

A person is sitting on a light-colored sofa, using a silver laptop. They are wearing a striped shirt and dark pants. The room has a modern aesthetic with a white coffee table, a patterned throw blanket, and a white rug. A green semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

# Going Remote - A Crash Course for Teams

**Created by Pronto**

The world's most frictionless communication hub

# Going Remote - A Crash Course for Teams

So, you're going remote. There are a few things you're going to want to think about.

Whether the shift to remote work is caused by the need to socially distance your team or some other reason, it doesn't really matter. A team that can work well remotely is a team that just plain works well.

The desire for remote work continues to increase - a recent study revealed that 74% of knowledge workers would be willing to quit their job to work remote. And 26% have quit their job for one that allows remote work.\*

There are many potential benefits of remote work for the individual, the team, and the company. There are also many potential pitfalls if the transition to remote is not done right.

There are **seven important considerations** that need to be addressed in order to avoid the pitfalls and enjoy the benefits of remote work. We're going to **take you through a crash course** in how to address these issues and implement the systems necessary to help your team accelerate through the transition.

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## Benefits

- Cost savings
- Flexibility
- Efficiency
- Increased productivity
- Reduced turnover
- Recovering commuting time
- Decoupling talent from location

## Pitfalls

- Loneliness
- Decreased wellness
- Overwork, burnout, and fatigue
- Under communication
- Relationship atrophy
- Decreased spontaneity
- Increased confusion



# Important Consideration #1 - Go all in – work is not a place

## Don't do this: ✗

The absolute worst thing you could do when going remote is to make a "toe-dip" sort of move. This usually sounds something like "We're going to let Timmy try working remote for a while and see how it goes." That's the kiss of death. You can almost guarantee that this will be the last remote work experiment your company runs because Timmy will soon become estranged, invisible, frustrated, overworked, and under-appreciated. Casting one or two people off to an experimental island or starting with the person that is out of town almost never works. At the minimum, it needs to be an entire team.

## Do this: ✓

The surest path to success in working remote as a team is to go all in. This means that the place can no longer be the place. Work can now happen anywhere, anytime, and anyhow as long as the work gets done and results happen.

## Office not required

Now, don't take this to mean you can't have an office, you certainly can. However, the paradigm for the office needs to shift from 'a place you go to do work' to 'a tool you may use to get work done.' The distinction is subtle, but powerful in its effect to shift the well-ingrained mindset of work and corporate culture established over the last century.



*Cali and Jody say*

As Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson state in the book titled "Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It," "Work isn't a place you go, it's something you do." The team will need to embrace this idea and work hard to eliminate any "work is a place" sort of thinking. This would include leaders working from the office regularly or requiring team members to come into the office for a meeting.



GitHub is well known for pioneering remote work with their team of 1100 employees in 65 countries across the globe. They use the term "all-remote" very deliberately to describe what they do. By including the word "all" in all-remote, it makes it clear that everyone is equal. No one, not even the executive team, meets in-person on a daily basis. They say cleverly, "the only way to not have a satellite office is not to have a main office."

## In short:

**This is a shift in not just place, but mindset of the entire team. The entire team needs to go all in on the idea that work is no longer a place, but something we do.**

# Important Consideration #2 - Focus on results, not effort

## Don't do this: ✗

Create a cultural expectation where team members need to compensate for the lack of visibility and presence with a new perverted set of rituals or posturing to prove to others how hard they're working. Because of their desire to feel needed and add value, team members will naturally tend to exhibit these behaviors. They show up in innocent statements like "I'm leaving a bit early to..." or "...running a little behind today" or "I'll be on a little later tonight." While well-intentioned, and expected in office culture, they can be destructive to your goals of working well remotely because they are putting the focus on effort, not results.

## Do this: ✓

Focus on results, not effort. Results are work completed, happy customers, deals closed, and anything else that really matters to your company. The butts-in-seats mentality that has pervaded office culture for the last century is maddening and toxic. This mentality asserts that as long as someone is here on time, staying late, and tapping away on their keyboard, then they must be doing a good job. It's a total trap.

## In short:

**Focus on results, not effort. Eliminate any cultural expectations or behavior that focus on effort. Implement systems that place focus on results.**

## Office not required

In order for an individual to effectively focus on results, regardless of effort, they must clearly understand what kind of results they are expected to achieve. For some companies, this may be the most challenging exercise of going remote – quantifying the results of an individual. This crash course is too brief to expound, but a good place to start might be something like implementing individual OKRs - a system used by companies like Google, Amazon, Uber, Dropbox, and Adobe.



*Cali and Jody say*

In order to help your team focus on results, you must ban all talk about effort. No one should ever talk about how many hours they work, their work schedule, or judge others about how they spend their time. They suggest that "people at all levels must immediately stop doing any activity that is a waste of their time, customer's time or company's money." That means that it has to be totally OK for someone to watch Netflix on a Wednesday afternoon if they are getting the results they need.



