," says Daly. "For example, when we redesigned our site, the process was slowed down by waiting for responses from people who were fast asleep in another timezone."

"It's harder to communicate via typical in-person channels such as whiteboards." - Matthew Makai, Twilio

Twilio's Makai finds difficulty in being the lone remote team member when an in-person meeting is happening at the headquarters.

“The downside is when I’m working with a group of folks at HQ in San Francisco and I’m in D.C., it’s harder to communicate via typical in-person channels such as whiteboards,” he says, noting he circumvents this issue by visiting the office at least quarterly for in-person meetings.

I’ll add one more to the list: shoddy internet. My home Wi-Fi has given me more trouble than I ever remember experiencing when I worked in an office building. And when the internet’s out, well, productivity takes a hit (and your mobile hotspot comes to the rescue).

The Right Reason to Go Remote?

Whether you’re a founder considering going remote or a professional contemplating joining a remote team, a major benefit to consider is the opportunity to amp your productivity. Between my own experience and conversations with over a dozen individuals for this post, it’s clear that a remote workplace allows you to do just that. Whether or not you succeed at it is entirely up to you.

That said, to achieve this productivity boost, you might not need to go remote at all.

Thanks to the rise of [instant messaging apps](#) like Slack, [collaborative editing tools](#) like Google Docs, and file sharing tools like Dropbox, there’s a shift in the way we all communicate at work.

“Pay attention to how much time you actually spend each day in the same room talking in real time to other people—it’s far less today than ever in history (I don’t have data for this, but I’ve rarely heard counterarguments),” [writes Scott Berkun](#), author of *The Year Without Pants*, a book about remote work.

“Even in companies that do not allow ‘remote work,’ remote work is encouraged implicitly by the equipment used and the daily working habits we’ve adopted across our culture.”

Unplug

“OK, I’m done,” I message Wade this time.

About six months into the job, I finally catch up to my new team's fast-paced environment. But it didn't come without pulling myself away from the team. My trick for writing faster, I found, is to completely unplug from the communication tools we use. Do this, and then put 100% focus on writing in a distraction-free environment. It works and I'm now working faster than ever before.

Written by [Danny Schreiber](#).

Racing photo by [Andy Walker](#) via [Flickr](#).

Chapter 9: How to Find Your Optimal Work Environment and Boost Productivity



There's no shortage of productivity articles to read or techniques to try, but I've realized lately that optimal productivity comes in different states for everyone. Not only are some of us morning larks and others night owls, some of us need to move around a lot, others find a standing desk works best, and some of us work to music while others need silence.

The most important thing I've recently come to understand about productivity is that embracing what works for me (once I know what that is) is the best way to get more done. If you're struggling to improve your own workflows, here are three areas to start experimenting with.

Time of Day



Time of Day

As more of us are working remotely, joining co-working spaces or working from home these days, we have more flexibility to work at the times when we're most productive. We can finally pay attention to what helps us do more, better work.

To start with, we all have a **built-in body clock** called a [circadian rhythm](#) that runs a little differently to everyone else's. This is what determines whether we're night owls or morning larks. Depending on how your internal body clock runs, you could be more suited to a particular part of the day. Generally speaking, we all start out being most suited to early mornings, and our body clocks slip later during adolescence, when we prefer to [sleep in and stay up late](#). As we become adults, some of us hang on to these night owl tendencies, others become extreme morning larks, and most of us slide into a comfortable middle ground.

You probably already know what times of day suit you best, but if not, it's worth exploring since **being tired will hurt your performance**. I had always liked being up early but I wasn't sure my body was naturally inclined that way until I tested starting my day later (which definitely isn't for me).

Although we all have different circadian rhythms, most of us have a **natural dip in energy** in the afternoon. So if you notice yourself moving slowly or feeling unmotivated after lunch, take heart in the fact that it's not just you.

Once you have a good idea of how your internal body clock works and how your energy naturally rises and falls throughout the day, you can use this information to plan a more productive workday. For instance, if you find working late at night suits you, plan your biggest tasks or your most intense projects for that period. If mornings work for you, you may need to get up earlier for some interruption-free focus time.

I often need a nap in the afternoon, so I've found that planning to work on major tasks before lunch and working from home where I can duck off for a half hour nap suits me best.

Surroundings



Surroundings

Adjusting your surroundings to make you more productive is easy to underestimate, but can actually make a huge difference. For example, if your workspace is too cold, you're actually going to be *wasting energy trying to keep warm*. Of course being too warm is no good for your productivity either. You really need to find your "sweet spot" as far as temperature goes, and try to get your workplace as close to that as possible. The team at Zapier has [this figured out](#); everyone knows just what **temperature** they work best at, and takes control of keeping their workspace from getting too hot or cold.

If you're sharing a workspace you might need to bring in a portable fan or heater, or move your desk to be closer to the heating and cooling system (or further away).

Noise levels (and types) are another environmental factor that can affect

productivity and are very personal. I always thought it was strange to like having TV reruns on in the background while I work until I learned entrepreneur [Nate Kontny](#) does this, too. Nate built the first version of [Draft](#) while [watching The West Wing](#), because he found that worked well for him.

“I know this isn’t real common, but I’ve always been pretty good about working while watching television. It can’t be some really cerebral show that I’ve never seen before, but things like re-runs of *Felicity* or *West Wing* are perfect. The core of *Draft* was built while watching the entire season of *West Wing* over again at 1AM.” - [Nate Kontny on the Brightpod blog](#)

Aside from TV, others like [working with music on](#), though some need complete silence to concentrate. The type of work you’re doing can change what sounds make you most productive, too. [One study published by the Journal of Consumer Research](#) found that creative work is easier amongst ambient noise, which encourages us to think outside the box. If that’s you, check out an app called [Coffivity](#), which offers soundtracks such as “Morning Murmur” and “Lunchtime Lounge”. Silence is more suited to work that requires [deep focus](#) rather than creative thinking. And if you like working to music, your own preferences will obviously play a part in what you choose to listen to.

Lastly, pay attention to how much **light** your workspace has, and how it affects your productivity. I tend to need more natural light when I’m working than others, so I look for spaces to work near windows. On the other hand, a study published by the *Journal of Consumer Research* found that our creative thinking is [enhanced by dim lighting](#), which helps us to feel less inhibited. So test out your own preferences if you’re not sure about them, but keep in mind the type of work you’re doing when you adjust your workspace, as well.

Managing Your Workload



workload

Once your workspace is set up and you've worked out the time of day when you're most productive, you can start experimenting with how you approach work itself. Here are a few suggestions, but you'll definitely want to experiment to see what works for you.

Chunk Your Tasks

If you have different types of work to get through, [grouping similar tasks together](#) into time "chunks" can make you more productive than switching between different types of work all day. For instance, small, simple tasks can be saved for the periods of your day when you're low in energy, or in-between meetings when you don't have time to get stuck into bigger projects.

A similar method is to [front-load your day](#) (or your week). This means you work on the big, intense projects first, and work on smaller tasks that don't have deadlines as you go through the day. Knocking off your most important tasks first make it surprisingly more fun to finish other work in the afternoon, since the stress of today's deadlines is already dealt with.

Just Get Started

Something I often struggle with is [just getting started](#) on a big task or project, so I take this into account when planning out my day. Breaking down a task into smaller sub-tasks or action steps can be helpful in getting over the hurdle of just starting.

Another way I've overcome this in the past is to just commit to working on something for just five minutes—not long enough for it to be a huge effort, but just long enough for me to feel like I might as well keep going, once the five minutes is up.

Set Yourself a Challenge

When you're working from home or a remote workspace, it can sometimes be hard to keep up with your workload or meet all your deadlines. I've found a good way to manage this is to challenge myself. Sometimes I challenge myself to [get all my work done by noon](#). A short deadline can do wonders for your focus!

If you're a fan of the [Pomodoro Technique](#), you can use that as a challenge, too. Try challenging yourself to get something finished before your Pomodoro timer goes off—you might not get it done, but you'll probably find you focus a lot better when you're working against the clock in a short burst like that. If timers aren't your thing and you work from home, you can try "[real life Pomodoros](#)" instead: naturally occurring intervals that you can use as timers for short bursts of work, like waiting for your dishwasher to run through, or waiting for someone to arrive for a meeting.

In my own experience, testing one part of your workday at a time is the best way to know what makes a difference to your productivity (good and bad). Once you've got one thing in place, like what time of day you work best, you can experiment with another part, like how you chunk your tasks together or breaking down big projects to make them more manageable.

This probably all sounds like a lot of effort, but the pay off for knowing what makes *you* productive is huge. It's definitely a lot more rewarding than trying to use other people's methods and getting frustrated when they don't work.

Learn more about how to set up your desk for productivity and ergonomics in our article on [The Best Way to Organize Your Desk](#).

Written by Hello Code cofounder [Belle Beth Cooper](#)

Header photo via [Ville Miettinen](#). Time of day photo via [Delgoff](#). Surroundings photo via [Eric Murray](#). Managing your workload photo via [Brad](#).

Chapter 10: How to Work in Different Timezones



“It’s a small world after all.” The Disney song rings true when you run into someone at random in a city of millions or when you cross the globe in a day. But somehow, nothing shrinks the globe like building a company with a team that’s distributed across multiple continents.

Twice a year, the Zapier team gets together [at a company retreat](#). We plan what we’ll do next and catch up on what’s happened with our teammates over the last six months. The rest of the year, we manage to work together across seven time zones, using Slack, Zoom, and some sheer effort to stay connected.

The best job for you might not be in your hometown, and you might work better when you aren’t shackled to a 9-to-5 workday. And that’s ok with a remote position, as long as you can manage the time shift. Your team will likely get more done, and you’ll be able to provide better support for your customers—but you’ll also need to figure out how to make the world feel a bit smaller.

After years of working remotely—for companies in India, Canada, Australia,

and the U.S.—I’ve learned how to make the most of the pros and overcome the cons that crop up when the world is your office. Here are five tips that you can use to take advantage of a time shift and six ways to tackle the most common problems that a remote teams faces.

5 Pros of Remote Work, and How to Take Advantage

1. Hire Around the Globe to Snag the Best Employees

“Letting people work remotely is about getting access to the best people wherever they are,” write [Basecamp](#) co-founders Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson in their book *Remote: Office Not Required*. Remote job board [We Work Remotely](#) says hiring a distributed team can help you “find the most qualified people in the most unexpected places.”

That’s music to the ears of metropolitan-based startups, like those in Silicon Valley and London fighting to hire great employees in a crowded market, as well as companies not based near urban centers. As Automattic founder [Matt Mullenweg](#) wrote, “If 95% of great programmers aren’t in the U.S., and an even higher percentage not in the Bay Area, set up your company to take advantage of that fact as a strength, not a weakness.” But hiring from anywhere only works with one crucial element: a time shift.

It’s possible to hire people around the globe and still have your whole team working 9-to-5 at your office’s time zone—after all, plenty of people work night shifts—but it’s not optimal.

“The problems with remote work are more apparent if the team expects remote team members to be available at the company’s time zone rather than theirs,” says [Mutahhir Ali Hayat](#), a Pakistan-based developer who has worked on a number of remote teams. “It can quickly lead to burnout.”

2. Offer Freedom of Time and Place to Boost Productivity

“It’s only sensible and wise to live in an area where you can do your best work.” - Neil Patel, entrepreneur

The freedom to work from anywhere you desire is an attractive benefit—but it’s only true freedom when you can also work *whenever* you’d like.

“The key to remote work is living where you work best,” says [Neil Patel](#) in [Entrepreneur Magazine](#) “Your environment does impact how you work. Thus, it’s only sensible and wise to live in an area where you can do your best work.”

Fried and Hansson offer another upside to remote work in their book on the topic. “The big transition with a distributed workforce is going from synchronous to asynchronous collaboration,” they write. “Not only do we not have to be in the same spot to work together, we also don’t have to work at the same time to work together.”

9-to-5 isn’t for everyone. Neither is Silicon Valley or the city where your company is based. Some of us [do our best work late at night](#), while others prefer to get up early and spend the late afternoons away from the desk. And while some metropolitan areas offer some lifestyle perks, other big-city issues—like high costs-of-living—will drive potential employees away.

3. Spread Across Time Zones to Work Around the Clock



The sun never sets on the British empire—even today—and it doesn't need to set on your company, either. Aside from the few weeks every year when we're all together at our [company retreats](#), there's always someone at Zapier awake and working. Time zone coverage is just something that's automatically possible with remote teams.

The Zapier marketing team, for example, works from Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Minneapolis, Omaha, Austin, Raleigh, New York, Toronto, San Francisco, Portland, and other cities. That makes scheduling meetings difficult, but we can hand off work to keep the wheels turning 24/7. I can write an article during the day in Bangkok, and my teammate Melanie in New York can edit it while I sleep. By the time I wake up, I've got corrections to work on. At the same time, Danny in Omaha can begin working with a new partner during the day, and I can pick up the remaining tasks as soon as he quits work at 5 p.m. his time.

[Jon Russell](#), a Bangkok-based reporter for TechCrunch, says remote work is

what enables their site to run a 24-hour newsroom. “When it comes to online publishing, being in different places isn’t so strange,” says Russell.

Marketing and reporting aren’t the only jobs that benefit from a time shift. A global support team, for instance, can provide 24/7 support to your customers without forcing anyone to pull a night shift. Or, if you have system administrators around the globe, no one needs to have their sleep disrupted for emergency server issues.

“It was like having a friend in the future.” - Scott Berkun

Microsoft’s Internet Explorer team found success planning work around time shifts. [Scott Berkun](#), in his book *The Year Without Pants*, relates that Microsoft’s U.S. and India teams worked in a system called “Follow the Sun.”

“They worked the night shift while my team in Redmond worked days,” Berkun says. “If I planned well, we’d find magic in going to bed frustrated by a missing puzzle piece, and waking to find it in our inbox. It was like having a friend in the future.”

As [Couchsurfing](#) designer [Ben Hanna](#) writes, “Good timing can make a project literally zip around the globe with work being completed 24 hours a day.”

4. Work Solo to Destroy Distractions



Keeping projects rolling 24/7 may boost your team's output, but there's something else about working at different times that might make you even more productive: silence.

"I always say I love the fact that my mornings are quiet," says Zapier developer Rob Golding, who works in the UK, a few hours ahead of the rest of the Zapier development team. Zapier support team member Lindsay Brand echoed that sentiment: "One of the benefits is the quiet time to concentrate without getting distracted by chatting to your colleagues."

Working remotely *already* frees you from the standard workplace distractions of parties and water cooler talk, but GIF wars in Slack and random questions can quickly distract you just as much no matter where you're working. And that's nice—we all need human interaction, and it's great that you can still get that without being in the same room.

Too much of a good thing, though, can mean getting nothing done. A time

difference gives you the freedom to code or write without distraction. Then, when the rest of the team is online, you'll be more focused at what you *need* to discuss with them before it's time to get offline.

5. Stay Accountable to Focus on the Important Things



Teams in traditional office settings measure productivity by how long each team member spends at his or her desk (I'm only half kidding). But remote teams can fall into the "I'm online, so I'm being productive" trap, too.

A time shift, though, forces you to show what you've actually accomplished, since few others were there to see if you were logged in all day.

"A remote work environment should encourage performance—not presence," says entrepreneur Neil Patel. Then, you won't have to worry about time off and how many hours people are working. "You are simply looking for high-performers who can get stuff done."

The ability to hand off work is a productivity benefit, but it's also motivator since you know you *must* accomplish tasks so you can hand them off to co-workers at day's end. "It puts a little pressure on you to get your work done," says TechCrunch's Russell.

6 Cons of Remote Work, and How to Overcome Them



Even if you've never stepped foot in a "traditional" workplace, TV shows like "The Office" paint a grim picture: Endless meetings, random interruptions, and droning water cooler chats. Those may be exaggerated stereotypes—and traditional offices *do* have some redeeming qualities—but they're universal, nonetheless.

Remote teams need their own conventions and tools, too, to make everything flow smoothly together. Whiteboards and corkboards are obsolete in a remote environment, and even paper calendars and analogue clocks feel archaic. As [Virtuali](#) CEO Sean Graber wrote in the [Harvard Business Review](#), "It's important to create formal processes that simulate the informal ways we touch base when we are physically collocated."

You'll need new ways to make your work, well, *work*, so here are a few challenges the distributed teams at Zapier and other remote companies have faced while working remotely with a time shift, and how they overcome them.

1. There's no Constant Collaboration, so Own Your Own Projects

"Hire managers of one." - Basecamp

Teamwork is great. But, if you're working with a time shift, you'll need to pull your own weight on the team and lead your own way. If you're always waiting for someone to tell you what to do next, and that someone's asleep while you're working, you'll never get anything done.

That's why the most crucial part of building a remote team is hiring self-directed workers—"managers of one," as the Basecamp team calls them in their book [Rework](#).

"You want someone who's capable of building something from scratch and seeing it through. Finding these people frees the rest of your team to work more and manage less," the book explains.

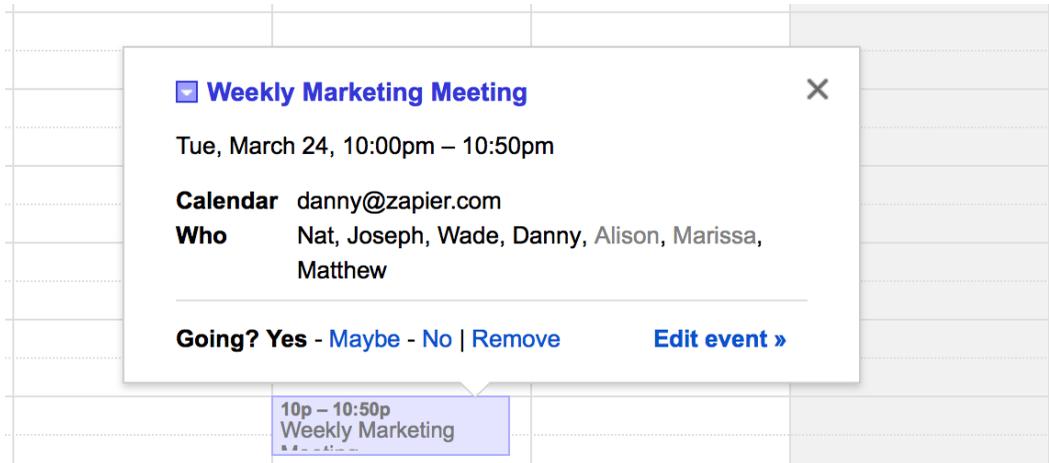
Zapier's CEO Wade Foster agrees, saying that the most important tenet in running a remote team is being able to "trust people to do stuff." To make that possible, he says, "have a project you own so there's always something to jump into." That way, you'll never be waiting on the next big thing you need to do.

It might not be possible—or even desirable—for each team member to take ownership of part of your company's work, but you can break projects up in a way that everyone has their own specific area to focus on. This strategy makes your projects asynchronous, which remote developer Mutahhir Ali Hayat suggests is the best way to make remote development work out.

"Manage projects in a way that they're asynchronous," Hayat says. "That means that the remote person has a lot of autonomy and any problems that arise can be solved by either leaving messages on Slack/email or syncing up for a couple of hours one day."

That, perhaps, is the greatest reason that it's tough to add remote work—and especially a time shift—to teams with years of experience working together in an office. It's absolutely possible to do great work with a dispersed team, but you must plan work accordingly. Break things up into chunks that can be worked on individually, find time to sync back up on what's been done, and make sure each person on the team can self-direct their work. Then, you'll find that the time gap doesn't really matter.

2. Meetings Might be Late (or Early), so Be Flexible



Remote workers are not islands—you'll need time to get together as a team. Whether it's just a check-in to see how everyone's doing or a set time to work collaboratively, there's almost no way to *always* work on your own.

That's good—after all, you'll still want some team interaction. But it also means you'll need to be flexible about times.

"Any remote worker knows you have to be flexible, so I feel time zone differences don't impact your remote work life too much," says Zapier's Brand, who works in Barcelona. "I'd quite happily sacrifice staying a little later or getting up a little earlier to avoid the stresses of a morning commute in rush hour traffic."

Staying up a bit late or getting up an hour earlier isn't a bad tradeoff for a job you love, but how about 2 a.m.? That's what *The Year Without Pants* author Berkun encountered when he worked at Automattic. "My team had hit the natural limits of space and time on planet earth," Berkun says. "For us to speak at the same time, someone would have to be miserable."

At Zapier, we encountered a similar issue with our weekly team meetings—for the marketing team, they typically occur in the mornings for U.S.-based team members and at 10 p.m. for me in Bangkok. When daylight saving time went into effect, though, suddenly I was looking at an 11 p.m.-midnight meeting.

6:30 a.m. Bangkok time—and late afternoon/early evening U.S. time—turned

out to be our winter solution. Both times have worked out for us, but they've forced each of us to be a bit flexible.

"I'd quite happily stay a little later or get up a little earlier to avoid the stresses of a morning commute" - Lindsay Brand

It doesn't need to be terrible: just try to limit long meetings so you're not straining someone's schedule. And if you're joining a team from far away, be prepared to be the most flexible one.

It might even work out great for you, if you like to work nontraditional hours anyway. Software engineer [Kevin Furbish](#) found this to be true about his remote team at Intuit. "Many of us tend to work crazy hours, which mitigates being in different time zones."

But even still, if you want to make a distributed team work, you need to accept a time shift. "I'll take phone calls late in the evening from folks that don't realize I'm on the east coast and consider that part of the job for someone working remotely in a different time zone," Furbish says.

3. It's Tough to Stay In Sync, so Check in With Your Team

@craiglabenz ●

Q Search ? ... <

 **Matthew Guay** 9:43 PM
Just remembered we need to pair call ... ping me anytime tomorrow when you're free and we'll work it out :)

 **Craig Labenz** 10:02 PM
It's 10pm in Thailand now?

March 6th, 2015

 **Matthew Guay** 8:45 AM
Yeah, it was when you'd messaged 😊
Just ping me when you're online for the day, and we'll jump on a call.

 **Craig Labenz** 9:42 AM
I could do later tonight

Planning meetings across time zones might sound so painful that you'd rather just never have meetings—but don't do that either.

[Belle Beth Cooper](#), writing about [working remotely on the Buffer team](#) says that "it's important to check in before you start your workday and make sure you're on the same page as everyone else." You might be a "manager of one," but if you're going to hand off projects across time zones, you'll need to stay in touch.

At Zapier, we stay connected with our team in a number of ways. We post thoughts and updates about team projects on Slack, regardless of who's online. Plus, each department has a weekly video call to map out that week's work, and every Thursday we'll have an all-hands-on-deck call in order to get everyone together.

Every employee is also assigned a random "pair partner" each week— that means we'll jump on a call with one of our colleagues just see how things are going, and perhaps work together on a cross-team project.

"Check in before you start your workday and make sure you're on the same page as everyone else." - Belle Beth Cooper

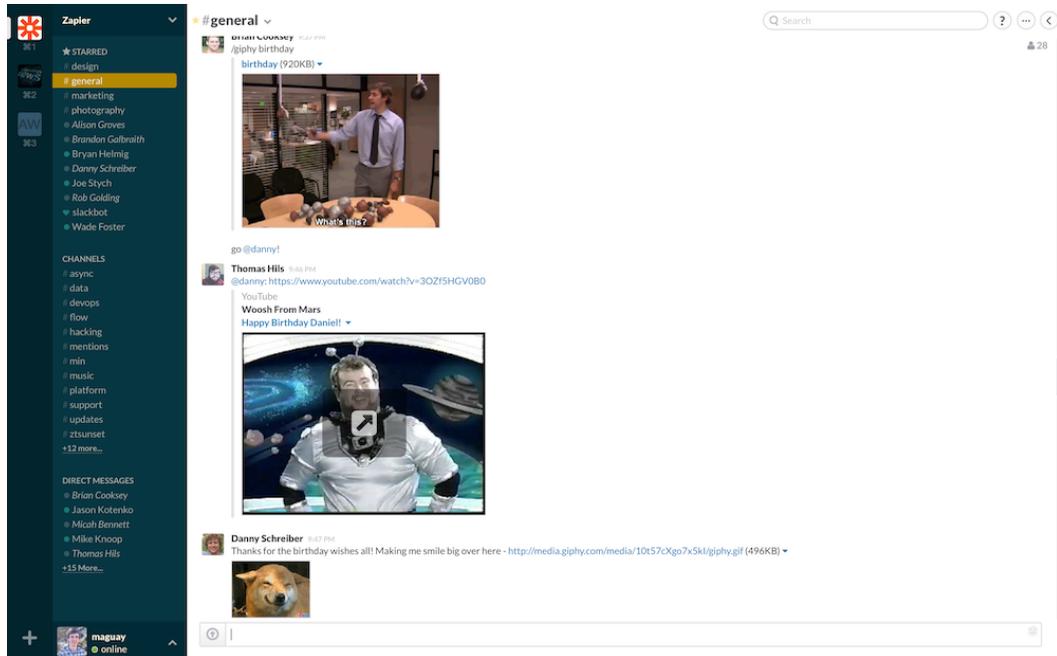
The [Couchsurfing](#) team has a similar schedule to make sure everyone's connected. "We have a bi-monthly full company meeting to make sure we all know we still exist," [writes designer Ben Hanna](#). "You may not need to do this, but for us it is good to hear voices we may not interact with on a daily basis." The Couchsurfing team also has "one-on-one meetings, conversations and project management meetings to keep everyone on task," just as our team does.

If you have a large distributed team, you might not need to try so hard to stay connected. Berkun found this out while working at Automattic. "Since there are people working from nearly every time zone in the world, there was always someone online to help with a problem or joke around with when you're working," he wrote in his book.

Even still, odds are you'll be working with *someone* who's not online at the same time as you. For that, be sure to try a bit harder to stay in touch. It's worth it.

FaceTime and Skype are great for quick one-to-one calls, [Google Hangouts](#) are great for team meetings and broadcasted meetings, and Zoom is the best tool we've found for getting a huge team on a call together. You might even want to [get a Twilio number](#) so your teammates can call you without racking up international charges. Whatever works best for your team, just put the effort into staying connected.

4. You Still Need to Socialize, So Have a Virtual Water Cooler



Staying in touch with everyone is easy nowadays. You can work at opposite times from the rest of your team, and *still* join in on all the office banter. The trick is a team chat app—for us, that’s [Slack](#).

“One of the sad parts of working at a different time to the majority of your team is missing out on all the work chatter, but with tools like Slack, it’s easy to catch up on that and get involved a little later,” explained Zapier’s Brand.

It’s impossible to overstate how crucial Slack—a team chat app that makes it easy to search through all of your team’s messages—is to remote teams. It’s the one app that comes up in nearly *every* discussion of how to make remote teams work. Even reporters from *The New York Times* have found that Slack helps them stay connected to their newsroom while away on assignments.

“One danger of my job, as a columnist who works in California, is a feeling of disconnection from the mother ship in New York,” writes technology columnist [Farhad Manjoo](#). “Using Slack, I can peer into discussions that would never have been accessible to me. I can see how the producers and editors who

are handling my column are discussing how to present it, and how the team overseeing the home page is thinking about my work.”

“I have a feeling of intimacy with co-workers on the other side of the country that is almost fun. That’s a big deal, for a job.” - Farhad Manjoo, New York Times reporter

The ability to see what others are saying not only gives you insight to how others are working—something you might glean by working together—but it also enables the more fun aspects of working in a team. “What’s more, I have a feeling of intimacy with co-workers on the other side of the country that is almost fun,” Manjoo says. “That’s a big deal, for a job.”

No matter how independently you can work, and how hard you try to stay connected, you won’t be in the flow of what everyone’s doing unless you have a team chat tool. “At TechCrunch and The Next Web, having a central point of contact is critical,” says Russell. “Tools like Slack, Convo and HipChat make that possible in a way that it never really was a few years ago.”

