

Diving into remote work

Common issues and what to
do about them

A PRIMER FROM [RANGE.CO](https://range.co)



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The new normal for work

Remote work has been increasing quickly over the past years. Whether it's organizations embracing remote-friendly policies or teams going entirely remote, people are beginning to better understand the benefits of remote work. Globally, 52% of workers work from home at least once every week.*

Events including major weather disruptions and the COVID-19 outbreak are accelerating this shift to remote work. Suddenly, many people can have an acute need to work remotely and to support business continuity, and more often than not, those people are unprepared for the world of remote work.

Globally, **52%** of workers work from home at least once every week.*

The natural inclination can be to quietly freak out — how am I going to lead my team while we're all working from home? Everything is different! And while things are different, the practices and systems that make remote work work are often quite similar to the best practices and learnings for co-located teams, just with a bit more video and intentionality.

We've put this Remote Work Primer together to help you make the transition. It contains tips and best practices — from communications to culture — so you can develop your own approach to getting your newly-remote team up and running fast.

Thanks for reading, and thanks for helping build great teams.

*Owl Labs

What we'll cover in this primer

1. What's different when you work remote

- Communication
- Culture

2. "How tos" for remote work

- Design your team's communications
- Run a meeting
- How to run a 1:1
- How to foster connection
- How to build alignment



“By 2028, 73% of all departments will have remote workers.”

What's different when you work remote?

For teams thrown into remote work, the first thing to break down is often communication followed by a feeling of disconnection or erosion of culture. While there is no replacement for face-to-face time, there are many steps teams can take to counter these, and thanks to technology, there are ways to build team success even if everyone isn't in the same place.

The first big step is to recognize how remote work impacts your default processes and understand that some things may be technology-related — e.g., poor connectivity — and others may be more process-driven like daily in-person standups or the Friday happy hours.

Let's take a look at what to watch out for when you're thrown into remote work, and how to solve for it.

Communication issues & solutions

With sudden remote work, there's automatically a lot of pressure not just on *what* remote teams communicate, but *how* they communicate. Here's what to watch out for and how to solve it:

Issue

You don't know what's going on — People feel out of the loop, don't know where to go for the source of truth, and don't have a good sense of how the work is progressing.



Solve

Embrace daily check-ins — ask everyone to share a written daily check-in first thing to let folks what they're planning to do today. Asynchronous written updates are better than video/phone because you can add links and look back on what's happened. Tools like Range make these updates easy.

Issue

Collaboration doesn't happen
With fewer chances to catch up in a hallway or drop by a desk, work can feel less fluid.



Solve

Schedule time for collaboration — once or twice a week, set aside an hour for the team to collaborate over video. Anyone can bring topics where they need help or want to get unblocked.

Solve

Set expected working hours — e.g., 10 am to 4 pm when folks should generally be available for collaboration.

Communication issues & solutions

Issue

Too much communication — people start to bombard each other with messages, book more meetings, and spend more time distracting than working.



Solve

Set communications expectations — collaboratively rethink practices for all your activities, from meetings to comms, and document and clarify them: “This is how we use email, this is how we use Slack, this is when a meeting is necessary.” Share communication preferences and norms.

Issue

Easy to get misaligned — you can start working on the wrong thing if you’re not in frequent communication with your team, and what success looks like can get cloudy fast.



Solve

Set goals and targets — this is a great opportunity to clarify your goals and specific targets. Rather than checking in at the end of the quarter, make them part of a two-week cycle where you check in at the beginning and end, reviewing progress, obstacles, and opportunities.

Culture issues & solutions

“How’s it going?” is both remarkably simple question and remarkably powerful act. This simple interaction is known as a “belonging cue”, and we have a lot of informal opportunities to renew them in person. In the absence of these moments, we need to intentionally craft interactions that encourage vulnerability, trust, and belonging—i.e., strong team culture. Here’s what to watch for and how to solve it:

Issue

People don’t know how each other are feeling — they don’t see each other’s face to know their mood or what’s going on personally.



Solve

Share moods and answer a daily team question — when people share a personal update in their daily check-in it helps everyone else sense how folks are feeling. Range uses emojis and built-in team icebreaker questions to make this easy.

Issue

People don’t feel connected to the whole team — they may start to communicate less, misunderstand tone over messages, or just feel lonely.



Solve

Schedule optional lunches or coffee times for the whole team to just chat — whether it’s everyday or a few times a week, create opportunities for people to catch up with each other. Lunch and learns are a great example, where one person shares an experience or hobby.



The “How Tos” of Working Remote

Working remote changes how you and your team collaborate. That means you need to make tweaks and adjustments to a lot of your team practices.

To help, we've compiled some concrete tips for how to adapt common team success practices like meetings and 1:1s to a remote setting.

How to design your team's remote communication

Without intentional design, everyone can end up using different tools, sharing information at different times, and things can get lost. Putting a remote communications plan together gets everyone on the same page and fosters team trust.

- **Identify the different types** of communication — planning, sharing updates, collaboration, culture-building, retros, etc.
- **Designate a cadence** for each type of communication — e.g, planning every two weeks, daily check-ins, weekly culture-building happy hours.
- **Make it a habit** — set up practices and reminders to ensure that your team follows the cadence.
- **Document your plan** — so everyone is aware, and you can iterate over time.

