

How to Be an Effective HR Manager for a Remote Team

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Includes

6 Steps To Effectively Manage a Remote Team

We'll discuss how you can be a more effective HR manager in a remote environment by implementing HR strategies that are designed for remote teams.

HR managers quickly realize that managing a remote team requires a very different strategy than managing an in-house team.

In an in-office environment, you can visibly see when an employee is distressed in their body language. However, remote HR managers communicate with their teams less frequently, and their limited interactions (like Zoom calls) are more shallow, as body language cues are limited.

This means it's much easier for issues to escalate without managers or HR members realizing a problem exists until employees take drastic actions like quitting.



As a result, even the most experienced HR managers who switch to managing a remote workforce find themselves caught off guard when employees quit, or when leading indicators like eNPS scores drop.

These unexpected events can make you feel like you're losing control over your domain, and you might wonder if you'll ever become an effective HR manager.

Responding reactively to each fire that's burning is not sustainable and will lead to high attrition rates, poor employee reviews, and decreased productivity. In addition, you'll probably feel like you're always a step behind.

This feeling can be discouraging, and many HR managers even second-guess their career path at this point.

[Access our free wellness scripts & resources](#) to promote wellness initiatives in your remote team!



In this guide, we'll discuss:

- Why remote teams require different management strategies from in-house teams.
- Proactive strategies to become a more effective HR manager for a remote team.

Why Remote Teams Require Different Management Strategies Than In-House Teams

Most people fear confrontation, so employees typically don't speak up when an issue arises.

Managers in in-person teams often rely on their body language (e.g., looking crestfallen, not joining co-workers in the break room, closed-off body language in meetings, etc.) to recognize issues and address them with employees before they escalate. However, remote team managers have limited visual cues, especially if employees turn off their cameras during meetings.

It's much easier to build trusting relationships in-person than over Zoom, as there are more opportunities for personal communication at the beginning and end of in-person meetings and while interacting in different places around the office. In contrast, online meetings require a more intentional approach to asking questions, like enquiring about weekend plans or exciting events that might be coming up.

If remote employees don't have a trusting relationship with their managers, they're less likely to speak up when there's an issue. This can make it easier for employees to surf Indeed for a better job opportunity rather than simply giving feedback to their manager.

As a result, you can feel blindsided when issues you never knew existed blow up, and employees quit.

6 Steps To Effectively Manage a Remote Team

Below, we'll discuss how you can be a more effective HR manager in a remote environment by implementing HR strategies that are designed for remote teams.

1 Set Clear Goals and Metrics

The first step to switching from reactively responding to issues, to proactively preventing issues from arising, is to set clear goals and metrics. Once you have clear goals, it's much easier to build a strategy that works towards them so you can avoid investing time and money into activities that don't contribute to the end goal. Before creating goals, talk to executives and learn more about the company's broader goals for the quarter/year. From there, you can align your goals with the overarching company goals.

Aligning your goals with the company ensures your efforts contribute to overall company growth, and helps you get buy-in from executives. If you can show executives how your strategy will help them achieve their goals, they'll be much more likely to support it and encourage lower-level managers to execute on it as well.

As most company goals revolve around increasing profits, here are some sample HR metrics worth tracking that affect the company's bottom line:

- Employee attrition and retention metrics like voluntary vs. involuntary turnover rate and absentee rate.
- Employee referral rates (how many new hires are from employee referrals as opposed to paying a recruiter?)
- eNPS scores
- Employee performance, as a result of employee performance reviews
- Employee engagement

2 Employee Engagement

In addition to revenue-driven goals, it's important to recognize the unique challenges of remote workforces and create goals that are focused around connectivity and engagement. Engagement in particular is more difficult, as things like inviting everyone to the conference room for a team lunch is not possible on a remote team.

It's best to offer activities that focus on improving connectivity, and then create employee participation goals around those activities. For example, you could implement a solution like Bright Breaks and measure how many employees use it to take breaks during their workday every month. You can also implement a wellness challenge through Bright Breaks or another provider (e.g. a step challenge) and then measure how your team engages with it.

3 Intentionally Build Relationships With Managers and Leadership

In addition to winning buy-in for your initiatives from C-suite executives, it's also critical to win buy-in from middle managers, as they run the teams and have the most influence over the employee experience. This is an important reason to keep relationships with C-suite and middle managers productive and effective for both sides.

In a remote setting, opportunities are different than in an office setting to build relationships with managers because you aren't bumping into them in the breakroom or attending lunches with other team members.

To build a relationship with managers in a remote setting, the interactions need to be planned and deliberate, which you can use to your advantage. This means there is an opportunity to research each stakeholder's goals and responsibilities before reaching out to meet. Asking for a one-on-one meeting with an agenda prepared that clearly shows the benefit of their attendance is the great way to successfully get time with busy leaders at any level. Yes, you will be asking them for help and feedback, but by tying in how this all feeds into their goals, this will perpetuate two-way productive relationships with your colleagues and superiors.

