

# The Complete Guide To Working From Home

Using Slack And Other Smart Tools



AttendanceBot



Harmonize

## Foreword

In the current context where everyone is scrambling to learn how to work from home, we at AttendanceBot are fortunate to have worked extensively in a remote setup. While we are not fully distributed, from the get-go we wanted to embrace a culture that encouraged work from home so that we could give our team the flexibility to work when they want and from where they want.

Like many startups, we work out of a coworking space but we always sign up for seats for 80% of our team's size. This means that the rest of the 20% is either taking time off or working from home. Today, we have built a resilient team that can work asynchronously.

We had an additional reason for embracing this mixed mode of working partially in office and partially from home - the software we built at Harmonize including our flagship offering of AttendanceBot works especially well for remote teams. This helped us thoroughly test our own software in the real world.

As we grew, we worked with many companies to help manage their remote teams. We believe we played a part in helping them transition to setting up remote working policies because of the way we have encouraged 'work from home' in AttendanceBot.

AttendanceBot encourages transparency in terms of who in the team is working when, from where and on what. At this time, we think we are somewhat of an expert in managing distributed teams.

With the rapid change of things around us, we expect a permanent shift towards a more accommodating office environment in the near future. That is why we are sharing our learnings with you.

We encourage you to send your questions and suggestions at [hi@harmonizehq.com](mailto:hi@harmonizehq.com).

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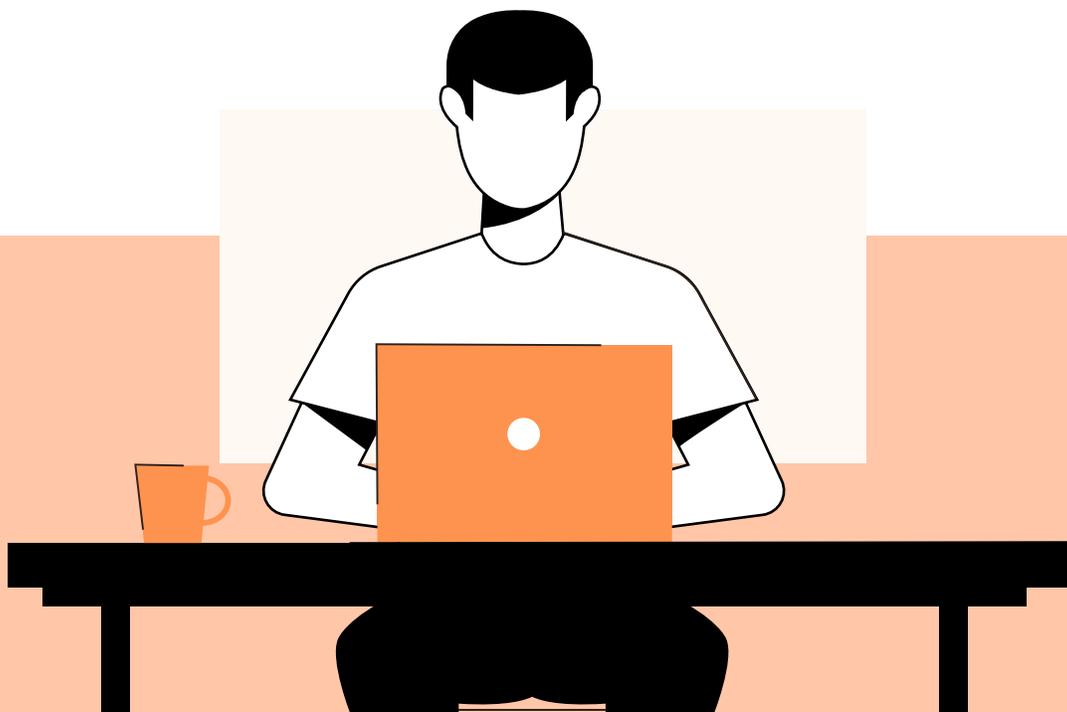
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# Why Remote Working is Rising

When remote working was just starting to be adopted by professionals, it was seen to be a trend. But, with the latest challenge - the coronavirus outbreak we've come to see how important it is to be able to work remotely. Remote work has become a widely adopted working practice.