It doesn’t have to be Slack—it could be any of the other [great team chat apps](#) out there. Just be sure it fits this description:

- Easy to use, with mobile apps to stay in touch on the go
- Separates discussions into groups that everyone can join
- Archives all conversations so you can search through everything
- Includes private chats
- Integrates with the apps you use
- Has fun extras like Slack’s Giphy integration that lets you lighten up the mood with GIFs

5. Your Work Can Be Overlooked, So Work in Public

The screenshot shows the Zapier Async blog interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "search async...", a "make a new post" button, and a "back to Zapier.com" link. The main content is a list of blog posts, each with a date, a title, a comment count, and a tag. The posts are:

- Wednesday Mar 25**: "How to Market New Zapier Apps: From Activation to Launch" (0 comments, marketing tag)
- Tuesday Mar 24**: "Marketing Minutes - 03-24-15" (4 comments, marketing tag)
- Monday Mar 23**: "Good News Everyone (also Cooksey OOO)" (16 comments, schedule tag)
- Monday Mar 23**: "Support Minutes - 3-24-15" (0 comments, support tag)
- Sunday Mar 22**: "Andrew Out Monday 3/23" (3 comments, schedule tag)
- Sunday Mar 22**: "Pair Buddies 3/23/15" (0 comments, schedule tag)
- Saturday Mar 21**: "Nat's Friday Update" (3 comments, friday updates tag)

At the bottom right of the screenshot, there is a small navigation menu with the text "try esc j k" and a cursor icon.

It's not enough to use Slack as your virtual watercooler. To work effectively with a time shift, you'll also need to work in public. In other words, communicate, and make sure everyone knows what you're working on.

Write what you've done that day, share where you're hung up on a project, and ping others with ideas. Developers, perhaps, have it the easiest with code comments and pull requests, but everyone should share what's happening in their own "manager of one" domain.

David Fullerton had to overcome the communication hurdle when he was growing the Stack Exchange team. "When there were 4 people, everyone knew everything. When there are 75 people, that no longer scales," he says. "So you have to work out your channels of communication, and that's doubly true with remote workers because you can't rely on overheard conversations or gossip to spread the word. You have to force yourself to be explicit in communication."

At Zapier, we've formalized communications about what we're working on with two things: a *Minutes* document from each of our team meetings that outlines our goals for each week, and a *Friday Update* post that covers which of those

goals we actually accomplished. Each of those live in *Async*—an in-house tool that gives everyone a set place to write anything they need to share with the entire team and forces us to “work in public.”

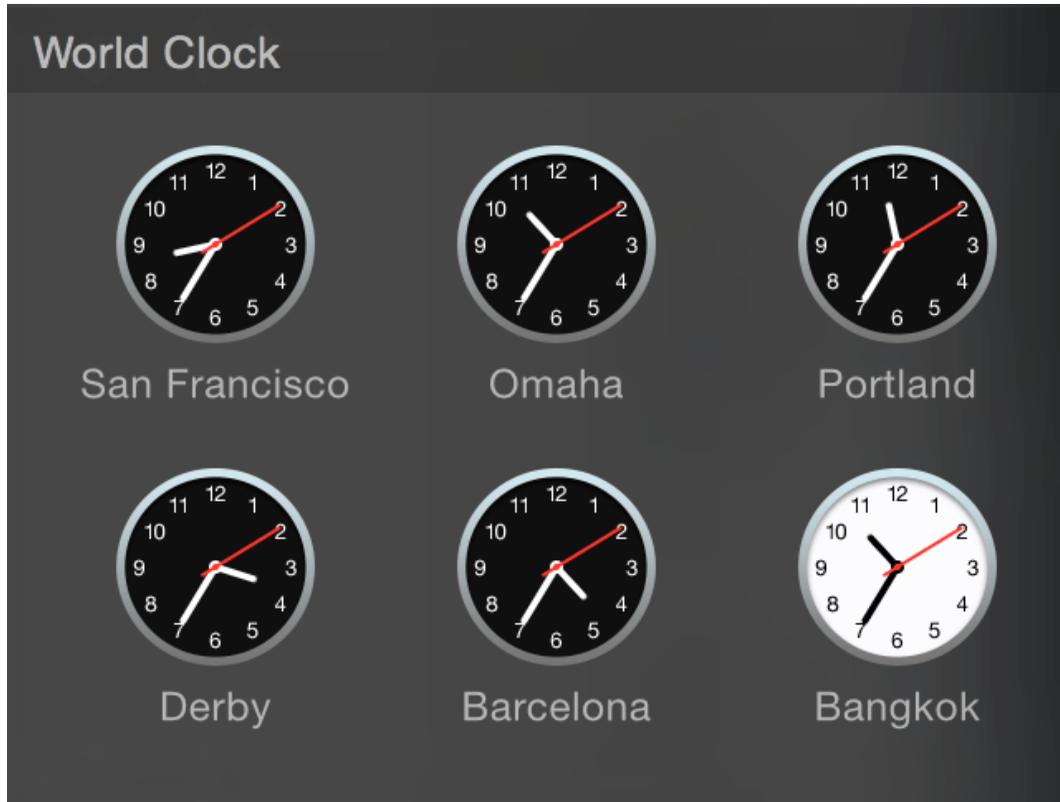
“You have to force yourself to be explicit in communication.” - David Fullerton

Sometimes you need someone to hold you accountable or just to work alongside you. Jeff Atwood found that when he [started Stack Overflow](#) programming on his own turned into a lonely job.

“I was coding alone,” he says. “Really alone. One guy working all by yourself alone. This didn’t work at all for me. I was unmoored, directionless, suffering from analysis paralysis, and barely able to get motivated enough to write even a few lines of code.”

His solution was to have a coding partner, someone he’d bounce ideas off of and check in with about project progress. Work together, even if there is a time gap, and you’ll find that the old adage “two are better than one” is still true.

6. Time Zones Are Merciless, So Keep Your Clocks Synced



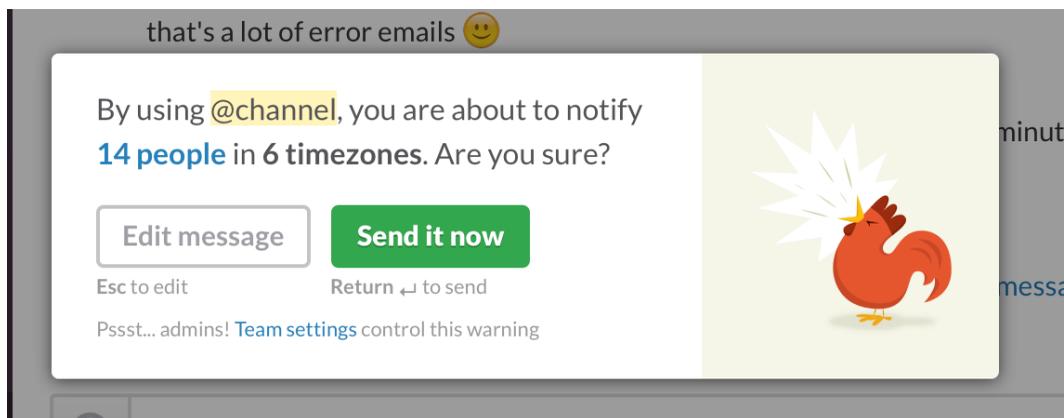
GMT—otherwise known as UTC—is a beautiful thing. It’s the “mean solar time at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London” according to Wikipedia, and it’s what every time zone is based on. If it’s midnight in London (GMT), then it’s 7 a.m. in Bangkok (GMT+7) and 8 p.m. the previous day in New York (GMT-4).

If you travel the world frequently, knowing which a time zone you’re in relative to GMT is crucial—and it’s also important if you’re working with a distributed team. Knowing the difference between Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific time alone isn’t enough anymore. You’ll need to know the new year starts in Japan, which times of the day you’re colleague in London will be awake, and the times you’re most likely to get support tickets from your Australian customers.

It’s not actually that hard, as long as you think about it relative to GMT/UTC.

Know how many hours you are from GMT, and then it's simple to know what time it is in any other time zone. And keep your brain thinking in the time zone where most of your team is located, or the time zone you use to schedule content and plan releases. Don't just assume that since you're "in the future" compared to the rest of your team that you have more time—I've fallen into that fallacy far too often.

Beyond those mental tricks, you'll want to rely on your apps to prevent mishaps. Sometimes, they can be so clever, you'll never have to worry about anything.



Slack, for instance, lists each team member's time zone, how many hours that is from your local time, and that person's current local time whenever you click their name. That's an easy way to double-check before expecting an immediate reply. Or, if you attempt to message everyone in a group, Slack lets you know it's late for some people before you hit "send."

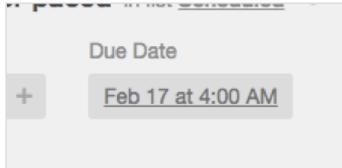
Tip: If you're working on distributed team—or just have friends around the world—turn on your phone's "Do Not Disturb" mode so it won't ding with notifications all night. Here's how to do that on [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



Danny Schreiber 11:35 AM

@channel heads up -- publish dates in Trello are now set to 4 a.m. -- this makes is globally the same day for us all 😊

<http://i.imgur.com/wt11vUS.png> (12KB) ▾



now no more confusion for our Bangkok office, hehe



Matthew Guay 11:37 AM

😊 Nice stuff, thanks for getting that figured out @danny!

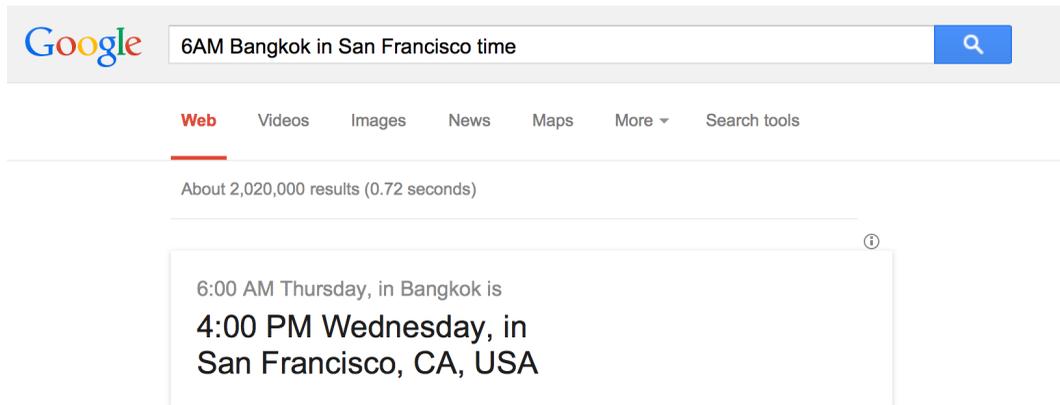
time zones are more annoying than exchange rates

Other apps *don't* make it so easy, though. Trello, for instance, stores deadlines in UTC and then displays their due date and time based on your current time zone. That made articles on our schedule look like they were due a day later for me in Bangkok. To overcome this limitation, we worked to find a time to schedule tasks where the due day would be the same for all.

You might find that you need to tweak some things—say, using the same time zone settings in everyone's apps—to make it all look correct, but it's worth the time. After all, a broken schedule can make your remote team's work fall apart entirely .

Beyond that, if you're still having trouble tracking time and scheduling meetings with your whole team, here are some tools that have come in handy for us:

Google

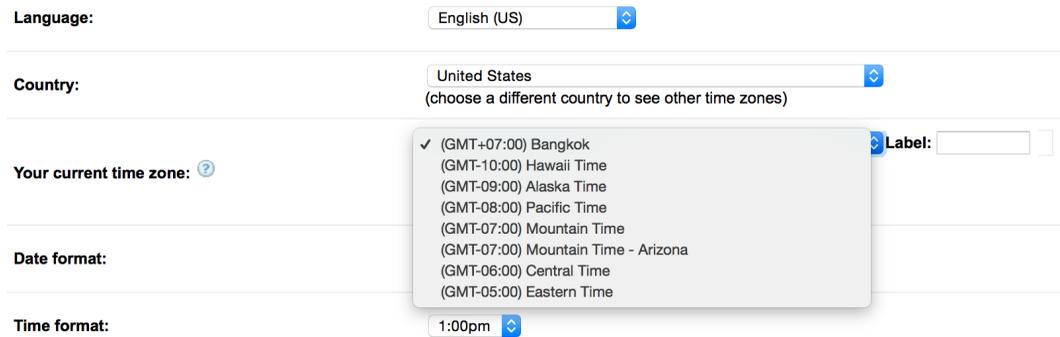


The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "6AM Bangkok in San Francisco time". Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "Web", "Videos", "Images", "News", "Maps", "More", and "Search tools". The search results indicate "About 2,020,000 results (0.72 seconds)". A prominent result box displays the following information: "6:00 AM Thursday, in Bangkok is" followed by "4:00 PM Wednesday, in San Francisco, CA, USA".

Google really does know everything. If you search for the current time in most major cities around the world, you'll get the answer right at the top of your results. More recently, Google added a time calculator to search so you can look up what time it *will* be in a certain place.

That might not be enough to schedule meetings across a number of time zones, but it's a quick way to figure out if you're ok to call your boss at 6 p.m.

Google Calendar



The screenshot shows the Google Calendar settings page. The "Language" is set to "English (US)". The "Country" is set to "United States" with a note "(choose a different country to see other time zones)". The "Your current time zone" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of time zones: "(GMT+07:00) Bangkok", "(GMT-10:00) Hawaii Time", "(GMT-09:00) Alaska Time", "(GMT-08:00) Pacific Time", "(GMT-07:00) Mountain Time", "(GMT-07:00) Mountain Time - Arizona", "(GMT-06:00) Central Time", and "(GMT-05:00) Eastern Time". The "Date format" is set to "MM/DD/YYYY" and the "Time format" is set to "1:00pm".

Google Calendar looks basic at first glance, but it's **packed with features** that make it great for remote teams—or really any team. You can set your own time zone, and save the time zones you work with most to have an easy way to switch between them.

Then, if you want another easy way to know what time it is everywhere your team's located, you can turn on the World clock in the Calendar Labs settings.

It's a simple, text-based world clock provides an at-a-glance update.

Find more great ways to optimize Google Calendar in our roundup of [30 Google Calendar hacks and tricks](#).

Every Time Zone



For an even simpler way to see what time it is around the world, check out [Every Time Zone](#) from the [Freckle](#) team. It shows the current time in your own city, along with others in popular time zones around the world.

Drag the second indicator to the time you want to have a meeting, and you'll see what time that'll be in cities around the globe. It's not a perfect way to schedule, but is a good way to get a feel for international time differences.

World Clock Meeting Planner

UTC-time	Bangkok	Omaha	Portland	San Francisco	Nashville
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 17:00:00	Fri 00:00	Thu 12:00 *	Thu 13:00 *	Thu 10:00 *	Thu 12:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 18:00:00	Fri 01:00	Thu 13:00 *	Thu 14:00 *	Thu 11:00 *	Thu 13:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 19:00:00	Fri 02:00	Thu 14:00 *	Thu 15:00 *	Thu 12:00 *	Thu 14:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 20:00:00	Fri 03:00	Thu 15:00 *	Thu 16:00 *	Thu 13:00 *	Thu 15:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 21:00:00	Fri 04:00	Thu 16:00 *	Thu 17:00 *	Thu 14:00 *	Thu 16:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 22:00:00	Fri 05:00	Thu 17:00 *	Thu 18:00 *	Thu 15:00 *	Thu 17:00 *
Thursday, 16 April 2015, 23:00:00	Fri 06:00	Thu 18:00 *	Thu 19:00 *	Thu 16:00 *	Thu 18:00 *
Friday, 17 April 2015, 00:00:00	Fri 07:00	Thu 19:00 *	Thu 20:00 *	Thu 17:00 *	Thu 19:00 *
Friday, 17 April 2015, 01:00:00	Fri 08:00	Thu 20:00 *	Thu 21:00 *	Thu 18:00 *	Thu 20:00 *
Friday, 17 April 2015, 02:00:00	Fri 09:00	Thu 21:00 *	Thu 22:00 *	Thu 19:00 *	Thu 21:00 *
Friday, 17 April 2015, 03:00:00	Fri 10:00	Thu 22:00 *	Thu 23:00 *	Thu 20:00 *	Thu 22:00 *
Friday, 17 April 2015, 04:00:00	Fri 11:00	Thu 23:00 *	Fri 00:00 *	Thu 21:00 *	Thu 23:00 *

TimeandDate.com's [World Clock Meeting Planner](#) won't win any design awards, but it makes time shift scheduling straightforward. You pick the cities where everyone lives, and the date for your meeting, and it'll show in green, yellow, and red the times that are best, not *too* bad, and terrible for everyone.

You might find that there's no perfect time for your team, but at least you'll find options that aren't excruciating. Plus, you can add the correct time to your calendar in just a click, if you'd like.

There are more time zone tools at [TimeandDate.com](#), too, so be sure to check it out if you want to find local times around the world for your event, convert times for any location, and more.

Tip: Need a tool that's more accessible and works well with screen readers? Try out [International Meeting Planner](#) for a similar tool with a slightly simpler interface.

World Meeting Time



Prefer something more eye-catching? Then [World Meeting Time](#) might be more your style. Just drag placeholders to the spots on the map where your team lives, enter when you want to hold the meeting, and see what time that'll be locally for everyone before sending invites.

It's not as simple to pick the perfect time here, but it's easy to spot where everyone lives and send group meeting invites. And with the new [World Meeting Time Pro](#), you can save your guests and regular meetings to re-schedule meetings with your team easily, and sync everything with Google Calendar.

Build Your Own Small World

Remote working isn't automatically a freer way to work—it can be just as stressful as any 9-to-5 job. Teach your remote team to be flexible about time, though, and everyone's lives will be easier. Plus, you'll be able to hire the best people from anywhere around the globe.

That might mean you can move to a city where it's easier to start a family, or extend your "vacation" to a few months on the beach each year. You might even find time to visit some of the incredible cities on [Nomad List](#) while still contributing your all to your team.

Written by [Matthew Guay](#).

World clocks photo by [Leoplus on Flickr](#). Always open photo by [Jeremy Brooks](#). Quiet photo by [José María Pérez Nuñez](#). Time zone clocks photo by [Alexei & Verne Stakhanov](#). Clock photo by [Matthew Guay](#).

Chapter 11: How to Avoid Burnout in a Remote Team



Working remotely is a wonderful thing. It allows you to work in your best environment, giving your teammates and company the chance to have your best work. It also lets you call your own shots, leaving you more creative, happier, and healthier (hello no germs spreading around an office!).

But there is a tendency to work *more* while working remotely. When your home is your office, it's hard to put separation between your work life and personal life. Though total control is great, not being able to pull yourself away from work can more easily lead to burnout.

When you're part of a distributed team, what's the best way to cope and balance

the great aspects about remote working with the sometimes-not-so-great parts? We posed that question to 22 members of remote teams around the world. Here are their responses, with actionable ways to help you avoid getting burned out while working remotely. And even if you work in a traditional, on-site team, you'll likely find tips here to help you keep balance in today's mobile-first, always connected world.

1. Establish and Maintain a Routine

Courtney Seiter, Content Crafter at [Buffer](#)

The best thing I did for myself in adapting to remote work has been to create morning and evening routines. In the morning, I have a routine of a quick workout, stretching and meditation, and in the afternoon/evening I take the dogs on a walk and then work on my Spanish. The routines change a bit based on the season (in the summer, there's a lot more gardening), but it actually doesn't matter so much what they include.

The main thing for me was that putting these routines in place has the effect of sort of approximating a commute time (although much nicer!) and signaling to my brain when work time is starting in the morning and ending in the evening. It can be tough as a remote worker to distinguish between work and non-work time, and these routines help me a lot.

Jesse Parker, Customer Champion at [Zapier](#)

It's definitely important to have a hard stop. There is always work to be done and you'll have to accept that it's not possible to finish all of it. If you try, you will burnout. I've done that to myself in a previous job and it's not fun and you grow easily exhausted.

Mercer Smith-Looper, Customer Service Integrations Specialist at Campaign Monitor

I keep a hyper-set schedule. To give you a little insight into this, I was the 5-year old that would get mad at my parents when they told me that there was no schedule for the day while we were on vacation. That has kind of—*er*—persisted through my life, much to the chagrin of my husband and friends. It sounds counterintuitive, but having a set schedule means that I *stick to it* rather than having the propensity of most other remote workers to not maintain balance between home life and work life. So, I wake up at 8:30, make coffee and breakfast for my husband, walk my dog, and then work. At 12ish everyday, I either nap with my dog or take a walk and eat depending if I'm hungry. I finish at about 5:30 everyday, unless I have a late call or something, and then do the same thing most nights. I always make sure to shut off my computer and not turn it back on until going back to work the next day.

I've heard statistics somewhere that when you work remotely because there are so few distractions for you (if you're of a certain personality type, that is, which I would argue you need to be if you're going to work remotely), you get a ton more work done than you would if you were in an office. I use this as a kind of justification in my crazy brain to keep to this set schedule. My home is my safe place, and I need to respect and honor it just as I try to do my own sanity by keeping a schedule, and making sure that I don't get into the habit of burning that midnight oil.

Rachel Muircroft, Software Engineer at Bentley Systems

I've worked remotely from my house now for 7 years and the one thing that I try to do consistently—and sometimes it's really hard—is keep office hours (between 8 and 6). It has kept me disciplined and over time my colleagues have been able to learn what my hours are, too. This is important for me because I like to try and get involved in collaboration projects as much as possible. It pushes the communication both ways more—and it's also more noticeable when teammates start heading home at the end of the day.

There are times though, when working on projects alone can't be avoided and when I'm in that situation, I make sure I get outside at lunchtime, see people,

plan my tasks to keep to the hours and check in with the office often. I even have my monitor dim slightly using the software [f.lux](#) to let me know it's getting late in the day and to think about finishing up.

I've recently moved further down the east coast of Scotland, too, so I try and take regular 5 minute breaks just to stand up and look out the window at the sort-of sea view.

“My home is my safe place, and I need to respect and honor it just as I try to do my own sanity by keeping a schedule.” - Mercer Smith-Looper, Campaign Monitor

Alison Groves, Customer Champion at [Help Scout](#)

For myself, keeping my mind and spirits in tip top shape has everything to do with establishing a routine. I'm an early riser, so I get up at 5:30am every day, work 90 minutes, take an hour to run for a few miles and eat breakfast, then tackle the day. I also find it extremely important to have a natural end to my day, which for me is preparing dinner. I use meal delivery service [Blue Apron](#) to bring me ingredients to cook for myself or friends, and know that I have to end my day and take care of myself in a healthful manner by cooking.

I do my absolute best to hold steadfast to this routine whether I'm at home or on the road. Tasks get done under those constraints, and I'm putting a large importance on my own well being.

2. Set and Stick to Priorities

Kate Stull, Co-Founder of [Popforms](#)

In the early days of Popforms, I used to work all the time. In the morning, I would grab my laptop and pull it into bed with me, and dive into email almost as soon as I woke up. I'd work all day, sometimes forgetting to change out of

pajamas, and then I'd be curled up with the computer, writing blog posts, back in bed at night. It was bad.

Not surprisingly, I got pretty burnt out doing that. I was working every day of the week, unhappy, never feeling done, and focusing more on quantity than quality. But I figured if I was working all day, I must be pretty important and doing pretty important things, right?

Then one day I realized the work was never going to stop. There is always more to do, and when you work remotely, there is no one to tell you to go home or that the office is closing, so it has to be YOU who decides when to stop. You have to decide that the rest of your life is worth making space for, and not let work take over that time.

When I decided to cut back my working hours (I don't check email after 6 p.m., I don't work weekends, I don't bring my computer to bed), it made me focus on quality over quantity. I had to make sure I was maximizing my 7-8 working hours, instead of just aimlessly moving from task to task over 12-14 hours a day, or being overly reactive to small fires and delaying more important work.

I worked with my cofounder to define the most important priorities for my role, so that when 5 p.m. rolls around I can ask myself, 'Have I done the most important work I could do today?' And when I can say yes to that, then I can log off, recharge, and invest in the other areas of my life. That is what makes it possible for me to keep working without getting burnt out.

Josh Pigford, Founder of [Baremetrics](#)

I think things like 'motivation,' 'procrastination' and 'burnout' are all kind of intertwined and burnout, to me, is essentially the sum of choosing to work on the wrong things for too long. We're naturally motivated by successful feedback loops, and you get burned out when that feedback loops gets broken over and over again for too long.

Show up, work on things that move the needle and you'll be fine.

"Like your grocery list, most things can wait until tomorrow. Set aside time for work and rest." - Chris Gallo, Highrise

Chris Gallo, Support at Highrise

The feeling creeps up and the next thing you know you're answering your first email at 6:45 am and replying to another one at 9:15 pm.

Burnout is real. Don't fight it. You can't win.

A great analogy that I've found useful is to think of work as grocery shopping. You don't drop everything and go out to the store the instant you're running low on cookies. If you did, you would waste a lot of time and energy.

You make a list, find time to go to the store, and stock up all at once. But with work, we're constantly plugged in, always checking email, and dropping everything when we don't have to.

Like your grocery list, most things can wait until tomorrow. Set aside time for work and rest. Do nothing. And don't feel guilty about it. Your mind will reward you later.

Kyle Gray, Content Marketing Manager at WP Curve

I am most vulnerable to burnout when I lose track of what's important in my work. It's hard to say no to tasks or opportunities and stay focused on what is really valuable in my work. I start to take on little extra tasks and projects that I think are important, but are just distractions. Before I know it I am spinning a bunch of plates and the quality of my work and my life start to suffer. Days where I jump between different tasks, projects and emails leave me feeling exhausted and stressed.

There's a couple of things I do to refocus:

- Identify what is essential and what's not - For me that is creating content, anything that is not creating new content needs to get cut out. Setting clear goals helps keep you on track. My goals are very simple: I need at least 10 posts published on the WP Curve blog each month.
- Get organized - I plan out my next week and book time for the important things. When the time is blocked out in advance, it's easier to say 'no' to distractions. It also means less creative energy is wasted making decisions in my day.

Getting refocused always seems to reduce my stress and burnout. I feel fulfilled and energized on days when I singularly focus on a single task.



Gavin Zuchlinski, founder of [Acuity Scheduling](#)

Before working on Acuity full time, I worked for a government agency in a classified environment. One nice side effect was that it was almost impossible to bring work home with you (absolutely no quick checking e-mails on your

phone!). Burnout definitely happened there, but it was more obvious because you would be physically at work too much.

During that time I worked on Acuity part time, so I'd squeeze in work on it whenever I had a free moment. That definitely formed some bad habits I'm still trying to break. Now that I'm full time on Acuity there's no need to squeeze in work when I can, but it's still a habit to check e-mails when I can, or whenever I have an idea to test it out.

When I was working on Acuity part time, limited time was a forcing factor. I had plenty of ideas and when I was finally able to implement them, they were full formed in my mind and my execution was efficient. Now with more time there's less of a need of efficiency, so it's easy to run with a less mature idea, only to find time wasted, or spend time ruminating on and researching things which really don't benefit the core of my business.

My feeling is that having fewer constraints on my time is leading to more overwork, and more burnout.

3. Create and Keep Boundaries

Janet Choi, Marketer at [Customer.io](#)

The remote worker's greatest challenge might be herself/himself. While one of the [best benefits of working remotely is flexibility](#), that can turn into too much pliancy over where work ends and life begins.

When I first started working remotely, I reverted to a college night-owl schedule, where I was getting up and going to sleep later than the rest of humanity—and failing to spend all that time in between in a disciplined way. So I felt like I was never getting enough done AND failing to deal with my well-being and everyday life. That puts you in a continuous dangerous downward-spiral that leads not just to one-time but habitual burnout.

