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Remote Work Guide

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Defining Remote Work

Remote work is an arrangement or practice where a person does their job /work outside the traditional office space. Workers are able to digitally connect to their workplace.

3 Benefits of Remote Work for Entrepreneurs

1. Higher Productivity

- Productivity is essential to the growth of an organisation. Remote working creates greater flexibility for employees as they are not confined to a rigid office schedule, employees can avoid office distractions and eliminate the daily commute. This freedom often creates a healthy work-life balance and encourages employees to get more done.
- Outsourcing a remote third party to complete repetitive or complex tasks gives employees more time to focus on the business core competencies. Moreover, remote freelancers are often highly motivated, disciplined and utilise tools and work processes for maximising productivity.

2. Cost Effective

- One of the most important things to any small business owner is the bottom line and remote working can lead to a reduction in operation/overhead costs. Working from home means that employers can downsize the office space or depending on the business move completely to a remote, cloud-based operation. This can save the



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organisation money on rent, utilities and the amount of office equipment to purchase and maintain , etc.

- Outsourcing a remote freelancer or independent contractor is cost effective as they are self-trained, so companies don't need to spend money on training them. Moreover, an employer can access specialised skills and expertise when and as they are needed by paying an hourly rate or project fee which may be cheaper than paying an employee wages. Also, there is no need for office space, stationery, laptops etc as freelancers have their own resources and tools.

3. Wider pool of talented professionals

- Your organisation will have unique needs which may require a specialised skill set not accessible locally. The digital space has allowed businesses to cast a wider net to recruit and hire highly skilled professionals. Thus, remote working ensures that hires are no longer confined by geographical barriers and can be located all over the world.

Integrating remote work into your organisation can be a daunting task. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a fundamental shift in the way that we work. Remote work is here to stay and entrepreneurs are empowered to use remote work to make sustainable and profitable businesses.

Here are some best practices and mistakes to avoid to get the most out of your remote working experience.

Remote working for entrepreneurs and managing remote employees

Create a Work Schedule

Structuring your days ensures productivity while maintaining a healthy work life balance. A detailed remote work schedule should include:

- Non-work hours - these times are designated for your personal life.



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- Uninterrupted focus time - this will allow you to focus on all tasks related to your business.
- Breaks at various intervals - these brief relaxation periods should help you to renegeise and refocus on the task at hand.

SMART Goals

The acronym SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely/ Time-bound goals.

Specific - Goal must be sufficiently clear, use as much details as possible. Another person who reviews this goal should be able to determine what should be done/ achieved and how it will be accomplished.

Measurable- How will you determine if the goal has been achieved? You can use metrics and KPIs to track progress.

Achievable - Look at your schedule, resources, restraints, capabilities and determine if the goal can realistically be accomplished in the stipulated time frame.

Relevant - Select goals which are of importance and will have an impact on your business.

Timely/ Time Bound - Give yourself a deadline.

An example of a SMART goal is as follows.

Specific: I'm going to help the team communicate better to free up time wasted on communication inefficiencies.

Measurable: Reduce average time of 1.5 hours per day on email in half to 45 minutes per day.



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Achievable: Simplify conversations by removing long email chains and using an instant messaging solution e.g. Teams or Slack.

Relevant: Empower my workforce to produce their best work and reduce time wasted on unnecessary and inefficient tasks.

Timely: Implementing a messaging solution within two weeks and half the time spent on communication within the next month.

By breaking down your goals into these components you are able to gain a better understanding of what needs to be accomplished and you are more likely to accomplish these goals because you can track and measure your progress.

Incorporate Prioritising Techniques

- After creating S.M.A.R.T goals you might find that all the tasks appear to be equally important and you are left wondering where to start.
- To decide which task needs your immediate attention you can employ techniques such as the Eisenhower Matrix and the Pareto principle. Using these techniques will allow you to use your time more productively and efficiently.
- The Eisenhower Matrix categorises tasks as
 - Urgent and important tasks - requires immediate attention
 - Non-urgent but important - schedule for attention at another time / decide later.
 - Urgent but non-important tasks - delegate
 - Non-urgent and non-important task- remove from the list
- The Pareto principle says that 80% of the outcome comes from 20% of the tasks / work done. Thus, one should consider the tasks that have the biggest impact or best results and focus on completing them. These tasks do not need to be strictly 20 % of your workload. What is important is its impact. The remaining tasks should then be allotted less time than the crucial tasks or be delegated to ensure completion.