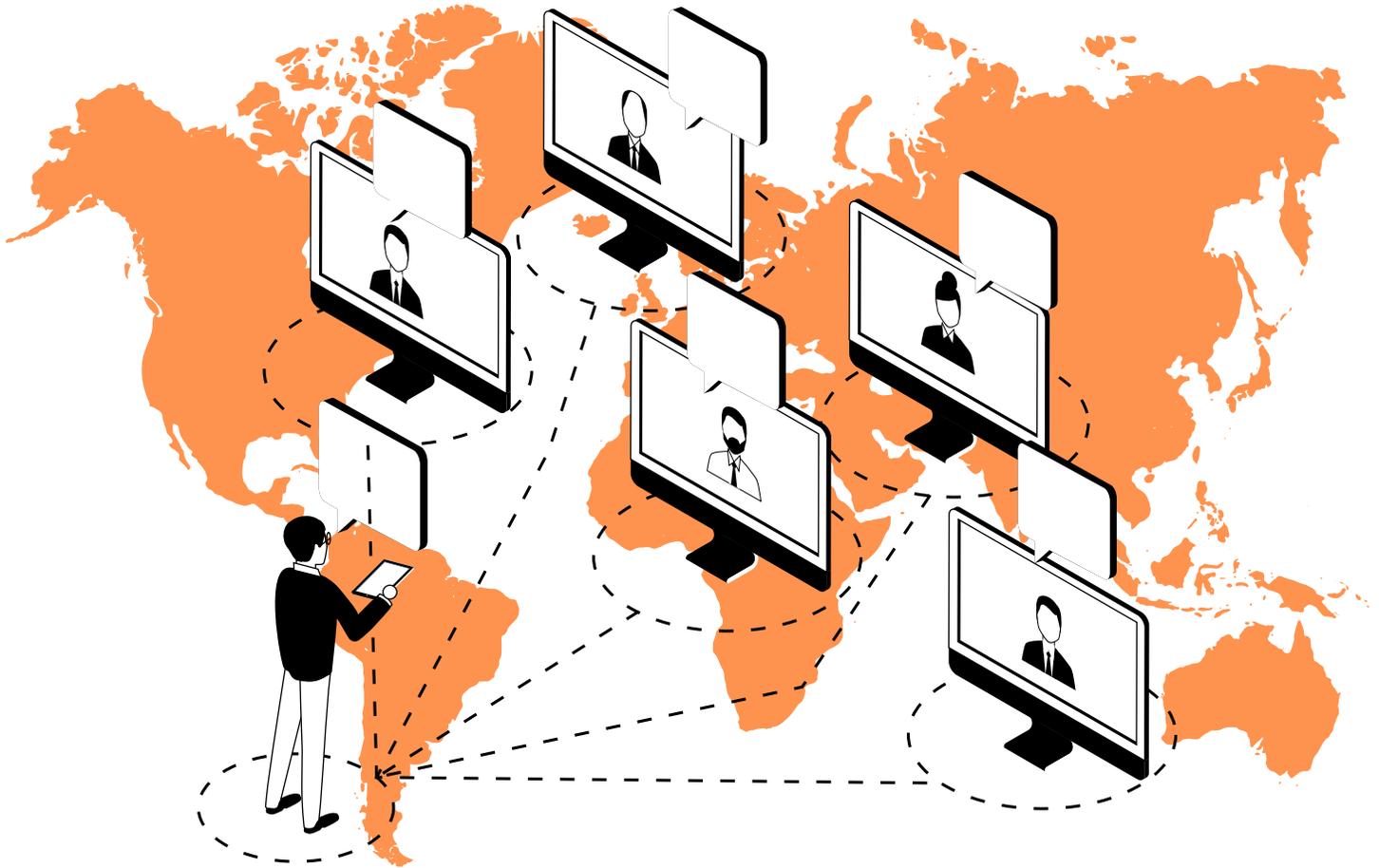
From top companies like Buffer and Automattic who have been working remotely since forever to our tech giants like Apple adopting the working practice recently. As more companies have adopted remote work, they've seen that it's much more beneficial to working in offices.

## Here's what's great about remote work:

- Less commuting. Employees can work from home or find a coworking space or coffee shop near their home.
- Without commuting, employees are less stressed about getting to work on time or don't have to deal with traffic distress.
- The company doesn't need to spend on office space.
- You can hire anyone from anywhere in the world. Prioritize talent over location and convenience. You have a larger pool of talent to hire from.
- Employees take fewer sick leaves and absences. 50% of remote employees said working from home reduced their sick days and 56% said it reduced their absences.
- Employees are more committed and accountable to their work.
- Having this flexibility gives the employee more reasons to stay with you.
- Companies that allow remote work have 25% lower employee turnover than those that don't.
- Increase productivity. Telecommuters are an average of 35-40% more productive than their office counterparts.



# Establishing a Remote Working Team



You may be worried about how you can establish remote working within your team successfully. A successful remote team is organized, communicates often (even over-communicating in many cases), is accountable with their work, and is in sync with the work needed to be done as well as the company's larger goals.

With 4 sections, we'll help you set up and manage a remote team:

- Essential Steps to Turn Your In-Office Team Remote
- Work from Home Policy Template
- Guidelines to Set Up For Remote Employees
- Essential Apps for Managing a Remote Working Team

# Essential Steps to Turn Your In-Office Team Remote



If you aren't working remotely, you may already be forced to take your team remote due to the current coronavirus outbreak. But, it isn't enough to send your team home. Taking your team from the office to a work-from-home setup involves setting up helpful systems that make remote working simpler for everyone involved.

Here are 5 crucial steps you need to take to help your employees transition to this new working environment:

## 1. Establish rules and guidelines in an all-hands meeting

If your team has already been sent home to work remotely, you should schedule a virtual all-hands meeting to set up systems for how your team will be functioning. Establish a few rules to make this transition easier:

- How attendance will be tracked
- Project management tools used — work will be assigned and monitoring
- Process of performance reviews
- Daily, weekly, and monthly meetings will be held.
- Team activities that you will set up
- New perks and benefits your employees will be privy to (if any)

You can also use this meeting to address questions that your employees would have.

## **2. Keep an eye on employee performance during the first 2 weeks**

The first 2 weeks of implementing these changes are crucial. Ensure managers are keeping an eye on workflow in the first 2 weeks of implementing remote working. Pinpoint problems and challenges so that you can help employees adjust to remote working easily.

## **3. Address challenges and allocate a budget**

Your employees may find it hard to adjust to these changes. Some may have problems setting up their workspace, others may have a hard time managing work with their kids. Check-in with your employees to understand what these challenges may be and help them find solutions.

It's also important to set up a budget to provide employees with the resources they need to work efficiently. This may be a pair of noise-canceling headphones, a sturdy work chair, or a specific type of coffee.

## **4. Set up employee schedules to monitor better**

By defining working hours, you can set expectations and ensure employees follow through on working within the hours that were committed for work. Since you are in the same time zone, you can ask everyone to commit to the same 9-to-5 or 10-to-6 workday. This way, employees will see fewer roadblocks as communication between them will be instant.

AttendanceBot allows you to set up schedules on the bot. With this, your employees will receive a reminder a few minutes before their work hours begin. By setting this up, you can avoid having to check in with your employees yourself and let the bot do all the work.

## 5. Accommodate employees who need to show up to the office for work

You may have employees who need to show up on-site or for service tasks. For such employees, remote working is limited. Instead, ensure employees have a means of transport to get around. Understand what other resources they need to work more efficiently. Such roles are very unique to the company and HRs need to gauge the challenges and take a call on how to best help these employees.

More importantly, you need to see whether the employee's tasks are essential to helping the community. Roles like food and medicine delivery are top priorities during this coronavirus outbreak. However, any other roles can be put on pause. You can instead ask these employees to help out in other areas of your company.