“The remote worker's greatest challenge might be herself/himself.” -
Janet Choi, [Customer.io](#)

When you're the decider over how you spend your hours, you also have to be more proactive about sticking to priorities and setting boundaries—that's part of your job. I find myself returning to something Marissa Mayer says about burnout (no matter the Yahoo policy for remote work) how important it is to [find your rhythm](#) and protect it to avoid burnout. For me, that rhythm means taking time to reflect and celebrate progress when planning, and setting boundaries like working outside of my apartment at a co-working space or scheduling deliberate non-work time into my week.

Jess Scott, Founder of [jessINK](#)

Set boundaries. While it's important to get work done in a timely manner, remote work doesn't mean that you absolutely need to be online or available 24/7. Also, schedule some time for relaxing/socializing and/or close, supportive relationships. Remote work offers flexibility, and I appreciate the work-life balance that comes with that.

4. Take Short and Long Breaks

Chase Clemons, Support at [Basecamp](#)

Take a three-day weekend every now and then. Make sure to get away from everything for a week or two each year. With our team, we recognize that sometimes you just need to get away and recharge. So every three years, we give each person a thirty-day sabbatical. Regular breaks and vacations go a long way towards [preventing burnout](#).

Tom Moor, Co-Founder of [Squiggle](#)

Split your days in two. This is pretty easy to do as a remote worker, as you can work from different locations in the morning and afternoon. Having a nice walk

or cycle somewhere around lunch gives your mind time to work and your body some movement, which it probably needs if you've been sitting all morning ;)

Debra Carpenter, PR Manager at [Logo Garden](#)

Use the little moments of free time throughout the day to your advantage—do some jumping jacks, walk outside, meditate. It helps break my days into smaller, more manageable bits and makes me feel more productive.

Mike Knoop, Co-Founder of [Zapier](#)

To me, burnout is when I have particularly low energy. It's happened a few times. The best way I've found isn't to fight it or force yourself to work on something productive. Rather, switch gears and do something active for a few hours. Go outside, walk, go do an errand. Seems to help a lot when you finally get back in front of a machine.

Nicole Geosits, Customer Support at [Acuity Scheduling](#)

Get outside when it's nice. Do your laundry in between answering emails so you can wholly enjoy your weekends. Enjoy your flexibility that working remotely offers, and pet your cat when you're feeling stressed.



5. Make Time for Human Interaction

John O’Nolan, Founder of [Ghost](#)

Burnout is always tough, and I think it affects everyone from time to time. One of the hardest things about working remotely is the lack of human contact to provide a moral boost during the difficult periods. Usually burnout is a clear sign for me that it’s time to get out of the house and go and spend time with real live people and unwind a little. I consider this an investment in my future productivity, rather than slacking off, which helps justify it (if only to myself).

“One of the hardest things about working remotely is the lack of human contact to provide a moral boost during the difficult periods.”
- John O’Nolan, Ghost

Laura Gluhanich, Co-Founder of [Signal Camp](#)

Make sure to get socialization in—and have a crew you can reach out to for advice, support, celebratory high fives and face to face time.

Coby Chapple, Product Designer at [GitHub](#)

Go talk to another human. Everyone always underestimates how much this helps. The most helpful person to speak to will be different depending on your situation, but here’s some ideas to try: talk to your manager, your colleagues, your non-work friends, and your family. You really should try and cultivate friendships outside your job (and even outside your industry as a whole) if you don’t already. One of the most [helpful things for burnout](#) is a change of context to distract you from your professional life’s fatigue, and healthy social time with friends is unbeatable in terms of grounding you in the bigger picture.

Aray Montaivan-Till, Community Manager at [Cloud Peeps](#)

Go out to lunch or coffee at least once a week with another freelancer [or remote worker] in the area. It’s great to talk shop, vent and talk through problems and thoughts together.

Wade Foster, Co-Founder of [Zapier](#)

One thing I think is really important especially for remote workers is to have a local social life. Have friends, colleagues or family that you can hangout with. Otherwise you’ll get no social interaction ever and will quickly burn out from work even if the work is fun.



Don't Flame Out

Campaign Monitor's Mercer perfectly summed up the working from home life in her answer. "Hobbies are super helpful to distract you from the feeling that because you work from home that home always has to mean work," she says.

Home doesn't always have to mean work, and those other things we love to do in life outside of our work help keep work in one corner of our lives, and let our other interests and hobbies share that same space. If we establish a routine, manage and respect our time, spend time with people outside of work, and take breaks—such as dedicating time to hobbies (mine is beer making!)—remote working can be an extremely fulfilling way to live. Burnout is something we don't have to let happen if we're mindful and take care of ourselves.

Related: Read our [Remote Work Survival Guide](#)

Written by [Allison Groves](#)

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Chapter 12: How to Thrive as an Extrovert on a Remote Team



Hi! I'm Bethany, Product Manager and extrovert. Super nice to meet you!



People often confuse being extroverted with being an outgoing person. And a lot of times the two traits do go hand-in-hand.

But to me, being extroverted isn't about being outgoing. It describes the way an individual gains and loses energy. Nothing gives me more energy than socializing and collaborating with my friends and coworkers. When I walk out of a meeting, I feel inspired, energized, and ready to take on the world. Personal interactions are the way I recharge.

This posed a problem for me about a year ago when I joined Zapier, an all-remote team. The remote aspect of my job provides many benefits I enjoy, but the lack of in-person contact has been a real challenge for me.

With the help of my Zapier coworkers, I've developed a few practices that I find vital to my day-to-day well being. Here are our best practices for thriving as an extrovert on an all-remote team.

Consider Social Activities as a Form of Self-Care

When I worked in an office environment, I could be passive about social interaction because it was an inherent part of my day. On a remote team, much

of our communication is written in tools like Slack. While I love communicating via emojis, it's not the same type of communication that feeds my extroverted soul.

In a remote world, you have to be intentional about in-person socialization. This can come in a variety of ways for extroverts on our Zapier team:

I'm a runner and my running group is the way I socialize and de-stress, so I make time for it. I also prioritize meetups, hackathons, and professional groups that relate to my development as a Product Manager.

Andra Roston, Customer Champion, also **prioritizes spending time with groups**: "One of the best things about working remotely is that it leaves me the social energy for the times I want. I crossfit and do theatre, both of which are social activities."

Cody Jones, Head of Partnerships, **relies on his home base and community ecosystem**: "I have 3 boys that love to rough-house, play, and get into all sorts of mischief. I see my parents and siblings each weekend as well. I'm also very involved in my local community—I'm a scout leader which means I spend about 4 hours each week with a bunch of boys and their parents."

Tim Anderson, Chief Growth Officer, is **intentional about making plans**: "I try hard to plan to meet up with friends. In remote work, you no longer have the easy, 'who wants to grab a beer after work?' thing going, so that requires a lot more planning."

Whether it's sports, a hobby, or hanging out with family and friends, recognize these activities are the primary way you'll recharge—and prioritize them appropriately.

Prioritize your social activities, because they are a form of self-care. It's easy to blow off social activities when you've been working in your pajamas all day and your Netflix queue is full. Which brings me to my next tip...

Put Your Shoes On

Literally, put your shoes on in the morning. I'm twice as likely to leave the house if I stick to my morning routine and get dressed. Whether I plan to work from

a coffee shop, go for a run, go to happy hour, or attend a meetup I make sure I'm dressed to do so *with my shoes on* before I start work in the morning.

Mike Knoop, CPO, also uses this trick: "It's such a small thing but it works. When my shoes are on, I'm at work and I'm ready to tackle the day."

This tiny change in your morning routine can really make a difference. For me, the simple act of putting my shoes sets a positive and intentional tone that shows up in my work and social life.



Leverage Technology

When I worked in an office, my go-to move was to grab some coworkers and head to a whiteboard. Working remotely changed that. I really missed the tactile nature of whiteboards and the ease of ad-hoc communication.

Luckily, there are tools that can help replicate in-person collaboration in a digital space. Some my team use daily include:

- [Mural.ly](#), a digital workspace that offers digital stickies, whiteboards, and a lot of other great features
- [Zoom](#), our video conferencing solution
- [Slack](#), where most of our day-to-day communication happens

Using these tools is a great way to recreate in-person collaboration. Chris Patrick, People Ops, finds **virtual coworking sessions a useful way to connect** with members of his team via technology. And Andy Wilkinson, Customer Champion, **pairs up with teammates** over Zoom or Slack calls when responding to customer emails.

These are great tools, but they're only effective if you use them. So grab a colleague and open up a digital whiteboard or hop on a call to brainstorm. Make the most of the technology you have available to you, and you'll feel a difference in your day-to-day productivity.

Engage With Your Remote Team

Because we communicate mostly in writing, it can be easy to watch conversations roll by without engaging. And, for the same reason, it can be hard to build relationships with your team.

Be diligent about participating. At Zapier, we have a culture full of jokes, gifs, and emojis in Slack. I find when I fully participate in these conversations I feel connected to my coworkers and spend a lot of my day actually Lol-ing.

Andra Roston, Customer Champion, **dedicates time to relationships with remote teammates**: "I try to spend time in our #fun Slack channels. I also make the absolute most of Zapier retreats, and try to maintain the relationships I forge thereafter."

Danny Schreiber, Editorial Team Manager, **takes advantage of in-person time** when he does see his team (such as our company retreats) to build relationships: "When we're together in-person as a company I find myself

taking full advantage of it and soaking up the time—mixing up who I dine with, grabbing drinks/coffee between things, staying up too late in the game room, etc.”

I’m fortunate to live in Austin, TX where a few other Zapiens also live. We organize monthly lunches and weekly coworking sessions at coffee shops. We even threw a holiday potluck! On the flip side, I also try to engage with my remote team. We have a weekly pair chat program and informal video hangouts that help facilitate these types of interactions.

When I focused my energy on engaging in the culture of our team and building relationships, it changed the way I perceived remote work. This type of focus builds a sense of community where we as extroverts thrive.

Finally, Ask for Help

Social interaction comes passively in an office. In a remote environment, you have to be much more intentional. That can be a hard transition.

Be proactive about your self-care. About 3 months into my employment, I felt lonely and isolated. I loved my team and the work, but spending time by myself all day, every day was negatively impacted my well being.



I reached out to my manager for help, and we brainstormed some solutions, like testing out a coworking space, attending meetups, and prioritizing social events. I wish I had asked for help sooner because there were two positive outcomes of that meeting.

The first is that I had the support and encouragement from my manager while I worked through this challenge. I felt less isolated immediately after that conversation.

The second is that I started being intentional about self-care as an extrovert. And that led me to raise the subject with my team and define these best practices that I'm now sharing with you.

Written by [Bethany Hills](#)

Title photo by [Burst](#) via [Pexels](#).

Chapter 13: How to Find and Get Hired for a Remote Job



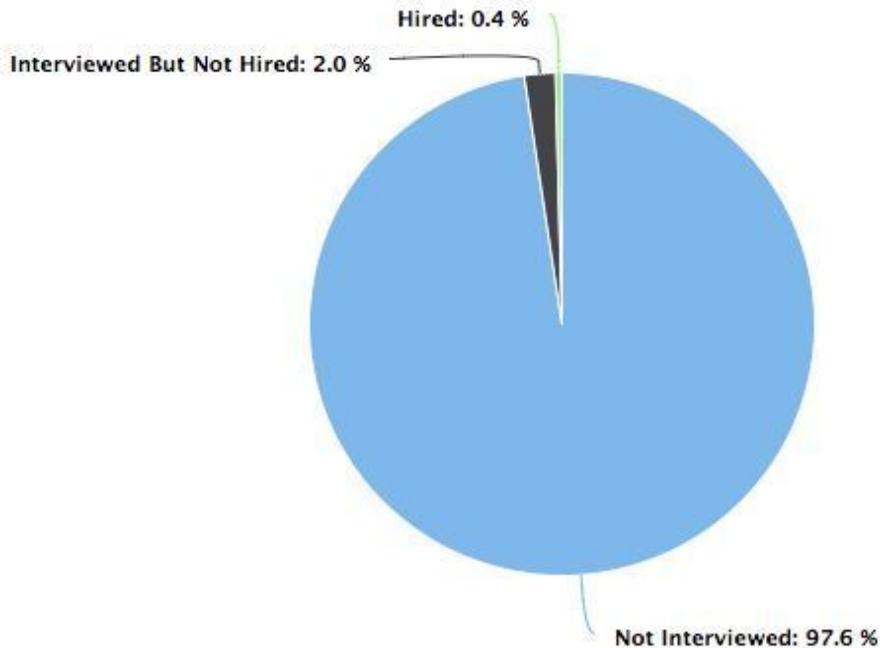
When it's raining, snowing, or sweltering hot outside, I am grateful for my 30-second "commute." When I see photos of open offices with people trying to work side by side at long tables, I'm grateful for the solitude of my home office. When I hear that some people spend two hours *each way* jumping from bus to train to yet another train to get to work, I'm grateful for the time I save by not commuting, because that's more time with my family and more time for myself.

For many people, remote work is the ideal way to work. You get the income stability and benefits of being an employee, plus the freedom to work wherever fits you best. You get to ditch the soul-crushing commute and, yes, work in your pajamas if you like. Before you throw out all your suits, though, you have to land the job.

Although remote work is becoming more popular—almost [40% of the US workforce works remotely](#), compared to only [9%](#) 20 years ago—it's still not the norm, and competition for these positions is fierce. According to a [Telework Inc. survey](#), the option to telecommute ranks as high as or even higher than health benefits on job applicants' wish lists. However, it takes *two years* on average to get a position that allows for remote work.

Here at Zapier, we're a 100% remote team and we get many applicants for [our job openings](#). In our Customer Champion roles, for example, only 2% of applicants get a job fit interview and only 0.4% are hired. We're as picky as Yale—and so are other employers.

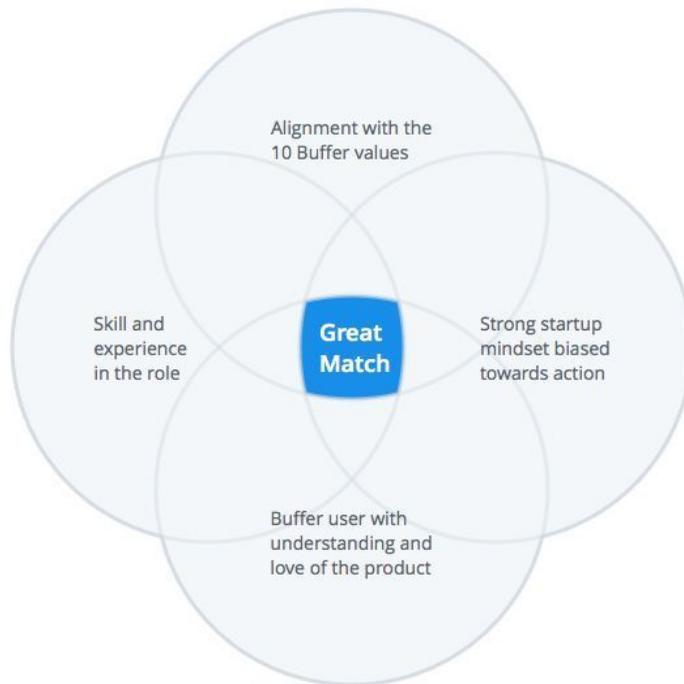
Zapier Customer Champion Hiring



So if you want to work remotely, you need a plan. A plan that will help you showcase to hiring managers that you're not only the best candidate for the job, you're also cut out for working productively on your own.

Here's that game plan.

Understand What Employers Are Looking For



The four attributes Buffer looks for in their remote work candidates

First things first: It takes a certain kind of person to work successfully in a remote work environment. There's no one looking over your shoulder prompting you to get stuff done. You might feel isolated and unmotivated on your own. Day-to-day communication with your boss and teammates can be trickier without body language cues. And there's a very real danger of *overworking* when your office is open 24/7 and a few feet away.

So as beneficial as remote work can be, it's not without its challenges, and employers who hire remote workers are keen on making sure every person on their staff can thrive in this environment. Also, it's a good idea to make sure for yourself that you really want to work remotely. I've known a few people who started working from home and quickly developed cabin fever.

See if the following four essential traits fit you.

1. You're tech savvy

Because much of your time will be spent online, make sure that your computer system is up to par. Employers with remote staff rely heavily on the latest tools and software to get the job done, such as [video conferencing apps](#). Some companies will pay to get you set up with the gear you need, but others don't. And, in any case, be prepared to gain experience with new tools.

At [FlexProfessionals, LLC](#), co-founder Sheila Murphy explains on [Remote.com](#) that "for remote positions in our company, employees must have excellent communications skills and a comfort level with learning [...] and using technology. We look for and evaluate these traits throughout the interview process."

You don't have to be a tech wizard, but at least have some familiarity with tools and be open to ongoing learning.

2. You're an efficient communicator

Even when you're working remotely, you'll still need to actively communicate with your team. You'll likely communicate via direct messaging apps, email, and texts, so being able to get your points across clearly and quickly is essential. Coby Chapple, a product designer at [GitHub](#), says:

The importance of this cannot be overstated. When you're remote, a majority of the way you interface with the world will be through the written word, so it's critical that you can articulate complex concepts and subtleties. Giant walls of text aren't fun either, so it's important to keep things concise.

[Automattic](#) Happiness Engineer Andrew Spittle shares with us:

Text is our predominant communication mode and we look for strong writing skills in applicants. On the support side that's key since text is not just how we communicate with customers but also with

each other. Our interview process is all done through text chats, too, as a way to evaluate that ability.

As we explain in our [Guide to Remote Work](#), being able to show tact in your written communication is also important, because it's easy to come off as curt via text.

Related: [Become a Better Writer: Our Favorite Writing Apps and Tips](#) and [How to Use Emoji Like a Pro](#).

3. You're independent and trustworthy

As a remote worker, you'll probably have the least amount of supervision you've experienced in your career (unless you were a freelancer or ran your own company previously). You'll have to take ownership of your tasks and be proactive and self-motivated in getting them completed on time. *Default to action* is one of our core values at Zapier.

If you have previous experience freelancing or running your own business, you've got a leg up on the competition. Giacomo Guilizzoni, Founder and CEO at [Balsamiq](#), is an example of another employer who looks for previous remote work experience in applicants. He [says](#):

Previous work-at-home experience is a plus, especially if they've done it for a long time. Working at home is amazing for the first six months, great for the first two years, and can be tough after that unless you come up with your 'system' for separating work from your personal life.

What if you don't have previous experience working solo or remotely? Try picking up projects that you can take ownership of and be self-managed on. Even better: See if you can get a few days working remotely at your current job, so you'll have experience with it. In [The 4-Hour Workweek](#), Tim Ferriss offers a script and instructions for getting your boss to let you work from home. It involves:

- Getting your company to increase their investment in you, for example by paying for additional training
- Showcasing your productivity when working from home, such as when you need to be home for repairs or on a snow day
- Creating a short presentation of the benefits of remote work for the company and for your work as an employee
- Proposing a remote-work trial period

I started working remotely 17 years ago for my previous job when I was too sick to go into work but still well enough to get work done. That week proved to my boss—and myself—that I could be productive outside of the office—*even more productive*, as many telecommuters besides myself have found. A few months later, when I needed to move out of state for my husband's job, remote work became my mode of work. That trial run made all the difference.

So give remote work a try as soon as you can and document your productivity success along the way.

4. You've mastered time management

If you're able to stay focused for long stretches of time, can prioritize tasks, and can follow-up promptly, remote work might be a fit for you. These are all important for any worker to have, but they're critical when you're on a remote team. Adda Birnir explains on [The Muse](#) that remote workers need organization, proactiveness, and motivation (among other skills):

When you work remotely, your boss won't be looking over your shoulder—or even able to stop by your cubicle—to see if you're staying on top of your tasks. You've got to keep yourself on track.

To prove that you always know what needs to be done and when, emphasize in your resume, application email, and interview the jobs or projects you've done that have required managing many moving pieces, and talk about how you kept everything coordinated. Also, because remote teams can be global, consider time zones. You'll have to be mindful of others' schedules and flexible when setting meetings. See [How to Work in Different Timezones](#) for more on this tricky issue.

To help with staying on top of things, adopt a process of making a plan to balance your work day. For example, project management tools such as Airtable and Trello will help you stay organized, as will a [daily schedule or routine](#). Got a bunch of recurring tasks you don't need to waste your time on doing manually? [Schedule and automate them instead](#).

Additionally, you are a great fit for that particular role and the company's values

Buffer COO and co-founder [writes](#) that the most important element they look for in a candidate is alignment with [the company's 10 values](#).

The main way we try to gauge this in practice is by looking at the wording of each email and seeing how well it feels in line with our culture. Especially since we're a remote team, written communication gets a lot of weight, and gauging emotions from it is important for us.

Secondly, we heavily rely on a candidate's social media postings. We'll check out their Twitter accounts, how individuals Tweet and whether their postings feel in line with our culture. Is there a lot of positivity or a lot of complaining? Would their posts feel great to see on our team Twitter list?

These elements help us begin to understand what type of cultural contribution a candidate would bring.

And in addition to that great values fit, you should also have skill and experience in the role as well as an understanding and love of the product. Before you apply for a remote job, make sure you're familiar with the company (more on applying in a bit).

Where to Find Remote Jobs

There are roughly 60 “work from home” job scams online for each real opportunity.

The first step in finding a remote job is knowing where *not* to look.

When I was younger and more foolish, I applied to a work-from-home job ad that promised easy pay for easy work. Yup, it was all about licking envelopes and trying to scam other suckers like myself with a pyramid marketing scheme.

When you’re desperate for flexibility and the desire to work from home is so great, it’s easy to fall into these kinds of traps. Bottom Line [reports](#) that there are roughly 60 “work from home” job scams online for each real opportunity.

Make sure the job listing is legitimate

If you’re unsure of a job posting, there are a few ways you can proceed:

- Although not always the case, avoid general classified sites such as Craigslist. While legitimate jobs are posted there, you’ll have to research the company to be 100% sure. Job hunting is stressful and time-consuming enough as it is.
- Check out the company’s website. Check to see if there are any red flags that stand out to you. Does it lack professionalism or basic contact information? Do they promise big paychecks without much work?
- Look the company up on the Better Business Bureau and Google around for reviews.
- If you decide to proceed and you’re selected for an interview, a video chat is helpful because you’ll interact with people versus communicating through emails. If you meet more than one person during the interview process, that could be a bonus.

Look to your own employer or companies that are known for remote work policies

The best thing you can do, though, is first to see if your current employer will let you work from home. If you have a good relationship with your company, that's the easiest path to remote work.

Beyond that, look for remote jobs at companies that are known for hiring remote workers. Here's a list on GitHub of [companies with "remote DNA"](#) (note that not all of them are 100% remote, however, for all jobs).

Check out remote-work friendly job boards

While sites like Indeed and LinkedIn offer solid job listings, niche sites that cater specifically to remote work give you better options.

Related: [25+ Fully Remote Companies That Let You Work From Anywhere](#)

The following remote work job boards have a great track record and are a good place to start your search. When you find a job you're interested in, research the company before applying—just as you should when applying to any job. You want to be sure you understand their business and feel that you would be a good fit, rather than haphazardly sending off your resume to any company that might offer remote work jobs.

See the Muse's ["Ultimate Guide to Researching a Company Pre-Interview"](#) for learning more about your potential new employer.

FlexJobs

The screenshot shows the FlexJobs website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the FlexJobs logo, links for Jobs, How FlexJobs Works, Job Search Tips & Help, and Research Companies, along with a search bar and a user profile for John Doe. Below the navigation bar is a row of icons for various site features: My Dashboard, Advanced Job Search, Job Search Activity, Your Resume Profiles, View New Jobs of Interest, Find Jobs By Location, Skills Tests, Job Search Checklist, and Special Partner Offers. The main content area is titled "Job Categories for Telecommuting, Part-time, and Flexible Jobs" and includes a welcome message. A grid of job categories is displayed, such as Account Management jobs, Accounting & Finance jobs, Administrative jobs, Advertising & PR jobs, Animals & Wildlife jobs, Art & Creative jobs, Bilingual jobs, Business Development jobs, Call Center jobs, Communications jobs, Computer & IT jobs, Consulting jobs, HR & Recruiting Jobs, Human Services jobs, Insurance jobs, International jobs, Internet & Ecommerce jobs, Legal jobs, Manufacturing jobs, Marketing jobs, Math & Economics jobs, Medical & Health jobs, Mortgage & Real Estate jobs, and News & Journalism jobs. On the right side, there is an "Announcements" section with a message about part-time telecommute jobs, a "Search for jobs" section with a search bar and advanced search options, and a "Related Job Search Options" section with links like "View All New Jobs" and "Find Jobs By Location".

FlexJobs is a job board that showcases not just telecommuting openings, but also job postings for other types of flexible arrangements, such as freelance or part-time work. Using the site requires paying a fee (ranging from \$14.95/month to \$49.95/year), but currently the site lists over 32,000 jobs from 4,725 companies—so signing up can definitely pay off. The FlexJobs staff hand-screen each job posting so you can avoid work-from-home scams.

Jobspresso

	JavaScript Engineer (Node.js Owner) Heroku Heroku provides services and tools to build, run, and scale web applications	Anywhere in US	DEVELOPER
	Junior Community Outreach Specialist Student Loan Hero The smartest way to organize, manage, and repay student loans.	Anywhere	MARKETING
	Program Manager Microsoft	Anywhere in US	PROJECT MGMT
	Engineering Program Manager Microsoft	Anywhere in US	PROJECT MGMT
	Marketing Writer GitHub How people build software	Anywhere	MARKETING

[Jobspresso](#) allows you to search for jobs in specific categories, such as marketing, copywriting, project management, and support. All of the jobs listed are curated for remote workers. They also allow users to post their resumes to increase exposure to potential employers and get daily job updates.

Remote.co

REMOTE COMPANIES Q&A

110 leading remote companies and virtual teams answer your top questions.

35 Questions

- Why Remote >
- Hiring Remotely >
- Managing Remotely >
- Working Remotely >
- Remote Worker Insights >

110 Companies

See All Questions & Companies >

[Remote.co](#) is passionate about remote work and partners with startups that feel the same way. They post jobs in the following categories: customer service, design, marketing, human resources, sales, writing, and development. And they also offer Q&As for remote companies and the people who would like to work for them.

If you want to be the first to hear about new opportunities, sign up for their alerts to receive up to two notifications a week.

We Work Remotely

PROGRAMMING JOBS		LATEST POST ABOUT 5 HOURS AGO
NEW	Spreaker Web Engineer at Spreaker - Fullstack / PHP7 / ES6	Jan 13
NEW	Recordsure Javascript Web Developer	Jan 12
NEW	Know Your Company Rails Programmer	Jan 12
NEW	Tempus Energy Energy Markets Data Scientist	Jan 12
NEW	Lullabot Front-end Developer with React/Redux Experience	Jan 12
NEW	Inside Rails developer	Jan 12
	Bytion Senior WordPress Developer	Jan 11
	Doximity Senior DevOps Engineer	Jan 10
	Barrel Development Manager	Jan 10
	DeepCrawl Senior Ruby Developer (London office or Remote in UK)	Jan 10
	Toptal LLC React Developer	Jan 10

[We Work Remotely](#) is sponsored by Basecamp and their book *Remote*, which delves into all things related to working remotely. The job board is updated daily and you can subscribe to the site's RSS feed to get informed of new job postings. You can find jobs in programming, development & system admin, marketing, customer service, management, design, and copywriting here.

Working Nomads

JOB CATEGORIES

- Development 58
- Management 27
- Marketing 14
- Design 10
- Sales 10
- Finance 4
- System Administration 4
- Writing 4
- Legal 2
- Consulting 1
- Customer Success 1
- Health Care 1
- Human Resources 1

🔍 Search for a remote job

Remote Jobs

- ★ Full Stack Developer
Carbon Analytics

Development
18 hours ago
- ★ Business Development Executive
Brazil Business Reports

Sales
1 day ago
- ★ Marketing manager
Betafresh Hong Kong ...