How to run a remote meeting

Running a remote meeting requires a bit more preparation, but can be just as effective, if not more so, than in-person.

- **Set up the right tools** — video conferencing, documents, goal tracking, and consider a meeting app like Range, which has feature for running meetings.
- **Always have a check-in round** — teammates can share how they're doing or answer a team-building question at the start of the meeting.
- **Have an agenda** — you cover what you need to and the loudest voice doesn't dominate.
- **Designate who speaks when** — using a randomizer or a specific order. That way no one has to speak over each other or everyone has a chance to speak. Range's meeting tool has a fun "spinner" to select a speaker.
- **Share notes and document decisions** — always useful and especially so for people in different time zones , so they can know what's happened. You can do written notes or even short video recaps.

How to do a remote 1:1

Maintaining 1:1s is critical as you go remote. Make sure you prioritize them, and take steps to develop the right model with your report.

- **Set a schedule, stick to it, but be flexible** — demonstrating your commitment through a consistent, present cadence is a big part of successful 1:1s over the long term. Recognize you'll have to be flexible, especially with big timezone gaps.
- **Develop a shared doc** — having a “wall” where you both can asynchronously write down topics to cover helps you make the most of the time, and documents key developments
- **Don't focus on status updates** — you can use Check-in or other meetings to review progress. Use 1:1 time to focus on well being, development, and to understand what roadblocks you can help them eliminate.
- **Consider how each person likes to communicate** - you may want to talk over video or each go for a walk while talking on the phone. Find what works for you and your teammate—it may be different for different people.

How to foster connection

Feeling connected to your team is part of what makes work fun; without it, the fabric of work deteriorates quickly.

- **Hold check-in rounds during meetings** — during recurring meetings, reserve the first 3–5 minutes to check in with team members and see how everyone is doing.
- **Answer team-building questions in meetings or check-ins** — these can cover information about yourself, like “What was your favorite class in high school?”, and help humanize individuals on teams. Questions like “How do you prefer to communicate?” can also spark questions about how to best work together. If you’re short on ideas, we created [Icebreaker](#) just for this purpose.
- **Create opportunities for social interaction:** all work and no play can get tedious. Book virtual lunches, coffee hours, and happy hours.
- **Encourage conflict and communication**— it’s easy for conflict to simmer in teams that aren’t used to working remote. Make sure to ask about relationships and “anything else on someone’s mind” during 1:1s and encourage folks to speak up and be proactive if they have a problem or feel like there was a miscommunication.

How to build alignment

Keeping everyone aligned when working remote can be hard—you're used to hashing out confusion in person. But alignment empowers autonomy, and builds accountability.

- **Re-evaluate your objectives** — when you switch to working remotely, especially quickly, it's helpful to recalibrate your objectives and review at a high-level what you're doing and why with your team. Think of it as checking for any existing misalignment.
- **Make objectives part of daily work** — avoid the “create and forget” trap, but also make them simple to track. Tools like Range help teams easily see and track objectives. We use a hashtag system to make it simple to associate check-ins and meetings with objectives.
- **Align regularly with a meeting cycle** — set up a cycle for you work, with kickoffs, updates, and closing sessions where you review objectives, obstacles, and opportunities. Document them so everyone can stay in the loop.
- **Create space for review and questions** — Have retros and check in on how objectives are going. Create space for others to raise meeting topics or ask questions to ensure that there is alignment.

Range

Having worked on remote teams ourselves, when we set out to build Range, we designed it to support remote work.

It's a comprehensive, flexible solution, so teams can check-in, set objectives, and run meetings in whatever way suits them best. It strengthens team culture with questions and moods. And it integrates with tools teams use, like Google Docs and Calendar, Slack, Asana, Jira and GitHub, making it simple to bring in and share the information you need in one place.

Whether your team is local or remote, you can share progress asynchronously, so it's easy to stay in sync and focus on what matters.



Check-ins

Plan your day, log your accomplishments, and connect with your team



Objectives

Create transparency across your org, track projects, and align your teams



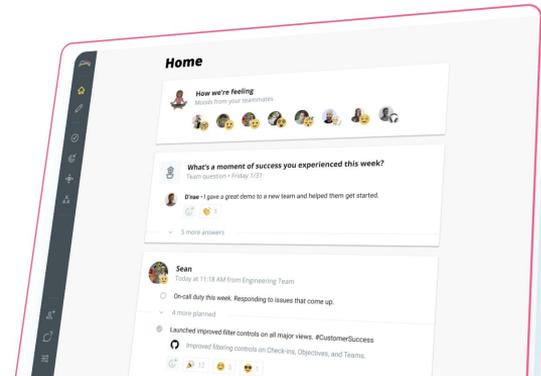
Meetings

Make them more efficient, productive, and inclusive



Team Directory

See what any team or person is working on



Diving into remote work with Range

Range is free to try, and if you ever want more information or to better understand if it's right for your team's needs, just drop us a line at hello@range.co.

We hope you enjoyed this primer on remote work, and if you'd like hear more about building great teams, be sure to sign up for Range's newsletter.

Learn more at range.co