### **TRANSITIONING FROM IN-OFFICE TEAM TO REMOTE**

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- Use Slack as a work communication platform
- Call an all-hands meeting to establish rules
- Be vigilant during the first 2 weeks of transition
- Address challenges and allocate a budget
- Ask each employee to set up their work schedule
- Use AttendanceBot to manage attendance and leaves
- Use project management tools for accountability
- Set monthly targets to measure work output
- Maintain employee bonding with virtual activities

# Work from Home Policy Template

If you don't have a policy in place, it's not time-consuming to set one up! Your employees will be privy to the same perks and benefits as they had even before remote working was set up in your workplace.

With a policy in place, you can define basic rules and terms that employees have to follow. The policy is stricter than the general guidelines that you have for your team.

## Work from Home Policy

<b>Eligibility</b>	All employees whose work can be performed off-site.
<b>Work Hours</b>	Employees must work from 10am to 6pm. This is to ensure clearer and instant communication. For shift workers, the work hours stay the same, as per the assigned schedule.
<b>Equipment Provided</b>	Each employee will be provided a work laptop and mouse. Any other equipment requirements can be requested to the HR.
<b>Perks</b>	Employees will be provided \$50 per month for resources like coffee and snacks. WiFi costs are fully reimbursed by the company. Ensure that the bill is uploaded within your reimbursement report. All perks and benefits generally provided by the company.
<b>Violations</b>	Work output will be monitored by the manager on the project management tool on a weekly basis. Any violations like missing more than 2 deadlines, not working during allotted work hours, or not finishing tasks will be dealt with strictly.



# Guidelines to Set Up For Remote Employees

Defining your guidelines for what working from home looks for can help you keep your employees accountable. With guidelines to direct employees on dos and don'ts.

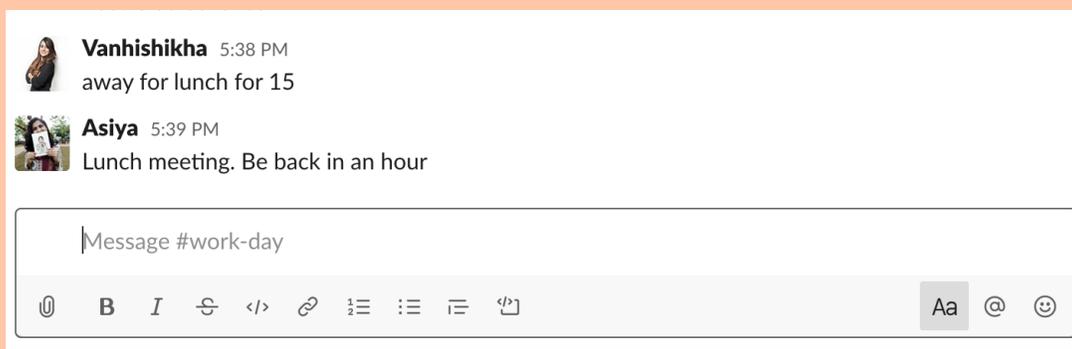
## 1. Employees will have to work for x number of hours

Have every remote employee set their work hours, even if you allow a flexible schedule for your team. Having a structure in place can give them a sense of schedule and they'll be much more likely to start working on time and check out of work when they were supposed to. With a structured schedule, you can manage your remote employees without having to guess when they'll be starting work.

If you have a team of mixed schedules, including shift workers, you should check out our guide to employee scheduling to understand schedule management better.

## 2. Employees can schedule on the team's schedule channel

Unlike a physical office, you can't tell when an employee is away from their laptop, taking a break or grabbing lunch. So, when working remotely, you don't want employees to step away for lunch only to come back to messages from their manager waiting for a reply. Set up a schedule channel where employees can send a quick message informing the team when they're away for a few minutes.



### **3. Each team must schedule a weekly call to align work**

Since there is a lack of face-to-face communication, you'll need to ensure teams are communicating on a regular basis via messages and also touching base with weekly video calls. This call can be used to understand the progress made, what deadlines are pending, and what needs to be done in the coming week.

### **4. Weekly activities will be held for team bonding**

Building a relationship with your remote team may seem tough. Your team isn't physically connected to each other and you may not think that you need to prioritize this need. However, a good team relationship can help to motivate your remote employees and get them pumped to work harder.

Set up weekly team building activities to facilitate connection. Buffer, for instance, has "Watercooler Wednesdays", where their remote team gets on their watercooler Slack channel to ask a random question every Wednesday.

It's best if you set a time and day each week so employees are mindful to set aside this half-hour to bond with the team.

### **5. Employees should use a specific set of tools for work**

Ensure everyone on your team is using common tools to manage their work. You can recommend and set up these work tools for various needs— project management, communication, video conferencing, etc.