Marketing
social media content marketing email marketing
3 days ago
- ★ Web and front-end developer
Veststofan

Development
php wordpress html git
7 days ago
- ★ Mid to Senior Level WordPress Developer
LightSpeed

Development
css html wordpress photoshop git
7 days ago

[Working Nomads](#) provides a curated list of remote jobs for individuals who

want to travel while they work. You can browse numerous job categories such as development, education, or management. You can also sign up to receive job alerts delivered to your inbox daily or weekly.

One nice feature of Working Nomads is the use of tags, so you can search or browse for a job based on specific skillsets.

Tip: Many other job boards or websites also allow you to filter jobs by location. So, for example, on [MediaBistro](#), you can narrow down the search to “Working from home.”

How to Apply and Interview for a Remote Work Job

All companies approach remote interviews differently. For instance, at GitHub, Chapple explains that they “usually start screening with things like written questions or exercises to get a feel for a candidate’s communication skills and the depth of their abilities in the area we’re looking to hire for.” Others, such as Automattic, conduct interviews via text chat, and at Zapier we use a combination of written, phone, and video interviews.

Keep in mind that employers use these video interviews to get a feel for your personality and interest in the job. If you’re positive, curious, and articulate in the video chat as well as other parts of the application process, hiring managers will be more confident about you.

Prepare for the video interview

If you’re going to interview via video chat, here are a few key considerations:

Try out the video app before the interview. Whatever app your interviewer chooses to use, install it (if required), log on in advance, and check it out. Familiarizing yourself with the tool is especially important if you haven’t used it before. Nothing is more nerve-racking than starting an interview late because you didn’t know how to use the tool or you’re having problems with your computer’s audio or video. (Still, it happens.)

Find a quiet space where you can focus on your interview and won't be distracted. Although comfortable, coffee shops might not be a good option. Some coworking spaces, on the other hand, offer private rooms or phone booths where you can have your video chat. Wherever you set up for the interview, make sure the lighting is adequate and whatever's in the background of the video isn't unprofessional.

Dress professionally and stay engaged during the interview. Avoid distracting patterns or colors that might not look good on video. You want the focus to be on what you're saying and not on what you're wearing. At the same time, make sure you're comfortable in your clothes so you can focus on the interview.

Body language is still important when you're doing a video interview. The eye contact, smiling, and not fidgeting rules apply here just as much as in in-person meetings. Also make sure to turn off your phone's and computer's notifications, less those become a distraction for you and your interviewer.

Be prepared overall—and focused on the job, not just remote work

Most importantly, for any part of the application process:

Be prepared. You'll want to know as much about the role and the company as possible.

Zapier Product Manager Chris Geoghegan advises:

Being able to clearly articulate why you want to work somewhere (besides the fact that the position is remote) is really important. In job fit interviews, you definitely see this where some candidates are clearly more interested in the remote aspect of Zapier, and I think that can be red flag.

Jason Kotenko, Zapier Platform Lead, adds:

Explain *why you want the exact position*. Just wanting to work at a remote company is usually not enough for specialized roles.

Be prepared with stories or examples that showcase your value to the potential employer and your ability to get that specific job done. Along with that is having examples of times you showed those “successful remote worker” traits or skills mentioned above. You might be asked about or want to mention things like:

- Successful solo projects you’ve started or team projects you’ve led.
- Your reasons for wanting to work remotely. What makes you fit for working on a remote team? (independence and trustworthiness)
- Previous writing experience and other communication skills. How do you choose the communication tool for different situations? (communication skills)
- Your daily routine and methods to stay focused. What are your optimal work hours? What’s your workspace like? How do you prioritize tasks? How do you balance work and personal life? (time management skills)

Ask questions to make sure this is a good fit

Remember that interviewing is a two-way street. While the employer is evaluating how suitable you are for both the job and the company’s culture, you’re there, too, to see if they are a good fit for what you want. Don’t take any job just because it allows you work remotely. Take it because that’s the job and the company you want to work for.

Questions you should ask to make sure the company is really serious about remote work:

- How many people do you have working remotely full-time?
- Is occasional travel needed to meet with co-workers?
- How does the remote team usually communicate?
- What would my typical schedule and day look like?
- How often would I be in touch with my manager?

Also, if you’re applying for an employer in another country, before accepting a position it’s a good idea to find out:

- How will taxes be taken care of from my paycheck?

- Will I need to buy my own health plan?
- Would I need to get a work permit when visiting the employer?

Of course, you'll probably have a lot of questions of your own for the company as well.

Finding the “right fit” for any job comes down to knowing your strengths and what makes you most productive—as well as finding the kind of company and role you want to work in. If you're independent and a high achiever, there are tons of remote work opportunities out there where you can gain freedom and control over where and how you work best.

Good luck!

Written by [Melanie Pinola](#)

Milveen Eke-Allen contributed to this post.

*Title photo by [Tran Mau Tri Tam](#) via [Unsplash](#).**

Chapter 14: The Remote Workers' Toolkit

30+ Productivity Apps and Tools to Help You Work Smarter, Not Harder



“Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend four hours sharpening the axe.” - Attributed to Abraham Lincoln, but most likely never said by him

Everyone could use a good productivity tool or two. If you're a carpenter, you need a hammer and nails. Painters couldn't get their job done without a paint brush. And if you're a remote worker or a freelancer, an internet connection and the software you need to stay productive are equally crucial. They can make the difference between wasting hours on a task versus getting it done as simply and as efficiently as possible—especially when there's no IT team to ask for help and you work largely unmanaged.

Every day, there are more web, mobile, and desktop apps, as well as gadgets, designed to help remote workers and the self-employed—and they're getting better all the time. Technology changes so fast, but some things remain the same. You'll always need fast internet, communication tools, and a handful of other apps to stay productive.

Here are the categories of apps and tools you'll likely need, with some recommendations based on popular tools I (as a tech reviewer and telecommuter for over 15 years) and my fellow remote workers use. For more options, you can check out our regularly updated app roundups for each category, as available, linked in each section.

Let's find your next productivity tool for your virtual office arsenal.

Tools for Staying Connected and Plugged In



It's amazing how much the very nature of work has changed in only the last 15 years or so. We can instantly access the latest files from a shared Dropbox folder, join a Skype video call, simultaneously collaborate on a shared document or spreadsheet, use remote desktop to control a computer from afar, and chat in real time with instant messages wherever we are, on any device.

All that hinges on reliable internet access, which is why this starts with making sure you stay connected.

Mobile Hotspots

Every online worker shudders at the thought of their internet going down for hours. If you work primarily from your home office, you probably already have the fastest internet you can reasonably afford (if not, that's project number one). It's also a good idea to have a mobile hotspot, not just for internet access on the go (such as getting your laptop connected while on the road) but also as a backup in case your power or internet goes out.

There are two kinds of mobile hotspots: hardware and software. Hardware devices such as the [Karma](#) are pocket-sized Wi-Fi access points you can wirelessly connect to with your laptop, tablet, portable game system, and so on. The devices cost between \$80 and \$150, with separate charges for the data. I like the Karma because there are no activation fees, and it's relatively inexpensive—you can pay as you go, with a \$3 monthly fee and data costing \$10 per GB (the data never expires). It works out cheaper, at least for the US market, than alternatives like the MiFi where you'll pay for a monthly plan.

You may not even need to purchase a mobile hotspot, though. The simplest option is to use your phone as a hotspot to share your standard mobile data plan over Wi-Fi. This feature—called *Personal Hotspot* on iOS and *Mobile Hotspot* on Android—is baked into most newer iOS and Android phones and tablets (look in the Wireless & networks settings on Android or the Network settings in iOS). However, using your phone as a wireless modem will drain its battery faster, and your wireless carrier may also require you to buy a hotspot (sometimes called “tethering”) plan, which typically costs about \$15 per month.

Every market's different, so be sure to check with your local carriers for the best options for mobile hotspots in your location.

Remote Desktop Software

Remote desktop apps securely connect you to a computer at another location so you can work on it as if you're sitting in front of that computer's keyboard. It's a handy way for telecommuters to access computers at the office—or even in the same building, without having to physically be there. The opposite is true, too—remote access software also is useful if you have a desktop computer at home and want to access it when you travel or if you need to troubleshoot your grandparents' email problems from the comfort of your couch.

If you're connecting to the office computer as a telecommuter, your IT department should help you set up remote access on your home computer. Microsoft's [Remote Desktop client](#) is built into Windows, available as a Mac download, and simple to use (all you have to do is press connect to start working remotely on the computer). Apple offers their own version, called [Apple Remote Desktop](#), but it costs \$80, and users report critical connectivity issues with the latest update.

So, for everyone else, [TeamViewer](#) is a free ([for personal use](#)) remote access tool that you can use to not only remotely control a computer but also to share your screen with others for online meetings or presentations. This all-in-one tool works on Windows, Mac, and Linux, as well as Android and iOS. Another option is [Chrome Remote Desktop](#). It runs in the Chrome browser and requires only a few clicks to set up and use. TeamViewer has more features, but Chrome Remote Desktop is probably the simplest option for accessing files remotely or for quick troubleshooting.

Real-time Communication Apps

If you want to have a video conference or collaborate on shared files, there are a multitude of options, ranging from simple mobile apps to enterprise-grade software with sophisticated management and security capabilities.

Team Chat: If you're working remotely, odds are you'll want to chat with your team to collaborate asynchronously instead of needing to set up a time for a call every time you have a question. [Slack](#) is one of the most popular tools for that. It's the free team chat tool that made chat popular again, with file sharing that works with Google Docs and Dropbox, image and video previews,

customizable notifications, and direct messages between team members. Oh, and tons of [emoji](#) (or [reactji](#)), too—very important for distributed teams.

More options: If you're looking for Slack alternatives, see [The 12 Best Team Chat Apps for Your Company](#)

Screen Sharing: Sometimes it's easier to show than tell. With screen sharing, you can show others your desktop and the files and apps you have open—and watch as you work on your computer. That means virtual team members can give you live feedback on that new logo you designed, and you can argue the merits of your font choice and change the colors before their eyes—all without anyone needing to be in the same room. As Basecamp's Jason Fried wrote, "You'd be amazed how much quality collective thought can be captured using two simple tools: a voice connection and a shared screen." Now that [Slack has built-in screen sharing](#), it's a no-brainer choice if you use Slack to chat. [Screenleap](#) is also a solid option, since the free tool shares your screen without requiring your viewers to sign up or download anything to view it.

Video Chats: Sometimes you'll still want to have a little face time. Video chats can make you feel like you're in the same room with your virtual teammates. Seeing others' expressions and gestures and hearing their voices goes a long way in having more effective conversations. [Google Hangouts](#) is one of the easiest and most capable video chat services around—if you have a Google account (who doesn't?) you have Google Hangouts. You can have a live video call with up to 10 other people, and Hangouts works with all computers as well as Android and iOS. At Zapier, we use [Zoom](#) because we find it's reliable for even 100 attendees on a video chat. Or, for quick calls, the built-in video chat in Slack is handy, too.

More options: Check out [The 12 Best Video Conferencing Apps for Teams](#)

Remote Collaboration Software



Communication and collaboration don't always have to happen in real time. One of the biggest benefits of online collaboration tools is that they let everyone have a discussion around projects and files, regardless of time or place. Here are some you should find handy.

Online Office Suites: Office suites have been shifting away from installed software packages to connected, online apps over the past decade. In both [Microsoft Office Online](#) (the web-based versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote) and the equivalent Google offering, [G Suite](#) (with Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Drive, and more), you can easily share a document with others and have them add inline comments or make their own edits. And, you can work on the go with nearly full-featured mobile apps.

More options: [The Best Online Writing Apps for Collaboration](#)

Shared File Storage: A central storage space you can access from any device—computer or phone—is critical for collaboration. And it doesn't have to be

complicated. Just save a file to the shared folder and you and your other coworkers will instantly have the latest changes.

[Dropbox](#) led the way. It's one of the most popular online storage and file syncing tools because it's so easy to use (just save a file to the Dropbox folder), was one of the first cloud storage services, and, in my experience, it syncs files more reliably and faster than competing services. Its integration with many other apps really makes it shine. A basic Dropbox account with 2GB of storage is free, but there are paid versions that add more storage, advanced management capabilities, and corporate security controls.

There are other options, though. Microsoft's [OneDrive](#) offers 1TB of storage with an Office 365 subscription (from \$6.99/month), which comes with the full Office suite and 60 minutes of international calls on Skype. And [G Suite](#)—the professional version of Gmail and Google Docs—includes 30GB of storage with its \$5/month plan.

Virtual Workspaces: Many online collaboration and project management tools offer a central place for dispersed team members to not only store shared files, but also leave messages in discussion forums, plan work in online calendars and task lists, and more. [Basecamp](#) (\$99/month for unlimited users) is one of the most popular and most highly recommended project management tools (check out [our review of Basecamp 3 here](#)). The closest free alternative is [Freedcamp](#), which supports unlimited projects and users; paid plans offers more features, such as Google Calendar syncing and cloud storage integration starting at \$4/month.

Related: See [the tools and methods our remote Design team uses](#).

Project Management, Note Taking, and Time Management Apps



Ditch the commute and you have even more time to work with. The apps below will help you get organized and maximize your most precious resource.

Project and Task Management Software

To-do apps and project management tools are a dime a dozen these days. The tough part is finding the ones that work best for you.

To-do Lists: If you don't have a place to track all your tasks, you might forget about them altogether or experience the constant anxiety of thinking there are things you need to do but can't remember them (dubbed [the Zeigarnik Effect](#)). That's why one of the tenets behind the [Getting Things Done® \(GTD®\)](#)

[productivity system](#) is to clear your head with a mind sweep, listing all your tasks or “next actions.”

Personally, I use a paper notebook with [the Bullet Journal note-taking system](#), because I like the speed and tactile nature of pen and paper. Other people prefer digital apps that will remind them of their upcoming tasks, including popular to-do list apps like [Todoist](#) and [Any.do](#). At the end of the day, the best to-do app is the one that you'll actually use.

More options: [The 40 Best To-Do List Apps for Task Management](#)

Project Management: Task lists can only capture so much. For projects with a vast number of tasks that need to be done in specific order or workflows with more complex time management needs, consider a full-fledged project management tool.

[Trello's](#) user-friendly and colorful interface lets you drag list items (“cards”) around on a virtual [Kanban board](#). Reminders, comments, labels, and other features make it a great organization tool for yourself or your entire team. In fact, you can use Trello to [organize your entire life](#) or use it to manage everything in your company just as [the team behind Trello uses their own product](#) to collaborate and communicate as a team. (By the way, Trello has also just published a [guide to how great teams are embracing remote work](#)—worth a read!)

[Asana](#) is another great option. Built specifically for teams, Asana integrates project tasks with conversation threads and calendars. It's a simpler approach to adding extra features to a to-do list for teamwork. [See how 22 teams use Asana as their central hub.](#)

More options: [The Best Project Management Software: 50 Tools for Team Tasks](#)

Note-Taking Apps: One of the biggest challenges of modern life is that there's too much information to keep track of and remember for both our professional and personal lives. Note-taking and web-clipping apps help us keep all this information organized and shareable.

[Evernote](#) is the app of choice for many productivity geeks. With it, you can save web articles, make lists and quickly jot down ideas, and snap photos of

documents and images related to your projects. Shared Evernote notebooks provide a centralized place for team members to share their reference materials or notes.

Microsoft's [OneNote](#) is similar but designed around a more traditional notebook style. Where Evernote treats each note as a separate document and uses tags for extra organization, OneNote shows your notes as tabs and pages in a virtual notebook—more like the paper notebooks you used in school. While Evernote excels at easily saving information, OneNote's notebook-like interface and robust handwriting support make it perfect for project planning and mindmapping. As you might imagine, it also plays very well with other Microsoft Office apps.

More options: [Evernote, OneNote, and Beyond: The 14 Best Note-Taking Apps](#)

Timers: The Pomodoro Technique promises to help you have fun with time management by encouraging you to work in focused, timed 25-minute sprints with a 5-minute break in between. You can use an app like [TomatoTimer](#) or an actual kitchen timer for those sprints. Adjust your sprint timing as you see fit—maybe it's 25 minutes or maybe 90 minutes.

More options: [The 12 Best Pomodoro Timer Apps to Boost Your Productivity](#)

Mind Maps: Finally, you can use mind maps like [MindMeister](#) not just for collaborative brainstorming, but also to plan projects in a more visual manner. GTD guru David Allen himself uses mind maps to get a bird's eye view of everything going on in his life. And if you use [MeisterTask](#), you can turn your mind maps into project tasks in a few clicks.

Learn more: [How to Make Mind Maps: Visualize Your Ideas for Better Brainstorming](#)

Distraction-Busting Apps

I once knew a professor who was incredibly prolific. Besides teaching, he had more than a dozen books under his belt. This is despite the fact that his home

office was the kitchen table, where family members were constantly bustling about. He had naturally razor-sharp focus in the midst of chaos, but most of us aren't like that. In addition to single-tasking and turning off notifications, a few key tools can help you focus better.

Minimalist Writing Tools: Writing apps like [OmmWriter](#) keep you focused on just the page and your words. It sports a Zen-like atmosphere, including mellow music, and keeps menus and other windows out of your view. Other options without the music and background photos include [iA Writer](#) and [Byword](#)—both of which are popular with the Zapier team.

If you need a more powerful tool for writing long-form content, [Scrivener](#) has a full-screen writing mode that removes distracting menus, toolbars, and file lists. You can pop back into the normal interface for organizing your content. Scrivener also makes it easy to break text up into smaller parts so you can concentrate on each section (instead of, for example, dealing with my usual time-wasting habit of going back to the beginning of a piece to endlessly retweak). [See our guide to Scrivener](#) to get started.

Program Blockers: If you struggle with the temptation to constantly check your email or visit time-wasting sites, apps like [SelfControl](#) and [Cold Turkey](#) can temporarily block specific websites, games, and other programs so you stay on track. They're like a force field between your focus and common distractions. If you don't want to install a desktop application, a browser extension like [StayFocused](#) for Chrome will block time-wasting sites for specific time periods. I also like [Productivity Owl](#) for Chrome, which lets you save distracting pages for later and limits the amount of time you spend at specific sites (so you don't get sucked into the rabbit hole called Wikipedia, for example).

More options: [14 Tools to Help You Avoid Distractions and Stay Focused at Work](#)

Tools for Staying Secure



Don't yawn. Information security isn't the most exciting topic, but it's as important as internet connectivity for remote workers—especially because we often store business information on our laptops and smartphones. Here's a quick review of the five security tools you should have in place:

File and Disk Encryption: Encryption software scrambles data so that even if it gets into the wrong hands, thieves won't be able to read your files without the encryption key or password.

You can encrypt your entire hard drive with tools like Windows' built-in BitLocker (only available for the Pro and Enterprise versions, though) or Mac OS X's FileVault (included with every Mac). Generally, however, while full disk encryption is more secure, you can more conveniently manually encrypt the folders and files on your computer that have sensitive information on them. These include files that contain personal information such as account numbers or social security numbers or sensitive company data including client names and proprietary information. No one wants to be that guy who loses a company laptop with unprotected files and exposes customers' personal information.

Open source [7Zip](#) makes it easy to compress a file or a set of files and encrypt the archive with a password. Mac OS X's Disk Utility can also create an encrypted disk image (basically a folder) with password protection.

Online Backup: Telling people to back up their files and make sure their

passwords are secure is probably the equivalent of your mom telling you to sit up straight and eat your broccoli (but Mom is always right!). Unlimited backup service [Backblaze](#) is set-and-forget online backup software, costing just \$5 per month per computer. It's [The Wirecutter's recommendation for online backups](#), and the best option for most people.

More options: [How to Back Up Everything from All Your Apps and Devices](#)

Password Manager: Hardly a week goes by these days without news of yet another security breach involving stolen passwords, credit cards, and other sensitive data. Hackers are getting more advanced, we all have too many passwords to remember, and most of us would rather clean the toilet than change our passwords again. That's where a password manager comes in. It reduces one of the biggest security risks—using the same password on multiple sites—by storing all your (unique) passwords in an encrypted database secured by the only password you have to remember. Just make that master password as long and complex as possible (“12345” does not qualify).

I use [1Password](#) because the app doesn't require you to store the password database on someone else's server—though you can store the database in Dropbox and sync it across your devices. The Zapier team uses [LastPass](#) thanks to simple sharing controls. And [Dashlane](#) deserves some love for being the first password manager to add a change-all-your-passwords-with-one-click feature (handy!).

More options: [The 12 Best Password Managers for Protecting Your Personal and Shared Accounts](#)

Two-Factor Authentication (2FA): Password leaks are going to continue to happen, but you can add an additional layer of security by turning on two-factor authentication for all the services that offer it. With two-factor authentication, even if someone has stolen your password, if they try to log into your account from an unknown device, the service will ask them to verify their identity with a unique, randomly generated code from an authentication device or app. Check the sites that use 2FA at [Twofactorauth.org](#). At the very least, turn on 2FA for your email and financial accounts.

Learn more: [Two-Factor Authentication: A Security System for Your Digital Life](#)

VPN: Finally, any time you're using an insecure network—such as free public Wi-Fi at the airport or coffee shop—use a VPN. Virtual private networks create encrypted tunnels for sending and receiving data, so that sensitive file you're sending to the office (or the content of that Web page you're visiting) can't be sniffed out by others. It's [surprisingly easy to steal people's information from the air](#) if they're not using a VPN. I use [Private Internet Access](#) because it's inexpensive (\$3.33/month paid annually) and the company doesn't log your activity, but if you want other options, [there's a site for that](#).

Automating and Outsourcing Tools



Finally, let's talk about supercharging your work with automation. Remote workers already have a leg up on productivity, because we have fewer office distractions and can avoid needless in-person meetings. Automation takes your productivity to the next level. Cut the repetitive tasks or delegate smaller tasks to others and you'll preserve your energy for the more important things only you can do best. Here are some tools to help manage outsourcing and automation:

Virtual Assistants: I use [Fancy Hands](#) to outsource tasks and make better use of my time. For about 40 cents per minute you can have your assistants do things you either don't want to do or don't have the time for, such as:

- Call your wireless carrier to negotiate your cell phone bill
- Perform research on a topic you're investigating or need for your next report, such as the top trending topics on Twitter
- Contact Dell about troubleshooting a new laptop that has lines going through the screen and find out what your service options are

You might not think you need a service like this, but you'd be amazed at the relief you'll feel when you have others doing the small tasks that are weighing on your mind. Fancy Hands pricing starts at \$30/month for 5 requests of up to 20 minutes each, and unused requests rollover each month.

Text Expanders: Stop typing the same words over and over again. Text expansion tools such as [PhraseExpress](#) (Windows, Mac, Android, and iPhone; free for personal use or starting at \$49.95 for a license) and [aText](#) (Mac; \$5) autocomplete phrases you type often, such as common email replies or snippets of code. They can also quickly insert data such as the current date and time and automatically correct misspellings, saving you hours of typing (and your wrists). Your phone's built-in text expansion (look in the keyboard settings) also relieve the frustration of tapping tiny keys to enter your email address, name, and other common words.

More options: See [our guide to text expansion](#) for more text expander app recommendations.

App Automation: I'd be remiss if I didn't mention [Zapier](#), the service that connects over 900 web apps to automate repetitive tasks. Not sure what to

automate? Check out these [popular ways over a million users are saving time with Zapier](#).

When you work remotely, you have the freedom and the flexibility to do your best work in the environment that best suits you. But you still need the right tools to overcome [the challenges that remote work presents](#). The apps and tools above are the ones I've relied on to stay productive when working largely on my own, but they can be helpful for office workers as well. Your turn: what are the must-have productivity tools you turn to regularly?

Written by [Melanie Pinola](#)

Title photo by [xsmo](#) via [Pixabay](#). Wi-Fi image via [Freepik](#). Laptop image via [Freepik](#). Pomodoro timer via [David Svensson](#). Gear photo via [Sonny Abesamis](#).

Chapter 15: A Special Thanks To Those Who Share

The Best Blog Posts, Articles and Resources on Remote Work



We wouldn't have been as successful as we have been at remote working without other people and companies sharing what they've learned along the way. Here are the posts, books, and other resources about remote working that have inspired and challenged me to think differently.

We'd like to say *Thank you!* to all these people and companies for sharing their experiences and providing a map to help us navigate the challenges of remote working. I hope you'll find these resources helpful as well.

Automattic

Automattic is most notably the team behind WordPress.com. With over 800 employees, all of which work remotely, they are one of the best modern examples of what a successful remote team looks like.

Our favorite posts:

- [A Year Without Pants](#)
- [Why Isn't Remote Work More Popular?](#)
- [10 Lessons from 4 Years Working Remotely](#)
- [Why Remote Work Thrives in Some Companies and Fails in Others](#)

GitHub

Similar to Automattic, GitHub has helped write the book on what modern remote work looks like. GitHub's teammates work all over the world.

Our favorite posts:

- [How GitHub Works](#)
- [Collaborating at GitHub with a 60% Remote Workforce](#)

Basecamp (formerly 37Signals)

Basecamp literally wrote the book on remote work. The best selling book *Remote* is one of the best resources to pick up if you are wanting to build a remote team. Their previous book *Rework* also includes a number of helpful tips about remote working and productivity in a distributed workplace, many of which were originally shared in part on their blog, [Signal v. Noise](#).

- [Remote](#)

Treehouse

Treehouse teaches people how to code, and they are also a remote team. Not only are they remote, but they also do other things that people might think are strange like working a 4-day work week.

Our favorite posts:

- [How I Manage 40 People Remotely](#)
- [How to successfully run a remote team](#)
- [How We Hire Developers at Treehouse](#)

Buffer

Buffer started about 1 year before us and has an amazing content marketing team.

Our favorite posts:

- [What Remote Working Means & The Tools We Use at Buffer](#)
- [The Joys and Benefits of Working as a Distributed Team](#)
- [How We Hire at Buffer](#)

Help Scout

Help Scout is almost exactly the same age as us. As a result, we've often struggled with the same things at the same time. It's been great to bounce ideas off each other as we've grown.

Our favorite posts:

- [How to Make Hiring Less of a Headache](#)
- [What We've Learned Building a Remote Culture](#)

Groove

The Groove blog is one of the best for startups. Groove founder Alex Turnbull is also one of the most thoughtful bloggers around, so it's no surprise that their writing on remote teams is helpful too.

Our favorite posts:

- [How Our Startup Hires Top Talent Without Bidding Against Google](#)
- [The Best Tips And Tools For Managing A Remote Customer Service Team](#)
- [The Pros & Cons of Being a Remote Team \(& How We Do It\)](#)

Fogcreek

Fog Creek is famous for having great private offices for developers in NYC. So when they started allowing remote work it was a bit of a surprise. Like most of what they do, their guide to remote work is pretty great.

- [Fog Creek's Ad Hoc Remote Work Policy, or, Working From Grandma's House](#)

Stack Exchange

Stack Exchange is founded by two of the most well-known engineers, Joel Spolsky and Jeff Atwood. Both are known for their great writing on engineering productivity. So it's no surprise that Stack Exchange has great posts on remote work as well as other subjects.

Our favorite posts:

- [On Working Remotely](#)
- [Why We Still Believe in Working Remotely](#)

WooThemes

WooThemes has grown as an international remote team. And one of their founders, Adii Pienaar, is a fantastic writer and shared some great articles on remote work.

Our favorite posts:

- [Trust In People](#)
- [The Challenge of Remote Working](#)

Popforms

Team building is one of those tough things to do in remote teams. Kate Stull was kind enough to share how Popforms makes this work.

- [Team-building for remote teams: how the best remote teams function, build trust, and get things done](#)

StatusPages

Remote work isn't for everyone. The team at StatusPages gave it a try and they hated it. Here's why.

- [We Tried Building a Remote Team and it Sucked](#)

iDoneThis

The iDoneThis blog is one of the best blogs out there on management. This post digs into remote team communication and how to make it work.

