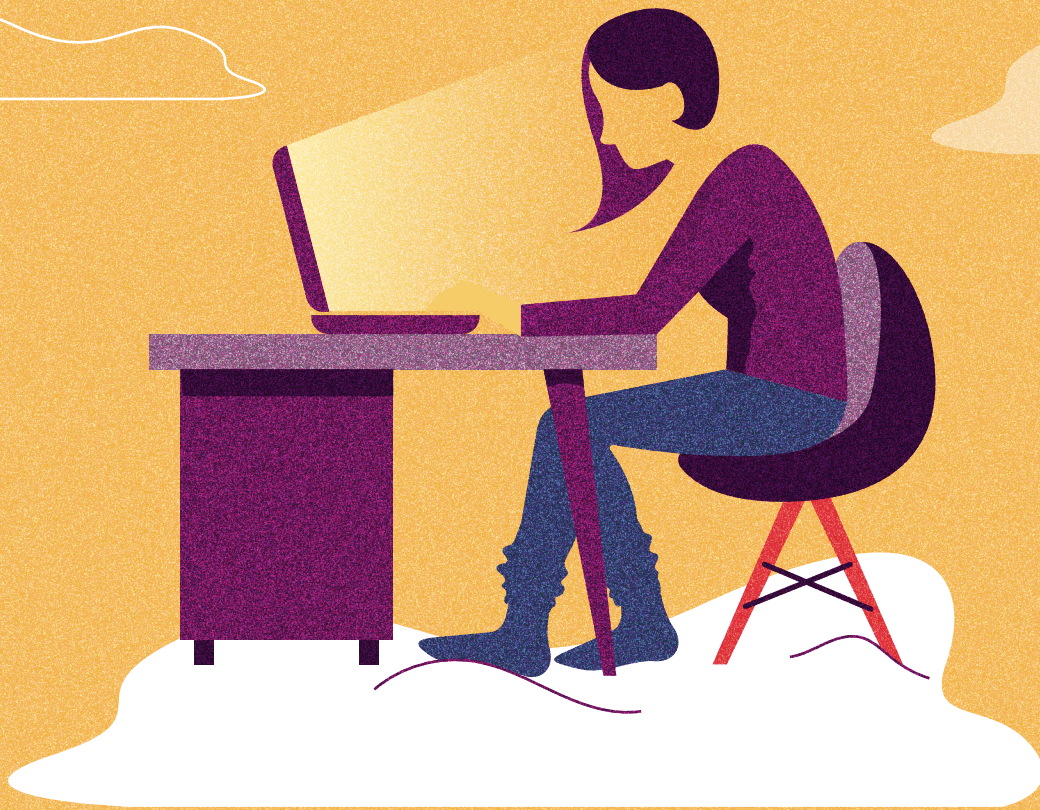


The Remote Work Handbook

Do's and Don'ts to Set You Up for Success



MICHAEL HYATT & CO

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he novel coronavirus has brought many changes to the workplace, including an immediate increase in remote work. Whether you're leading a remote team or being asked to work from home for the first time, this presents some new challenges.

Is this really as simple as closing the office and asking everyone to work from home? If I have a laptop and a kitchen table, am I all set? How do we make this work?

At Michael Hyatt & Company, we began as an entirely remote team. To this day, nearly all of our team members work from home at least part of the time. In fact, our workplace is designed as a space for collaboration and communication. It contains no offices or cubicles.

Based on our success in this area, we've identified some do's and don'ts for managing remote teams. Follow these guidelines, and you'll avoid the pitfalls of garbled communication and wasted time. You'll likely see a rise in creative output *and* a surge in employee morale.

Whether you're a CEO, a team leader, or a team member, these tips will help you succeed in the transition to remote work. You may also discover some new processes and better communication methods for your business that you'll want to use moving forward.

You can do this!





Do:

Determine which positions can be conducted remotely.

Don't:

Assume that all knowledge work can be done off-site.

