

EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR MANAGING THE PROJECT TEAM IN A DISTANCE FORMAT

P. D. Rusakevich, V. E. Sadoha

*School of Business of Belarusian State University, Minsk;
polina.rusakevich02@mail.ru; lerasadoha@gmail.com;
scientific supervisor – L. S. Buloychik, senior lecturer*

The relevance of our research work lies in the fact that in the new realities of the pandemic, the issue of switching work to a remote format is becoming more and more relevant in many areas of activity. In this regard, many managers of remote teams face with problems of misunderstanding, weak interaction, control, since standard management methods no longer work. That is why, in order to identify the main blocks when managing a remote team and find their solutions, this work was carried out.

The aim of this survey is to identify the most pressing and significant problems in remote work that exist at the moment and select the most effective methods for its solution.

In order to achieve this goal, various indicators from real surveys of people already working on a remote format were analyzed, and the main problems that bother them were identified. The important part of the work was to identify ways to solve those problems and test their relevance in real conditions.

Object of the study – employees currently working remotely.

Subject of the study – main features and problems of interaction of remote teams.

Key words: distance format; remote work; project team; management; project management; communication; motivation; job satisfaction.

Today, business has changed beyond recognition, and its main feature is the sudden transition to remote work. It is no longer exotic for anyone to have online meetings, calls in case of emergency questions and lunch breaks in video mode.

Until recently, homemade and highly specialized methods were used to manage remote employees. However, the use of these options would not allow problems aimed at reducing risks and improving control remotely to be solved. In particular, when the volume of hired remote workers is constantly increasing, the question of creating specialized management of remote employees becomes quite relevant. That is why it was decided to conduct this study and identify the most pressing and significant problems in remote work that exist at the moment and select the most effective methods for its solution.

Work research conducted by FYI on the basis of the WWR (We Work Remotely) within the community, which is already working remotely, was analyzed. It was concluded that remote work will live even after the pandemic is over [1].

A survey on job satisfaction among remote employees (employees from certain spheres, allowing them to work from home full-time. The survey was

conducted among employees already practicing remote work). The research showed the following:

90 % of those surveyed plan to work remotely until the end of their careers, 96 % recommend this work format to their friends, and 91 % said that this format of work is more convenient than an office one.

With the development of technology, the established forms of relationships between employers and employees are losing their relevance and changing. Already, most organizations are making a great contribution to the development of remote work and creating new opportunities for remote collaborations.

In order to identify effective and efficient methods for managing a project team in a distance format, it was necessary to identify the most common problems. For this, an online survey was conducted, in which 23 people took part, mainly students of the School of Business of Belarusian State University, as well as employees who are currently working remotely.

After analyzing the survey responses, we identified the most common problems, namely the distribution of work tasks, tracking progress on common tasks, team performance and the lack of feedback, difficulty focusing on work tasks at home, and lack of live communication with the team.

Recommendations on how to improve the distribution of tasks between employees:

Divide all employees into several teams and assign leaders. One distributed team under the control of a manager should not have more than 8-10 members. Large teams are harder to manage, especially remotely.

Create an organizational chart for a company or a specific department, which will make it clear which employee you can turn to for help. Each member of a remote team must understand whom to interact with about the particular task.

Write down how you see your remote team's working day and write a guide for how to work. You can record videos or screencasts for remote employees so that they understand which programs, on which platforms they will have to work with the rest of the team.

Tips on how to track progress on common tasks and provide feedback:

Use cloud-based programs to manage small group projects. For example, Trello, Jira, MS Project, and ClickUP. These programs are very easy to learn and have a simple interface consisting of task boards and task lists.

Try the 360 ° method to evaluate performance. The essence of the 360 ° method is that an employee is assessed “from all sides”, that is, not only by the manager, but also by colleagues, subordinates, and also the employee himself [2]. This is a great way to identify the strengths and weaknesses of employees and chart a way to improve their performance.

Recommendations designed to eliminate the problems of focusing on work tasks from home:

Reduce all chats, emails, conference calls to 1–2 programs. It is extremely difficult to work with many tools, switching from one messenger to another takes time and focus on the necessary tasks.

Make your schedule flexible. Some employees are productive at 7 a.m., while others are more comfortable starting work at noon. Let your employees self-manage their time.

According to our survey, many employees and students are distracted by all sorts of non-work-related apps on their smartphones, so it was recommended that they install the Forest app. After installing the Forest app, a person "plants a seed in the forest," which begins to grow and turn into a tree. It takes half an hour for the tree to fully grow, and it requires not touching the phone the entire time. At the same time, it is possible to create a "white list" containing actions that can be done during this time without "killing" your tree.

Tips to help establish team communication in a distance format:

Establish trust in the team. Start with yourself. The manager's openness will make other team members feel relaxed. Share photos of your home office, family, pet, and build friendships with employees.

Make GIFs or stickers for your company. The challenge for graphic designers is to make cool stickers for your remote team. For your lunch break, you can make a sticker with an employee who always eats whenever you write to him. To acknowledge the new challenge, make a funny "accepted" gif of the person who says so most of the time. Stickers and gifs will cheer you up and dilute your workdays.

Chat for non-working communication of employees. In an ordinary office, employees can chat in the corridor or in the kitchen; in a virtual space, this is not possible. So make an informal chat. In it, you can also talk about everything: about your son's graduation, about your wife's birthday, about trips out of town.

Arrange virtual team building activities and online games. Such activities give remote employees an opportunity to connect with colleagues who rarely meet in person. For example, the Recipe Roundup, where employees discuss a recipe together and cook in a videoconference. This type of group online team building is designed to be fun and symbolizes the strong element of communication.

Conduct outdoor events. It is important that the employees of the distributed team have the opportunity to meet in person, chat and have a great time at least once a year. Such meetings are an opportunity not only to relax but also to unite.

To test the effectiveness of the tips provided, it was decided to conduct a small experiment: 23 people who had previously passed the survey were informed about our advice regarding remote work. After 2 weeks, they received new surveys to check if they followed the given tips and how effectively they solved the problems of remote work described above.

After analyzing the second survey, the following results were obtained: 69.6 % of respondents no longer had difficulty assigning tasks and getting feedback (was 39.1 %), 87 % of respondents no longer had difficulty tracking progress on team tasks (was 43.5 %), 47.8 % became less distracted from work tasks (initially 26.1 % have never or rarely been distracted from work), and 60.8 % no longer lacked communication with teammates (was 30.4 %).

All indicators have increased, so the advice that was given above has confirmed its effectiveness and efficiency.

This scientific work helped to identify the most obvious problems in the management and interaction of remote teams, as well as to choose the most effective methods of its solution, which were tested in practice and displayed effective results.

References

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