

# YPO | Working Remotely: How Coronavirus Will Change the Way We Work

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As the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) forces companies as large as Amazon, Microsoft and Twitter to ask employees to work from home, remote work is quickly becoming the global new normal for massive numbers of workers.

While some employees thrive working remotely, others fear they'll feel isolated or unmotivated to work in their own homes. Managers worry about keeping a team motivated and effective without daily face time with their peers in the office.

YPO member Robert Glazer, Founder and CEO of Acceleration Partners, has seen the benefits of remote work for over a decade. His entire organization has worked remotely since its founding in 2007 and has expanded to 177 employees in eight countries. Recognized with awards for industry performance and culture, Glazer believes this is because of their remote culture, not despite it.

"While transitioning a team to a remote environment isn't always easy, most businesses can excel under these circumstances if they follow certain practices," he explains.

As more companies are looking to a new reality that they may need to prepare for a future remote workforce, Glazer shares what he's learned from over a decade of experience leading an award-winning remote culture. Here are the keys he believes will lead to success:



**Hire the right people.** You cannot build a successful remote business without hiring employees who excel in that environment. Your remote work policy should be a part of your interview process, including being forthcoming with candidates that working from home is not for everyone and asking them to consider how they would adapt. Ask interviewees: Do they have trouble setting their own schedule and staying disciplined? Are they self-motivated? Their answers to these questions can help reveal if the person is right for a remote environment.

**Invest in technology.** Invest in video conferencing software such as Zoom, GoToMeeting and Skype, and project-management tools such as Slack and Asana. Conduct as many meetings via video to ensure employees are more engaged, connected to their colleagues and invested in the success of the team. These tools are also crucial for onboarding new

employees or transitioning a team to a remote environment, as many companies are now doing due to coronavirus. Employees need to know their organization is committed to making their remote work lifestyle as comfortable and effective as possible; these technology investments go a long way in assuring an easier transition.

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**Create organizational transparency.** It can be normal, especially in larger companies, for employees to feel disconnected from senior leadership. Under the wrong conditions, this can be especially true in remote organizations. “We’ve made top-down transparency a foundational part of our culture,” says Glazer. “This includes having biweekly all-company briefings where our senior leadership team reports our company financials, progressing sales deals and operational initiatives to the entire company in real time.”

When a company’s leadership is transparent — and invites regular questions and feedback — it creates an environment of trust for employees. With the current health challenges and the many unknowns surrounding the coronavirus, employees need to know they can bring any potential issues to leadership before they become unfixable.

**Host face-to-face company meetings.** While this may not be recommended currently given the health guidelines calling for social distancing, it’s important in the long-term to create opportunities for workers to interact in person, even just a few times each year.

“As part of our hiring strategy, we organize most of the company into what we call ‘hubs,’ cities where large collections of our employees are based,” says Glazer. “This allows us to have semi-annual ‘Hub Meetings’ where large groups of our employees gather to connect in person and share feedback with senior leadership in attendance. It also facilitates regular collaboration days, in-person trainings and social events. ”

**Prioritize professional development.** Companies thrive when employees are consistently learning and growing. Likewise, most employees want a clear path for advancement at work and want their leaders to help them grow even if they aren’t at an office every day. Organizations should invest in professional development by creating virtual courses that employees can take on company best practices and policies, creating mentoring groups where senior team members can share knowledge with new employees, and setting aside time and resources for in-person trainings.

“At our company we’ve taken this a step further,” explains Glazer. “We develop our future senior leaders internally. We hold regular in-person advanced leadership training workshops where employees gather to learn from experts on how to grow their personal and professional leadership skills.”

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## **Embracing unexpected transitions**

Building a great remote culture isn't easy, especially for organizations that need to make a sudden transition to this workplace model due to recent global health events. However, most organizations can develop the culture they need to thrive in this environment if they make it a priority.

Here are a few tips to share with your employees who are suddenly finding themselves in a remote work situation:

**Don't leave out details.** Because employees can't just stop by someone's desk to ask clarifying questions in a remote workplace, it's vital to clearly explain all details in your verbal and written communications. Conversely, managers should invite clarifying questions so that their direct reports can freely request more information when they are uncertain.

**Keep your morning routine.** Even though your full morning routine may no longer be necessary now that you are not commuting to an office, it's important to set a shortened routine like exercising before work, getting showered and dressed for the day and scheduling breaks during the workday.

**Make the most of organizational and productivity tools.** With increased flexibility and decreased structure, it's important to stay organized and specifically schedule your entire day. Carve out blocks of time for work, meetings, lunch and time away from your computer.

**Find or create a space where you can focus on your work.** Whether it's an entire room, a nook or a designated table in your home, create a space to focus on work (and only work).

**Don't jump to conclusions.** Less face-to-face time is difficult for some and may result in overanalyzing social cues. Use video calls on a regular basis with co-workers to help avoid unintended meanings or directions on process.

**Separate yourself from distractions.** It helps to put your phone on silent, limit notifications, turn off the TV and consider in-home care for younger children if budget permits.

**Welcome new methods of working and communicating.** Be open and flexible to suggestions on how to better collaborate with colleagues and offer your own suggestions to improve team productivity.

**Work with time zones.** If your employees are operating in different time zones, be sure to carefully budget the timing and deadlines of projects and make sure everybody fully understands the timetable before proceeding.

**Cherish opportunities to connect with colleagues on a personal level.** Even though it's harder to grab lunch with a work colleague, you can take time at the start of video calls to check in personally with teammates.

By creating transparency and trust, hiring the right people, and investing in employee growth and enabling technology, business leaders can create a remote organization that doesn't just match a traditional work model, but outperforms it.