



The Ultimate Guide to
**Empowering Your
Remote Workforce**

Although the sudden transition to remote work in 2020 presented many challenges to businesses worldwide, it also allowed us to assess how we work. Whether remote work was always part of the plan, or you had to pivot, there are several ways you can leverage technology to improve the way your remote team works together.

If you want to motivate your remote team to do their best work, enhance work-from-home collaboration and improve cybersecurity, this is the guide for you. Let's take everything we learned in 2020 and empower your remote workforce to perform their best.

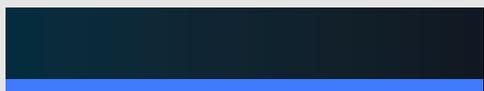
Remote Work Isn't a Trend



44% =

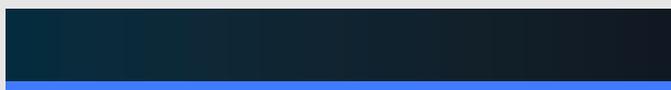
Growth in remote work over the last 5 years*

*According to a study by Flexjobs and Global Workplace Analytics



91% =

Growth in remote work over the last 10 years



159% =

Growth in remote work over the last 12 years



Remote work has seen a sharp increase in popularity over the last decade—2020 just accelerated this process. Many companies never envisioned they would be fully remote, but they have adapted and thrived. The reason why is simple: there are many benefits to working from home.

Remote Work Is Here to Stay



Reduced Overhead

The office, as you know it, is dead. Corporate America downsized in 2020 when many CEOs moved their organizations from the traditional office space to the much more affordable virtual workstation. Real estate savings aren't the only fiscal perk to remote work. According to Flexjobs, the average worker saves \$4,000 per year working remotely. Financially speaking, everyone wins with remote work.



Improved Worker Satisfaction

When remote work is done right, your team is happier. Flexible schedules lead to an improved work/life balance. This leads to an increase in job satisfaction and employee retention rates. This concept is especially true for your youngest employees. According to CBRE, 69 percent of millennials would trade in other benefits for a more flexible workspace. Remote work creates a loyal workforce.



Increased Productivity

According to Global Workplace Analytics, approximately 40 percent of remote workers are more productive than their office counterparts. With the right resources in place, you can increase productivity, enhance teamwork and collaboration, cut down on wasted meetings and reduce unscheduled absences. With more flexibility in scheduling, departments can stagger their work times to ensure there is always a member of the team on the clock, too.



The Best Talent Pool

Remote work can also expand the talent pool of candidates. Companies can hire the top talent from any location instead of just the best candidate near their headquarters. When you eliminate geographic boundaries from your hiring process, candidates don't have to factor their morning commute into whether they want to join your company. This can give you a major edge over your competition.



5 Challenges of Remote Work

There's no denying the benefits of remote work, but there can be some challenges, too. To create the best work-from-home experience, you first must understand the pain points. Arguably the greatest barrier to a successful remote team lies in their level of engagement. If your team is losing focus, they will inevitably experience a decline in performance. When their performance isn't at peak level, this impacts how they work together. Here are a few common challenges remote workers struggle with:

They Feel Isolated: With fewer face-to-face interactions, 19 percent of remote workers admit they struggle with loneliness, according to Buffer's 2020 State of Remote Work Report. Some workers also struggle with unplugging from their virtual workstations. According to Monster, 69 percent of remote workers experience burnout while working from home.

They Can't Connect: According to Buffer, 20 percent of remote workers identify communication as one of their biggest obstacles. Scheduling conflicts, time zone gaps and limited access to the resources they need are a few reasons why remote teams are disconnected.

They Need Support: Many remote employees don't have a strong support system. Without supervision, they may not know their deadlines and what projects to prioritize. They may also deserve more recognition for their achievements. On the other hand, there's management mistrust too – not every manager loves the concept of having their employees work in their PJs.

They Don't Have the Right Setup: Some remote workers don't have the resources to do their best work. Whether it's a spotty internet connection, choppy video streaming options, or a faulty network, remote employees are only as good as their virtual workstations.

They Are Distracted: Remote work isn't for everyone. Without a dedicated workspace, free from distractions, many remote employees can struggle to transition to working from home. Although your remote team needs direction, they also need to be self-starters to accomplish every task.

How to Motivate Your Remote Team

Working from home has plenty of challenges, but there are ways you can motivate your team to do their best work. Successful businesses have seen this transition as an opportunity to improve the way their team works together. There are several techniques you can implement to make remote work easier for your team. Let's discuss a few ways you can increase work-from-home motivation.