Github suggests that all remote companies should consider adding to their list of values some words on results and what that means for the individual, team, and company.

# Important Consideration #3 - Set proper boundaries and expectations

## Don't do this: ✗

Don't compensate for the lack of physical presence by filling the calendar with meetings or checking in a little too often.

## Do this: ✓

Be deliberate about documenting culture and norms. Be proactive in setting the intention of how working remotely should work.

## Here are a few suggestions:

### Consider overlapping schedules

While not totally necessary, it might be nice, if your team is mostly in one location and time zone, to consider a core of hours during the day in which it's expected that everyone will be working. Maybe it's 10a-3p or something like that. This compromise allows individuals to have the flexibility to work whenever and however they want while still creating some cohesiveness to the workday. The team at Qzzr called these "game on" hours. If meetings must be scheduled, they should be scheduled during this time.

### Create a communication protocol

Office culture has its own unwritten protocol dictated by physical presence. Remote work does not. It's important to describe expectations around responsiveness for various forms of communication. Is it OK to respond to an email three days later? What is a reasonable expectation for a response on a DM? How about a text? When should phone calls be used? These and other questions should create guidelines and create clarity. Github defaults to asynchronous communication as they feel it is vital to "avoiding dysfunction and enjoying outsized efficiencies."

### Avoid M&M's

37signals lovingly refers to meetings and managers as M&M's. And they wrote the definitive book on remote work, called Remote. They believe that M&M's are the "greatest cause of work not getting done." It's not that they are not valuable. It's just that they are overused in traditional work culture. Github considers meetings a last resort. 37signals asserts that "it's a manager's natural instinct to worry." And working remote could cause them to worry more. All the more reason to focus on results, not effort.

## *In short:*

**Be deliberate. Setting proper boundaries and expectations can create clarity and avoid unnecessary complications.**

# Important Consideration #4 - Take care of yourself

## Don't do this: ✗

Crank out a 12-hour day slouched down on the couch in the middle of the living room with the TV on and the family walking around only getting up to use the restroom and eat food. Then, after your work is done, open a new browser tab on the same computer and watch some Netflix while sitting in the same spot you worked all day.

## Do this: ✓

Take care of yourself. Give this new opportunity the chance it needs to create more wellness, freedom, and fulfillment.

### Here are some ideas:

#### Exercise



C'mon, you just saved the time of your entire commute and everything related to it. Invest this newfound time in exercise. At Pronto, we have a workout channel where anyone can post a workout. You'll receive those precious minutes back in productivity and your body will thank you for it.

#### Change your scenery



Our neural pathways are influenced by our environment and habit. This means new sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, and sights spark different synapses in the brain and have the potential to revitalize the mind and boost creativity. Go outside. Work at the coffee shop. Take the dog for a walk while you think about a problem. It works.

#### Establish a routine



As George Orwell said in his novel 1984, "freedom is slavery." And it certainly can be if you now think work is 24/7. We are habitual beings who need routine. Use this newfound flexibility to establish a routine that makes you the most fulfilled.

#### Ergonomics



A bad chair can be worse than no chair at all. Mind your environment. Get a good chair or stand-up desk – you deserve it. Work where you feel most inspired. Avoid distractions of all types.

#### Draw a line



One of the pitfalls of remote work in this digital age is the blending of work and home life. You'll need to be deliberate about drawing a line between them. This could be location, using a different computer, changing clothes, etc. – any ritual that helps you neatly separate the two.

#### Take regular breaks



When you're in flow, it's hard to step away. Research on breaks only points to more satisfied and effective individuals. Set a timer. Get up. Sharpen the saw Back to work.

### In short:

If you take care of yourself, you are more likely to receive the wellness, freedom, and fulfillment that can accompany remote work.

# Important Consideration #5 - Put the right technology in place

## Don't do this: ✗

Don't expect that team members will just figure out solutions to their problems and put the right technology in place. This will only result in a bunch of partially adopted software tools creating a lack of cohesion across the company.

## Do this: ✓

The right technology can make all the difference between success and failure in the transition to remote work. There is some core functionality that should be offered to enable the results-focused work you envision.

### Core Functionality



#### Communication hub

If there is a "place" in remote work, the communication hub is it. There are two important requirements - 1. everyone should be on the same hub and 2. it should be absolutely frictionless. The difference between adoption and abandonment often comes down to the tiniest amounts of friction. These two things ensure the greatest success for your communication hub and your company.



#### Spontaneous video chat

"We've all sat in a conference call and spent minutes describing something that could have taken seconds to show," laments Jason Friend of 37signals. You need to be able to see and talk to someone as easy, if not easier than, being in an office.



