



A Complete Guide for Businesses: Making Remote Working Actually Work

An Introduction to Remote Working

Remote working goes by many names: smart working, mobile work, telecommuting, telework, or just working from home. A handful of companies, like Impala, Basecamp, and GitLab, have been successfully functioning remotely for a while now. But, for many, the shift to remote work was abrupt and forced upon them by unprecedented external circumstances – the coronavirus pandemic.

Without a doubt, a remote work setting has many benefits, but it comes with challenges too. You might have struggled with a few during the pandemic. Ben's [ultimate guide to remote working](#) is here to help you and your team. It'll help you get the most out of remote working, learn how to navigate the challenges, and how to pick the right strategy and tools to create a high-functioning remote or hybrid team.

Why Work Remotely?

Start by asking why you or your team want to work remotely. What are you hoping to gain out of it and are you ready to make the necessary adjustments? While making this decision, you need to take into account the impact on both employers and employees.

You'll notice throughout this guide we focus on employees. After all, all employers rely heavily on their staff – so having more people available and being able to keep staff happier is all good news. There's the potential to save a lot of money too. Not only will you have limited or no office costs, there's some suggestion that remote work improves productivity and efficiency.

There have been a [lot of studies](#) on this subject, with a 2013 study by Stanford University professors and scholars being one of the most cited. 16,000 call center employees volunteered to work from home over nine months, and in this time performance increased by 13%.

Remote working can also have a knock-on effect on the amount of sick days taken ([it did during the pandemic](#)), although it's not necessarily clear if employees are healthier, or just that people feel willing to do some work at home while feeling unwell.

Employers do have the responsibility to make sure employees are still taking breaks, holidays and sick days while remote working. The added flexibility may feel like a huge benefit, but employees shouldn't feel like they have to earn it by putting in extra time. No matter where they're based, it's an employer's responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their employees – more on that later.

Employees have really enjoyed the additional time and flexibility while remote working during the pandemic. For many, it would be tough to return to the office full time. Slack's [Future Forum research](#) of 4,700 knowledge workers found the majority never want to go back to the old way of working.

One of the key takeaways from their research is that remote work is a net positive. When compared with traditional office work, the remote workers they surveyed reported higher levels of satisfaction for work-life balance, stress and anxiety levels, productivity, and work in general. This only has benefits for their employers.

Establishing and Maintaining Company Culture

Creating a strong company culture in any work setting is probably one of the larger challenges leaders and managers face. And in a remote workplace, something that already appeared intangible has seemingly lost the last bit of its foundation.

It's also easy to dismiss culture as a bit of a buzzword. But every company has a culture – whether it's heavily advertised on the website or just an unspoken understanding. It's a hugely important aspect of a company and the type of environment it offers for its employees.

With a culture that promotes transparency, honesty, and recognition, employees can be happier. And if you can win over your employees with the right workplace culture, you're much more likely to win in the marketplace.

Company Culture in a Remote Setting

If you asked them to explain it, it's likely there'll be some common themes across different businesses' cultures – whether they've officially confirmed their culture in writing anywhere or not. But it's definitely better to guide the culture you want by having a company mission, vision, and core value statements. You might just opt for one, all three, or perhaps you'll have different names for your statements. The important thing is that you're sharing and promoting the same message across the company. Regardless of organisational size or remote working set-up, this consistency is important.

Company Mission, Vision, and Core Value Statements

The first step in creating a strong remote company culture is having clear, inspiring company mission, vision, and core value statements. These can have a strong impact on your team, foster a strong work ethic, and create cohesion to guide everybody in the same direction. So, what are they?

Mission Statement

A good mission statement is a short description of the organisation's purpose, goals, and the sort of products/services it provides to help find solutions to specific problems. It's a simple yet powerful statement that acts as a guiding light for company culture. In modern working culture, a clear purpose has become incredibly important to employees.

Overall, a good mission statement explains in less than 100 words:

What you do
Why you do it
How you do it

Try to answer these questions when creating a mission statement. And aim to make it concise, outcome-oriented, and inclusive.

Vision Statement

While a company mission statement creates a sense of purpose in the present, a vision statement communicates where the company wants to be in the future.

Vision statements function as roadmaps that guide each action of a company.

A good vision statement should be:

Realistic
Not too far in the future
Measurable

Company Values

A company's values represent its desired behaviours and attitudes. Typically, they would be formulated by a leader in the company and passed down through time.

But there's no reason why you can't get employees involved in setting company values.

When a company transitions to remote work, it might be necessary to reformulate the values to reflect the remote working culture.

Some examples of important company values could include:

Trust
Open communication
Teamwork
Independence
Integrity
Ownership
Innovation
Empathy
Accountability

Seeing a list of words in isolation is unlikely to mean much to anyone. Try to choose something that's meaningful for your business, and create examples or sentences which show employees how these company values work in reality.

Goal setting

When you've successfully formulated the company mission, vision, and value statements, they can be broken down into actionable and measurable goals. That's where employees from across the company can get involved. Goal setting can seem like a daunting task, but it helps to create alignment within the company, and encourages employees to feel connected to the wider business goals and mission.

OKRs (Objectives & Key Results)

An increasingly popular goal-setting methodology is the implementation of OKRs (Objective and Key Results). Companies like Google, Spotify, and LinkedIn use their OKRs to manage and grow their businesses. And for good reason – they can be incredibly effective.

In a nutshell, OKRs are a goal-setting framework that helps define and measure goals. They can be used at all levels of a company, from board to employee.

In a remote setting, having clear goals is arguably more important as it helps everyone stay on the same page. You can encourage collaboration and ensure colleagues are regularly sharing progress on their OKRs. It's important to share in each other's success. Without providing an opportunity for employees to shout about what they're up to, these achievements may become lost.

As well as being reported on often, objectives should be:

Linked to the company's mission

Qualitative

Ambitious

Time-bound

Have 3-4 key results

Key Results should be:

Quantitative

Measurable

Difficult but not impossible to achieve

Have actionable to-dos (can be limitless)

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

Very similar to OKRs, KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are measurable values to demonstrate how effectively a company is reaching its vision. They are quantifiable, results-based statements that measure progress on goals and objectives.

The structure of a KPI includes:

A measure

A target

A data source

Clearly defined where and how each KPI is tracked

Reporting frequency

KPIs should be developed in relation to Critical Success Factors (CSFs), key objectives, the company strategy, and company vision. A Critical Success Factor is a necessary qualitative element to achieve an objective.

For example, customer relationship building to achieve sales objectives, high productivity to achieve operational objectives, or sustainability to achieve higher customer satisfaction. If you're making the move to remote work, you may even be able to monitor the change in your KRs as employees adjust to a new way of working.

How to implement KPIs

Identify measurable business performances areas

Establish a target you wish to achieve

Compare current performance with target

Write a KPI that will help you achieve that target. KPIs should be SMART:

Specific: be clear about what it measures and why

Measurable: must be measurable to a defined standard

Achievable: the company should be able to deliver this KPI

Relevant: must measure something that matters and improves performance

Time-bound: achieved within an agreed time frame

Review KPIs regularly

To read the full guide to making remote working actually work, head over here:

<https://www.thanksben.com/remote-working-the-business-guide>



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