- [Remote Team Communication](#)

HubSpot

HubSpot publishes roughly 15 posts a day across their blog. With so much content, they rely on a fleet of guest contributors, freelancers, and other remote writers. Here's how they pull it off.

- [How to Build and Manage a Team of Remote Writers](#)

Remotive.io

Staying on top of current trends in remote working isn't something you have to do by yourself. Remotive is a great newsletter that will bring all the best content on remote work to you.

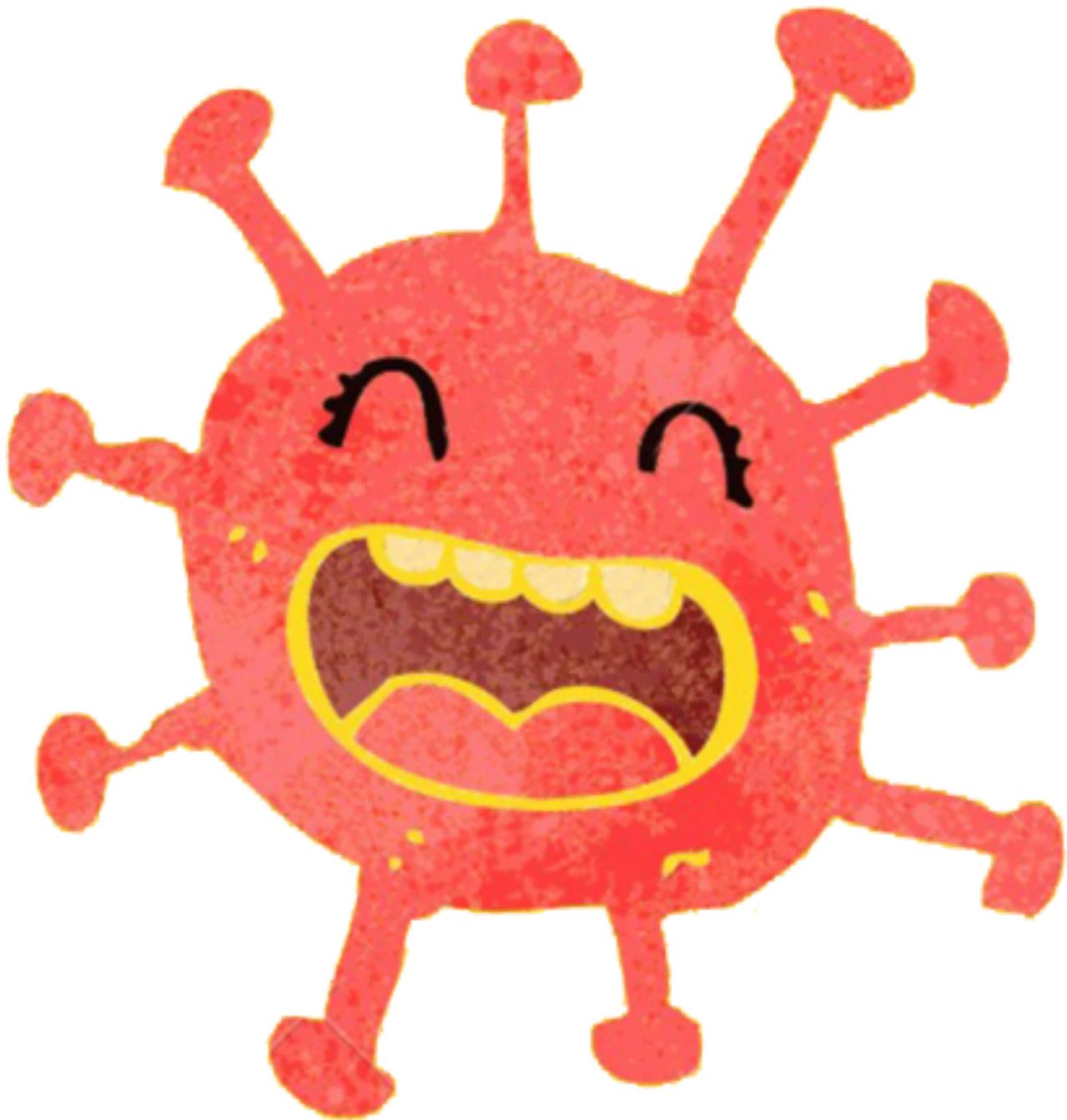
- [Remotive](#)

Enjoy this book? Check out the other books and guides from the Zapier book at [Zapier.com/learn](https://zapier.com/learn) or follow along on our blog at [Zapier.com/blog](https://zapier.com/blog)

Map photo by [Sylwia Bartyzel](#) via [Unsplash](#)

HELLO!

**I am a VIRUS,
cousins with the Flu and
the Common Cold**



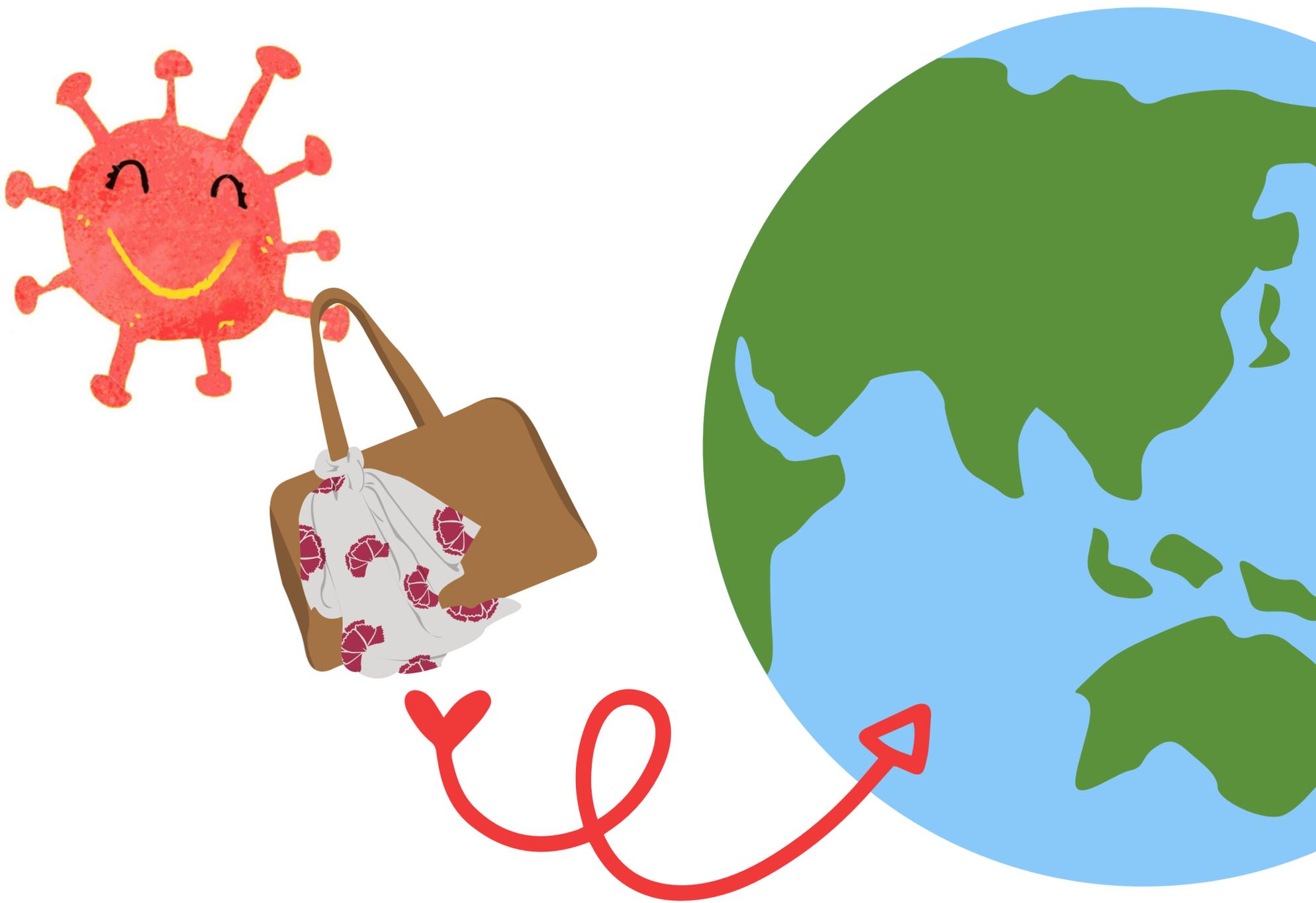
My name is Coronavirus

MANUELA MOLINA - @MINDHEART.KIDS

WWW.MINDHEART.CO

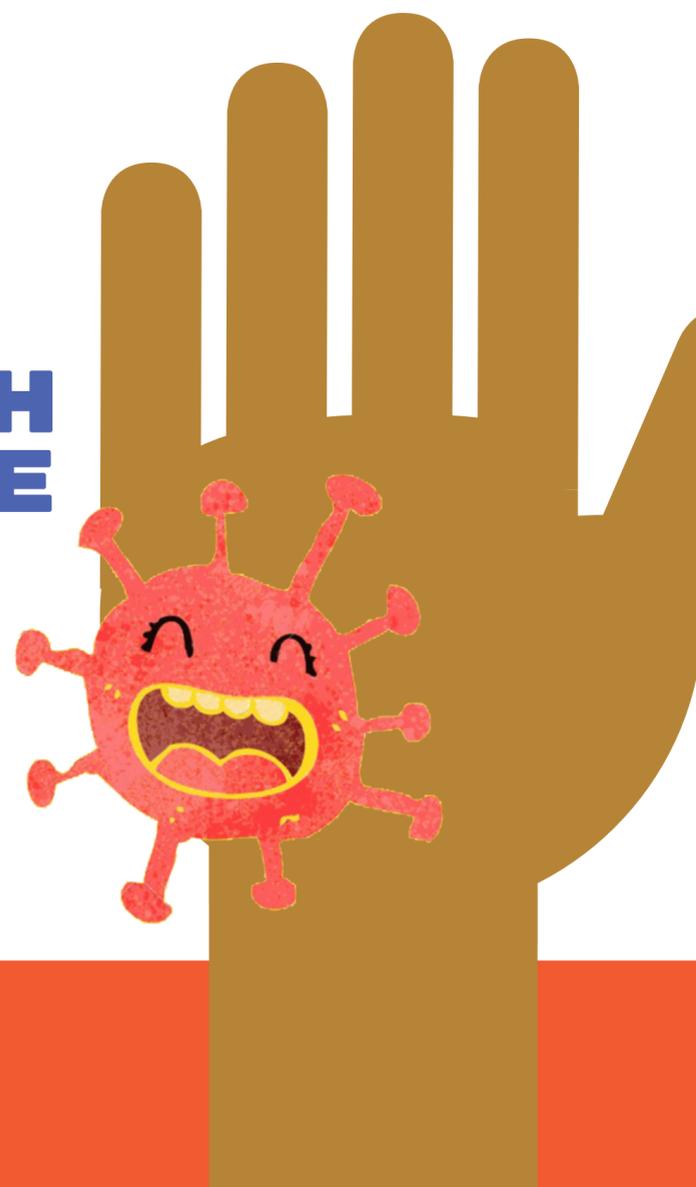
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC LICENSE

I love to travel...



and to jump
from hand to
hand to say Hi

**HIGH
FIVE**



Have you heard about me?

YES



NO

And how do you feel when you hear my name?



Relaxed



Confused



Worried



Curious

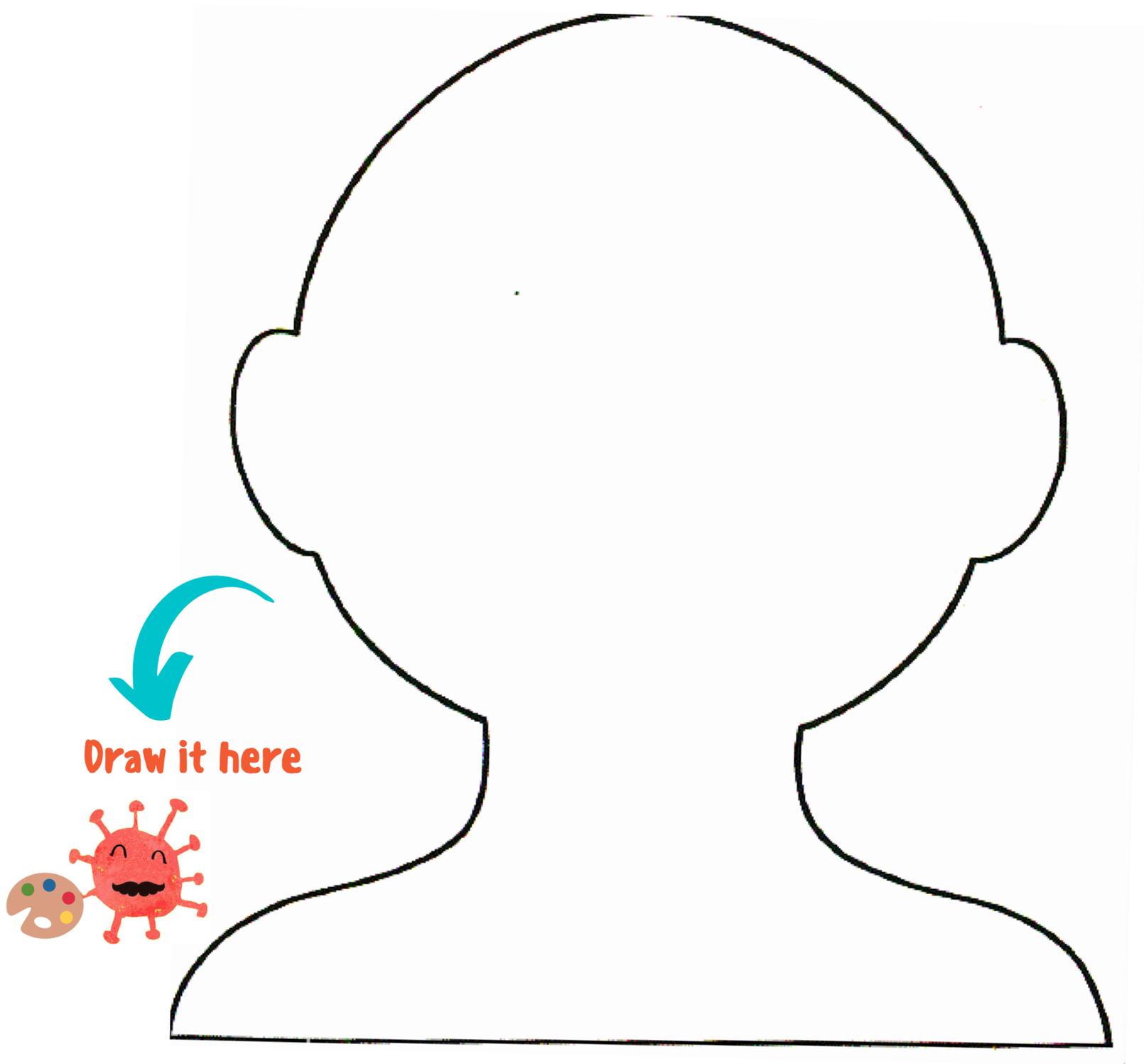


Nervous



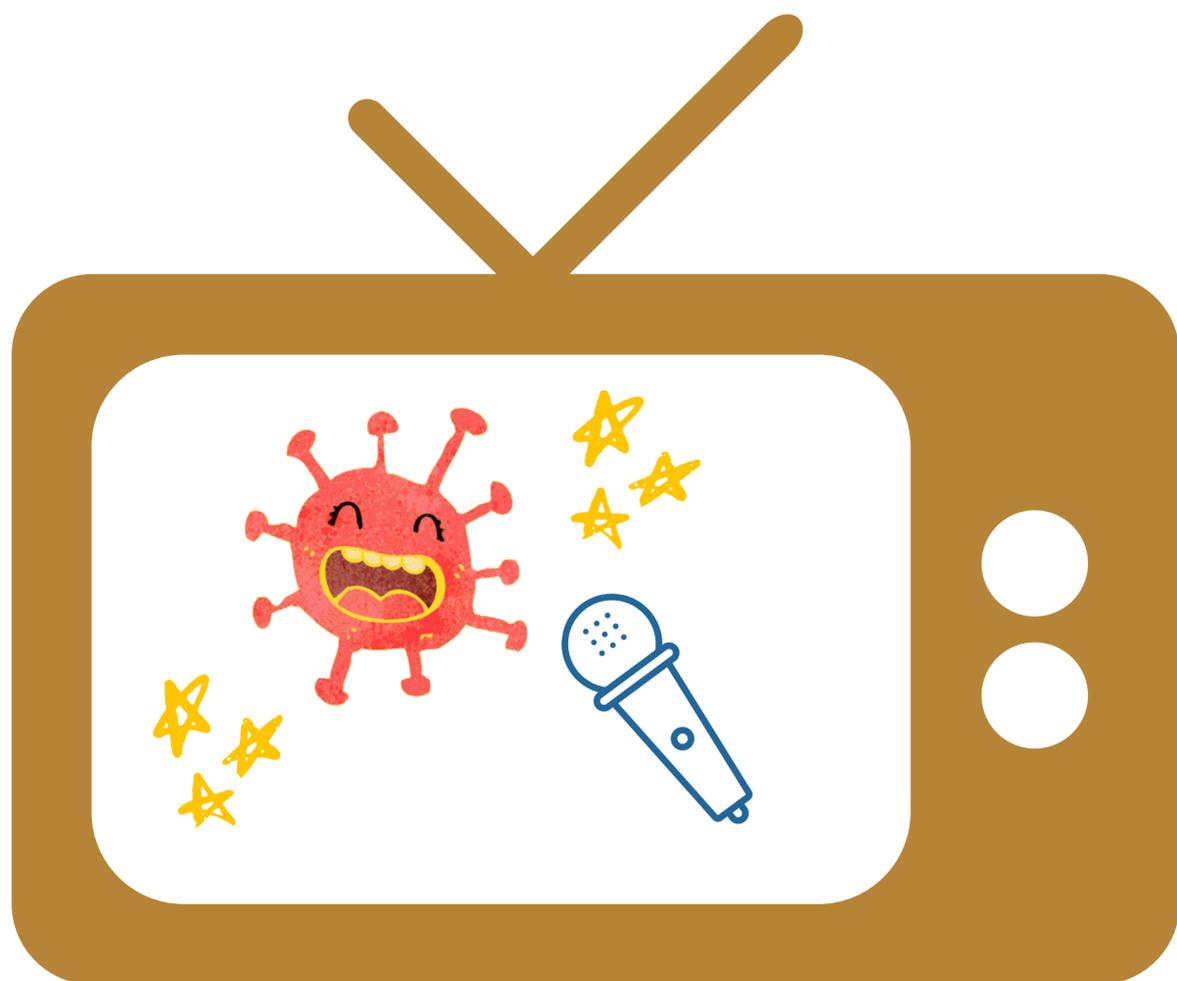
Sad

I can understand you feel...

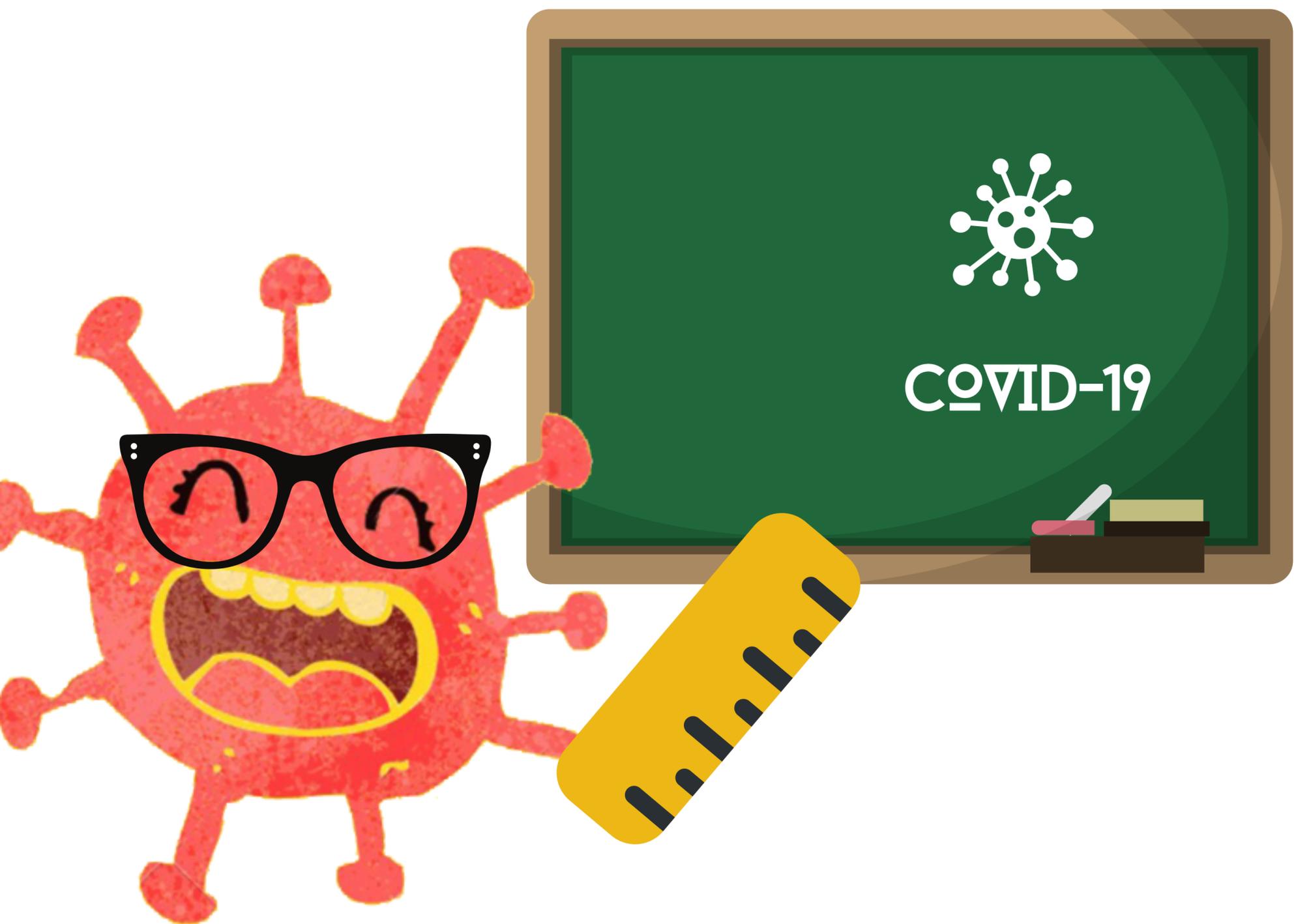


...I would feel the same way

Sometimes adults get
worried when they read
the news or see me on TV



But I am going to explain myself...

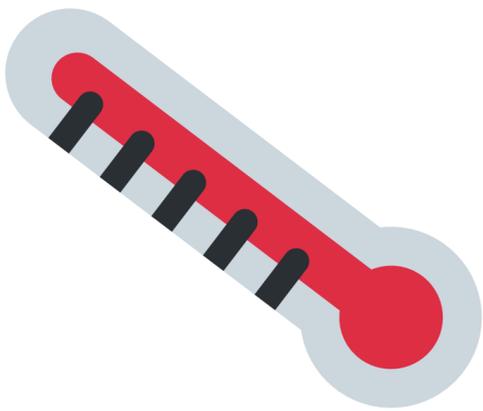


So you can understand...

When I come to visit, I bring...



Difficulty breathing



Fever



Cough



**But I don't stay with
people for long, and almost
everyone gets better**



**Just like when you get a
scrape on your
knee and it heals**

BYE BYE...



Dont you worry!

The adults who take care of you:

will keep you safe



And you can help...

1



**By washing your hands
with soap and water
while singing a song**



**You can sing your favorite song,
the happy birthday song, or the
alphabet song**

2



**By using hand sanitizer
and letting it dry on
your hands**



Without moving them count to 10

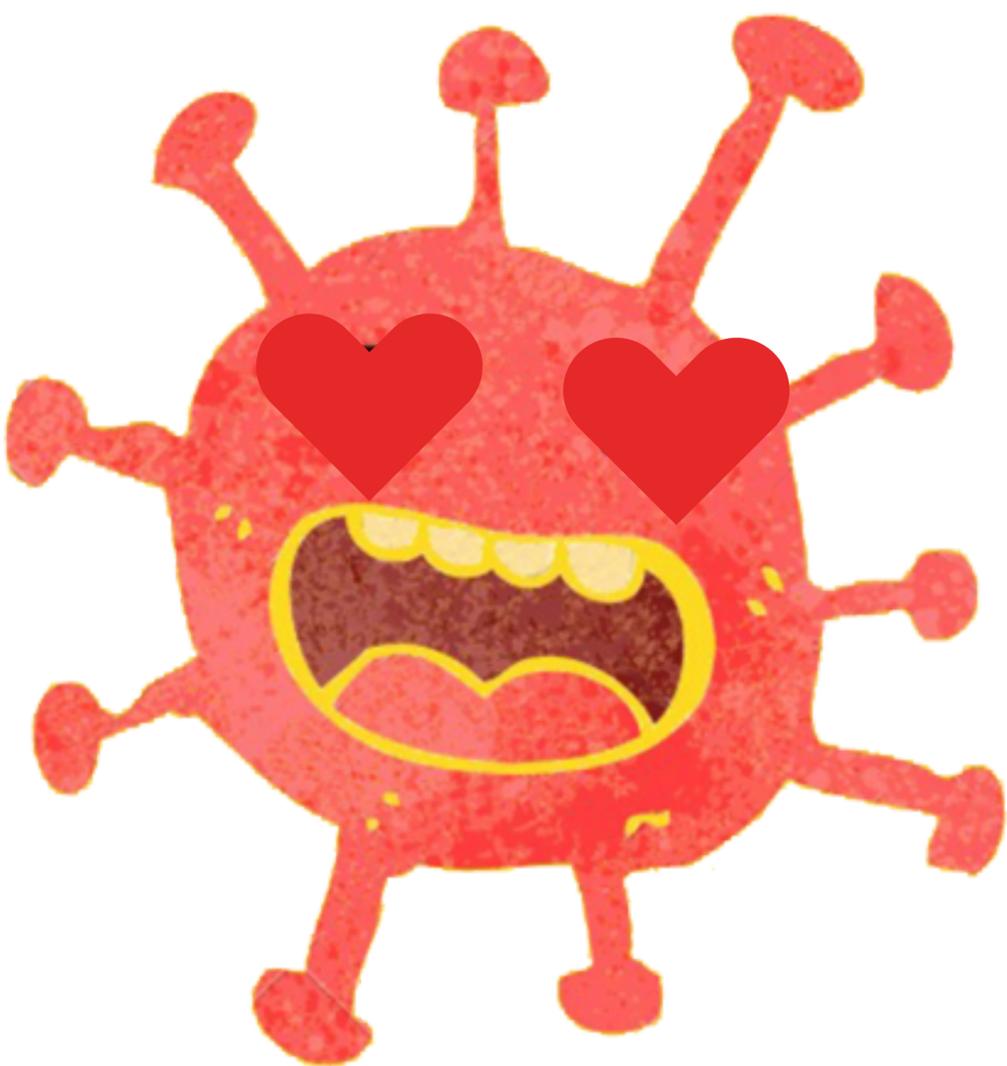
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