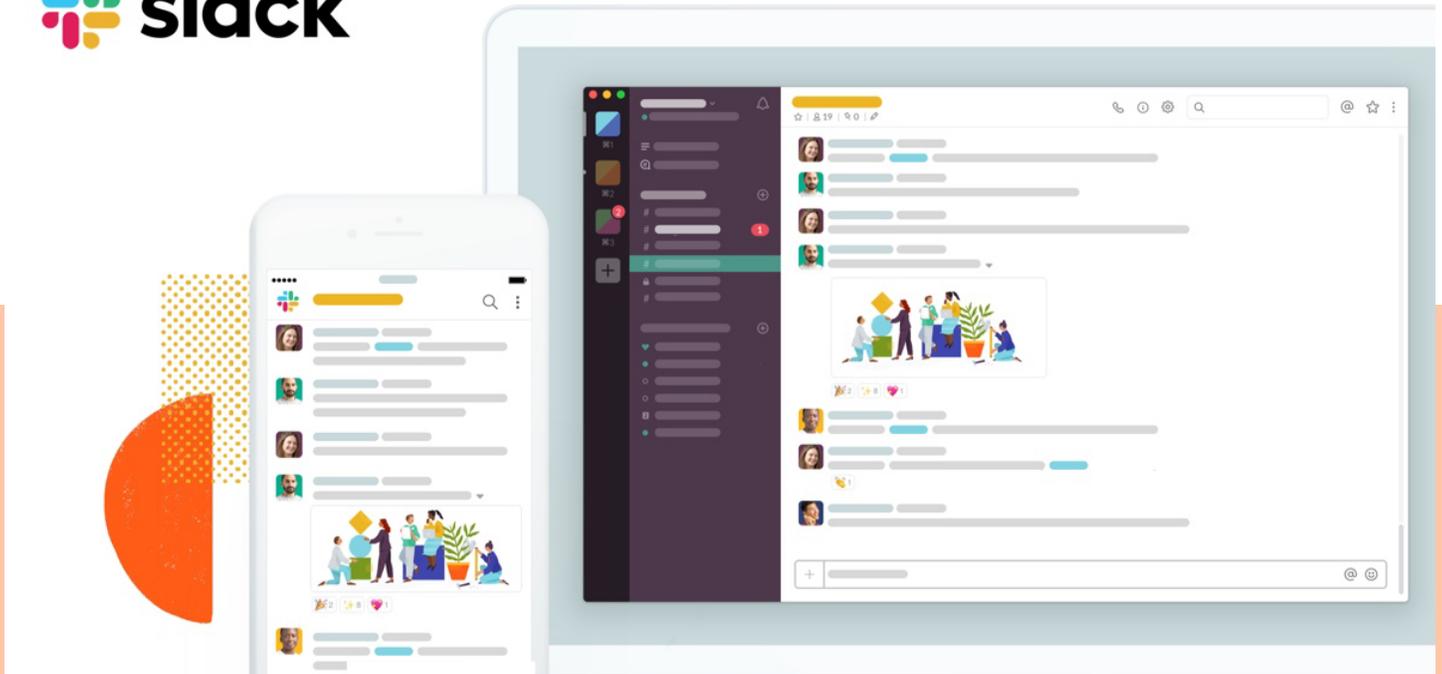
List these tools for your employees and set them up so that all your work is in one place.

# Essential Apps for Managing a Remote Working Team

There are enough apps online to help HRs and remote teams to manage their work efficiently. The Slack App Directory itself has thousands of apps to help HRs with each and every function they need to manage, automate, or monitor.

Here are 8 apps we highly recommend you set up:

## 1. Slack – Communication



Slack is a work communication platform. It keeps all your conversations organized on one platform, with channels made for individual topics, projects, or teams. You can pin important messages and documents to a channel for easier access. Its search capabilities simplify your task of looking for a specific message or document. Here are a few things you can do to structure your Slack:

- Create channels to keep conversations structured according to each department and project.
- Establish communication rules— all work conversations must be done on public channels rather than on DMs.
- Set up a team chat window for general chitchats.
- Set up systems within the platform to track work output and work hours.
- Over-communicate. It's important to be on the same page and by explaining thoroughly, you can clear roadblocks, cope with changes, and celebrate wins.

## 2. Donut – Employee Bonding

Donut helps you build relationships among your employees. The app introduces people who don't know each other well on teams of all sizes via direct messages and encourages them to meet in person or virtually for a variety of programs, from virtual coffee meetups, team bonding activities to peer learning.

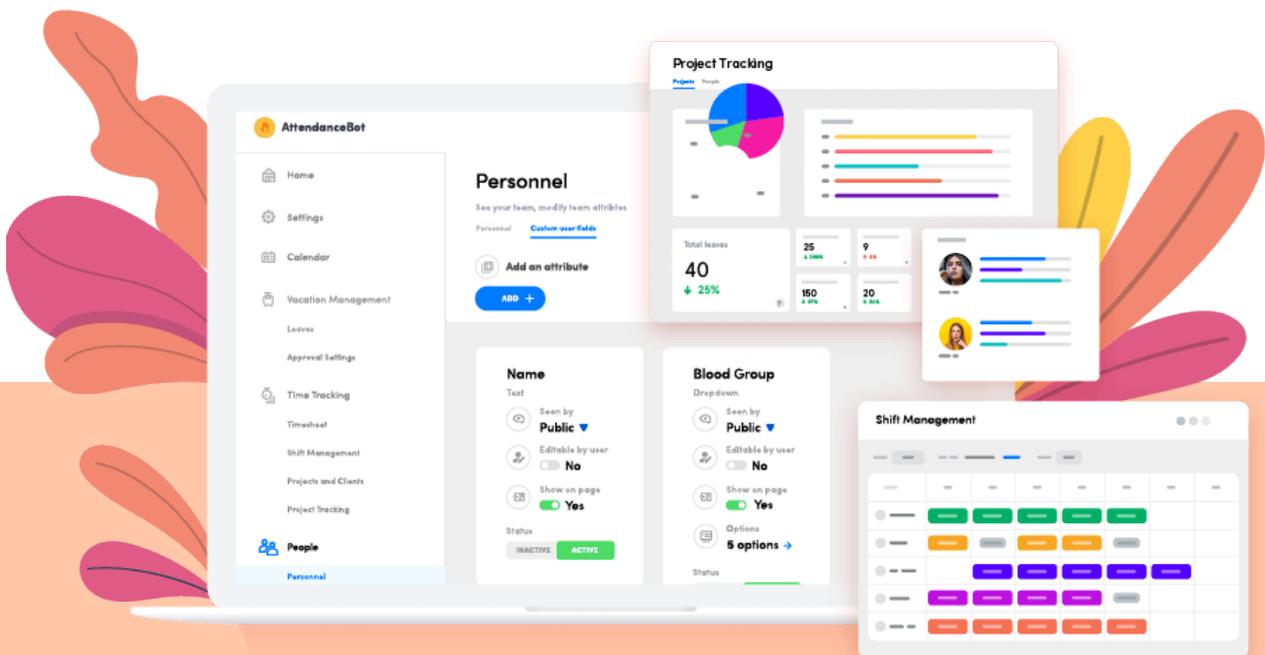
Automate employee bonding with Donut and ensure your employees are engaged with each other and have more human connections at work. This app is especially important during this time when your employees are social distancing by staying at home.