1

Establish Policies: If you're offering a work from home option, start by creating a comprehensive guide. This guide can be continuously updated in your cloud, and can feature remote company policies, work schedule rules, reporting processes and more. Although you don't want to take away the best work-from-home perk, flexibility, you do want to set some parameters of when your team is on the clock. This can also help your remote team avoid burnout, as they will know when they can work and when it's time to shut down the laptop.

2

Focus on Your Culture: It's a great time to focus on your company culture. Stay in constant communication with your team. Provide client feedback and help them see the big picture. Empower your team to make decisions and show them you trust their insight. Consider creative ways you can show your team you appreciate their hard work. Listen to your team's pain points and proactively discuss ways you can solve their problems. Organizations focused on company culture right now have happier and more motivated employees.

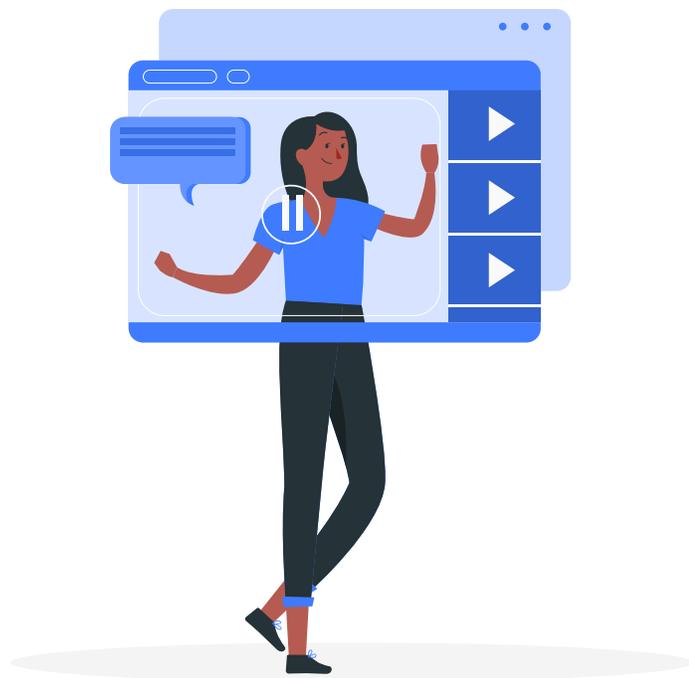
3

Trust in the Best Tools: Utilize the best tools to increase engagement and improve remote collaboration. With the right tools, software and support, your remote team will be happier and more productive. The best technology can improve communication, enhance project management, streamline workflows and enable your team to access what they need from anywhere. Let's cover the essential tools you need to increase remote work collaboration.



5 Collaboration Tools That Enable Your Remote Team

How do you improve team collaboration? It takes a combination of communication, empathy and the best technologies to keep your team connected. With the right remote collaboration tools and software, your team can work smarter, more efficiently and track their success like never before. So, what tools and software do you need? Here are the top five tools that enable remote teams to work from anywhere.



01

Increase Remote Engagement with Video Conferencing Tools

Did you know that Zoom saw over a 60 percent increase in consumer spending in April 2020? Video conferencing software like Zoom, Slack and Google Hangouts have become widely popular thanks largely to the fact the technology provides remote team members with virtual face-to-face interactions that increase engagement. Here are a few of the benefits teams can take advantage of when they collaborate in the cloud:

- Connect through live video chat
- Schedule meetings for future dates
- Stay informed with instant messaging chat rooms
- Initiate instant meetings
- Utilize easy screen-share options
- Save valuable information with recording features

With video conferencing software, teams can host teleconference meetings quickly and effectively. They can invite unlimited participants for streaming. Team members can also stream from a variety of devices. This software gives employees an outlet to connect, collaborate and engage. Video conferencing also personalizes the meeting experience for all the participants. Team members can share exciting news, work together in real time or thank a co-worker for helping with an assignment. You can host a company-wide meeting, one-on-one, or virtual event and collaborate from anywhere.



02

Connect Through Team Communication Solutions

Internal emails have pretty much gone the way of the dinosaurs. In-house communication can now be accomplished via communication tools, like Microsoft Teams and Slack. Remote workers can have one-on-one conversations or align projects into specific group channels. Here are a few benefits:

- Team communication in one place
- Quick, succinct messaging
- Organized group chats
- Integrated file sharing
- Easy search features
- Video conferencing capabilities

Team communication tools allow the entire workforce to assemble in one place, organize their workflows and communicate quickly and clearly. When you have a convenient chatroom structure, your remote team can share information and collaborate in real

time. Team communication solutions can help everyone work more efficiently on projects and ensure they are on the same page.

