



## **EFFECTIVE REMOTE TEAM**

Five useful principles of managing a remote team.

### **Principle 1. Take tailored approach to every employee**

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IT IS VITAL TO HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHO REQUIRES CLOSE ATTENTION AND WHO WILL SEE IT AS DEMOTIVATION.

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Assess the maturity of your remote team. It can consist of both experienced and highly motivated professionals who understand the company's goals and objectives, and lower-level employees that require more attention. Rank the team members by their experience, level of motivation and responsibility to balance discipline and self-control for each of them.

Example:

A manager does not always have an opportunity to build a team from scratch and allocate responsibilities in the most effective way. Remote teams are no exception. It is vital to have a clear understanding of who requires close attention and who will see it as demotivation and micromanagement. Assessing and analysing team members' performance early on will help you find the right approach and schedule one-on-one meetings in priority order.



*The manager has to find the right approach to each member of the remote team.*

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THERE ARE CULTURAL PATTERNS REMAINING UNCHANGED FOR DECADES. THE SMART THING TO DO IS TO USE THE TEAM'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BUSINESS.

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## **Principle 2. Respect the region's cultural background**

Every company has a corporate culture that sets a framework for communication and work practices. On the other hand, there are cultural patterns remaining unchanged for decades, if not forever. The smart thing to do is to use the team's cultural diversity for the benefit of the business. Match people to the right roles and combine opposing points of view.

Example:

Comedies often hinge on cultural misunderstanding. In a multinational country, such awkward situations can become a matter of everyday life.

As I work with employees from all around the country, I see that people from certain regions tend to solve problems through private talks and informal agreements. Countless progress trackers are burdensome and inefficient for them. In other regions, people pay close attention to the leader's personal qualities – charisma, leadership, etc.

Knowing these details is crucial for managing a remote team. It improves tasks distribution and helps achieve better results, for example, in negotiations with partners.

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MATCH PEOPLE TO THE RIGHT ROLES AND COMBINE OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW.

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### Principle 3. Communicate more closely with the remote team than you would with a regular one

Numerous studies show that the total impact of a message is only 50% verbal and vocal. The other half comes with nonverbal signals, such as posture, position relative to the recipient, facial expression, and look. Remote communication is obviously missing all of those channels and requires more effort to be effective.

Example:

At Nielsen, every manager of a remote team has a system of regular communications in place. For instance, we organise a virtual department meeting every month, a meeting with managers every two weeks, and individual calls with direct subordinates once a week.

What matters is frequency. If you keep rescheduling or cancelling such calls, remote employees may see it as neglect. It is also important to record such calls and distribute them to all participants.

There is another advice as regards communications – use social media to circulate newsletters to your team or create a group chat. There, you can discuss not only corporate achievements but also team members’ personal news, share photos and videos, and exchange holiday greetings. This will create a special atmosphere slightly different from the global identity, which is important when you are part of a corporation. Pay due regard to the communication style and accompany the information you share with comments, personal remarks, or even a joke, if appropriate.



*It takes more effort to make remote communication meaningful.*

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THE REMOTE TEAM’S PERFORMANCE DEPENDS ON INTERNAL HORIZONTAL TIES.

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### Principle 4. Build horizontal ties

The remote team's performance depends on internal horizontal ties. It is similar to regular teams, but with one exception: a remote team's situation is more complicated, because a Volgograd office employee cannot share a morning coffee with a colleague from the Urals. Address this by involving different members of your team in cross-functional projects, and inventing such projects if there are none. It will provide your employees with a better understanding of the business and boost their motivation.

Example:

Our goal was to increase employee engagement in the department. The most obvious and direct way would be to assign the task to the managers, who would then discuss it with their teams and agree on the action plan. Instead, we picked rank-and-file employees from different teams within the department, who were not familiar with each other, and asked them to jointly look into reasons for low engagement and then develop an action plan to improve it. The task itself was the first step to engage a certain group of people, who became ambassadors of the programme.

### **Principle 5. Even for remote teams, set up in-person meetings at least once a year**

Prepare a schedule that would include introductions by team members. Make sure the agenda features workshops or brainstorming sessions to help the team members set their goals and discuss problems. And do not forget about team building activities as joint entertainment brings the team together.

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INVOLVE DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF YOUR TEAM IN CROSS-FUNCTIONAL PROJECTS, AND INVENT SUCH PROJECTS IF THERE ARE NONE. IT WILL PROVIDE YOUR EMPLOYEES WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUSINESS AND BOOST THEIR MOTIVATION.

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Example:

In Nielsen, we often play a Two Truths and a Lie game for introduction, with the team trying to guess which is which. For example, an employee can say that during the university years they worked as an alpine skiing instructor, a waiter, and an assistant film director. The team voices their guess. The right answer is not always obvious, sometimes coming as a surprise and contributing to a more relaxed atmosphere.





*Remote teams also require informal team-building sessions.*

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IN ADDITION TO IMPLEMENTING NEW WORK PRINCIPLES, TAKE TIME TO SEE HOW THE TEAM REACTS, AND ADJUST THE APPROACH OR FIND A NEW ONE, IF NEED BE.

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## **How to make the best of it**

Technological development means that a growing number of managers will have remote employees. It is not always easy. In addition to implementing new work principles, take time to see how the team reacts, and adjust the approach or find a new one, if need be. These methods have repeatedly proven to be highly effective and helped remote teams at Nielsen improve their engagement and communication.

To manage a remote team effectively:

1. Find an individual approach to each employee;
2. Learn and take into account the region's cultural specifics;
3. Maintain regular and strong remote communication;
4. Strengthen the ties between team members;
5. Find a way to meet in person and communicate informally.

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*Source (<https://rb.ru/opinion/remote-team-management/>)*