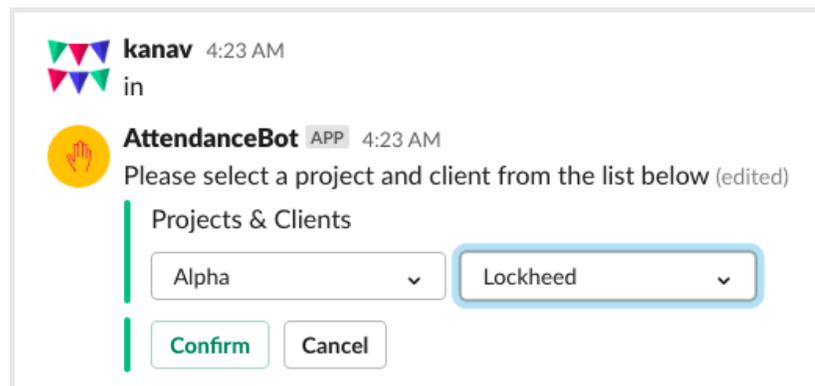
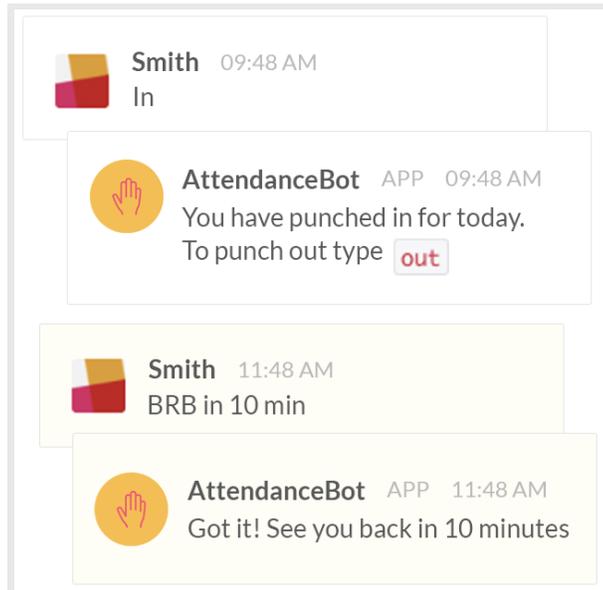
### 3. AttendanceBot – Project Tracking

With AttendanceBot, you can set up an attendance management tool within Slack. Employees can check-in and out so that the bot can capture and record when they are starting and ending work. This record can easily be accessed by you and generated as a report.

The bot is extremely helpful if you pay your employees based on the number of hours worked. You can input the pay per hour and the bot will calculate how much you need to pay as per the real-time hours that the employees worked.



Additionally, AttendanceBot allows you to track time spend on a specific project with project reports. When your employee checks in at the start of the day, they can choose the project they are working on or the client they are working for. This helps you get an understanding of which projects are taking up more of your employee's time.

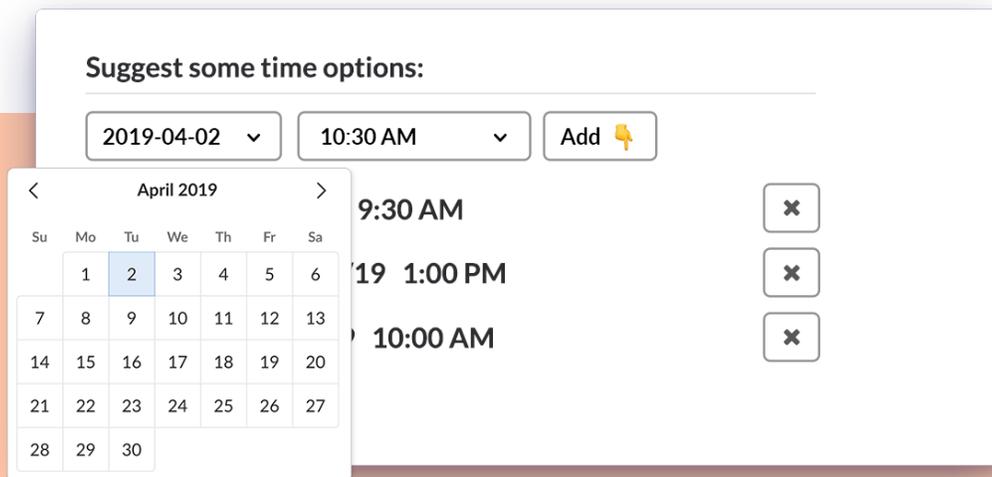


Such a comprehensive project and time tracking feature ensures that you can step in when employees are stuck on a specific project. It ensures you get an overview of which projects your team spends more time on.

## 4. Doodle Bot – Meeting Planner

Ever had to go back and forth about meeting timings? When you're working from home, it gets harder to find a time that works for everyone. Doodle Bot allows you to set up meetings that work for everyone's schedule!

With the bot, you can suggest times for the meeting right within Slack. Everyone participating in the meeting can vote for a time that works for them. Based on the number of votes, you can pick the best option. The app also allows you to reschedule the meeting.