03

Prioritize Tasks with Workflow Management Tools

Successful workflow management depends on three things: visibility, functionality and simplicity. To get your team working together, you need a workflow management tool that can help you prioritize tasks and streamline operations. Here are the benefits:

- Coordinate projects with in-depth planning features.
- See a clear visual presentation of task flows.
- Gain access to project tracking features.
- Assess employee productivity, project statuses and more.
- Set priorities, deadlines, share resources and assignments.

Some of the most popular project management tools are Jira, Trello, Basecamp, Monday and Wrike. Although each of these tools has unique features, they all provide transparency around productivity and the statuses of projects. With the right workflow management tools, your remote team can enjoy their flexible work schedule and still have the guidance they need for assignments.

04

Utilize Versatile Multipurpose Applications

When it comes to the most complete collaboration solutions, Microsoft 365 and G-Suite check off all the important boxes on your company's lists for communications and productivity. With a multipurpose application, remote teams have access to all their familiar applications on a cloud-based platform. They can work on projects simultaneously, share worksheets in real time, and reduce overlap, miscommunication and other issues that bog down productivity levels. Here are a few of the benefits:

- Gain access to large storage space for online group collaboration.
- Create and collaborate with productivity apps.
- Work on documents, spreadsheets and presentations in real time.
- Coordinate internal and external meetings with shared calendars.

With multipurpose applications like Microsoft 365 or G-Suite, your remote team can work smarter and faster in a shared workspace with global accessibility. Companies can bolster their communication efforts with access to business email, shared calendar services and productivity apps designed specifically for mobile collaboration. Employees can also collaborate seamlessly with team chat messaging sessions, video conferencing meetings and shared worksheets. They can also track their progress with a bevy of innovative tools.



05

Backup and Access All Your Files in the Cloud

We've all done this – tried to send an email with an attachment only to get the dreaded error message, “your file is too large to send.” Most email servers can't handle documents bigger than a few megabytes and large files can slow down your computer. Instead, you can store and work with your files in the cloud – no matter how large they are.

- Back up all your large files with ease.
- Access the files you need on any device.
- See the latest version of all your assets.
- Access what you need from anywhere.

With a reliable file sharing system, your remote team can utilize a centralized platform to find, view and work on whatever file they need. Wherever your team is working from, file storage applications are secure and allow your employees to instantly access and share information. With more flexibility and secure remote access to your network, your team can increase their productivity and collaborate at their best.

How to Keep Your Remote Team Engaged

The need to increase employee engagement is pressing. According to Gallup data, only 34 percent of U.S. workers are engaged at work – and that was before the pandemic! With your team out of the office, how will they reach their peak level of engagement?

What if there were a few easy ways to drive engagement and make your remote team feel valued? Collaboration tools can help your team stay connected and perform their best work. These tools will also help increase work-from-home engagement. With the right people, processes and technology, you can accomplish anything you want to.

5 Technology Tips to Drive Employee Engagement

01

Host Virtual Meetings to Increase Engagement

If we learned one thing over the last year, hopefully, it's that our meetings can be more productive in a video chatroom than in a stuffy conference room. Video conferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack are affordable, and they provide your team with face-to-face interactions to boost engagement. Here are a few ways you can build team camaraderie with video conferencing tools:

Send Quick Video Messages: When remote work is done right, your team is happier. Flexible schedules lead to an improved work/life balance. This leads to an increase in job satisfaction and employee retention rates. This concept is especially true for your youngest employees. According to CBRE, 69 percent of millennials would trade in other benefits for a more flexible workspace. Remote work creates a loyal workforce.

Have One-on-One Meetings: Giving individual attention to your employees is one of the best ways to increase employee engagement. According to a poll by the Harvard Business Review, 46 percent of remote workers said that the most successful managers frequently check in on them. Host a one-on-one meeting with each member of your team and listen to what they have to say.

Host Social Events: Don't focus too much on work. Consider ways outside of work to have fun with your collaboration tools. 2020 has introduced a lot of creative ideas to the virtual workspace. Here are a few ways remote teams can interact through video conferencing tools:



Virtual lunch-and-learns



Happy hours



Holiday parties



Coffee and tea breaks



Netflix watch parties



Trivia games



Gamification



Icebreakers

With video, there are endless options to increase engagement outside of the normal workday. The key to promoting any team-building activities is to allow your team to decide how they want to interact. Once they lay the groundwork, help them facilitate their plan.

