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MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PRODUCTIVITY, COMMUNICATION, AND WELL-BEING

-Garvita Mishra

The Office Is Gone. The Work Is Not.

Before 2020, people would have thought running an office team from your countertop was impractical. Then, of course, 2020 happened, which normalised this. Millions of managers who couldn't see their team members and were in different time zones had to deal with frozen screens. They had to adapt, and that too fast. Managers had to learn to communicate and become flexible. But work had to go on. Building trust and focus on production were priorities. Managers were no longer tied to an office. The freedom became a plus.

Fast forward to now, working from home is not something we just do in an emergency. It is how we work now. A 2025 Gallup study showed that even though people are not working from home as much as they did during the pandemic, they are still getting as much work done. People who work on Teams feel lonely and tired of talking to each other online. They are not feeling as good as they used to because of the disconnection and isolation. Managers do not usually notice this until it is too late.

Every manager who is out struggling with a remote team to keep it productive and functional, this blog is for them.

Productivity: More Than Just Output

The first thing managers should do is to track everything. How many hours they work, the tasks they complete, and how fast they respond. It is not controlling.

A McKinsey study on work in general and administrative roles found that making remote work successful is more about establishing a good system and less about monitoring what employees

do. Clear organisation of tasks makes it clear who was responsible for certain tasks, leads to fewer but more effective meetings, and ensures that people can work at different times without causing problems. On the other hand, companies that just tried to do the same things they did in the office online faced immense struggles.

George, Atwater, Maneethai, and Madera, in a study of 278 workers who started working from home during COVID-19, found that when people worked from home, they got more work done but didn't feel as good about themselves. They were being more productive but feeling less happy. Health problems went up. This was mainly because work and personal life started to mix. This study tells us that just looking at how much work a team gets done isn't enough. It is set that the team will have problems later if things keep going like this.

Lesson 1: Set goals for what needs to be done instead of imposing deadlines. Have talks with your team that are really about the work they are doing, how they are doing, not just about what they have done so far. Make sure your team has time to focus on personal time without many meetings getting in the way. Every now and then, ask your team how they like the work they are doing, not just what work they are doing.

Communication: The Skill Remote Work Exposes

In a physical office, you catch a lot of things while chatting in the hallway during lunch or right before a meeting. However, when you work remotely, personal chats become limited. You have to make an effort to share every piece of information or to clear up any confusion. This can be tough for managers who do not usually make an effort to communicate clearly. Remote work really shows up their lack of communication skills.

A study published in the Journal of Communication Management in 2025 found that when leaders use motivating language, it helps employees feel better when they work from home. This kind of language makes people feel good and confident about themselves. The way a manager talks to their team is very important. It affects how people feel. If a manager does not speak well, people will feel alone and like nobody sees them. Motivational language use is highly underrated because it helps people feel connected to one another. Leaders who use language that is affirming, direction-giving, and meaning-making make people feel important.

With Indian organisations adopting hybrid work models, cybersecurity has become a major concern. Employees using devices on unsecured networks are at risk. To be clear, this is not a

technical issue it shows that organisations have not fully planned for remote work infrastructure. Secure communication channels are a management task, not an IT issue. Organisations must consider cybersecurity to protect their communications. Remote work requires planning to prevent security risks. Hence, Organisations in India need to focus on communication channels.

Lesson 2: When you are working with employees, you need to give minute details to your teams. Remote employees, unlike office ones, cannot figure out by reading rooms. As a manager, you should make it easy for people to ask questions. Use of video calls, like when you need to have a discussion about something complicated, or by sending a text, like when you need to tell people about an announcement that has been made or give them an update on what's happening. Make sure your team has ample resources to do their jobs. This includes things like computers and internet connections that are safe and secure.

Well-being: The Thing Managers Keep Forgetting

Question managers about how their remote team is doing, and they will tell you about the project's status. If you ask the team members privately, you often get a very different answer.

Research by SHRM on employee well-being finds a recurring pattern. Managers think that because people are not complaining, they must be okay. Remote work makes it hard for people to open up about their personal struggles. There are no moments to bring it up, no walking past someone's desk, and no way to read their body language. People feel isolated. It can build up for months before it shows or they react.

The George et al. study indicates that others have also found that work intruding into their lives is a big problem, especially with remote work. When your home is your office, it is hard to stop working. Managers who do not show and protect boundaries. By respecting time off, not sending messages at night, not expecting an answer, and scheduling real break time. Are you actually saying that you should be available 24*7?

The work HBR does on both remote and hybrid team building shows that social connection is crucial. Social connection means you actually know your colleagues, as people, not just employees. This is one of the things that helps teams stay positive and encourages people to

want to stay with the team. This does not just happen when people work from home. Managers have to make an effort to create space for social connection. They have to try to make it work.

Lesson 3: Normalise talking about workload. How you're feeling in one-on-ones. Don't just focus on what tasks you're doing. Make sure everyone knows and respects each other's time limits. Have chats that feel natural, not forced or fake. Keep an eye on team members who're quiet because when you're not in the same room, silence can mean something is wrong.

What Great Remote Management Actually Looks Like

The best remote managers share some common traits. They think about what they're doing, and they do not just wait to see what happens. They come with structured plans. They communicate more because they know the value of the absence of physical presence and face-to-face contact.

Obviously, home is not the same for everyone. Some people do well when they work from home. They get more work done at home than in the office. A good manager of remote workers needs to know what is going on with each person and then make changes to help them. By adjusting each person's work capabilities and limits.

Most crucial is that good remote managers take care of their team's mental well-being. Not everything can be handled by the human resources department. Instead, they think of it as something they should be responsible for, as leaders. If a team is doing a job today but is really tired and not working together well tomorrow, then they will not be a good team when they face the next challenge. Remote managers need to remember that their team's well-being is their responsibility.

The Distance Is Real. The Leadership Has to Be Too.

Remote work does not create challenges of productivity, communication and well-being. It just makes these challenges impossible to ignore. The managers who work well are not the ones with the best project management software or the most complex systems for checking in with people. They are genuine enough to really want to know how their people are doing. They build their management approach around the real answer about remote work.

The separation between you and your team is genuine. However, the quality of your leadership does not need to reflect this.

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