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Security & Data Protection

- Ensuring that your company's data is secure can be a complicated task when employees are not located in the same physical space. To ensure the safety and confidentiality of sensitive business information employees should be encouraged to take the following precautions to help prevent data breaches.
 - Only using secure networks to complete work related activities.
 - Regularly changing passwords
 - Upload work documents/ sensitive data to cloud storage
 - Implementing a 2 factor authentication
 - Look out for scam / phishing emails

Outsourcing a Remote Freelancer or independent contractor

1. Determine the scope of work

Determining the scope of work is the foundation for an effective execution of a project as it sets out how the project will be completed and the specific elements of the project. Further, it ensures that all parties are on the same page and minimises confusion.

A detailed scope of work should consider factors such as:

- Project goals, objectives and tasks
- Hard and Soft skills needed to achieve /complete the task
- Project deliverables
- Milestones, Check-In dates, Deadlines
- Company's Budget

By determining the scope of work a decision can be made whether the work is achievable in-house or whether it would be performed more effectively by an external person or company.

2. Select your hiring channel

Selecting the most suitable hire to complete a task can be a difficult process. There are hundreds of qualified professionals available at your fingertips but how do you narrow down the pool of experts and select the most suitable candidate?



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Websites such as Upwork, FlexJobs, Indeed, Fiverr and job boards like Jobcase and Simplyhired take the hassle out of finding and selecting a remote candidate. These sites provide a pool of workers, list their experience, review of previous projects and in some cases references which allows you to find the best hire.

3. Test you candidates skills

During the interview process create a small exercise which will allow the candidate to demonstrate their competency in the desired areas. This process will help you evaluate a freelancer's skills and decide if their work aligns with your project development, quality standards and their overall suitability for your project.

Be mindful that such a request will carry a service fee as freelancers will not work for free.

4. Leveraging Remote or technology tools

There are various technologies which are essential to being productive and staying connected when working remotely.

Collaboration and communication tools like Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, are essential for discussing tasks, sharing direct reports, and bringing the virtual team together.

Apps such as Trello, Asana, Jira can be used to manage projects and tasks for a virtual team. These platforms allow streamlining and tracking projects. They help teams collaborate on projects, create to-do lists, update tasks, and share files.

5. **Establish Consistent Check-Ins**

Consistent check-ins are essential for the success of any projects. Regular check ins whether via phone calls or video conferencing ensures that remote



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workers are making progress as scheduled and it allows them to ask clarifying questions, highlight and solve problems as they arise. The communication during these meetings should be clear and detailed; being brief or short is not always better; this opens the door for miscommunication.

Three Common Mistakes when outsourcing a remote worker

1. **Do not** outsource a remote worker/s who demands all your attention.
The purpose of remote outsourcing is to allow business owners and employees to concentrate their efforts on their core competencies. If a remote worker is unable to properly manage the tasks given to them it is best to reconsider your options.
2. **Do not** outsource all your non-core areas at the same time.
As a business owner it is your responsibility to ensure the proper operation and management of your company. Hiring remote workers to do multiple non-essential tasks at the same time can lead to one, the entrepreneur stretched too thin in trying to maintain regular communication and staying on top of tasks with the various hires. Two, the possibility that multiple outsourced remote workers are unable to complete the task or project as scheduled. If such a situation were to happen it could be challenging to bounce back from.
3. **Do not** hire a remote worker solely based on cost
Considering economical options is always necessary when deciding to outsource a remote worker. However, although an outsourced remote worker is cheaper than having a full time employee the cheapest hire might not provide the best services and vice versa.
Apart from the price, look for other factors that make the outsourcer more favourable than its competitors. Find the best value for your dollar without compromising the quality of work produced.