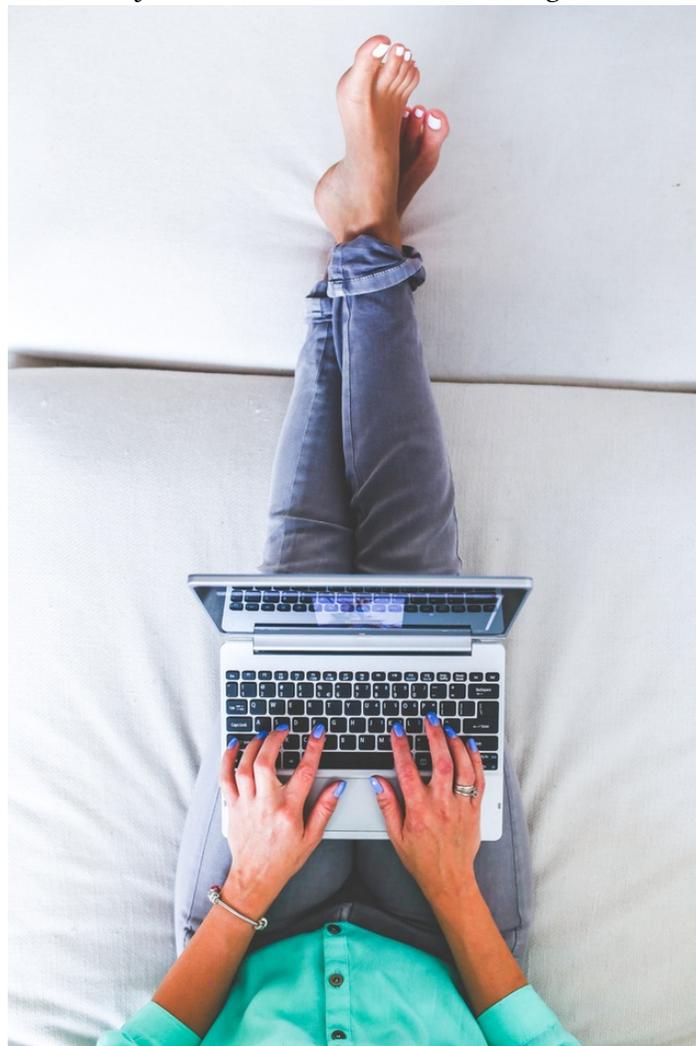


Remote Control: Creating a Productive Distributed Work Model

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E-commerce isn't constrained by time zones or location, so why should your office be? To be truly dynamic and have greater access to finding (and hiring) the right people, a distributed team work model is the answer. My own company, for example, is based in wonderful Bozeman, Montana, and our production facility is in Harlowtown, Montana. However, 55 percent of the [TicketPrinting.com](https://www.ticketprinting.com/) (<https://www.ticketprinting.com/>) team is not in those two locations. We've got workers living from sea to shining sea and beyond.

The decision to integrate distributed teams into the TicketPrinting.com structure was a practical one. Though Montana is beautiful and a fantastic place to live, the pool from which we could draw for specialized positions, such as software development, coding and graphic design, isn't huge. Also, by enabling team members to work remotely, we save on overhead costs, which allows us to focus resources into delivering the best product and customer experience possible.

Sounds great, but you may be asking yourself how a team of workers spread out across the globe can be efficient and cohesive. It's a very salient question! Not unlike a traditional workplace, the distributed team work model requires great communication, the right tools, and a positive corporate culture.

Below are some tips to creating an effective team of distributed workers:

Hire The Right Folks: Now, I realize I've mentioned how finding the right person for the job is easier when the world is your hiring pool. However, just because a candidate has the skills doesn't necessarily mean they're a fit for working in a distributed team. Look for folks who don't require a lot of oversight – those with freelance or entrepreneurial experience are often a safe bet as they're self-starters and accustomed to working independently.

Make Communication Easy: Since you can't physically drop by someone's office, chat in the lunchroom or grab someone for a quick meeting, do everything you can to create regular and clear communication amongst your team. Use tools such as Basecamp or Blossom to organize projects and keep everyone on the same page. Foster a rapport and community with team group chats through collaboration technologies like Slack or Hipchat. I'd also suggest regular face-to-face meetings via Skype or Google Hangouts.

Get Everyone Together: For any company to flourish, its team members need to feel as if they are part of something cohesive. Host a retreat with workshops as well as opportunities to socialize. Interacting in person and sharing experiences is something that is invaluable and worth every penny.

Respect Time Zones: Having team members working all over the US and abroad means everyone's work schedules are not the same. Encourage a mindset of flexibility, patience, and adaptability. For example, a team member in Boston may have questions for a colleague in Seattle, but he or she is unlikely to get an immediate response at 8am EST. In that scenario, the person waiting for answers must be able to turn their attention to other projects.

Measure Productivity: Though you can't see your team in-person, that doesn't mean you can't assess whether they're working. After all, gauging whether someone is pulling their weight in a traditional office setting can be tricky, too. In fact, in some ways it is simpler to figure out if folks are working in a distributed team because it's purely about results. Are projects being completed on time? Are you receiving responses to queries within a reasonable timeframe? If so, that's a clear positive your worker is on the ball. There are also apps designed to track what folks are doing during their work hours, such as HiveDesk, WorkSnaps and IDoneThis.

It's Distributed Not Remote: Lastly, we use the term "distributed" not "remote". Remote conjures detachment and distance; while we are geographically apart from each other, through tools like Skype, Slack, Google Hangouts and more, we are very present second by second as a team. We do not feel in any way "remote" from each other.