Some jobs simply can't be done from home, or not as effectively. Most manual labor will likely require an on-site presence. Also, we've found that our sales team can be much more productive when they have a well-equipped and dedicated space for making audio and video calls. One size does not fit all when it comes to remote work.

Choose off-site workers based on job function.

Do:

Provide equipment necessary for remote work.

Don't:

Expect team members to pay company expenses.

Many knowledge workers need nothing more than a laptop, cell phone, and solid internet connection. Others may need more specialized equipment. Provide these tools, just as you do for on-site workers. For phone and Internet access, there's an overlap with personal use, so you could consider a supplemental allowance for these tools.

Set your team up for success by providing the tools they need to do the job.

Do:

Trust your team to work efficiently.

Don't:

Micromanage team members because you lack confidence in them.

Some leaders are leery of remote work because, well, they don't trust their workers. It's true that not everyone has the discipline and maturity to manage themselves. However, it's likely that such team members are not fully productive even under the supervision of a boss. If a team member cannot work well at home, it's possible they aren't performing well anyway. When you make the decision to allow a team member to work from home, trust them to get the job done.

Allow people to rise to the level of your trust.

**Do:****Manage outcomes.****Don't:****Manage activities.**

The premise of remote work is that team members can be more efficient and effective working independently. It's based on trust. Micromanaging erodes that trust quickly. Set clear expectations for the *outcomes* you want to achieve or the work product you're looking for. Then allow team members to produce that result on their own.

Make your team productive by defining the win, not prescribing the pathway.

Do:**Establish guidelines for availability.****Don't:****Expect others to always be on call.**

The blessing—and the curse—in remote work is that it allows you to work anywhere, anytime. High achievers will leverage that freedom to work when and where they are most productive. Let them! But don't expect them to be always on call. Set “office hours” when team members should be available to take meetings or respond to messages. Beyond that, allow flexibility in their work time.

Help your team be productive by establishing baseline expectations for availability but allowing freedom to capitalize on their best energy.

Do:**Create a business continuity plan.****Don't:****Assume that the cloud can handle every contingency.**

If you're leading a remote team, you'll have to depend on electronic document storage for most of your business functions. But what happens when your Internet goes down? Don't assume the cloud can handle every contingency. Spend some time asking “What if _____ happens?” Build redundancy into your communications, vital document storage, and business processes.

Reduce your risk by developing alternative processes for every business function.



Do:

Communicate more, not less.

Don't:

Assume that no news is good news.

Working from home cuts off the informal communication that occurs in an office. There's no opportunity for a quick question or brief update. Leaders are less likely than team members to notice the lack. The leader assumes no news is good news. Meanwhile, team members can feel isolated or left in the dark. Establish a regular pattern of communication that allows for passing information, asking questions, and making decisions. Consistent communication keeps leaders informed and teammates on board.

Head off problems by adopting a consistent meeting rhythm.

Do:

Establish protocols for communication.

Don't:

Allow overlapping communication channels.

Working off-site opens up possible channels that might not be used inside the office. Avoid confusion by designating approved channels for certain communications. For example, Michael Hyatt & Company uses email for all external communications, [Slack](#) for all internal communications, [Zoom](#) for all video meetings, and [Asana](#) for collaboration on projects. Text messaging is reserved for occasional urgent messages, never for standard communications.

Avoid confusion by sticking to designated channels for each type of communication.

Do:

Replace casual communication with online venues.

Don't:

Restrict interaction to business only.

In the office, a lot of interaction happens in the hallway, the lunchroom, or at the coffee pot. When that casual conversation evaporates, team trust can erode quickly. Be intentional about replacing that not-strictly-business chitchat. At Michael Hyatt & Company, we have a “water cooler” Slack channel, which is reserved for the kinds of personal back-and-forth that happens in most offices: birthday celebrations, birth announcements, vacation pictures, and the occasional joke.

Build the trust by facilitating interpersonal communication on your team.

**Do:**

Supplement communication with affective signals.

Don't:

Assume others perceive your tone.

