MARKETLAUNCHER

Remote Workforce Playbook

Lead your team from virtually anywhere

Tips from a 20+-year, fully remote workforce

Introduction

As your team transitions to a virtual environment, the way you work, live, and interact with others has changed. From a team who has been working remotely for more than two decades, this playbook is our guide to leading and succeeding from anywhere, no matter the circumstances.

Navigating the Day-to-Day

Ditch the PJs

While lounging in sweats can be tempting, it's best to treat your day as if you're going into the office. Shower, make coffee, get dressed. Develop new routines that kick your body into work mode, not sleep mode.

Get Extra Engaged

With less opportunities to talk to your team, proactively let them know your priorities and project timelines. When you are in meetings, make an effort to be engaged and try to be extra responsive to calls and emails. You don't have to feel chained to your desk, but your team should feel like they can reach you in a timely manner.
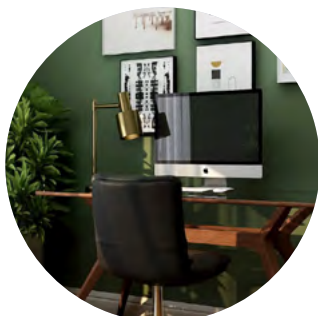
Set Your Limits

The line between work and life can get blurred when both are in the same space. If you can, set limits with your family so they know when you need undisturbed working hours. Conversely, block your calendar so your teammates know when you need to step away from your desk and when you plan to be done for the day.

Give Yourself a Break

Let your remote work lifestyle mimic the natural pace of office life. Give yourself time in the morning to settle in, take a break every few hours, and close your laptop at the end of the working day.

Collaboration – Internally, Externally, Instantly, By Email & Video

Without face-to-face interaction, it's more important than ever that you be very intentional in your communication. While you may not use the exact technology solutions listed below, you should have a tool in place to facilitate all types of remote interactions, including by phone, in writing, and by video.

TECHNOLOGY

One benefit from the influx of so many companies joining the remote workforce is the incredible advancements in the technology available for remote workers. You now have options – lots of options - and many platforms resolve multiple collaboration needs. You can choose to have multiple solutions or just one that provides all the functionality you need in one platform.

Microsoft Teams (Teams) is just one example of advancements that technology vendors have made that are helping remote teams collaborate. The virtual version of dropping by a co-worker's desk is an instant messaging platform like Teams which we at ML use along with **Slack** for some of our clients.

Many other platforms combine instant messaging with other functionality. Choose the one that is best for you.

For years ML has used **ZOHO Connect** for internal collaboration, and we have also used it successfully to engage with our clients. Recently, we moved client collaboration to Teams as clients do not need a license to participate and share. Teams can also facilitate private channel communication that includes easy-to-use functionality like pinning items that are often used. An additional benefit is that Teams integrates with your email platform and SharePoint so that it's all connected. You can also build out internal-only channels to share company updates, training, etc.

While we use **Zoom** for video conferencing, you can also use Teams or any of several other easy-to-use tools. Again, pick the best fit for you.

The remote work environment has become a lot easier with these improved tools. It's important to find the ones that work best for your company and establish and communicate processes regarding how and when to use each to support your unique team and needs.

How to Hold Effective Virtual Meetings

Conducting all of your meetings over video may feel out of the ordinary right now, but you may actually find your team to be more productive without the distractions of a meeting room. Being able to share your screen, make changes to documents, and pull up reports during the call ensures everyone is focused on the same thing.

Agenda

If you want your meeting to be productive, **set an agenda beforehand** and verbally go through the checklist during the call. If you have a lot to cover, it may be helpful to set a time limit for each topic.

Video

Face-to-face contact is essential to preserving a human connection and catching those non-verbal cues. Turn your video on for calls whenever possible. It's awkward if you can see others but they can't see you.

Lighting

Keep your source of lighting in front of you rather than behind you by positioning your desk in front of a window or having a light source behind or to the side of the camera.

Sound

Avoid using the audio from your laptop directly. **Get yourself a good headset** or earphones to limit background noise. It may be helpful to dedicate a quiet space in your house just for taking calls.

