12 Ways to Motivate Remote Working Teams

Remote Working

By now – many of us are part of a team that is 100% working from home. We may be days, weeks, perhaps a month into our new norm.

If that's you and you are either struggling with motivation or looking at ways to motivate your team here are a few good tips.

Keeping the motivation of team members during our collective global crisis, is a universal concern. You are not alone. Ensure you are asking questions of your peers, your mentors and managers if you are struggling with working from home.

The message here is: keep the communication lines open.

Team members are going to feel an enormous sense of unease and lack of motivation may be one of the first visible signs of stress in this time.

It's important to try to maintain a level of motivation yourself, and with your co-hort. By that we mean, don't come up with a couple of things, then set and forget. It requires diligence.

Motivation comes in many different forms, but laying out the benefits of any situation is always a good start: Working from home means no commute, added time to help take care of family and pets, and reduced costs from eating meals at home are just some examples. Make a list of the pros.

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12 WAYS TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR TEAM MOTIVATED IN A TIME OF CRISIS.

Keep in Touch

Keep Routine

Show Flexibility

Celebrate Team Success

Clearly State Priorities

Know the Tools

Consider The Varied Experience

Time to Keep Learning

Bring Humour

Recognize Time-Zone Differences

Informal Catchups & Team Bonding

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1. KEEP IN TOUCH

It's important to stay in touch with each other. Schedule more video calls (and have the camera on) than usual to stay connected and make up for the missed coffee chats which happen when people are together.

Strike a balance between virtual work meetings and virtual coffee chats to hear how people are and what they have been up to outside of work.

Organizing regular "pulse checks" - brief surveys on how the team members are feeling - will give a hint to what's working and what's not.

At ADAPTOVATE we are continuing to stay connected. We have been doing a daily team sync where we all show our faces, talk about what we have been working on and leave some time at the end to chat more broadly and check in with one another.

After weeks of working remotely, one of the things that motivate people to work could be that human voice from a team member. Setting up a daily or even weekly call in the calendar goes a long way in making people feel less lonely. We are social creatures, so having something to look forward to is much better than thinking no one cares.

2. KEEP ROUTINE

It's important to keep in place your usual team meetings or ceremonies to stay aligned and motivated; these now become virtual and you may need to use other online tools such as Miro, Trello, etc.

Daily stand-up doesn't have to be so formal and redundant. One of our own Principal's shared her excitement in attending this ceremony. Simply

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put, she said: "I love the daily meetings, I really enjoy the opportunity to say Good Morning to team members - that's so much fun." -- it's about making work and work sessions fun to attend.

We still need to create an environment that clearly aligns everyone to goals while teams have the space to figure out how best to get there. The one caveat is now physical walls and visual management boards don't really help us, we need to go virtual but still maintain fluidity in our planning and planning artefacts.

3. SHOW AND ACKNOWLEDGE FLEXIBILITY

We need to ensure we are flexible in this new world. Many people will have disrupted daily schedules, particularly when children are home from school. Do not measure people by the time they log on and off. Do not measure people by the hours they spend at their computer all day. In fact, do not measure people at all, rather measure how teams are making an impact and the outcomes they are working toward. Importantly, accept that there will be a drop in productivity as people get used to this way of working.

4. KEEP CELEBRATING TEAM SUCCESSES

Most importantly keep celebrating your teams' successes and be creative how you do this when the team are working from home.

5. CLEARLY STATE PRIORITIES AND TEAM NORMS

Ensure people are clear on what their priorities for the day are and why, and then give them ample space to do it without micromanaging; rather, let them know you are available if they have questions.

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Discuss your team norms (i.e. encouraged and discouraged team behaviours, mutual expectations on availability times and preferred methods and style of communication), decide on your team name (maybe also create your team logo?), discuss team mission and clearly define team goals. Use Objectives and Key Results format to make sure the goals are transparent, actionable and measurable. Clear objectives and team norms are critical for the team to self-organize – people will refer to them to recognize and address unwanted behaviours within the team and maintain a healthy work environment.

6. ENSURE EVERYONE KNOWS HOW TO USE TOOLS

Make sure everyone knows how to use online collaboration tools E.g. Google Hangouts, MS Teams, Zoom, Miro, Slack so that they can connect with other team members working remotely

Use online collaboration tools When using Agile ways of working, we value interactions over following process and tools. This means we want to have meaningful discussions. The online tools we use are a means, an enabler, to having those discussions. Therefore, online collaboration tools are valuable in helping remote team members achieve those meaningful discussions, thereby serving to increase motivation.

7. CONSIDER THE VARIED EXPERIENCE

In terms of skill mix, are there employees who've had more experience with remote working and are proficient in remote working tools? Would it make sense to deploy them to different teams so that they would share

their knowledge and bring everyone else up to speed? A little planning in team set-up phase goes a long way when it comes to effective work.

8. TIME TO KEEP LEARNING

Building in time for mastery is also crucial - and while we may have done this differently when co-located (for example, chapter time, on prem hackathons, team coding challenges) we can still do this remotely. We just need to let people find the right time and balance in this more flexible world.

9. RECOGNITION ON MESSAGING PORTAL

When working face to face we provide much of our thanks and congratulations face to face. Often this is not seen by a wider audience. Working from home gives us the opportunity to broadcast achievements without it being contrived. Genuine sharing of success and recognising individuals and teams via messaging and capturing permanently on a portal is a great way to motivate people who seek to do a job well.

10. BRING HUMOUR

Don't forget to bring in the humour. Ask people what the best part about working from home is. Encourage folks to show off their "work from home" gear.

11. RECOGNIZE TIME-ZONE DIFFERENCES

Global teams should optimize around time-zones to make sure teams within a certain time zone (region) collaborate effectively. Time zone

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differences can be taken advantage of to seamlessly hand-over to teams in other time zones to make sure work progresses around the clock.

12.   INFORMAL CATCHUPS AND TEAM BONDING

Just like a team working together physically, remote teams also need activities not related to work. Team building and bonding also still important aspects to maintain.

For example, our Melbourne ADAPTOVATE office did word games last week. One of the team is going to be taking to us about art, another yoga for home office, another craft beer! These can be as easy as 15-minute chunks 2-3 times a week.

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Finally, at ADAPTOVATE, we practice what we preach.   As we are trained in this very scenario of helping global and local teams in remote locations work collaboratively together, we are now ensuring that we also 'practice what we preach'.   To that end – if you and your new remote working teams are specifically in the AGILE industry – these simple little nuggets are just for you:

DO WHAT YOU PREACH

- Organize your work in one- or two-week sprints and plan with the agreed sprint goal in mind.
- Dedicate enough time for sprint planning so that everyone on the team has a clear understanding of what is expected at the end of the sprint.
- The team members make a commitment to deliver a set of work items and create full transparency among themselves on the progress.
- Daily check-ins help the team to align and effectively progress towards the sprint goal. Use of online collaboration tools helps the team to keep track of the progress.
- Teams working remotely require more effort to satisfy communication needs (remember, there's no coffee or water dispenser chats anymore!).

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