**Once your hands are dry you can get
back to playing!!**

**If you do all that
I will not come to visit**



**while the doctors work to find a vaccine
that will allow me to say hi
without getting you sick.**

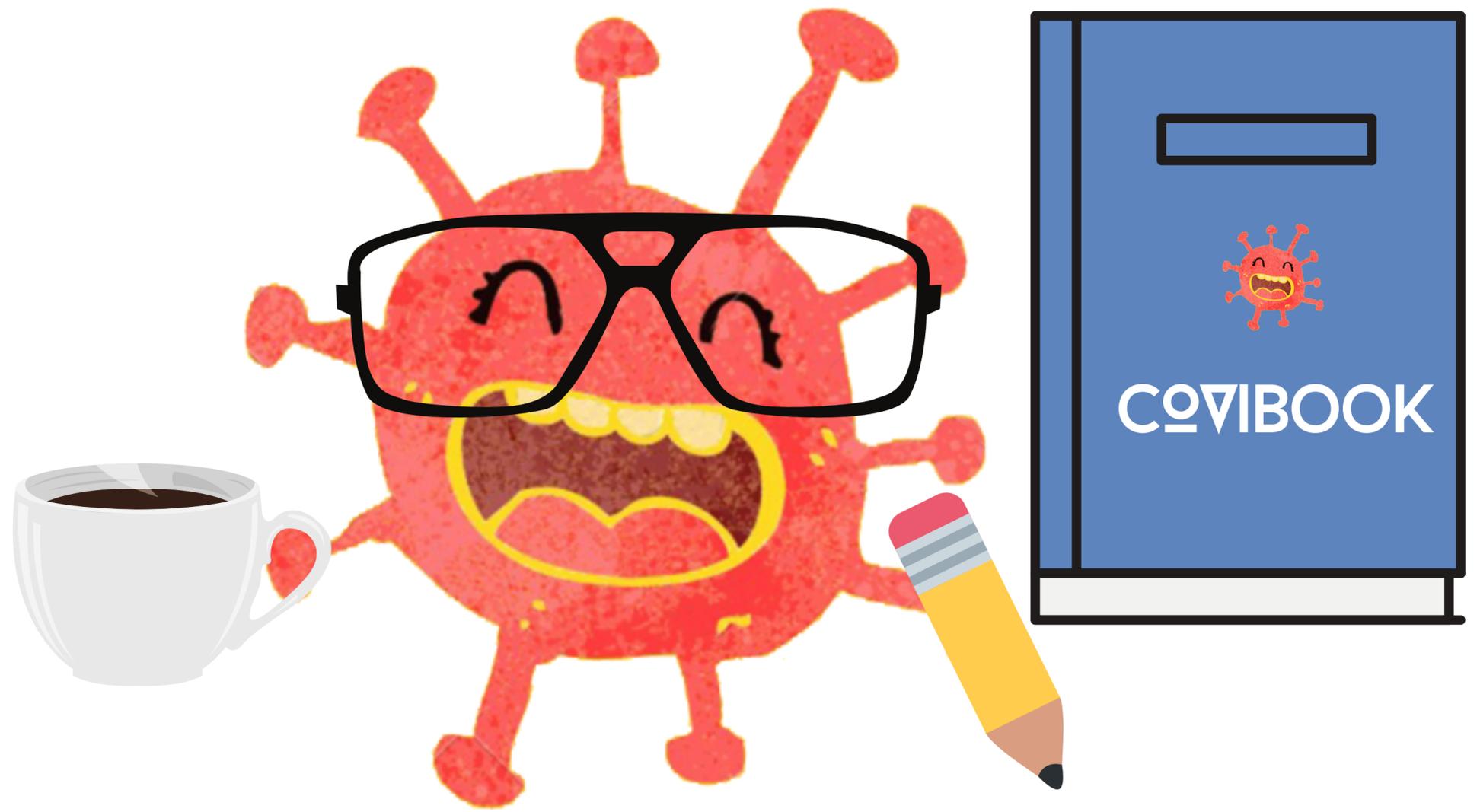


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THE END



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Author:

Manuela Molina Cruz

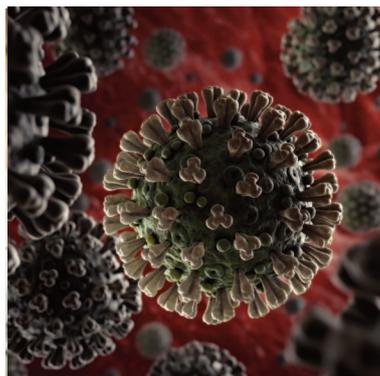
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TOP *of* MIND

2020'S BLACK SWAN: CORONAVIRUS



Amid many concerns heading into 2020, the event that no one expected was the outbreak of COVID-19—a coronavirus that first emerged in the populous city of Wuhan, China, and which is now proving to be both more infectious and virulent than the common flu. As China attempts to restart its economy after an unprecedented lockdown, the virus continues to spread globally, and data on the sizeable economic fallout starts to trickle in, coronavirus is Top of Mind. We feature expert interviews with Harvard's Dr. Barry Bloom and University of Minnesota's Dr. Michael Osterholm to better understand what we know—and don't know—about the virus today. We assess the potential hit to global growth, which we now expect

will be -5pp and -2pp qoq ann. in Q1 and Q2, respectively—enough to prompt the Fed to cut 75bp by June, in our view. And we discuss where markets that have already been pummeled—albeit from lofty levels—go from here. Finally, CSIS's Jude Blanchette gives his take on what this all could mean for China over the near and longer term.



The sense is that this infection will probably spread worldwide...stringent control measures...won't stop an epidemic, but they will slow it down and ultimately reduce the total number of cases.

- Dr. Barry Bloom

While the case-fatality rate is much lower, the transmission is quite dynamic, and many more people will get it. So comparing this illness with SARS or MERS is not helpful.

- Dr. Michael Osterholm

I think climbing out of this hole will likely stress the [Chinese] leadership in a way that it hasn't been stressed since the 1989-1991 period.

- Jude Blanchette



WHAT'S INSIDE

INTERVIEWS WITH:

Dr. Barry Bloom, Professor of Public Health, Harvard School of Public Health

Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director of Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, University of Minnesota

Jude Blanchette, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

Andrew Tilton, Chief Asia-Pacific Economist, Goldman Sachs

A VIRAL GLOBAL SLOWDOWN
Jan Hatzius and Daan Struyven, GS Economics Research

MARKETS: BRACING FOR MORE UNCERTAINTY
Zach Pandl and David Kostin, GS Markets/Portfolio Strategy Research

THE PHYSICAL REALITIES OF DISRUPTION
Jeff Currie, GS Commodities Research

Q&A ON ASIA EQUITY IMPLICATIONS
Tim Moe, GS Chief Asia Equity Strategist

...AND MORE

Allison Nathan | allison.nathan@gs.com Gabriel Lipton Galbraith | gabe.liptongalbraith@gs.com Jenny Grimberg | jenny.grimberg@gs.com

Investors should consider this report as only a single factor in making their investment decision. For Reg AC certification and other important disclosures, see the Disclosure Appendix, or go to www.gs.com/research/hedge.html.

Macro news and views

We provide a brief snapshot on the most important economies for the global markets

US

Latest GS proprietary datapoints/major changes in views

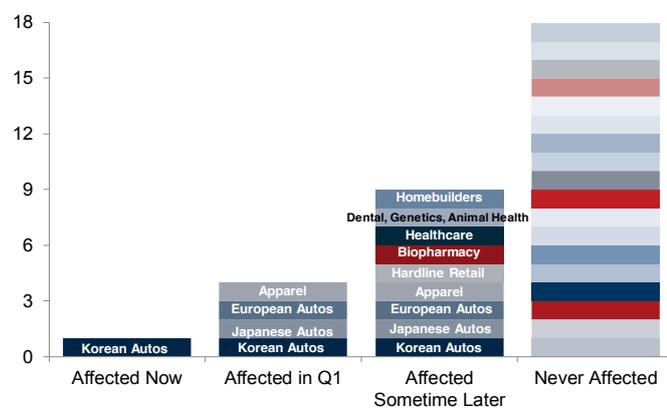
- We expect a larger coronavirus drag on growth, but expect an eventual recovery will partially offset the hit to full-year GDP.
- In response to coronavirus risks, we now expect the Fed to cut rates by 75bp by June.

Datapoints/trends we're focused on

- A potential uptick in new coronavirus cases in the US, which would pose significant downside risk to our GDP forecast.
- The supply chain impact of the virus; though limited so far, we think it could grow if China production disruptions continue.
- The Democratic primary; we expect the general election to be competitive irrespective of who wins the party's nomination.

Potential supply disruptions ahead

Supply chain disruptions by industry based on GS sector analysis,



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Japan

Latest GS proprietary datapoints/major changes in views

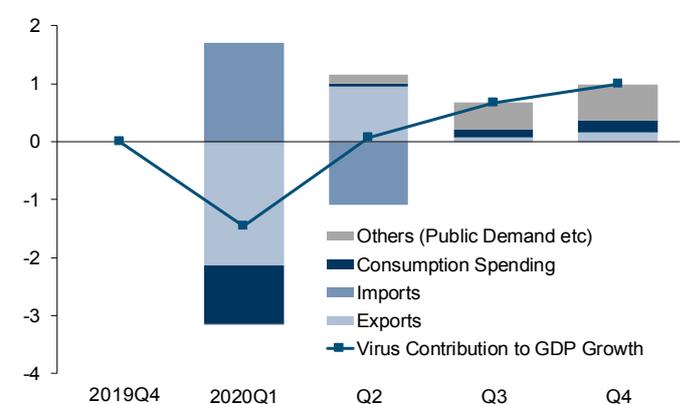
- We lowered our annualized Q1 2020 GDP estimate by 0.6pp to -0.3% based on lower expected external demand and personal consumption as a result of the coronavirus, indicating Japan will likely enter a technical recession; we've slightly reduced full-year 2020 growth by 0.1pp to -0.4%.

Datapoints/trends we're focused on

- The domestic consumption outlook, which would skew growth risks to the downside if people increasingly avoid public activity.
- The gov't's stimulus package; we expect implementation to be pulled forward to some extent to help offset the virus impact.

Likely entering technical recession

Estimated COVID-19 impact on Japan GDP qoq ann, contribution pp



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Europe

Latest GS proprietary datapoints/major changes in views

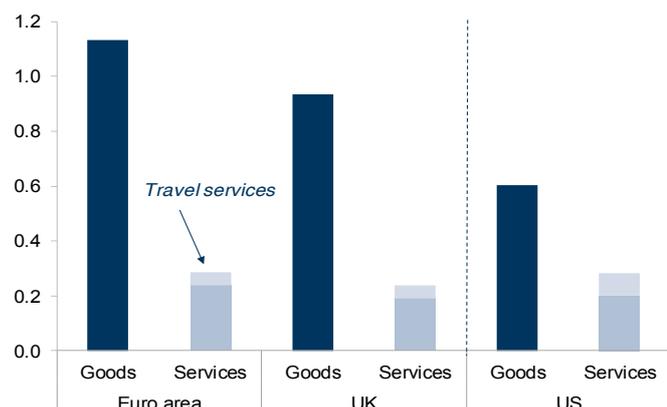
- We continue to expect a virus-related drag on growth in the first part of the year, followed by an eventual rebound, but much depends on the breadth of regional virus-related disruptions.

Datapoints/trends we're focused on

- The spread of the virus throughout Europe, which presents the danger of an economically disruptive outbreak.
- The second phase of Brexit negotiations; we think the UK government will make enough concessions to secure a zero-tariff/quota free trade agreement before the December deadline.

Europe more vulnerable to China shock than US

Exports to China by source country and type, % of GDP



Note: Based on latest available annual data; EU used as proxy for Euro area
Source: Eurostat, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Emerging Markets (EM)

Latest GS proprietary datapoints/major changes in views

- Over the past month, we reduced our Q1 China GDP forecast to 2.5% yoy and full-year 2020 growth forecast to 5.5% yoy based on deep and prolonged disruptions from the coronavirus outbreak.
- We lowered full-year 2020 GDP across EM Asia, including by 0.4pp in South Korea, 1.1pp in Thailand, and 1.3pp in Malaysia.
- We see China policy settings being far looser through year-end in an effort to push the economy to above-trend growth in H2.

Datapoints/trends we're focused on

- China macro data; we expect the Feb manuf. PMI to drop as low as 38, a sharp dip in the services PMI, and very weak trade growth.

China electricity consumption still well below normal

Daily coal consumption of major electricity producers, thousand tons



Note: We adjusted the chart for a 2-day delay in reports of coal consumption.
Source: Wind, Haver Analytics, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

2020's Black swan: Coronavirus

Heading into 2020, there was no shortage of concerns about the global environment, including elevated tensions with the Middle East and North Korea, a high-stakes election year in the US, and few monetary policy levers left in several major economies to fight the next downturn amid ongoing growth worries. But the event that no one expected was the outbreak of COVID-19—a coronavirus that first emerged in the populous city of Wuhan, China, and which is now proving to be both more infectious and virulent than the common flu.

As a result, China implemented an unprecedented lockdown of much of the country in late January, effectively halting a vast amount of activity in the world's second-largest economy, with knock-on effects to global supply chains just beginning to emerge. Although the Chinese economy is starting to limp back to life, with the country continuing to grapple with containing the virus, a rising number of international cases, and data on the sizeable economic fallout trickling in, coronavirus is Top of Mind.

We first dig into the virus itself, turning to Dr. Barry Bloom, professor at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota. They collectively describe what we know about the virus at this point: it transmits easily from person to person, and each infected person infects about 2 or slightly more people (vs. 1.2-1.4 people for regular influenza); the vast majority of infected people show only mild or no symptoms, and people without symptoms can transmit the disease to others (which differs from past outbreaks of SARS/MERS, in which people didn't typically become infectious until after they showed severe symptoms); and a small percentage of infected people develop severe symptoms, with an even smaller percentage of those dying.

Given these attributes, Bloom and Osterholm agree that further global spread is likely. But they also argue (though Bloom more ardently) that quarantines and control measures can slow the spread of the virus even if they won't stop it. This is important because it buys crucial time for the medical community to prepare for outbreaks and eases acute demand for critical care, which helps healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed. That said, both believe the US is unprepared on almost every level—from policy and preparedness coordination across national, state and local levels to the availability of drugs and medical supplies—to deal with any sizeable outbreak today.

GS economists Jan Hatzius and Daan Struyven then size the potential global economic shock, which they now expect to amount to a -5pp and -2pp hit to quarter-on-quarter annualized GDP growth in Q1 and Q2, respectively, followed by a rebound in the second half of 2020. All else equal, this would imply a short-lived global contraction that stops short of an outright recession. As a result, we now expect the Fed to cut rates by 75bp by June. This baseline scenario assumes a recovery in economic activity in

China over the coming quarters, moderate supply chain disruptions, and some drag on consumer spending and business activity from national outbreaks outside of China.

Andrew Tilton, GS Chief Asia-Pacific economist, then digs further into the economic implications for China as policymakers carefully attempt to balance the priority of containing the virus with the need to manage its economic impact. Tilton expects the largest decline in quarter-on-quarter China GDP in over three decades. That said, as with past viral outbreaks, he expects growth to rebound in subsequent quarters, substantially aided by government stimulus. But he cautions that this expected rebound is contingent on the authorities getting the virus largely under control over the next month, and he views the balance of risks to these forecasts as skewed to the downside.

The markets have clearly begun to digest the economic hit, with the S&P 500 now down on the year and US 10-yr yields declining to a new all-time low. Zach Pandl, GS Co-Head of Global FX, Rates and EM Strategy, and David Kostin, GS Chief US Equity Strategist, believe the risk-off move in markets has more room to run, with Kostin now expecting no earnings growth for US companies this year and lowering his near-term S&P 500 target to 2900. And they argue to position defensively across US equities, FX and rates.

As for the assets most exposed to China, Tim Moe, GS Chief Asia Equity Strategist, also advises to focus on stocks in Asia that are likely beneficiaries of a stimulus boost in China, or are well positioned to snap back as the sharp, but ultimately temporary, demand hit in the region reverses. And Jeff Currie, GS Global Head of Commodities Research, warns that a tug-of-war between ample commodity inventories in the wake of virus-related disruptions and the potential for a stimulus-led demand boost in China is likely to create more commodity price volatility ahead. But the one thing he says is for sure: gold is immune to the virus.

Finally, looking beyond the near-term economic and market implications, we ask China scholar Jude Blanchette of the Center for Strategic and International Studies if these events could have longer-term implications for Chinese President's Xi Jinping's leadership, and China's political stability more broadly. His short answer: No. In his view, although the recent situation will come at a political cost for Xi, a challenge to his leadership is very unlikely given the amount of power he has amassed as well as the logistical obstacles to such a challenge today.

P.S. Don't forget to check out the podcast version of this and other recent GS Top of Mind reports—on [Apple](#) and [Spotify](#).

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Goldman Sachs and Co. LLC



Interview with Dr. Barry Bloom

Dr. Barry Bloom is the Joan L. and Julius H. Jacobson Research Professor of Public Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Below, he discusses what we know about COVID-19 right now, why it's likely to spread further, and how control measures and public health preparedness will be crucial to mitigating the outbreak.

The views stated herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect those of Goldman Sachs.



Allison Nathan: Is it time to call COVID-19 a global pandemic?

Dr. Barry Bloom: The World Health Organization (WHO) generally uses the term “pandemic” when a major infectious disease is spreading within communities on multiple continents. It denotes the highest level of concern. The dilemma with this coronavirus is

that while cases have now been identified on multiple continents, the number of cases we know about is relatively small in most places. That said, there are almost certainly lots of cases we don't know about. So, on the one hand, you could say it is a pandemic, and I believe that the public health community everywhere is treating it as such. But one wants to alert the public, not panic the public. And the concern is that when you call something a pandemic, there will be a rush on everything from face masks to vegetables, which isn't necessary when only 15 or even 100 people are currently infected. All that said, it is almost a meaningless designation, provided we start to prepare for a serious set of outbreaks and community transmission in multiple places around the world.

Allison Nathan: What do we know and what do we not know about COVID-19 at this point?

Dr. Barry Bloom: Thanks to extraordinary scientific work in China, we know the genome sequence of the virus. Within 10 days Chinese scientists figured out the sequence and nature of the virus and alerted the WHO and the world, so that scientists around the world could start to think about developing diagnostic tests, drugs and vaccines. It's astonishing that the science moved so quickly. We also know that the disease is spreading from person to person and the effective transmission rate, which is how many people get a disease from a single individual source, is around 2.3. That number is important because when it declines to less than one, meaning that every sick person is transmitting to fewer than one person, we'll know we're past the peak of the outbreak.

And we know that unlike most flu and common upper respiratory infections, this is a lower lung infection, which means that it's more likely to be spread by coughing than just sneezing, though both are possible. We also see increasing evidence of asymptomatic transmission, meaning that some infected people don't feel sick, but can still transmit the virus to others. And we know that some small percentage of people who do get sick, die. These attributes suggest this is a serious, lethal and rapidly spreading infection.

Allison Nathan: We keep hearing about a 2% case-fatality rate. Is that an accurate reflection of the virus' virulence?

Dr. Barry Bloom: The case-fatality rate estimates, or the percent of infected people who die, doesn't provide any information about how lethal this virus is at this point. That's because those estimates basically reflect the percent of hospitalized people who die from the disease. In the case of SARS, this was around 10% and a relatively accurate reflection of the disease's virulence because virtually everybody infected had severe symptoms. But with this virus, which can be asymptomatic, we don't know the total number of people infected; so the case-fatality rate's denominator is unknown. In these situations, the initial case-fatality figures are almost always frighteningly high, but then come down when the total number of infected people becomes known. For example, rates for H1N1 were terrifying in the beginning, at 4%, but ended up at around 0.07%.

Allison Nathan: Given that the disease has already spread to multiple countries, can it be contained at this point?

Dr. Barry Bloom: In places that have a limited number of cases, public health systems should be able to identify, isolate and effectively contain the spread of the disease. The problem is that this disease is likely more widespread than the number of identified cases reflects given that people can be asymptomatic, mildly sick people don't typically go to hospitals and diagnostic tests are not widely available. And when you get to a much larger number of cases—several hundred or thousands of cases—the ability of the public health system to track down and contain every contact becomes overwhelmed. Add to that the fact that an awful lot of exposed people flew out of Wuhan before restrictions were imposed who we don't know anything about. So the sense is that this infection will probably spread worldwide.

Allison Nathan: That said, do control measures and quarantines like those that China has implemented help thwart the disease's spread?

Dr. Barry Bloom: There's no question that they do. We've seen the number of new cases in China decline, and my contacts in China believe these numbers are accurate. So, as draconian as the lockdowns have been, they've been effective. Now, is that kind of draconian imposition possible in the United States? Most of us would say no.

But what China's success has taught us is that stringent control measures like restricting mobility, prohibiting large gatherings, closing schools etc., can reduce the spread of a major localized outbreak. These measures won't stop an epidemic, but they will slow it down and can ultimately reduce the total number of cases. And that is critical because it delays spread and allows public health systems to be better prepared and avoid becoming overwhelmed. This issue of hospital care extends beyond patients with the virus; more people died in West Africa from ordinary diseases like measles and

cardiovascular illnesses than from Ebola during the 2014 outbreak because hospitals were unable to cope with Ebola. As the duration of a pandemic is extended, the number of people demanding hospital care at any one time is lower, and the care they get is therefore better. The 1918 influenza pandemic provides evidence of this—it hit the East Coast very hard, but by the time it got to the Midwest, the epidemic curve was lower and more prolonged, and health officials were better prepared, so they had a much more effective response.

“China’s success has taught us that stringent control measures like restricting mobility, prohibiting large gatherings, closing schools etc., can reduce the spread of a major localized outbreak. These measures won’t stop an epidemic, but they will slow it down and can ultimately reduce the total number of cases.”

Allison Nathan: Once restrictions are lifted in China, could we see the number of cases pick up again?

Dr. Barry Bloom: I am increasingly optimistic about China, but we can’t assume that we’ve seen the worst of this globally. During the 2003 SARS epidemic, there was a second peak in Toronto once restrictions were relaxed. There was also a second peak during the 1918 pandemic in New York and Pennsylvania. But there was no second peak in the Midwest during the same pandemic, because they had more time to prepare for and attenuate the impact.

Allison Nathan: What scares you the most about this virus?

Dr. Barry Bloom: What scares me the most is the prospect of the virus spreading to developing countries, especially Africa, which has limited capabilities to assist patients in severe respiratory distress. Developing countries are going to have great difficulty dealing with the most serious cases. With SARS, there were no cases in Africa. But Africa has just reported its first case—in Nigeria—and that worries me greatly.

Allison Nathan: When will this peak, and how can we gauge if it has?

Dr. Barry Bloom: It’s very hard for scientists to make evidence-based predictions on that. We couldn’t have predicted that the quarantine around the Wuhan area would have resulted in such a rapid decline in cases; the classic epidemiology model suggested that the number of cases would have declined around the middle of March, at the earliest. So the real answer is testing, testing, and testing, and keeping accurate data and records on new infections. Such testing is currently happening in Hong Kong; they’ve run about 300,000 PCR tests in the last month. But we’re not now prepared to do that in the US. So far, tests are only going to the CDC, which has a diagnostic test that is not fully functional. If

the virus starts to spread in the US, there will be a desperate need for information on the number of cases, where it’s spreading, and so forth. At this point, only six centers in the US have been sent testing kits. That’s shameful.

Allison Nathan: Will the onset of summer in the Northern Hemisphere help thwart the virus?

Dr. Barry Bloom: That has been the case for influenza, which moves seasonally. And SARS wound down over the summer. But it is not at all predictable whether this infection will be seasonally controlled. There’s good evidence that coronaviruses don’t do well in warm, humid weather, and that they thrive in cold, dry weather. But is that because of the climate, or because people are huddled closer together in the wintertime? It’s not clear. A couple of small studies on parts of China versus places like Hong Kong that are in a tropical belt show no evidence that weather differences between these regions have been a big determinant in the viral spread. But we just don’t know.

Allison Nathan: So what do you think will most likely end this outbreak?

Dr. Barry Bloom: If the virus turns out to be seasonal, it will decline in the summertime. And if we’re lucky, as in the case of SARS, it will not come back again. But it could instead become a recurring seasonal infection, like influenza, that reappears each year; 61k people died from the flu in 2018. All that said, we think it’s unlikely that seasonality alone will stop this outbreak. So what we really need to do is reinforce whatever benefits the seasonality might bring us with public health preparedness, so that we can detect and isolate cases while the numbers are still very small, and hopefully avoid having to use massive mitigation strategies like closing schools and major public events and congregations.

Allison Nathan: Is the US prepared to deal with this?

Dr. Barry Bloom: No. As Laurie Garrett has recently written about, during the Obama Administration, all 17 agencies involved in emergency preparedness, including the White House’s Office of Emergency Preparedness and the Department of Homeland Security, had regular conference calls to discuss how to tackle scenarios such as a viral outbreak or a bioterrorism attack. There were plans in cities to prepare for either of those eventualities, and there was a legislative fund created for emergency preparedness that could be released by CDC very rapidly if need be. Such emergency preparedness offices do not exist today and the emergency fund has disappeared. It is a question of whether there is current leadership in this country that is able to efficiently organize the public health system in every federal agency, state, city, and town. The CDC cannot yet get a workable diagnostic test to every public health laboratory in the country. And we’re already facing shortages of supplies of medicine, gloves, and masks—and that’s before we’ve had any community spread. Much of our drugs and medical supplies come from China. So, in summary, we are regrettably not adequately prepared on almost any level.

A viral global slowdown

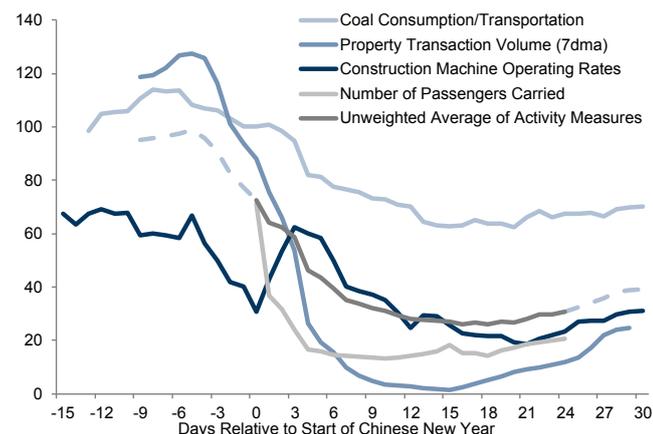
Jan Hatzius and Daan Struyven expect a larger drag on global growth from the coronavirus, likely prompting 75bp of Fed rate cuts by June

In early February, we estimated that the coronavirus would subtract about 2pp (annualized) from Q1 global GDP growth. Since then, we have seen several important developments that now suggest a considerably more serious impact on the global economy.

First, our China economists have cut their growth forecast further and, despite a sharp slowdown in reported infections in China, high frequency indicators of economic activity in China remain about 60% below 2019 levels. Second, the production shutdowns in China have increased the risk of global supply chain disruptions. Third, disruptions are no longer confined to China as community transmission has spread to a broader set of countries. These developments require a rethink of our analysis and a fuller consideration of the range of economic scenarios that could play out.

High-frequency proxies for China activity still depressed

2020 activity relative to 2019 activity, percent



Note: Dotted line is where any missing series are projected using remaining data. Source: Wind, Ministry of Transportation, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

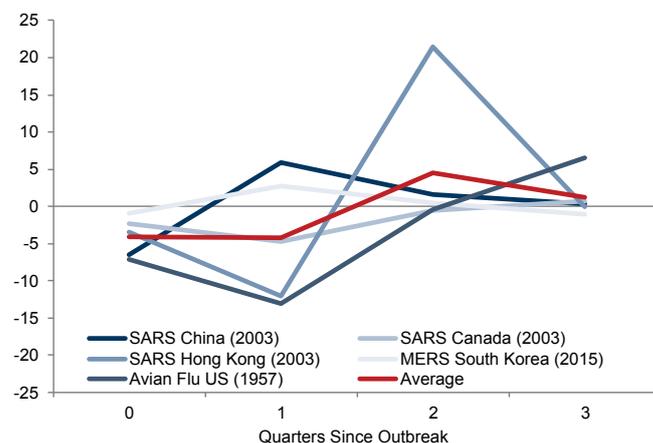
We broaden our previous analysis to include five different effects on global GDP growth.