02

Use Communication Tools for Teambuilding Exercises

According to Slack, 85 percent of workers want to feel closer to their remote teammates. Keep an open line of communication through messaging applications, like Slack or Microsoft Teams. Again, it's important to have your remote team take their mind off work and discuss non-work-related topics in chat groups too. Dedicate messaging channels to special events, birthdays, company pets, healthy recipes and fitness goals. When you add a virtual water cooler into your messaging platform, teams stay connected, build strong relationships, increase worker satisfaction and collaborate at their best.

03

Reward Your Team

According to a study by the Harvard Business Journal, 72 percent of respondents agreed that recognition for high performers can significantly impact employee engagement. Even when workers are out of the office, there are many ways employers can show their appreciation.

Here are a few:

Surprise Them with Virtual Gifts: Show your appreciation by sending your team a virtual gift card on birthdays, work anniversaries or for a job well done. Whether you drop the gift in their email, a Teams or Slack chat or an HR platform, they will be pleased.

Use Cloud-Based HR Tools: Boost peer recognition through a cloud-based HR platform like Bamboo HR or Zenefits. When managers give instant praise on a platform with company-wide visibility, this boosts engagement and increases remote motivation.

Implement a Rewards Platform: Take rewards to the next level with a rewards program like Bonusly. Remote workers can gift each other “mints” for hitting deadlines, getting help on projects or for performing excellent work. These mints are then converted into tangible rewards.

04

Teach the Power of Telelearning

Every organization should do its best to create a culture that fosters development. When you invest in your remote team’s future, they will reach a higher level of engagement. Managers can provide their remote workforce with access to training courses and e-learning programs on their cloud platforms. **So, we all agree that education is important, but what courses should you feature?**

Cross-Training Videos: Teach your team insights into every employee’s job by having each team member create training videos.

Development Plans: Help your employees identify areas where there is room for improvement and create a peer-to-peer video that trains them in those areas.

Educational Courses: Promote professional development courses and reward your team for taking them. Also, consider creating internal videos teaching them about your company.

Non-Work-Related Courses: Not every course needs to focus on your team’s growth or career. Your remote team may want to publish courses on their favorite dishes, fitness tips, mixology lessons or a variety of other topics.

05

Help Employees Avoid Burnout

Some remote employees work too hard, and it can be difficult for them to unplug. Similarly, employers need to be mindful of how many hours their remote team is working. Microsoft 365 can help your team reach new levels of productivity. The application can also help your team switch things off, too. Managers can set reminders on remote employees’ calendars, notifying them when to end their day. They can also schedule break times or request their team to turn off notifications on weekends. Let your team know that it’s okay to be off the clock when they need the break.

Helping remote workers avoid burnout is critical. When your employees experience burnout, they feel physically and emotionally depleted. If they are overwhelmed, they are more likely to make mistakes. This leads to additional problems. According to a study by IBM, human error is the leading cause of 95 percent of cybersecurity breaches, which brings us to our next point — hackers are targeting remote workforces!



Warning:

Your Remote Employees Are a Security Risk!

The need to increase employee engagement is pressing. According to Gallup data, only 34 percent of U.S. workers are engaged at work – and that was before the pandemic. With your team out of the office, how will they reach their peak level of engagement?

What if there were a few easy ways to drive engagement and make your remote team feel valued? Collaboration tools can help your team stay connected and perform their best work. These tools can also help increase work-from-home engagement. With the right people, processes and technology, you can accomplish anything you want to. Here are a few ways how:

68%

of business leaders feel their cybersecurity risks are increasing.
-Accenture



Hackers attack every **39** seconds, on average **2,244** times a day.
-University of Maryland



Worldwide spending on cybersecurity is going to reach **\$133.7** billion in **2022**.
-Gartner

Employee engagement and collaboration are extremely important. However, these concepts are meaningless if all your data is compromised. Although working remotely can increase productivity and boost employee satisfaction, there are a plethora of security issues with remote work. Remote workers are prone to using personal devices for work-related tasks. They work on vulnerable networks. They lack proper training on cybersecurity. This makes them the perfect target for cybercrimes. Every organization needs a reliable prevention system in place — that is where we come in.

3 Common Cyberattacks That Target Remote Workers

When hackers are trying to steal data from an organization, they will deploy some tried and true methods to breach your system. You and your team must be familiar with the most common types of hacking techniques. Here are a few common ways malicious actors can steal your valuable data:

1

Malware: Human error is your biggest threat. Malware, ransomware or a virus can be accidentally installed on a device by a user. Remote workers may receive a pop-up alert or open an infected email link. Once the harmless-looking attachment is downloaded, it wreaks havoc by taking control of the device or by stealing valuable data. Malware attacks are costly, with the average expense of \$2.6 million per breach according to a study by Accenture.