Background

Try to position your desk so that you have a **neutral background** that won't be distracting. If there's a chance a person or pet may get in the way, consider some of Zoom's virtual background capabilities -- but don't go too crazy with it.

Notes

The great thing about video conferencing is you can take notes without distracting from the meeting Even better, Zoom lets you **take a transcribed recording of the call** that you can refer back to later. You can even record calls of yourself to use as training tools for your team.

Leading a Remote Team

If remote work has become your team's new normal, your focus as a leader should be to maintain your company's vision, build a sense of community, and help your employees adapt and thrive individually and as a group.

Show empathy for each team member's unique situation. If your remote work setup is due to an external influence like the pandemic or an employee's personal need, take extra time to check in and see how each person is being impacted by the current situation and how it may affect their work.

Focus on outcomes rather than activity. Your team may not have uninterrupted availability during regular working hours. Show appreciation for their achievements, not their time.

Over-communicate across multiple channels, and then do it again. As things change day-to-day, you can lessen the ambiguity by regularly updating your employees and ensuring them that you're aware of their needs.

Have a little fun and stay positive. With everyone working from home, you'll likely get a little peek into each other's personal lives. Take this time of connection to share stories, introduce a child or pet, start a book club, share a playlist, and lean on your company culture.

Tips from Our CEO

Reach out Everyday

01

When your team can't physically see you, find other ways to be seen. Post regular state-of-the company updates on your portal, send good news via email, record yourself on video acknowledging achievements. Communicate through multiple channels so they feel your presence.

Assign a Campaign of Culture

02

Appoint someone to bring the fun. At ML, our champion acknowledges every birthday and work anniversary with creative and highly personalized announcements. She also leads virtual holiday celebrations with games and laid back video conferences to celebrate the winners.

Be Social

03

While working remotely, work a little harder to get to know everyone on a personal level. Follow your team members' social media accounts if they are public, but recognize that not everyone is comfortable giving their employer access.

We've Been Doing This Awhile

We asked our ML team members how they thrive as a remote team and stay connected with each other and clients

Theresa Applegate
Technology Manager

"I really love TEAMS. I feel that it is easier to reach out to co-workers more as if they were in the same location rather than in another state or country. We are all spread out in different time zones and don't work the same schedule. Having that Green AVAILABLE indicator on someone's name to know when they are at their desk is so helpful. Red dot, I know they are in a meeting, and yellow they are away from their desk. The fact that we can call via voice chat from inside the app or share screen/camera instantly is insanely helpful. Being able to instantly see what someone is talking about or show someone something on your computer makes tackling some issues a LOT faster. When you are relying solely on email, there can be a lot of lag time between responses or more back and forth than just hopping on Teams and talking through a problem."

Jennifer Aldinger
Senior Sales Development Specialist

"My children have all graduated from college and are moving on to new life experiences. ML has allowed me to pivot my job as their growth and needs changed to ensure they could be as successful as they now are."

Teresa Block
Senior Market Research Specialist

"It truly has been nice to have my teenagers around the house more this summer, so I've loved spending time with them and my husband. I value my role as their mom so much. It's the primary reason I chose to work in a virtual environment. Juggling all that is involved in sending two of my kids off to college while working close to full-time would not have been possible if I didn't work for ML."

Dyan Klein
Director of Business Development

"I had a tremendous opportunity to oversee Client Services virtually from Germany and facilitate programs for our clients to help build their businesses in regions across the world. I traveled abundantly throughout Europe. It was fast-paced, fun and a lot of hours maintaining relationships with ML and clients across many time zones. Oftentimes, I would work early in Germany before the US woke up to prepare for a full afternoon of meetings into early evenings sometimes. I wouldn't trade the experience for anything."

ML HAS YOUR BACK

MARKETLAUNCHER

Ask Us Anything

MarketLauncher is a 100% remote team because we know that top talent has no boundaries. As you transition to a new way of working, we want to help in any way we can. Please reach out if you're looking for additional guidance on how to lead your team from virtually anywhere.

CONTACT US