First, we estimate the direct impact of the virus on economic activity, relying on the official Chinese GDP numbers in our estimates because they enter the global GDP aggregates. Second, we estimate spillovers from China via reduced goods imports, relying on the hit to estimated activity in the China tradable sector and the income elasticity of Chinese import demand. Third, we estimate spillovers from China via reduced spending by Chinese tourists assuming a very slow recovery from the February lows. Fourth, we estimate the damage to production outside of China from production shutdowns in China using our supply chain model. Fifth, we estimate the disruptions to domestic economic activity in virus-hit countries other than China, including South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, and potentially a large range of other countries. To get a rough sense of the magnitude of this channel, we look at GDP changes during other pandemics,

including the 2003 SARS episodes in China, Hong Kong, and Canada, the 1957 Avian Flu in the US, and the 2015 MERS episode in South Korea. The average episode saw a GDP hit of 4-5% in the 1-2 quarters after the outbreak, although the variation is substantial.¹

We use past pandemics to estimate the potential growth impact of global community spread

Real GDP growth minus average growth over year before outbreak, pp



Source: Haver Analytics, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

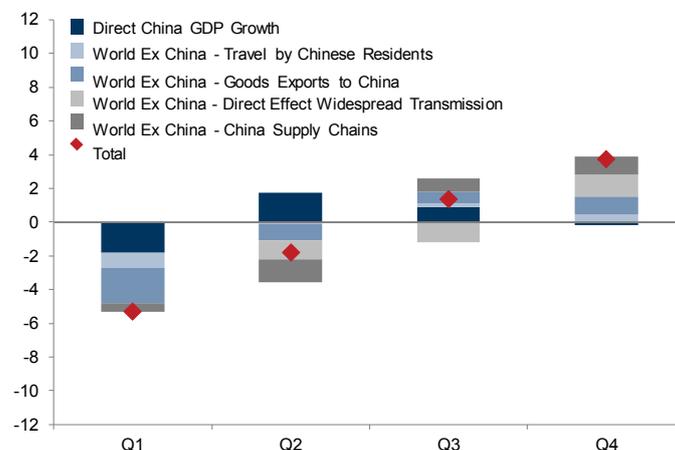
Three scenarios for the global virus impact

We consider three scenarios of varying severity. In our updated baseline scenario, we assume a gradual recovery in Chinese import demand and now incorporate both limited supply chain disruptions and an intermediate level of global community spread. We assume that the direct growth effect of community spread outside of China is roughly one-third of the impact of the average pandemic.

Our analysis shows effects on quarter-on-quarter annualized global GDP growth of -5pp in Q1 and -2pp in Q2, followed by a rebound in the second half of 2020, leaving our full-year global growth forecast at about 2%. All else equal, this would imply a short-lived global contraction that stops short of an outright recession.

Baseline scenario: global growth remains weak in Q2 but stops short of full recession

Baseline scenario: impact of COVID-19 on 2020 ann. global growth, pp



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

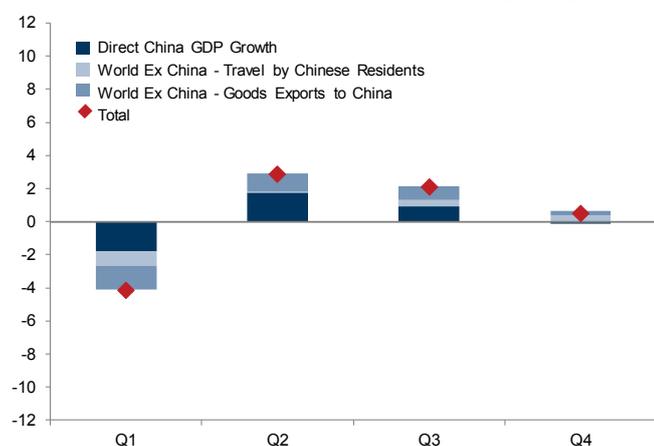
¹ In addition to these effects, potential amplification channels through financial conditions or labor markets could add to the drag on growth but we have not modeled these separately.

In this scenario, we would expect some monetary easing from a number of the world’s major central banks, including 75bp of rate cuts by the Federal Reserve through June starting with a 25bp cut in March. Although moderate Fed rate cuts are unlikely to be very powerful, the committee will probably be reluctant to disappoint market expectations for substantial rate cuts for fear of tightening financial conditions further.

We also consider two alternative scenarios. The upside scenario assumes that the global spread of the virus is brought under control quickly, that supply chain disruptions remain mostly absent, and that Chinese activity rebounds in Q2/Q3. In this scenario, the data outside of China—especially the business surveys—would likely show noticeable signs of a virus hit in the short term, but with a rebound toward the middle of the year. If so, risk asset markets would recover sharply, and central banks may stay on hold.

Upside scenario: the global economy quickly recovers in Q2

Upside scenario: impact of COVID-19 on 2020 ann. global growth, pp

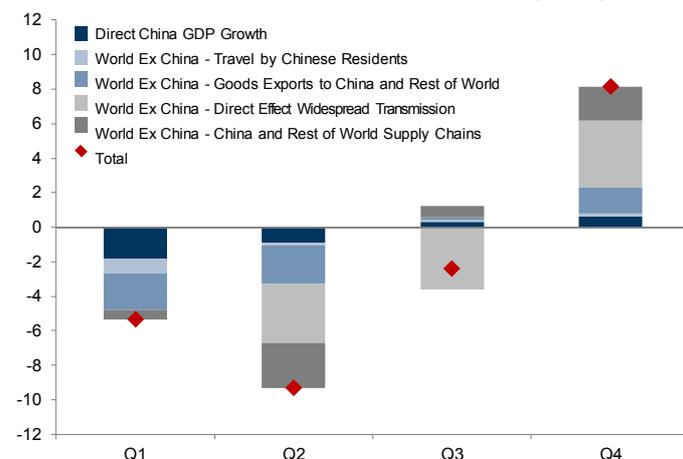


Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Conversely, in our downside scenario, the virus becomes a more severe global pandemic with large direct effects on economic activity. In this scenario, we assume that Chinese GDP continues to decline through Q2 and recovers only modestly in the second half of the year, that import demand remains depressed for longer in both China and other heavily affected Asian economies, that global supply chains are substantially disrupted by shortages from both China and other Asian economies, and that the virus has a direct effect on growth outside of China equal to the full impact of the average pandemic. This scenario produces a sharp sequential contraction in global GDP in Q1 and Q2—i.e., a global recession—and probably an aggressive monetary easing campaign, including a return to the near-zero funds rate of the post-crisis period.

Downside scenario, the Q1 hit deepens in Q2

Downside scenario: impact of COVID-19 on 2020 ann. global growth, pp



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Ideally, we would assign probabilities to the different scenarios. This would allow us to calculate probability-weighted expectations for global growth and monetary policy outcomes, which could then be compared to market pricing. However, we feel too uncertain both about the development of the disease itself, and are therefore reluctant to provide a probability distribution, however stylized.

What we can say with greater confidence is that the distribution of outcomes has shifted significantly in an unfavorable direction in the past two weeks. Our upside case is relatively similar to our latest country-level forecasts, which translate into low but roughly stable full-year global GDP growth of around 3% in 2020. This would require not only a very rapid turnaround in the news about the virus but also an end to the increasing reports of household and business disruptions before long, which no longer seems like the most likely outcome.

Staying nimble

Although uncertainty is a fact of life in economic forecasting, the current situation is much more uncertain than normal. Even if we had perfect medical foresight, it would be challenging to derive the economic impact of the viral outbreak. This is largely because of the important role of psychology in driving the impact of a given local viral outbreak on economic activities such as airline travel and entertainment. And we have no particular expertise in the medical or epidemiological field.

We therefore plan to take an eclectic and data-driven approach in assessing whether we are on track for our baseline scenario or seem to be diverging in a more optimistic or pessimistic direction. In assessing whether a shift in our baseline view is required, we will rely on a wide range of indicators, including the monthly hard economic data, higher-frequency indicators on economic activity, financial conditions, medical statistics, and more anecdotal reports. In the meantime, our thoughts are with all those affected by the emerging pandemic both in China and elsewhere in the world.

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Interview with Dr. Michael Osterholm

Dr. Michael Osterholm is the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and author of the 2017 book, *Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs*. Below, he argues that we shouldn't take comfort from the recent trends in COVID-19 case numbers, and the coming weeks will be critical in assessing the ultimate magnitude of the outbreak. *The views stated herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect those of Goldman Sachs.*



Allison Nathan: Are we facing a global pandemic?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: At this point, it's not clear what the future holds. However, we do know several facts. First, this virus is easily transmitted, much like the influenza virus. Over 80% of cases are mild or

asymptomatic, and there appears to be clear evidence from several clusters of cases that even asymptomatic people can transmit the virus to others. That is concerning, because it means that the public health measures we traditionally use, like quarantine or isolation, will be ineffective. Second, we know that about 5% of cases are severe, and about 2% of those infected die—a case-fatality rate 20-times higher than during a severe influenza season. That could come down as more infected people are detected through increased testing, but in regards to both the transmission and severity of cases, this could be a very significant event. Should it continue to unfold in this manner, that would make it a global pandemic.

Allison Nathan: You don't think the 2003 SARS and 2012 MERS epidemics are useful guides for COVID-19. Why?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: The key reason is that in both of these prior episodes, the majority of transmissions occurred well into patients' illnesses, meaning that patients experienced four to six days of critical illness before they became infectious. So while these prior episodes had much higher case-fatality rates—with SARS about 10% and MERS as high as 25-30%—we could address those illnesses fairly easily, by recognizing cases early on, and getting patients into isolation while still in very low states of infectiousness. That's not the case with COVID-19. While the case-fatality rate is much lower, the transmission is quite dynamic, and many more people will get it. So comparing this illness with SARS or MERS is not helpful.

Allison Nathan: Is the 1918 pandemic a better comparison?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: The transmission characteristics of the 1918 pandemic—how it spread around the world and how fast it could infect people in a population—make it a better basis of comparison. But there are also key differences between the two illnesses, one being that the fatality rate of the 1918 pandemic was much higher, in some cases killing 3-4% of the population. Another main difference is that the largest number of deaths in the 1918 pandemic actually occurred among young, healthy adults, as opposed to the preponderance of cases in those over 50 years of age, and particularly those with underlying health conditions, in the current outbreak.

Allison Nathan: How accurate and reliable are the numbers on new cases we're seeing today?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: As in almost any outbreak, the numbers in the earliest days weren't reliable because there wasn't a test to determine if someone was actually infected, and even once a test was developed, the number of available test kits was initially extremely limited. So through much of January and early February, the case numbers out of China just reflected a sub-sample of cases in the Wuhan area in particular. There is little doubt these numbers vastly underreported the number of actual infections; there were numerous reports of people who couldn't get into a hospital because they were overflowing with cases and eventually died at home. None of these people were ever tested, so they weren't considered a case. More recently, test kits have become more widely available in China, so the numbers have become increasingly reliable, although the way the numbers have been reported has changed a few times, causing some confusion. As for the rest of the world, the availability of test kits is still extremely limited. So the reality is we'll never really have an accurate number of total cases.

Allison Nathan: While the number of new cases is still rising in China, the growth rate of new infections is slowing. Should that give us comfort?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: I don't take much comfort in that. Remember that much of China has been under an extremely severe population lockdown, well beyond a standard isolation or even quarantine from a public health standpoint. And even despite that, we're still seeing new cases, which is a testament to this virus' infectiousness. When China loosens its population control efforts to restart its economy and people go back to work and gather in crowds again, we could easily see a major rebound in the number of cases in the ensuing 4-6 weeks. We saw something similar in Toronto in during the 2003 SARS outbreak. An outbreak in April was brought under control, but then two unknown cases reignited the spread in May, which became the more severe part of the outbreak. The lesson from that was don't celebrate the end of this prematurely.

Allison Nathan: But hasn't the extensiveness of the lockdown in China at least thwarted the spread of this?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: I don't think so; the shutdown is just delaying cases, not materially reducing the ultimate magnitude of the outbreak. A legitimate point may be that such a delay helps buy time to better prepare by, for example, getting more personal protective equipment into healthcare settings. But we have no indication this is happening. At this point, we have no evidence that quarantine measures are going to make much difference, and we have no such evidence from past outbreaks, either. If this virus were behaving like SARS or MERS—with people not becoming infectious until several days into their illness—then intervention would be effective because we would be able to isolate people before they transmitted the

virus to others. But with the model that's emerged for COVID-19, in which you may be infectious well before you get sick, quarantines don't work.

Allison Nathan: What do you make of the rise in international cases? Should we expect more to come?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: More cases are very likely. To see why, take a look at what happened in Wuhan. The virus emerged there in late November at the latest, and no one in the medical community picked up any activity until the end of December—a month later. The best data we have so far suggests that each infected person not in protective isolation infects about two other people on average; that compares to 1.2-1.4 people for regular influenza, and about 1.8 people for pandemic influenza. Using an incubation period of around 6 days, in the first 24 days, or four generations of the virus there are 31 total new cases per every individual initially infected. Over the next four generations, there are a total of 480 cases. At that point, you might start picking up something, but, if 80% of these cases are mild, not a lot of cases would be detected by the medical system. After the tenth generation, there are 1,548 total cases. If 5% of these are severe, you really start picking this up, but that's already ten generations, or 60 days, out.

Every country in which the virus is introduced around the world will go through a similar pattern in which the disease goes undetected for the first month or two. And once the virus is detected, it will take time to see a buildup in the number of cases. So that is why we are just beginning to see a rise in international cases, and why we can expect more to come.

Allison Nathan: Given what we know today, when is the virus most likely to peak, and what would you need to see to get some comfort that we are on the back side of this?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: You're asking the trillion-dollar question that none of us can answer. I will say that, internationally, the number of cases over the next several weeks will be very important to watch given the math I just reviewed. If we don't see case clusters continuing to emerge and the number of detected cases building up as I laid out, that would give me comfort, as would no flare up in cases in China once activity there starts to normalize.

Allison Nathan: Will seasonality help thwart the virus?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: I keep hearing people talk about how the onset of summer will help slow the virus' spread. That's wishful thinking, often based on faulty data. One piece of evidence that people use to support this claim is the fact that the 2003 SARS outbreak basically ended in June. But I think that just owed to the illness being detected in February, and that's just how long it took to get it under control. During the MERS outbreak on the Arabian Peninsula, I observed the virus continue to successfully transmit from camels to humans and then from humans to humans in 110-plus degree heat; heat presented no obstacle for transmission. And while people often hang onto the seasonality of flu, which tends to become more prevalent in both hemispheres during their respective winters, the flu virus circulates year-round in the tropics. So the collective experience of what we know about other coronaviruses and about the influenza virus gives me no reason

to think that this is just going to end with the onset of warmth in the Northern Hemisphere. I'm afraid that this could very well play out like a pandemic influenza over the months ahead in both hemispheres at the same time.

Allison Nathan: What do you think will most likely end the outbreak, then? Will this require a vaccine, or will enough people just be exposed and become immune?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: Again, no one knows the answer to this. If it doesn't slow seasonally like a typical influenza virus as I suspect, we'll see the number of cases peak in countries after some weeks or months of transmission, and then, just by the mere fact that the number of people who are now immune after having previously been infected will increase, the spread will slow or even stop, but it won't disappear.

In terms of stopping this outbreak, I have no hope a vaccine will play any role. There's no way we're going to have a vaccine tested for safety, effectiveness, approved by a regulatory agency, manufactured and administered to the public any time short of more than a year, or even several years. But vaccines could become very important if this illness is like an influenza virus, becoming part of our regular illness repertoire that periodically reasserts itself.

Allison Nathan: Are countries like the US prepared to deal with this?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: I don't think so. We're only now beginning to understand how dependent we are on the rest of the world for our preparedness. For example, for the last 18 months, I have been part of a group that has been studying supply chains for critical care drugs—meaning, you need them within hours, or people start to die—in the US. We've identified 153 of these drugs, all of which are generic and most of which are made outside of the US, with a sizable portion made in China. Sixty-three of these drugs were already in short supply even before this outbreak. So we are potentially setting up for a perfect storm in which we have an increase in illnesses at the same time that we have shortages of critical drugs. The same is true for personal protective equipment; most US hospitals today have no meaningful stockpiles of these supplies, which are on backorder because companies can't ramp up fast enough to meet the demand. So we are not in much better shape than China is. The whole world will struggle with this challenge.

Allison Nathan: Is the world more vulnerable to these types of outbreaks given such supply challenges, growing antimicrobial resistance, and more global travel?

Dr. Michael Osterholm: I do think we're all more vulnerable given the degree to which we've outsourced so much of our everyday lives to other parts of the world. And while increasing antimicrobial resistance is definitely a concern, if you don't even have the drugs to begin with, it just won't matter. In terms of transmission, of course we move a lot more people, animals, and goods around the world today than any time in our history. But the 1918 virus made its way around the world just fine, so I have no reason to believe we're much more vulnerable from that perspective.

Interview with Andrew Tilton

Andrew Tilton is Chief Asia-Pacific Economist at Goldman Sachs. Below he shares his expectations for a sizeable hit to Q1 growth in China from COVID-19 followed by a sharp rebound in Q2 and Q3, assuming the virus spread is largely contained in China by the end of Q1 and policy is eased.



Allison Nathan: What is the current state of activity levels in China, and how are you gauging this?

Andrew Tilton: In Hubei province, which is the center of the outbreak, economic activity remains very low: a large-scale quarantine remains in place and travel is severely restricted. More broadly across the country, activity is slowly starting to resume; local

government data suggest 60% of all companies are back to work, although that should not be interpreted as meaning they are back to normal production levels.

That said, gauging activity levels at this time of year is challenging given a big gap in official data owing to the Chinese New Year. Because the timing of the holiday shifts every year, most of the key data for January and February are reported together and released in mid-March. So, we're operating with very little information about the economic impact of the virus. But the early survey data that we do have has declined to record lows. And we're monitoring several daily indicators that we think shed some light on the situation, such as data on traffic congestion, coal consumption at electric power producers, property transactions, and movie box office revenues. These types of indicators still show activity levels at least 20% below normal.

Allison Nathan: Is this daily data—and the monthly indicators we will get in March—reliable?

Andrew Tilton: For any country, it's best to look at a mosaic of different macro and micro data points. The obvious advantage of daily data is that it is real time, but the drawback is that it tends to provide a narrow glimpse of the economy and is difficult to adjust for seasonality, so you can get a lot of noise along with your signal. The advantage of the monthly government data is that it provides a broader sense of the economy. But the challenge in China especially is that the government sets out formal GDP growth targets each year, which recent official statements suggest they may stick to despite the economic hit from the virus. With officials putting a lot of pressure on themselves publicly to get to those numbers, that can obviously lead to questions about how reliable the numbers are. Again, that argues for looking at a mosaic of data points to get an accurate read on the situation.

Allison Nathan: How big of a virus-induced hit to Chinese growth do you ultimately expect?

Andrew Tilton: We've cut our first quarter GDP growth forecast by more than three percentage points from pre-virus levels to 2.5% in year-over-year terms, which implies a sizable contraction in quarter-over-quarter GDP and the worst quarter for Chinese growth in three-plus decades. And some high frequency data points look much worse. So when we do see

the monthly macro data for this period, we expect it to be pretty ugly, with, for example, real retail sales numbers likely meaningfully negative and the manufacturing PMI for February likely in the neighborhood of 2008 lows.

Having said that, the typical pattern of past viral outbreaks has been a rapid decline in economic activity over a few months, followed by a sharp rebound. And that's the template we've assumed. So even though Q1 is likely to be very weak, we're expecting a strong rebound in Q2 and Q3. For that reason, we expect a total hit for the year of only around half a percentage point of GDP relative to our pre-virus forecast. But this assumes the outbreak is brought largely under control by quarter-end, which remains highly uncertain.

Allison Nathan: Are past viral outbreaks like SARS in 2003 really a good guide for assessing the likely economic hit today, given that the magnitude of the lockdown has been so much larger, and the Chinese economy is so much more important to the global economy?

Andrew Tilton: In magnitude, SARS isn't a very good analogy, but in pattern it might be. What I mean by that is the types of industries and economic activities that get hit in a viral outbreak are likely to persist from one episode to another. And I think the pattern of seeing a sharp deceleration in activity ultimately followed by a strong rebound is likely to be repeated. But I agree that the intensity and breadth of the control measures in this episode as well as China's much greater importance to the global economy makes the current situation quite different from the experience with SARS, with uncertain consequences. To put some figures on this, as compared to SARS in 2003, the contribution of Chinese goods imports and foreign travel spending by Chinese tourists to global GDP are about 3x and 8x larger today, respectively, and its share of the global economy is more than twice as big. So, the spillovers to the rest of the world is certainly higher.

Allison Nathan: Given that, are risks to your growth forecast skewed to the downside?

Andrew Tilton: Yes, the balance of risk remains skewed to the downside. Two drivers will ultimately determine the hit to growth. The first is obviously the trajectory of the virus itself, which we assume—and I emphasize that this is an assumption as opposed to a forecast because we're not epidemiologists—will be largely brought under control before the end of the quarter. Although the spread of the virus has slowed materially in China, there is still a risk that the virus picks up again as activity levels normalize and/or that the outbreak is longer or broader than we've assumed. The second driver is the magnitude of the actual hit to economy, which could end up less than we assume if consumer spending bounces back quickly once the virus is controlled or stimulus measures are even larger than we expect. But the hit could also be larger than we assume if there are greater ripple effects into supply chains, credit markets or the labor market.

Allison Nathan: How worried are senior officials about the economic impact of the virus?

Andrew Tilton: Senior officials' recent statements suggest that they're getting more worried about the impact of control measures on the overall economy. In recent communications, Chinese policymakers have emphasized a bifurcated approach to imposing activity controls: in high-risk jurisdictions, virus control should remain the priority, whereas in lower-risk jurisdictions, returning to normal economic activity should instead be the main focus. But, as is often the case in China, incentives may differ between the central and local levels of government. Local officials in low-risk jurisdictions may still feel pressure to avoid infections in order to be viewed favorably, and so may remain more focused on virus control than on the revival of economic activity. And, as a result, they may retain some of their own restrictions that aren't necessarily mandated or even desired by national authorities.

Allison Nathan: What policies is the government pursuing to help growth normalize?

Andrew Tilton: First and foremost, the government has focused on getting the virus under control, which is paramount to returning activity levels back to normal. But as the pace of new cases has declined, we've also seen a shift towards the use of traditional policy levers to help support the economy. The PBOC has injected additional liquidity, which has pushed short-term interest rates lower. We've seen measures to encourage banks to continue to roll over lending to struggling enterprises, as well as a frontloading of fiscal expenditure. Another key focus has been transmission into the labor market, which could substantially worsen and prolong the economic impact of the virus. You're already hearing stories of firms laying off workers, and every week that goes by without a return to normal activity creates a bigger risk to the labor market, which could create knock-on effects to income and lead to a negative spiral. Because of this, there has been a lot of official encouragement of firms to avoid laying off workers.

Should damages from the virus worsen, I think officials would likely use fiscal levers even more aggressively, further ramping up fiscal spending, cutting taxes and/or providing incentives for consumption in different areas. Money and credit easing would also certainly be employed—credit easing to facilitate fiscal spending and monetary easing to ensure that debt could still be serviced. That said, I think there is probably still a residual wariness about going too far in the direction of policy easing given the 2015/16 experience that saw an equity market bubble burst and capital outflow pressure as a side effect of excessive easing. That was a cautionary experience and suggests to me that while authorities will do more to support the economy, they probably won't be quite as aggressive as they would have been five or ten years ago in a similar situation.

Allison Nathan: Could currency depreciation become part of the mix?

Andrew Tilton: Ultimately, yes, but we think that would be lower down on the list of policy options. At least so far, policymakers have leaned against depreciation pressures. The currency has weakened against the US Dollar over the past

month, but that largely reflects broad Dollar strength rather than idiosyncratic weakness in the renminbi.

Allison Nathan: Does this shock increase the risk of financial instability in China?

Andrew Tilton: The concern is that the sharp decline in economic activity could lead to a big pickup in delinquencies, non-performing loans (NPLs) and banking sector problems. But the authorities have made it clear that they don't want credit cut off to firms that are struggling. Our sense is that larger firms will see forbearance, and we probably won't see a large pickup in defaults. The bigger challenge may be in the small-medium enterprise (SME) space that is harder for regulators to monitor. Those entities are more likely to have lower cash reserves and are at greater risk of being cut off from credit, which could lead to loan losses as well as employment losses if firms shut down. But these entities comprise a relatively small fraction of the overall stock of debt. So while the slowing economy is a source of stress, we don't think credit problems will be the primary channel of that stress.

Allison Nathan: Which regional economies are most exposed to this shock?

Andrew Tilton: Countries in the region are being impacted through three channels. The first and most immediate channel is Chinese tourism, which has been rapidly shut off by a combination of outbound and inbound travel restrictions; in some countries, Chinese tourism appears to be down by as much as 90% versus typical levels. The places most exposed to this are Hong Kong and Thailand. Second, regional trade has been hit by the slowdown in the Chinese economy, which has affected exports to China from elsewhere. That will be material for the region's smaller, more export-oriented economies such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. In places like Korea, Taiwan, and Japan there is also concern about the possible impact of supply chain disruptions. For example, some automakers in both Japan and Korea have announced production stoppages because of the unavailability of certain parts from China. That problem could grow significantly over the next few weeks if there's not a meaningful ramp up in Chinese production. Finally, some countries, especially South Korea and Japan, are now grappling with containing their own outbreaks, which will likely weigh on domestic consumption. All told, we have taken down our Q1 and full-year forecasts for most of the economies in the region.

Allison Nathan: How will the virus-induced demand shock affect the Phase 1 US-China deal?

Andrew Tilton: In order for China to purchase the \$200bn of goods and services that it agreed to as part of the deal, many of the existing retaliatory tariffs may need to be reduced or removed entirely, either through exemptions or waivers. Sure enough, on February 18, the Ministry of Finance announced that Chinese firms can apply for exemptions on nearly 700 types of US goods, including soybeans, starting on March 2, which suggests that the original purchase agreement is likely to remain on track. However, as both the US and China have acknowledged, the timing of purchases will likely be delayed by the viral outbreak.

Markets: bracing for more uncertainty

Zach Pandl and David Kostin argue that investors should prepare portfolios for a longer period of virus-related uncertainty

Toward the end of February, the market response to the coronavirus outbreak entered a new, more concerning phase. Investors seemed able to look through the first wave of infections and even the significant retrenchment in economic activity in China caused by the government's aggressive containment measures. But this changed following news that the virus had spread to Europe and guidance from public health officials that its emergence in the US is just a matter of time.

From an economic perspective, what started as a temporary regional shock now seems at risk of transforming into a more protracted global phenomenon—with possible effects on public confidence and supply chains well beyond the worst affected areas. Although we cannot predict the path of the virus itself, we do think markets will now need to price a wider distribution of possible outcomes for the global economy. Investors should prepare for a longer period of virus-related uncertainty and position portfolios for the range of possible macroeconomic implications of the outbreak.

Position defensively in equities...

For **equity markets**, the expanded set of virus-related impacts has led us to reduce our expectations for earnings growth for US companies, and we now expect no earnings growth in 2020. We recommend shifting defensively, and have raised Real Estate to Overweight from Neutral, Utilities to Neutral from Underweight, while lowering Industrials to Neutral from Overweight, and Financials to Underweight from Neutral.

...And in FX and Rates

The shifting regional pattern of the virus should also have implications for **currency markets**. Before this week, the Dollar had appreciated sharply and Dollar-neutral carry trades generally performed well—suggesting a consensus among investors that the virus would leave the US economy and global growth relatively unscathed in 2020. Both assumptions now look questionable. An outbreak in the US would likely weigh on domestic growth through confidence and travel/leisure-related channels. And it's difficult to envision global risk appetite rebounding if the US experiences an economic hit from the virus. The odds of a US outbreak are difficult to assess, but it seems a clear risk that markets will need to discount to some degree. As a result, we expect this year's sharp Dollar rally to stall, and favor longs in defensive G10 currencies like the Japanese Yen.