Suggest some time options:

2019-04-02 10:30 AM Add 📌

April 2019						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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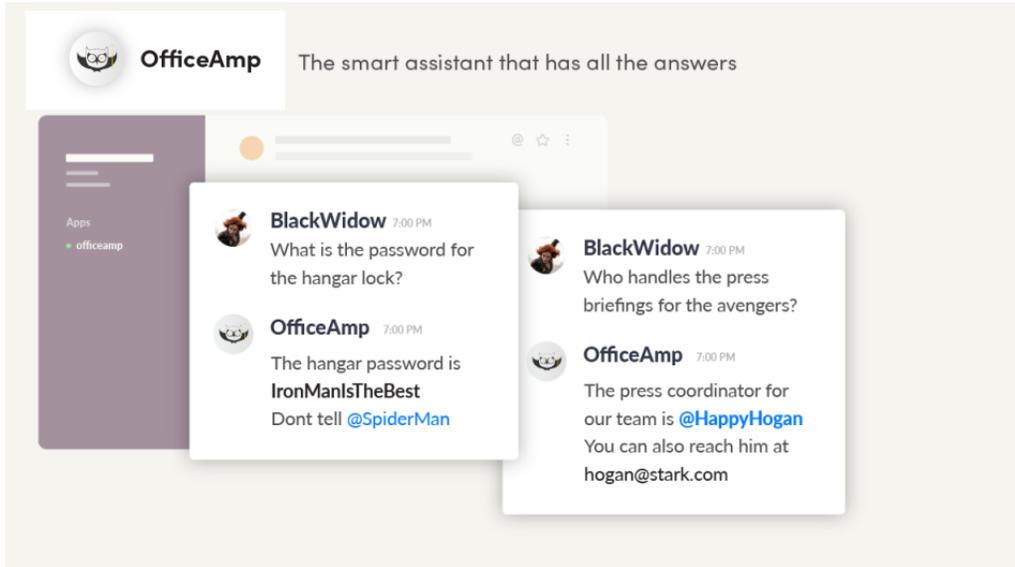
19 1:00 PM X

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## 5. OfficeAmp – Office FAQ and Help Desk

OfficeAmp is an internal help desk to manage employee requests. It allows employees to search for frequently asked questions like 'how to file for reimbursements' and 'how many public holidays are available in a year'. This removes the constant questions between the employee and their manager.

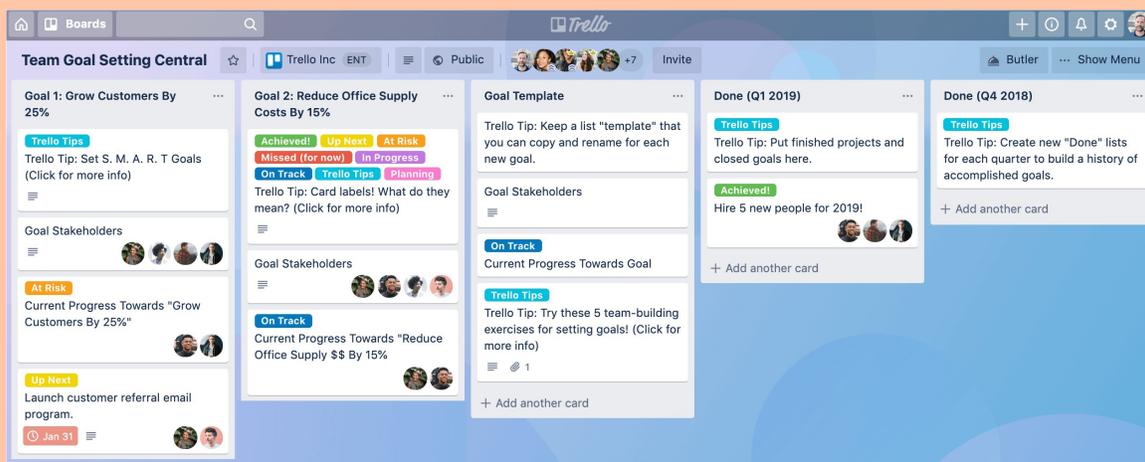
Any issues and requests can be instantly raised on the OfficeAmp app through Slack. You can then assign the issue to a person, track it, and mark it as complete once done.



## 6. Trello – Project Management

Trello is a kanban style tool that allows you to manage your projects in a visual dashboard. Organize tasks into cards and move them around based on their status. You can also add deadlines and assign people to a card.

Trello also allows you to integrate with other tools so that you can access your documents and other files within the project management dashboard.



## 7. Zoom – Video Conferencing

Zoom is highly recommended by most remote companies. It is a video communications platform, allowing you to join and host meetings from anywhere in the world.

It is secure, smoothens over any technical issues that might arise, and has a host of features that allow you to share your screen, chat with the team during the call, and even use the app to host webinars and training calls.



# Remote Working Optimization Tips

Remote working is a new way of working and so HRs, managers, and employees need to adapt to the change. There are a few challenges to working remotely, as with any kind of working environment. But with these tips, you can ensure that you are better at setting up your remote team, managing them, or working as a remote employee.

## HRs: Best Practices to Navigate Remote Working

### 1. Track time and productivity

One of the most important metrics when managing your employees is tracking their work hours. This is especially important when working remotely since you cannot physically see your employees working during the hours they were supposed to.

Set up time tracking apps like AttendanceBot to record your employees' check-in and out times. Besides this, to get a more specific understanding of your employees'.



### 2. Digitize your files and documents

You need all your files in one place so that employees aren't compelled to scan and upload documents as and when they need them. File management tools like Drive and Dropbox are two great options for teams going remote.

### **3. Prioritize employee bonding**

Whether it's virtual team lunches or casual chats, employee bonding is crucial. Besides the automated team bonding apps, you can also just schedule a team chat where everyone can get together online and talk about everything but work.

If you have a small team, you can do this chat with the entire company. However, if you're a larger team, you can ask department managers to host such chats on a weekly or monthly basis.