During these meetings, ask for feedback on your proposed HR strategy and their department's goal progress to make the connection that your goals align with the success of their goals. Ask questions about what challenges they are facing and if you cannot make a direct correlation on the call to their challenges and the HR strategy, then use it as an opportunity to follow up with them at a later date.

For instance, if a manager complains that they keep losing and having to replace staff quarter after quarter, then let this be an opportunity to strategize with them to create a more enhanced employee onboarding experience, more opportunities for engagement in general and how HR can help.

You may also discover while speaking with mid-level managers that you can help them elevate their management skills. This can look like providing resources on conducting effective one-on-ones with their direct reports and giving them access to training to develop their relationship-building skills as leaders.

4

Regularly Conduct Employee Surveys And Collect Feedback

Remote HR managers don't have the luxury of visual cues to gauge employee well-being and engagement. For example, you can't glance up from your desk to read an employee's body language or see if employees are using the ping pong table at lunch.

Therefore, surveys become a critical factor to measure team health and cover the blind spots that come with remote culture.

A quarterly eNPS pulse collected at regular intervals is particularly important feedback as you implement a new HR management strategy. eNPS scores are a strong leading indicator of employee turnover rates. If they wouldn't recommend their workplace to someone else, are they themselves happy in their role?

It's also essential to run quarterly or annual surveys and collect more detailed feedback about what employees like and dislike about the culture and their general opinion on your current HR strategy. You can either create your own survey with a tool like [SurveyMonkey](#), or use a tool like [OfficeVibe](#) to do it for you

If you feel your company would respond well to this, you can run daily surveys with a tool like [HelloTeam](#) or [Workfeel](#), which allow employees to rate their general happiness each day. There is, however, a risk that only those who are feeling fairly positive will answer regularly.

Implementing new hire surveys is also useful as you can receive a newcomer's feedback to learn how your culture compares to other cultures they've been part of, and it can give you a new perspective on how to improve the company culture in your organization. This data can also be a leading indicator of attrition if points of improvement or expectations mismatch are identified early on.

When running employee surveys, use a mix of anonymous and personalized responses depending on the survey. The former will allow for information to be learned that may not otherwise be for fear of jeopardizing their job, the latter will help in engaging in follow-up dialogue to help resolve issues directly with respondents.

It's also worth noting that the simple act of running employee surveys demonstrates to employees that you truly value their well-being. This makes them feel more comfortable raising questions and addressing issues before they escalate.

5

Implement Employee Well-Being Initiatives Designed For Remote Teams

Happy employees are more productive, less likely to leave the company and encourage their friends to join the team. As employee well-being directly impacts the HR team's key goals, [employee well-being initiatives](#) are excellent tools to help you achieve your goals.

Unfortunately, many employee well-being initiatives used by in-person teams don't work for remote teams. For example, doing a team hike simply isn't realistic for remote teams unless coupled with a company-wide offsite that may only happen once or twice a year.

So instead, here are a few different employee well-being initiatives that are ideal for remote teams:

Offering EAP (Employee Assistance Program) Resources:

If employees are struggling with loneliness and other mental well-being challenges, giving them access to professional healthcare is critical.

Scheduled Breaks:

One issue with many remote teams is that employees often feel burned out because they don't take breaks during a busy workday. Bright Breaks are virtual live seven-minute classes (yoga, meditation, etc.) delivered directly to employees' calendars to give them short breaks they need to reset and refresh during the workday. This helps them avoid burnout and focus better during the workday so that they get more done in a shorter amount of time. Bright Breaks also helps combat employee loneliness with connection to live educators and fellow break participants around the world – including co-workers.

Physical Health Perks:

Plenty of scientific studies show a link between physical and emotional well-being, so offering access to gym memberships, subscriptions to step-tracking apps, and other physical activities is also an excellent method to improve employee well-being.

6

How Managers Can Check-in on Employee Wellbeing

In addition to offering resources for employees to use, it's also important to talk to managers and ensure they dedicate a portion of one-on-one meeting time to focus on the employee's emotional and mental well-being. This builds in another way to gauge employee well-being and give opportunity to act proactively either with individual employees or well-being strategy as whole.

Some questions you can recommend that managers ask include:

- How are you feeling in your role this week?
- Do you feel supported by your team, and is there anything I can do to support you more effectively?
- How is your current work-life balance? Is there anything we can do to improve it?

Implement Activities That Strengthen Team Relationships

In-person co-workers naturally build relationships with one another because they have many serendipitous touch points throughout the day, ranging from meetups in the breakroom to passing conversations in the hallways.

Co-workers that trust one another are more likely to communicate more frequently, confront problems before resentment builds, and reach out to one another for help and advice. Excellent communication ultimately leads to increased productivity, lower employee turnover, and a general increase in employee satisfaction which fuels the company's larger growth goals.

Remote teams don't have these multiple touchpoints throughout the day, so HR and managers need to work harder to facilitate them, and to ensure employees have the opportunity to build genuine relationships with their team members.

