Don’t Even Try Managing a Remote Team Without These Tools

From onboarding to ongoing training and password management, these apps keep workers connected so you can focus on the bigger picture.

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If any of your employees work remotely, you already know the challenges that come with off-site team management. When workers live in different times zones, communication and collaboration often can be difficult. It’s also harder to build strong team-wide relationships and integrate dispersed team members into your unique corporate culture.

But the remote workforce is growing as employees quickly learn to appreciate the benefits of flexibility. As Phil Strazzulla of NextWave Hire explains, “We now seem to be entering a new phase of the future of work where traditional employees can be replaced more and more by freelancers who live and work remotely.”

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Fortunately, several innovative tools make it easier than ever before to manage remote teams effectively. Consider these tips your essential guide to prepare for the changes ahead.

Onboarding and training.

Onboarding – incorporating new workers into your team and company culture – can be one of the most challenging aspects of managing a remote workforce. ClickMeeting, a platform built for webinars, also is commonly used as a virtual conference room.

This enables organizations to schedule onboarding sessions and deliver presentations that allow remote workers to engage in real time. You can share documents, illustrate information with a whiteboard feature and run Q&A sessions for your remote attendees.

ClickMeeting's webinar replay function can run a sequence of onboarding videos that incorporate visuals from multiple sources. After the onboarding process, you can use this platform's virtual-meeting features to host your remote workers for ongoing meetings and conferences.

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At tech companies (or any company with technical roles, really), new employees learn best by doing. They get up to speed and develop their skills from hands-on training while they work. Setting up a virtual lab environment is an excellent way to train your remote staff members. In this type of cloud server space, employees can experiment safely and make mistakes without negative consequences.

MicroTek's version of this software allows you to set up cloud computing platforms. Your remote employees can interact with whichever configurations and tools they need to learn. You also can create virtual labs for use alongside of any online training courses you'd like to offer remote workers.

Ongoing remote management.

Regular performance appraisals are important to assess strengths and weaknesses. But it’s more challenging to provide remote employees with feedback than it is to evaluate and give pointers to on-site workers.

Among its other services, the BambooHR suite offers a valuable employee-appraisal platform. Employees and their managers can access an intuitive dashboard and unlock effective performance-review capabilities (even when team members are dispersed globally). You can set automated performance-review reminders, quickly address performance concerns and use the tool to reduce subjectivity in the appraisal process.

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Business advances smoothly when a remote team’s computers and other devices work properly. But any time glitches occur, that productivity nosedives. Offsite technical problems call for TeamViewer, a remote desktop tool that lets your team’s IT pros connect to computers and devices anywhere in the world. Your support staff can help offsite employees troubleshoot computers, tablets and even devices connected via the internet of things.

Communication and collaboration.

For remote collaboration, your team needs a tool that puts geographically scattered workers on the same virtual page. Google Drive can help a great deal with document creation, editing and sharing.

This feature-rich cloud storage and backup platform is straightforward to learn and use. Combining the Google Docs tool suite with the Drive cloud makes it easy to create and share documents, presentations and spreadsheets from any

internet-connected device. Your team members can edit and save the same synced document in real time. They also can make comments, track changes with ease and receive automated activity updates.

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No matter how dispersed your employee base is, though, regular communication still remains crucial. Slack is a robust chat room for business communication, and it can integrate with almost any productivity app on the market. Remote employees can message one another other anytime and anywhere, and they can access archives of old messages if needed. It’s also a great way to keep remote team members engaged in their business units and with th rest of the company.

Password management.

All these platforms require administrator passwords and a failsafe way to manage access. By now, it’s simply common sense that you should create several unique and complex passwords to help protect your accounts from hackers or other unauthorized access.

Rather than trying to memorize a multitude of passwords, consider using LastPass or 1Password. These tools store every password associated with all your online accounts. You need memorize only one master password – the one that logs you in to the password-manager application. Administrators can select which remote employees can log in to which online accounts, and they also can set expiration dates for access.

Related: 5 Apps That Never Forget Your Passwords and Require You to Remember Just One

Are you ready for the new workforce?

Smart businesses adapt to change. Rather than procrastinating, embrace the reality of remote working. With the right management tools, you'll be able to engage freelancers and other remote workers in ways that strengthen your employee base and give your company a competitive edge.

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