How to Create a Remote Work Policy

1. Determine how employees will work remotely.

While employees across many roles can work effectively outside the office, not all roles are best-suited for a remote work environment. Your policy and processes should ensure *everyone* can feasibly work from home when necessary, no matter their role. For example, HR roles that coordinate in-person interviews and training sessions might not fit as seamlessly into a remote work policy as a copywriter. The remote work policy should provide them with guidelines they need to conduct interviews and training sessions remotely.

Your policy will outline all the tools and strategies that will be necessary for all employees to work productively outside of the office. Questions to consider when building the policy include:

- Will the nature of a certain role impede success when performed remotely?
- What tools, resources, and strategies will team members need to work effectively?
- What considerations need to take place when identifying who will manage a remote employee? Will that person need additional training and resources?
- How will remote work affect the culture and collaboration among your teams?
- Will remote work impact taxes or benefits for the company or employees in different states or countries?

Ask the right questions and determine the answers with your HR, legal, and finance teams before rolling out any working from home (WFH) policies to make sure the transition is smooth.

2. Provide the right tools for successful and secure work.

When working away from the office, your employees need the right tools to work securely and productively. For many employees, a laptop and a Wi-Fi connection might not be enough. Remote employees need technology that makes them feel engaged and part of the team, not just an afterthought. Be sure to ask questions like:

- How will remote employees communicate with the rest of the team?
- Will you set them up with video conferencing software and hardware so they can virtually attend meetings and brainstorms?
- Do you have meeting spaces and tools that allow remote employees to be clearly seen and heard?
- Do your employees need separate technology or equipment to maintain an effective home workspace, like a second monitor or printer?
- Will you offer a stipend or reimbursement so employees can purchase necessary equipment for their home offices?

Additionally, cybersecurity concerns should be top-of-mind. Remote workers might need a VPN or another form of security to work on important company files or private customer data. And while some employees might be able to operate using public Wi-Fi networks, others might need to stay at home or in a more secure co-working space to ensure data privacy.

You'll also need policies and tools in place for remote team collaboration and communication. Use additional tools like live chat, synchronous screencast recording, live video conferencing and more to ensure technology doesn't get in the way of an effective and meaningful work relationship. For instance, Slack and Google Hangouts can act as a virtual water cooler, where employees can discuss the status of a project but also debrief on Game of Thrones, share cat GIFs and bond over their favorite music.

3. Establish clear rules about working from home.

When you're not meeting with team members in-person, creating processes for collaboration and communication are key. Consider what types of communication tools work best in situations like:

- Manager 1:1s
- Team all-hands meetings
- Client kickoff meetings
- Performance reviews
- Employee learning and development activities

Clearly communicate and document what's expected when employees work remotely. Though most employees report being more productive working remotely, distractions abound when outside of the office. Set policies about when employees are expected to be available online, or if they can operate on a flexible schedule that's built around their personal lives – for example, to accommodate a doctor's appointment or delivery.

4. Plan time for collaborating and socializing.

Make sure your policy has guidelines for building in time for teams to be together outside for impromptu conversation and team-building. No matter what technologies you have at your disposal, human beings crave face-to-face connections. In your policy, build-in time every month, quarter, or year when you can virtually gather all team members for brainstorming, planning, and having fun.

You can hold virtual kickoff meetings for projects, office hours, or set up a video call for non-work related conversations. All of these activities will bring your team closer together even though they're spread across multiple locations. Check out these team-building activities for even more inspiration.

5. Clearly outline the legal rights that remote workers have.

Remote workers are entitled to the same legal protections that in-office workers have. However, working remotely can present some added challenges that need to be addressed to ensure your company is legally compliant.

Set up a process to report hours for hourly remote workers. If they work more than 40 hours, they'll likely qualify for overtime. To avoid high overtime costs, select times that employees should and shouldn't be working. With clear guidelines, they won't be able to work outside of these hours unless they have permission from their manager. This makes it easier to avoid employees accidentally working more hours than intended.

It's important to support employees that are remote just as you would in-office workers. This means clearly discussing the training, benefits, and promotions that are available to them. If you don't provide remote workers with the same level of assistance as in-office workers, it could result in discrimination or disability-related workplace violations.