It can be difficult to interpret the tone of a message when it's not delivered face-to-face. That's why emojis have become so popular. When nearly all of your team's communication is remote, misunderstanding can spiral quickly. Communicate tone explicitly with expressions like "no problem," "this is not urgent," or "I'm kidding." On video calls, smile frequently. On Slack, our team uses emojis freely to add a positive vibe to messages.

Maintain a collaborative mood by intentionally communicating positive affect.

Do:

Default to higher-context modes of communication.

Don't:

Be unaware of the affective gap in remote communication.

Everyone has their preferred mode of communication. Writers love email. Talkers love the phone. Quick starts sometimes prefer texts. Given the missing affective component of written communication—and the great danger of being misunderstood—it's wise to default to higher-context modes of communication. Prefer video conferences over conference calls. When an email or Slack message results in confusion, elevate immediately to phone or video. A five-minute video call can prevent several hours wasted unraveling a confusing email thread.

When in doubt, level up on the mode of communication.

Do:

Meet face-to-face periodically.

Don't:

Go 100 percent remote.

Just as there is no substitute for the deep work that remote teams can produce, there is no substitute for the relational value of face-to-face communication. It's vital for remote teams to gather occasionally for collaboration, communication, and a certain amount of relationship building. Time together builds trust. You can gain much of that through virtual collaboration. But face time is golden.

Supercharge team trust by meeting in person a minimum of once per quarter.

**Do:****Celebrate wins frequently.****Don't:****Be all business.**

Nobody likes wasting time, especially in meetings. That drives some leaders to be “all business” once a meeting is called. They want to get the team in, get the business accomplished, and get everybody back to work. But team members need connection and affirmation, two things that are harder to come by in a remote setting. One solution is to celebrate wins and do so frequently. This is the standing first item on our agenda for every meeting. Yes, for team meetings, quarterly team training, and even annual vision meetings. We always start by celebrating achievements and congratulating the teams and individuals that accomplished them.

Boost morale through frequent celebrations.



Do:

Adopt a code of etiquette for virtual meetings.

Don't:

Multitask just because you can.

Distance tends to lessen our sense of accountability, much like being in a large group. That makes a remote meeting fertile ground for distraction, multitasking, and other forms of nonparticipation. Head that off by agreeing on standards of etiquette for video conferencing. We ask people to have cameras on and mics off (except when speaking). And we discourage answering Slack or email messages during meetings. Meetings are more effective when the people who are there are all there.

Make virtual meetings more productive by agreeing on common behaviors.

Do:

Prioritize self-care.

Don't:

Allow work to take over your home.

The challenge for remote workers is to manage their own time and energy. The clock in your living room has no quitting time, so you have to set one for yourself. Set boundaries on your work time. Having a dedicated home “office” helps. If you don’t have one, set virtual boundaries. Close the laptop when not working. Turn off work-related email and messaging on your phone after hours. Avoid the temptation to abandon your morning startup and afternoon shutdown rituals.

Keep yourself fresh by managing your own health and energy.

Do:

Focus on your Daily Big 3.

Don't:

Wing it.

Working in the office brings its share of distractions, but working from home or a coffee shop carries more. You may have kids home from school, a spouse with a “quick question,” or boisterous patrons at the next table. Focus is the superpower you need to work effectively in a remote setting. To amp up your focus, double down on the productivity practices in the Full Focus System. When you work from home, your Quarterly Goals, Weekly Big 3, and Daily Big 3 are the golden thread that ties your productivity together. Establish your priorities for each day, and stick with them, and they will keep you focused.

Make yourself more productive by following the Full Focus System.

**Do:****Buddy up for added accountability.****Don't:****Struggle by yourself.**

Some people who work remotely miss the subtle accountability of having peers nearby. When someone can walk by your desk any time, you're less likely to go online shopping or scroll your social media feed. You can gain that positive peer pressure by buddying up with a workmate online. Set up a virtual work session on [Zoom](#) with a coworker. The online app [Focusmate](#) was designed for just this purpose. Simply announce what you're working on for the next hour, then get to it. Having a "live" person on the screen will boost your focus. This really works!

Keep yourself on task by leveraging the power of a virtual workmate.