#### Screen sharing

Maybe even more important than video chat is screen sharing. This is the experience of two or more people looking at a computer screen together. This also has to be frictionless. It can't feel like getting the ol' projector out. You need to be able to share your screen from your communication hub in a single click.



#### Create mental health awareness

Other items like calendar, docs, drive, and anything else needed to move work forward should be easily available and accessible to all. 37signals puts it this way, "you need everything available to everyone at all times."

## In short:

Get everyone on the same frictionless communication that has one-click access to video chat and screen sharing, with easy access to everything else.

# Important Consideration #6 - Watch for overwork, burnout, stress, and loneliness

## Don't do this: ✗

Applaud the team member who is constantly posting updates through all hours of the day and shun the team member who quietly cranks away. It's too easy to fall into the effort focused trap of office culture and send the message that working hard is a substitute for results.

## Do this: ✓

Overemphasize the focus on results, not effort. Get excited about efficiency. Applaud team members' results. Cali and Jody say that if you're doing this right, no one "feels guilty, overworked, or stressed out." If they do, there is a problem.

## Some other ideas:



### Shun burnout culture

Burnout culture is a hard thing to spot because we've become so immune to it. In short, it is anything that puts the focus on effort and or takes the focus away from results. These behaviors are not healthy and will ruin your remote work environment.



### Create a plan for training and onboarding

How will you make new team members feel as welcome and plugged-in as you did in the office? This will take some creativity and design, but it's certainly a problem that can be solved. This might look like a special gift that arrives at home coupled with some 1 on 1 time with each team member scheduled throughout the first week.



### Provide support for the non-ideal

For some people, remote work is not ideal. This may be true if they have a busy family or a small apartment with distracting roommates. It might be helpful to encourage these team members to establish a desk in a co-working space or work more often in libraries or coffee shops.



### Create mental health awareness

Remove the stigma around mental health by choosing to talk openly about it and document a process for helping others when they need it. Isolation and loneliness are especially critical behaviors to watch for. Make sure everyone is staying healthily visible and engaged.

## In short:

Overwork, burnout, stress, and loneliness can be byproducts of remote work done wrong. Continue to focus on results, not effort. Create a culture of strong mental health.



# Important Consideration #7 - Be human

## Don't do this: ✗

Become so over-focused on results that nothing else matters, especially human interaction and connection.

## Do this: ✓

Happiness is found in belonging. Belonging happens when communication and connection blossom into relationship and tribe. These are the ties that bind. And these things have almost nothing to do with being together in the same place while we work. We are more invested when we feel we are heard. We give endlessly when we feel we are cared for. And we fall away from things that we don't feel part of. Read more in [The Communication Manifesto](#).

## Some fun ideas:

### Pair buddy calls



Zapier does this thing where they randomly assign team members to just get together and chat it up about anything other than work.

### Celebrate good times



You have to remember to take time to celebrate the good things. Maybe this is a scheduled time of singing Happy Birthday or an asynchronous stream of Happy Birthdays sung from different team members throughout the day.

### Jokes & Memes



Now that you have a frictionless communication hub, try out your comedic timing in a special chat just for cat humor and inside jokes. In Pronto, you can create groups for any discussion topic

### Happy Hour



Set a time once per week where all team members jump on a video chat together and enjoy their favorite beverage.

### Cribs: Remote Edition



Take turns giving your team members a tour of the world around you.

### Coffee break



Github encourages team members to take virtual coffee breaks together

## In short:

Life is short. Remote work can and should be fun. Don't forget to be human.

# Going Remote - At a glance

There are seven important considerations that must be addressed in order to avoid the pitfalls and enjoy the benefits of remote work.

## #1 - Go all in – work is not a place

The entire team needs to go all-in on the idea that work is no longer a place, but something we do.

## #2 - Focus on results, not effort

Eliminate any cultural expectations or behavior that focus on effort. Implement systems that place focus on results.

## #3 - Set proper boundaries and expectations

Be deliberate. Setting proper boundaries and expectations can create clarity and avoid unnecessary complications.

## #4 - Take care of yourself

If you take care of yourself, you are more likely to receive the wellness, freedom, and fulfillment that can accompany remote work.

## #5 - Put the right technology in place

Get everyone on the same frictionless communication that has one-click access to video chat and screen sharing, with easy access to everything else.

## #6 - Watch for overwork, burnout, stress, and loneliness

These things can be byproducts of remote work done wrong. Continue to focus on results, not effort. Create a culture of strong mental health.

## #7 - Be human

Life is short. Remote work can and should be fun. Don't forget to be human.

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### Recommended reading

- "Remote: Office Not Required" by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson
  - "Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It" by Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson
  - Github's Guide to All-Remote
  - Zapier's Guide to Working Remotely
  - The Communication Manifesto
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