2

Phishing: This cyberattack is performed through email and is a deceptive way hackers try to get recipients to download malware to their devices or share confidential information. For phishing attacks, the attacker sends an email urging the recipient to take action through a clickable link or attachment. Usually, the email appears to be sent from a reliable source, like from coworkers or a company you do business with.

3

Password Attacks: In some cases, a hacker will steal a victim's password and use it to take valuable information from them. If a person reuses their credentials for all their accounts, they risk having all their sensitive information vulnerable once a cyberthreat obtains one password. Without a unique password, a hacker can utilize a collection of usernames and passwords to access everything they need.

These are just a few common ways hackers can access valuable corporate data through an unsuspecting remote worker's mistake. Whether it is session hijacking, man-in-the-middle attacks, denial-of-service attacks, application vulnerabilities, SQL injection tasks, or business email compromise (BEC) attacks, there are several sophisticated ways a hacker can attack a remote network. Unfortunately, this list is only continuing to grow.

10 Ways to Protect Your Data with a Remote Workforce

New cyberthreats and data breaches are reported every day, so organizations must protect their databases proactively. With the right knowledge, training and support, you can be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Here are ten quick tips to help you prevent a data privacy breach with robust work-from-home security:

1 Network Security: Every business with a work-from-home policy should have an external network for remote access. If a breach occurs, it will be isolated from your private network. With a network security strategy, you can prevent unauthorized use of your network.

2 Virtual Private Network (VPN): VPN gateways extend a private network across a public one. This creates secure access from the employee's device to your network. A VPN provides your team with a safe outlet to perform their work.

3 Mobile Device Protection: Mobile devices have become increasingly popular for work-related tasks, but they pose a security risk to your business. Remote teams' mobile devices need to be protected, and there should be a mobile device management solution in place to take control of any stolen or lost devices.

4 Patching Updates: One of the best ways to keep your data secure is to regularly update the tools your remote team uses. Hardware and software should be routinely patched and updated to cover any vulnerabilities that could expose your network.

5 Take the Next Steps: Put actions in place for protection, including data encryption, multi-factor authentication and session locking mechanisms. Any of these steps can detect suspicious behavior and help deter hackers from infiltrating your system.

6 Password Policies: Instead of allowing your remote team to choose their own passwords, it's best to utilize a password manager to generate strong, unique passwords and require mandatory updates of all passwords. Remind your team that business privacy is a top priority.

7

Workforce Training: As we said before, most data breaches are caused by human error. Educate your team on the latest cybersecurity tricks and consider implementing phishing training and simulation programs to increase awareness. Also, make sure to create a reporting system for private information security breaches.

8

Company-Owned vs. Personal Devices: It's best to provide employees with work-issued devices when you can to protect your network. If you have a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy, establish clear policies for which devices and software are permitted.

9

Cloud Security: Utilize cloud-based systems that provide the highest level of security. Create clear company policies for how data is stored on company systems. Ensure your team is storing data securely in the company-protected cloud and never on their personal devices.

10

Data Loss Prevention (DLP): Every organization needs a DLP strategy to ensure sensitive data isn't lost. Determine what data needs to be prioritized, learn when it's at risk, closely track the movement of your data and always have multiple backups ready.



It's Time to Embrace the Future

99%

of remote workers would like to work remotely, at least some of the time, for the rest of their career.

-Buffer



Around 30% of the workforce will continue to work remotely by the end of 2021.

-Global Workplace Analytics



Optimal engagement occurs when employees spend 60 percent to 80% of their time working off-site.

-Gallup

2020 forced us to change the way we work together at the drop of a mask, and we're better for it. The future of workforce engagement and collaboration will rely heavily on technology – especially for remote workforces. When you use collaboration software and tools to work smarter and more efficiently, you will benefit your business no matter where you are working from.

The right technology makes it easier to connect and collaborate from anywhere. To maximize your success, you will need your team to work together in a secure and seamless environment that enhances communication, increases productivity and provides a clear vision of your goals and objectives.

For more information on how you can empower your remote workforce, schedule a free assessment. We can evaluate how you're working, make a series of recommendations, implement the right solutions and enable technologies that drive engagement, collaboration and increased security throughout your organization.

Now is the time to empower your remote workforce perform their best. We can help you increase engagement, enhance collaboration and protect your data.