### **4. Enforce off-hours**

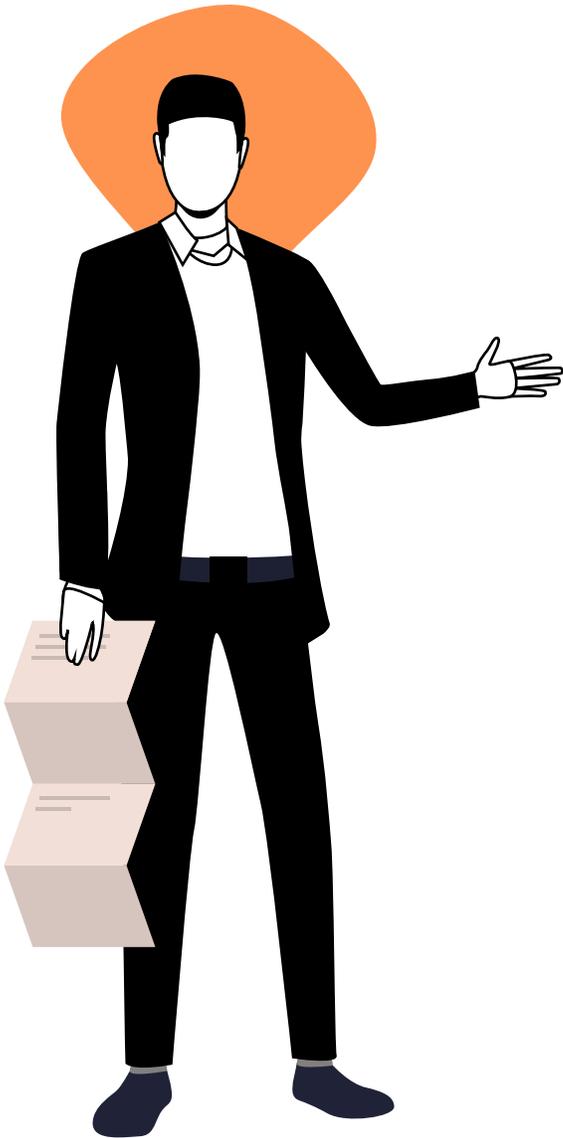
When working remotely, your employees will have a hard time establishing non-work hours. Since they'll be at home, there are fewer boundaries between work and personal hours. Your employees would end up responding to emails as soon as they come in, even at 10pm.

Ask employees to stop work as soon as their work hours are over. This should be enforced just like in an office, where you stop working when you leave the workplace. Ensure that your employees log off and any communication is done only during the hours they are supposed to be working.

### **5. Keep communication transparent**

Your employees are crucial to your vision. Be open to your team about what's happening on a higher level. Whether you're in talks about funding or about losses, this transparency can make your employees feel strongly for the company. They will be more likely to take up responsibilities.

# Managers: Best Practices to Manage a Remote Working Team



## 1. Focus on work output

Work output has always been an important part of managing employees. However, this holds more importance when working remotely. Many managers use work output to understand how productive the employee is and how well they are faring in a remote role. An employee's work can be tracked with project management tools. Such tools give you a clear idea of all the tasks that the employee was assigned to and when they completed the tasks.

## 2. Encourage feedback and suggestions

When you work in a team, you want your employees to be loyal to you and feel like they are a huge part of what you do. Encourage employees to counter your ideas and plans. This allows them to suggest new ideas and

open up healthy arguments about how work should be done. You'll see that this can help you avoid making mistakes.

Once the entire team decides on an idea, everyone must commit to it. So, while everyone can argue and suggest new ideas, the team must come to a conclusion and stick to the idea that is decided.

Besides countering ideas, have an open policy for feedback and suggestions. This can help you understand how you can manage your employees better and even come up with side projects that will boost your company's growth.

### 3. Check-in with employees often

Send messages on your team's channel, asking them questions frequently. You can ask them to reply to the message and start a thread to the response, helping the employee. A few question ideas include:

- What blockers are you facing?
- Anyone need help with their work?
- Did you do anything this week you're proud of? Share away!

It's best if you ask specific questions. For instance, if you manage your content marketing team, you can ask if anyone needs help reviewing a blog.

Ensure that you are nudging employees to message on the team's channel. Once you've set this in motion, you'll notice that your employees will come forward with questions, announcements, or requests for help without you prompting them to.

### 4. Make employees take ownership

When working remotely, you want your employees to take up ownership of their work and run with it, without hesitation on the minor details. You can do this by asking employees to make decisions on the smaller details rather than turning to you for approval.

By giving them the confidence to take a call on their work, there will be less dependency on you and you'll see work moving faster.

### 5. Recognize wins and achievements

Just as it's important to keep work moving, it's also important to recognize achievements. Praise and appreciate employees when they reach a milestone, finish a daunting task. You can set up performance recognition with apps like **Lattice** and **HeyTaco**.

# Employees: Best Practices to Work Remotely

## 1. Create a structured schedule

When working from home, structure goes out of the window! You wake up a few minutes before you need to log in, grab a coffee and sit down to work. There aren't boundaries between your work and personal hours, which means you end up working longer hours than you're supposed to. Create a structure to your day, just like how you would when you're heading into office for work.

You can do a few things to create this structure:

- Set a wake-up time.
- List tasks you need to finish before starting work.
- Set a reminder for when you need to start work.
- Set up a 5-minute break every 2 hours.
- Take a 15-minute lunch break and stay away from your screen when you are eating.
- Set a reminder at the end of your workday when you need to stop working and put your laptop away.
- Set your status on Slack when you're away.

## 2. Keep your work out of your bed

Work from home often turns into working from your bed as soon as you wake up. Anyone who has ever worked from home knows this. If you've still kept up this habit, it's about time you change it!

Get out of your room as soon as you're out of bed and dressed for the day. Many remote professionals work from their dining table or a home office, where they can spread out their laptops, notebooks, and other things that help them work.

However, if your dining table is a noisy place or you don't have a separate space for your work, you can stay within your bedroom and set up a table dedicated to your work.

One tip that some remote workers swear by is changing your space throughout the day. You may sit at the table in the morning, migrate to the couch after lunch and set up a cushion in the balcony in the evening.

This constant change makes you move around despite your mostly stationary position. More importantly, if you're feeling a little sleepy or slow, changing your environment can make you feel more refreshed.

### 3. Choose to collaborate

Remote work can be a little isolating. If you're losing motivation or need to stay accountable, the best thing you can do is to pair up with your co-worker. You can stay on a call while both of you finish your individual tasks or review each other's work so you have a third opinion to help improve your work.