The global spread of the virus introduces new downside risks to growth, which could tip the scales towards easing for a number of central banks—resulting in even lower short-dated interest rates. Among developed market economies, rate cuts appear most likely in the US—and we now expect the Fed to cut rates by 75bps by June—as well as Canada, Australia, and the UK. Although bond yields have fallen to record lows in major markets, monetary easing could prolong the rally.

US 10-year Treasuries reach all-time lows
US 10-year Treasury yield, %



Source: Haver Analytics, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

The risk-off likely has more room to run

Our best guess is that the drawdown in **risky assets** has further to go over the short run. US markets, in particular, will need to price not only a possible drag on activity from the virus, but election-related risks as well. Based on our proprietary tools, it appears that investors have marked down their growth expectations meaningfully, but still not to the lows of 2016, or even 2019. On the equity side, the market has moved to our near-term target of 2900, but we see near-term risks still skewed to the downside on virus-related developments.

Market growth expectations: worried, but less than recently
Cross-asset growth factor, index



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Looking ahead, we would expect risky assets to find a floor as the disruption from the virus begins to fade—which has already begun to happen in China—and policy provides new support. At this point our “shopping list” for an eventual rebound would include several EM currencies (especially the Russian Ruble and Mexican Peso), pro-cyclical G10 currencies (especially the Scandinavian currencies), and US breakeven inflation. And we would expect the S&P 500 to retrace to 3400 by year-end, assuming activity rebounds and the yield gap narrows.

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The physical realities of disruption

Jeff Currie argues that we're facing the largest commodity demand shock since the Global Financial Crisis and sees more volatility ahead

The global economy is a complex physical system with real physical frictions—a reality that financial markets often seem to forget, but have been painfully reminded of with the outbreak of COVID-19. If a ship is in the wrong place, it can take weeks to get it in the right one. That said, the extent of the physical disruption owing to the current outbreak was both minimized and masked by the timing of the Chinese travel disruption.

Occurring during the Lunar New Year holiday, which sees 2.1 billion people—representing nearly 30% of global output—celebrate for one to two weeks, the entire global economy was already prepared for reduced activity in a large part of Asia during this period, with order times and inventories adjusted accordingly. Ships leave Asia before the Lunar New Year laden with goods destined for the West, a 30-40-day trip, and return with scrap and raw materials in late February. This buffer in supply chains bought China nearly a month to contain the spread of the virus, and their strategy is increasingly looking successful, with early indicators suggesting viral containment and economic restarts.

Economic and viral contagion into the Atlantic basin

However, economic contagion from China is now likely to spread into the Atlantic over the next month, on top of the viral contagion that has already begun to occur. We estimate that c.45% of scheduled Asia-Europe containership sailings were cancelled in the four weeks following the onset of the Lunar New Year holiday, and as much as 60% of the weekly containership sailings from Asia-Europe/US have been cancelled during the first three weeks of February. This means the March ramp-up in Chinese activity could be slow given the physical realities of re-starting global supply chains. Goods need to be produced, trucked to the ports, documented and then loaded.

This large and unexpected cancellation of sailings to China will likely create shortages in backhaul capacity from the Atlantic that will cause freight rates to spike in coming weeks. Transportation bottlenecks in the Atlantic basin should peak in the next 30-40 days, assuming the recent restarts in China continue. At the same time, supply chain disruptions in the Atlantic basin face further downside risks from internal European travel restrictions, with, for example, 58% of German goods exports in 2018 going to other EU countries, and only 7% going to China. And unlike in China, there is no holiday period that companies have planned for to buffer these disruptions. Indeed, auto-parts maker MTA, whose factory sits inside the Italian quarantine zone, has warned German car producers would shut in a week without their components.

Largest commodity demand shock since 2008

The unprecedented disruption to economic activity in China has resulted in an estimated 4 million b/d of lost oil demand compared to 5 million b/d during the Great Recession in 2008/09. While we see severe travel disruption contained to East Asia for now, further disruption across the West is a real risk with both Italy and Iran now under travel restrictions. And

finite storage capacity in China—though large—is filling up quickly, presenting further downside risk if storage is ultimately breached. Solid goods like metals do not face that risk.

Although steel demand in China is down nearly 50% yoy, the unprecedented inventory increases have been accommodated.

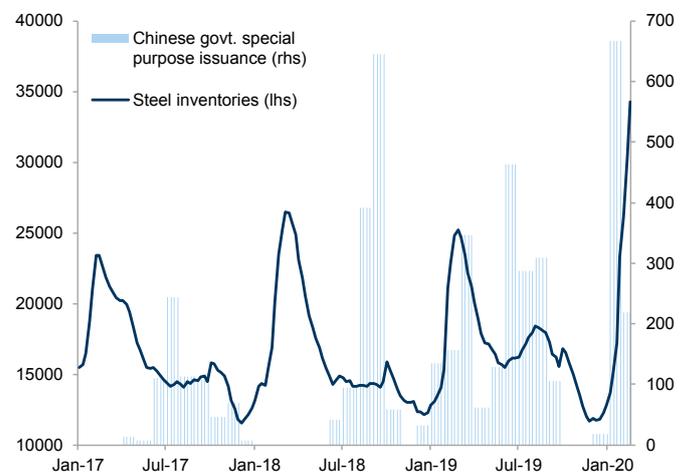
Tension between surplus and stimulus drives volatility

The disruption to commodity demand falls broadly into two categories. Either the commodity is consumed as a stock—steel in infrastructure or aluminium in durable goods—or it is consumed as a flow—crude in transport or coal in energy production. Demand for the stock is **deferred**, as projects resume after the shutdown ends, while demand for the flow is **lost**, with energy use and transport returning to previous levels.

As Chinese policymakers become increasingly vocal about their intention to use monetary, fiscal and macro-prudential policies to minimize the economic impact of the coronavirus shock, markets have focused on the potential for this stimulus to save deferred demand. Case in point: onshore steel rebar prices are now above pre-outbreak levels despite a massive build in inventory, while Brent crude is down 23% since the onset of coronavirus fears. This continued tension between economic stimulus and surplus inventory will likely create commodity price volatility.

Commodity markets caught between rising surplus and stronger stimulus

Chinese special purp. issuance (rhs), RMB bn; steel inventories, kbd (lhs)



Source: Wind, MySteel, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Gold has immunity to the virus

While so much about the current environment remains unclear, there's one thing that isn't: gold, which—unlike people and our economies—is immune to the virus. It is the currency of last resort and avoids the concern that paper currencies could be a medium of transfer for the virus. As a result, gold has outperformed other safe haven assets like the Japanese Yen or Swiss Franc, a trend we see continuing as long as uncertainty around the full impact of COVID-19 remains.

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History of pandemics

Unlike the current COVID-19 outbreak, there is little evidence that asymptomatic transmission occurred in past epidemics. No such evidence exists for the SARS or MERS outbreaks.

**10 2019-
Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
Total confirmed infections: 84,000
Mortality: 2,800 people
Case-fatality rate: Unknown*
R0: 2.3
Transmission: Unconfirmed; suspected spread by close contact; respiratory droplets

**1 1918-1919
Spanish influenza**
Total infections: 350 – 750 million
Mortality: 20-50 million people
Case-fatality rate: 2-3%
R0: 1.5-1.8
Transmission: Through nearby contact with infected respiratory droplets

**3 1968-1969
Hong Kong flu (H3N2)**
Mortality: 1-4 million
Case-fatality rate: <0.2%
R0: 1.6-1.8
Transmission: Through nearby contact with infected respiratory droplets

**6 2009-2010
Swine flu (H1N1)**
Total infections: 750 million – 1.4 billion
Mortality: 150k-575k people
Case-fatality rate: 0.01-0.08%
R0: 1.3-1.7
Transmission: Contact with infected pigs; limited person-to-person spread

**7 2012-2020
Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)**
Total infections: 2500
Mortality: 860 people
Case-fatality rate: 34%
R0: <1
Transmission: Close person-to-person contact

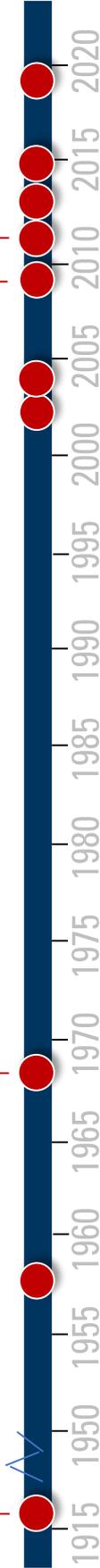
**4 2002-2003
Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)**
Total infections: 8,000
Mortality: 770 people
Case-fatality rate: 10%
R0: 3
Transmission: Close person-to-person contact

**2 1957-1958
Asian flu (H2N2)**
Mortality: 1-4 million
Case-fatality rate: <0.2%
R0: 1.5
Transmission: Through nearby contact with infected respiratory droplets

**5 2003-2009
Avian flu (H5N1)**
Total infections: 470
Mortality: 280 people
Case-fatality rate: 60%
R0: 0.1-1.1
Transmission: Contact with infected birds; person-to-person spread rare

**8 2013-2017
Bird flu (H7N9)**
Total infections: 1600
Mortality: 600 people
Case-fatality rate: 39%
R0: 0.03-0.4
Transmission: Contact with infected poultry; person-to-person spread rare

**9 2014-2016
Ebola**
Total infections: 30,000
Mortality: 11,000 people
Case-fatality rate: 50%
R0: 1.5-2.5
Transmission: Bodily fluids



Note: R0 refers to the number of expected cases of a disease directly generated by one infected case.
*Case-fatality rates are not quoted for active epidemics due to lack of data around the true number of cases.
Source: CDC, WHO, NCBI, NIH, NLM, Johns Hopkins, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Sizing the coronavirus shock



60

countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19



240,000

global flights cancelled between January 23 and February 18



11

towns, representing 50,000 people, under quarantine in Italy, the country currently most affected by the viral outbreak outside of Asia



25x

size of temporary global GDP hit from viral outbreak compared to the **disruption from a major US hurricane**



40 billion

“missing working hours” if all Chinese firms had restarted on the 1st allowable day—the equivalent of **all US workers taking an unplanned break for two months**



60 million

the population of Hubei, the province where the virus outbreak began, similar to the **total number of people living in Spain and Portugal**



2,000

Starbucks locations that have temporarily closed in China



0.30 - 0.35%

of annual global GDP is generated by China's travel spending, **double the amount of the US**

Source: Johns Hopkins, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.

Interview with Jude Blanchette

Jude Blanchette holds the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Below, he argues that while the COVID-19 outbreak in China will make it more difficult for President Xi Jinping to implement policy, his leadership isn't under threat.

The views stated herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect those of Goldman Sachs.



Allison Nathan: You argue in your recent book, *China's New Red Guards*, that China is undergoing a revival of extreme authoritarianism inspired by Mao Zedong. How do you view the government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak through that lens?

Jude Blanchette: China's response to the coronavirus has employed many tactics, tools and important elements of the Communist Party's traditional political culture, ranging from General Secretary Xi Jinping invoking the idea of a "people's war" to combat the virus, which is an idea that traces back to the Mao Zedong era when China was engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Japanese, to the mounting of a top-down, highly-mobilized campaign to deal with the issue.

Allison Nathan: In theory, this type of top-down approach that enables the mobilization of vast resources quickly should have left the government well-positioned to respond to the crisis. How do you rate its response?

Jude Blanchette: That certainly is the theory underlying many of Xi Jinping's efforts to further centralize control since he assumed the leadership in 2012. Xi himself has stressed that his underlying approach to governance is to better react to sudden crises. However, the government's response to this outbreak has not been a reassuring example of effective governance. In the early weeks of the outbreak, we saw inaction bordering on incompetence from the Wuhan municipal officials, as well as provincial officials in Hubei.

Some people have framed this as officials being too timid to report bad news to Xi Jinping, but I don't think the facts bear that out. To me, this was a case of general bureaucratic incompetence; these officials were looking the other way, and underestimating the problem so that it wasn't until January 20, nearly two months after the initial outbreak, when Xi Jinping himself weighed in that the system really lurched into gear. So, while Xi Jinping's efforts to centralize power have arguably reduced governance problems in China relative to the past, I think this situation reveals that there are still extraordinary weaknesses in the system. In fact, many of the problems with the government's response to the virus are a direct result of this centralization of power to the extent that it has resulted in a disempowered, ineffective and, in some cases, incompetent bureaucracy.

Allison Nathan: To what extent do the Chinese people blame the government for the current situation?

Jude Blanchette: There is little doubt that the people blame the government for not acting sooner. Moments where you see a groundswell of frustration at the Communist Party in modern China are rare, and this is one of them. The common framing of the unspoken pact between the Chinese people and the party

is: "we'll stay quiet on politics as long as you provide economic growth." But I see the pact in reality as "we'll permit some lack of freedom in exchange for a safe and healthy living environment"—and that's been violated. The level of frustration and anger being directed at the Chinese leadership is truly extraordinary in the context of an overall political climate that demands quiescence. That said, it's interesting to note that most of the anger at this point is being directed downwards to municipal and provincial officials, which is a very common pattern in Chinese politics; the party leadership is typically able to point its finger at lower level officials. And, in fact, most Chinese people deal with local Communist Party officials—not Xi Jinping—so it's more natural to direct their frustrations there.

That said, a recent development may start to shift the focus of frustration upward. It recently came to light that Xi Jinping was aware of the virus as early as January 7, which we know because of a speech he gave on that day to the Politburo Standing Committee, which was recently published in a top party journal. Before this speech, it was unclear how much Xi Jinping really knew before he officially acknowledged the issue on January 20. So that has started to raise some serious questions about why he wasn't more involved earlier—especially when we now know the weeks between January 7 and January 20 were critical to the initial spread of the illness.

Allison Nathan: To what extent have Xi Jinping's own actions helped orchestrate the deflection of blame?

Jude Blanchette: Xi Jinping understands that power comes from perception, and it's clear that he has tried to orchestrate a Goldilocks balance between not appearing too close to the worsening situation—and thereby risk appearing ineffectual—and maintaining a leadership presence. He essentially went missing from the state mouthpiece *People's Daily* and the nightly news broadcast for a seven or eight-day period as the number of new cases in China sky-rocketed, at the same time that he sent Premier Li Keqiang—the number two in the Communist Party hierarchy who has been marginalized for years from the center of policymaking—to the front lines of the outbreak in Wuhan. But as narratives about his absence began to run counter to his political goals, he re-appeared adorning a face mask in a hospital in Beijing, which showed that he understood it was time to start demonstrating leadership.

Allison Nathan: Will Xi Jinping, and the Communist Party more broadly, use this crisis to broaden the powers of the state?

Jude Blanchette: Most likely, especially given the well-established pattern of governments ratcheting-up controls to manage a crisis and then keeping many of the expanded powers in place even after the crisis has passed. In this case, the state has increased the use of tools like facial recognition and real-name identification to help fight the virus. So a likely

outcome of the virus will be an even further ramp-up of digital authoritarianism in China.

Allison Nathan: Generally speaking, much has been made of Xi Jinping's consolidation of political power. Is his grip as tight as is often portrayed?

Jude Blanchette: Yes, and no. Compared to previous general secretaries of the Communist Party, he has significantly more institutional and charismatic authority and has accomplished much more, and more quickly, from a bureaucratic and institutional perspective. This has enabled him to amass substantially more power than his predecessors, as best exemplified by his success in abolishing the term limit on the office of the presidency at the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2018. You only do that if you're very darn powerful because every leader everywhere would like to get rid of term limits. But Xi Jinping had a singular ability to do so. This is what people are referring to when they say that Xi is the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong.

But despite this power, he too continues to struggle with getting the system to do what he wants. There's an old saying in Chinese: "the sky is high, the emperor's far away." This gets at the central conundrum that all Chinese leaders have faced, which is that it's very difficult to govern China given its size and complexity. Xi Jinping has not overcome that problem. Add to that the burden that all authoritarian leaders face, which is that they hold their position not because a vote gave them a clear legal mandate for a fixed amount of time, but because they have cobbled together a coalition that supports them in that position. Keeping that coalition happy is a full-time job.

For Xi to maintain this coalition, he must ensure that the economic pie continues to grow; that way, he can distribute rents to members of this base, which includes key members in the security services, the military, state-owned enterprises, the party state bureaucracy, and maybe even the private sector. This leads to a constant worry that someone won't think their slice is big enough. This is why authoritarian leaders tend to get very paranoid. So, I don't think Xi Jinping feels powerful, or even secure. To quote his favorite philosopher, Mao Zedong, this is a "constant struggle."

Allison Nathan: In that context, is the COVID-19 outbreak the biggest challenge that Xi Jinping—or even the Communist Party in modern China—has ever faced?

Jude Blanchette: This is now the third "biggest challenge" we've talked about for Xi Jinping in just one year. Remember, a year ago the biggest challenge was Hong Kong, then the biggest challenge was the resounding re-election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who has openly rejected the "one country, two systems" for Taiwan, and now we're talking about the biggest challenge being the COVID-19 outbreak. The reality is, as the leader of the second-largest economy and arguably the only other superpower besides the US, such challenges are going to be more frequent.

That said, Chinese leaders have certainly dealt with significant challenges in the past. The biggest challenge in recent history was the Tiananmen Square episode in 1989. Since then we've

had the SARS outbreak in 2003, the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, and the Wenzhou train crash in 2011—all of which also shook the people's confidence in the government's ability to provide a safe living environment for the Chinese population.

Without being too alarmist, I would say of the previous challenges, the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis is closer to that of the 1989 episode than the more recent ones for a few reasons. First, Xi Jinping is under much greater scrutiny than his predecessors precisely because of his ambitious global goals; he is under a microscope because people see much higher stakes in his actions and the future direction of China more broadly. Second, the expectations of Chinese people are also higher. It's a wealthier country; Chinese people have seen more of the world and have greater aspirations. So they, too, have a bigger stake in the Communist Party living up to its promises. Third, the economic impacts of the outbreak are significantly larger than any of these past episodes. So I think climbing out of this hole will likely stress the leadership in a way that it hasn't been stressed since the 1989-1991 period.

Allison Nathan: Are there any signs that Xi Jinping's leadership could be challenged over this?

Jude Blanchette: No, we're not seeing any signs of that. Whenever one of these types of challenges arises in China, we tend to quickly ask the question: "Will this be the thing that unseats the leader?" Our prediction record on that is pretty abysmal. I think that's partly because even though we might think we're seeing cracks in the cement, we actually don't have a really good sense of what's in that cement to begin with—what legitimizes the Communist Party, and gives it its resilience. The Communist Party is turning 100 next year, and it has a good track record of stability, only very rarely purging senior leaders in the post-Mao era.

On top of that, Xi has insulated himself from leadership challenges in many ways, such as appointing only loyalists to key positions, ensuring he is the only civilian leader in contact with the military, and prohibiting one-on-one meetings between party leaders outside of official Communist Party settings—all of which is reinforced by the digital surveillance state. So I think the outbreak will undoubtedly exact a political cost on Xi Jinping, and will make life more difficult for him. Like any other leader, a hit to his popularity will make implementing policy that much more challenging. But given the power he has amassed and the sheer logistical difficulty in mounting a leadership challenge, one is extremely unlikely to occur.

Allison Nathan: Will these events put pressure on Xi to announce a successor, though?

Jude Blanchette: No. The iron law of power is that once you get to the throne you stay there for as long as possible. That's true for a few reasons, but the main one is that unless you're assured a safe and peaceful retirement, you don't come off the throne. Since Xi Jinping himself has violated the widespread understanding that retired Standing Committee members are immune from prosecution, he can't be assured of this. So, Xi Jinping can't retire.

Q&A with Tim Moe

Tim Moe, Chief Asia Equity Strategist, answers key questions about Asian equity markets.

Q: Have the price moves in Asian equities in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak been rational?

A: Yes. The market has clearly been pricing in the daily news flow on the rate of new infections. Most recently, the sharp sell-off has owed to the rise in the number of cases outside of China, which has increased fears about a global pandemic. But even before the sell-off, price action closely matched the pace of new cases, with the peak in the daily rate of new infections in China occurring on February 5, and the initial trough in the Asian equity market occurring on February 3, which was then followed by an 8% rally through February 17. These moves have been rational in the sense that they have essentially repeated the pattern of the past five viral outbreak episodes, starting with SARS in 2003, in which the market trough coincided with the peak of incremental new infections, and then rose by an average of 20-30% over the next 3-6 months.

That said, the speed and strength of the initial recovery this time around was too optimistic, in our view, because today's environment is different from that of past viral episodes. First, the macro backdrop is less supportive for earnings growth. The current growth rate in China—with real growth of roughly 5-6%—is nowhere near the pace during past outbreaks such as SARS in 2003, when real GDP was growing 9%-10%. Second, the starting point for valuations was much higher in the current episode, with the forward 12-month multiple for the regional index on January 17 trading at 14.4 times 12-month forward earnings—the highest level in two decades. Bottom line, there's just less upside for growth in both earnings and valuations today, which means less market upside. So while the recent sell-off has been large, I view it as a somewhat justified correction of an overly-optimistic market.

Q: Is the market now close to fair value post the sell-off?

A: The MSCI Asia Specific ex-Japan Index is currently trading at 13.5 times consensus forward 12-month earnings, versus our estimates of fair value around 13.2-times earnings. So valuations are closer to fair value, but still somewhat on the more expensive side of the range.

Q: So where do Asian equity market returns go from here in your base case? Upside case? Downside case?

A: Our base case for earnings and valuations suggests about 6% upside over the next twelve months, assuming a 13.5 P/E multiple and 10% earnings growth in 2020. Our optimistic case, which relies on slightly higher valuations and no further reduction in the consensus forecast to earnings growth, suggests upside of 15%. And our downside risk case, which embeds a 12.7 P/E multiple and earnings of 8% in 2020, suggests 11% downside from here for the broader region. So even with the recent market pullback, we think that the risk-reward here is fairly evenly balanced between a risk case and the more optimistic case.

Q: Where is the greatest value/opportunity today?

A: There are two broad themes that present opportunities. The first is a set of companies that have substantially underperformed the broader market but have fundamentally sound businesses and therefore should snap back once the operating environment improves. Most of these companies are in the Airline, Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure space. And the second theme we are focused on are those companies that are well positioned to benefit from the fiscal, monetary and macro-prudential policy accommodation that Chinese policymakers have increasingly signaled will be coming down the pipe to cushion the impact of the virus outbreak and bolster growth. This primarily includes companies exposed to infrastructure investment largely in the Machinery space, as well as financial companies, including Banks and Real Estate companies.

Q: It's striking that as of today China-A shares have been the least impacted by virus concerns in the region, and companies in Korea and Thailand have been impacted the most. What do you make of this?

A: Indeed, as of today the region is down net 9% since the pre-virus peak on January 17, whereas China A-shares are down only 4%, while Korea and Thailand are down 13% and 18%, respectively. So despite being at the epicenter of the outbreak, Chinese equities have ironically proven the most resilient of any market we cover. This outperformance since the early days of the outbreak, when China A-shares underperformed, reflects domestic investors' confidence in the clearly articulated policy support from the Chinese government that should spill over into support for equities. Given this policy boost, we, too, upgraded our view on China-A shares in mid-February. And even beyond the likely near-term policy support, we see longer-term structural drivers in the domestic market, including the "new China" themes as well as several "mega-liquidity" themes. For that reason, we see 7% upside for China-A share returns over a 12-month horizon.

In contrast, the underperformance of firms in Korea and Thailand is clearly a function of the recent rise in the number of domestic cases in the former, and substantial exposure to a collapse in tourism demand in the latter. For Korea in particular, which had a solid narrative around tech hardware/semi-conductors and relatively attractive valuations heading into the year, we see potential for a strong rebound once the virus outbreak is contained, on the order of 13% from current levels.

Q: How would you describe investor sentiment today?

A: Obviously, markets have been very volatile. But against that backdrop, the broad consensus seems to be to "buy the dip," which history supports. Ultimately, no matter how widespread or long-lasting the viral outbreak is, barring an extreme global pandemic, it's reasonable to expect economic activity will eventually recover. So, despite bouts of fear like we've seen this week, investors are likely to continue to look through very poor first quarter, and possibly even second quarter, numbers and focus on a more promising second half of 2020 and 2021.

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Glossary of GS proprietary indices

Current Activity Indicator (CAI)

GS CAIs measure the growth signal in a broad range of weekly and monthly indicators, offering an alternative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP is an imperfect guide to current activity: In most countries, it is only available quarterly and is released with a substantial delay, and its initial estimates are often heavily revised. GDP also ignores important measures of real activity, such as employment and the purchasing managers' indexes (PMIs). All of these problems reduce the effectiveness of GDP for investment and policy decisions. Our CAIs aim to address GDP's shortcomings and provide a timelier read on the pace of growth.

For more, see our CAI page and Global Economics Analyst: Trackin' All Over the World – Our New Global CAI, 25 February 2017.

Dynamic Equilibrium Exchange Rates (DEER)

The GSDEER framework establishes an equilibrium (or "fair") value of the real exchange rate based on relative productivity and terms-of-trade differentials.

For more, see our GSDEER page, Global Economics Paper No. 227: Finding Fair Value in EM FX, 26 January 2016, and Global Markets Analyst: A Look at Valuation Across G10 FX, 29 June 2017.

Financial Conditions Index (FCI)

GS FCIs gauge the "looseness" or "tightness" of financial conditions across the world's major economies, incorporating variables that directly affect spending on domestically produced goods and services. FCIs can provide valuable information about the economic growth outlook and the direct and indirect effects of monetary policy on real economic activity.

FCIs for the G10 economies are calculated as a weighted average of a policy rate, a long-term risk-free bond yield, a corporate credit spread, an equity price variable, and a trade-weighted exchange rate; the Euro area FCI also includes a sovereign credit spread. The weights mirror the effects of the financial variables on real GDP growth in our models over a one-year horizon. FCIs for emerging markets are calculated as a weighted average of a short-term interest rate, a long-term swap rate, a CDS spread, an equity price variable, a trade-weighted exchange rate, and—in economies with large foreign-currency-denominated debt stocks—a debt-weighted exchange rate index.

For more, see our FCI page, Global Economics Analyst: Our New G10 Financial Conditions Indices, 20 April 2017, and Global Economics Analyst: Tracking EM Financial Conditions – Our New FCIs, 6 October 2017.

Goldman Sachs Analyst Index (GSAI)

The US GSAI is based on a monthly survey of GS equity analysts to obtain their assessments of business conditions in the industries they follow. The results provide timely "bottom-up" information about US economic activity to supplement and cross-check our analysis of "top-down" data. Based on analysts' responses, we create a diffusion index for economic activity comparable to the ISM's indexes for activity in the manufacturing and nonmanufacturing sectors.

Macro-Data Assessment Platform (MAP)

GS MAP scores facilitate rapid interpretation of new data releases for economic indicators worldwide. MAP summarizes the importance of a specific data release (i.e., its historical correlation with GDP) and the degree of surprise relative to the consensus forecast. The sign on the degree of surprise characterizes underperformance with a negative number and outperformance with a positive number. Each of these two components is ranked on a scale from 0 to 5, with the MAP score being the product of the two, i.e., from -25 to +25. For example, a MAP score of +20 (5; +4) would indicate that the data has a very high correlation to GDP (5) and that it came out well above consensus expectations (+4), for a total MAP value of +20.

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December 14, 2017



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November 9, 2017



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May 9, 2019



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October 12, 2017



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October 29, 2018



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Geopolitical Risks
May 16, 2017



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October 16, 2018



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April 17, 2017



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September 13, 2018



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August 13, 2018



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Trade Wars
February 6, 2017

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