To create more opportunities for employees to connect on a more personal level, consider implementing team-building activities. You can either create your own activities, like planning a virtual escape room or hosting a virtual yoga class, or use a tool that does this for you.

Bright Breaks is an example of an app that makes it easy to offer well-being initiatives that also includes connectivity opportunities, as we host hundreds of live seven-minute sessions every week with no planning required.. Employees just join the session with the click of a button.

Many of our customers have their entire department join a Bright Breaks session before or after meetings so that co-workers can take time for well-being together. Employees can also invite one another to Bright Breaks independently.

You can also create watercooler-style channels in Slack and other internal communication tools to help employees learn more about each other. For example, you could create a Pets channel where employees can share about their pets. This is a great way for employees to bond over similar hobbies and get to know each other on a deeper level.

Another option is to use an icebreaker game like QuizBreaker where employees receive trivia questions about one another to learn more about each others' interests and hobbies.

Prioritizing Your Own Well-Being And Mental Health

Many HR managers worry so much about their employees that their own mental and emotional well-being deteriorates. You won't perform your best as an HR manager if you're suffering emotionally, so be sure to follow your own advice and take advantage of the well-being resources you make available for your team.

If employees notice that you aren't taking your own advice, they'll assume you don't believe in the systems you've put in place, and will be less likely to participate in your strategy.

If you want more support, you can also join online HR communities to connect with others who can empathize with the day-to-day challenges of being an HR professional in a remote company. You can find many supportive HR groups on platforms such as LinkedIn, [Reddit](#), Facebook, and Discord.

A Wellbeing and Connectivity Toolkit For Effective HR Managers

If you've previously managed in-person teams, you can't translate the exact same management strategies to a remote company.

Employees face different challenges, and as an HR manager, it's your responsibility to prepare for those unique challenges and meet them.

One of the most common challenges we identified in remote companies is that employees feel guilty taking breaks during the day, and many work non-stop for eight hours. In addition, many feel lonely due to the lack of opportunities to connect with their teams in a physical space every day.

Unfortunately, this makes employees less productive and ultimately leads to burnout. To solve this problem, we created Bright Breaks, which are scheduled seven-minute live breaks that employees can add to their calendars and attend together.

This helps them stay sharp throughout the workday, which increases productivity, prevents burnout, and increases general employee well-being.



 **bright breaks**

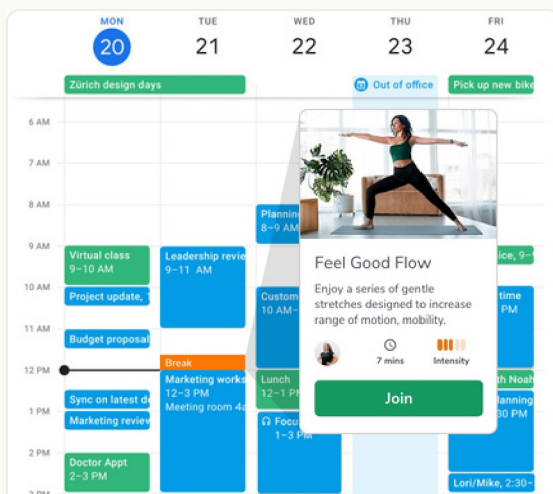
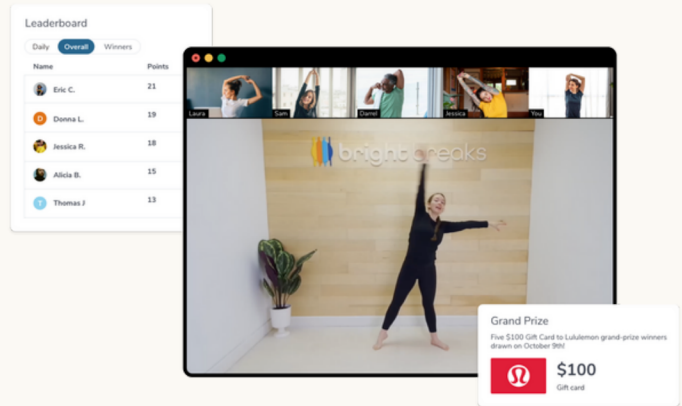
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Love this guide? You'll love Bright Breaks even more.



Bright Breaks helps your team prioritize and take breaks each day. Offering 300+ microbreaks each week that are designed to improve well-being, Bright Breaks makes it easy to introduce breaks throughout your organization and cultivate a happier, healthier workplace.

You can unwind and recharge with fitness, yoga, meditation, nutrition, personal development, and more.



Plus, Bright Breaks' Daily Break AI-powered smart scheduler makes it easy to find the daily breaks you enjoy most, make them part of your daily routine, and even get rewarded with fun prizes like Starbucks or Airbnb gift cards.

Talk with the Bright Breaks team today for more expert advice on how you can introduce workday breaks to your team to reduce burnout, improve well-being, and increase retention.

[Talk with the Bright Breaks team](#)