Collaboration is a great way to keep the remote working blues away. You can also ask your manager if you can collaborate on a specific project together. This will also help you break the monotony of work.

Here are a few tools to give you an idea about how you can collaborate:

- **Google Docs** for collaborating on strategy planning or content together.
- **Loom** to record your screen to show your co-worker what you're working on.
- **Zoom** to host calls about the work you're doing together.
- **Polly** to host polls among your team members about a decision you need to take.

## 4. Block distracting apps

If you have a hard time staying away from your inbox, Facebook, or news sites, you can force yourself to stay away from it by setting up a website blocker on your laptop and phone. This will block websites and apps on your device for the period you've specified. Even if you are tempted to check these sites, you won't be able to.

We highly recommend Freedom, an app and website blocker that can be installed as an app or as an extension on your browser. It's free to use and helps you increase your focus and productivity.

## 5. Follow the Ivy Lee Method to tackle your to-do list

If you have too many tasks on your plate, you're highly likely to end up juggling between 2 or 3 at a time. You'll end up not finishing any of the tasks or not producing high-quality work. The Ivy Lee Method can help you deal with this problem with ease. Here's how you can implement this technique into your working day:

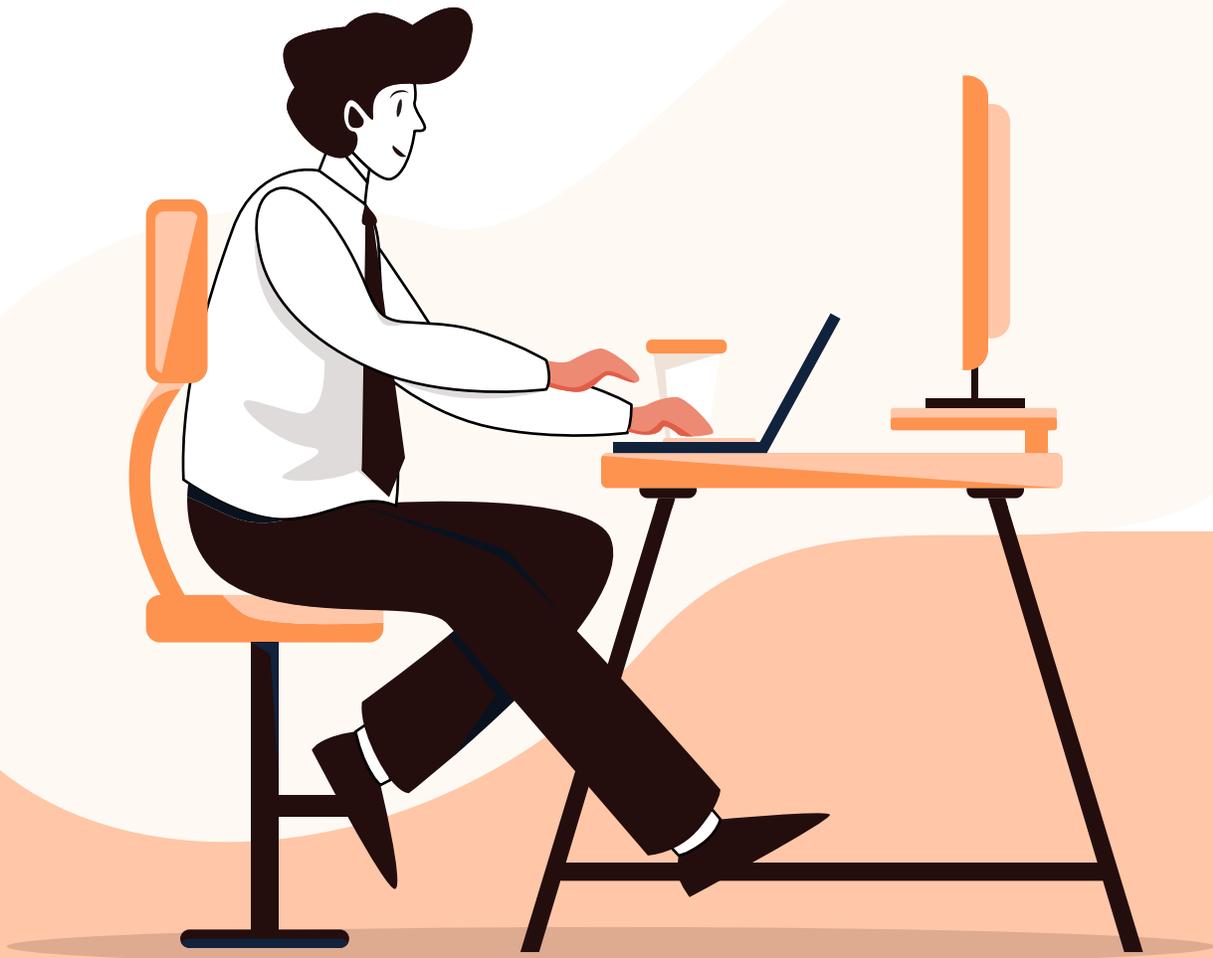
Jot down 5 or 6 important things you want to accomplish the night before. List them in order, starting with the most important task first thing in the morning. Don't list more than 6 items. The next day, you can only focus on one task at a time, going from most important to least until you've accomplished your whole list. Any unfinished business should be moved to the next day's list of 6 tasks.

## 6. Calendar block your high productivity hours

If you've identified your high productivity hours, a good idea is to block those hours so that no one tries to schedule a meeting within that time frame. This way, your best hours are spending on churning out work faster without any distractions to break your flow of work.

## Ready to go Remote?

We hope this helps you set up a remote team and set up healthy systems to help you work smoothly, despite the distance.





# AttendanceBot

## People Management Simplified

AttendanceBot is an attendance and time tracking bot that works from within your team chat apps like Slack, Microsoft Teams and Google Hangout Chat. It helps you get the most accurate time sheets to easily invoice clients and pay your team, all while saving a lot of time.

**By**



**Harmonize**

[Schedule Demo](#)

