2020

The Remote Playbook

from the largest all-remote company in the world

- Tips for making remote work
- Tactics for remote transition and fluency
- The most comprehensive remote work guide

GitLab

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Preparing for the future of work

Due to recent events surrounding the global health crisis COVID-19 (coronavirus), many teams face a new reality: working remotely. We hope this playbook serves as a quick start guide to get your remote workforce up and running quickly and smoothly for short-term and long-term success.

As technology and internet access has improved, more of the world's workforce opt to work from anywhere. GitLab's recent *Remote Work Report* revealed that **86%** of respondents believe remote work is the future of work. Today, a quarter of remote work settings are all-remote, where all employees work remotely and in their native time zone. In addition to employee benefits like flexibility and zero commute time, remote work employers consistently experience increased productivity, efficiency, and employee morale. In the words of **Fast Company**, "remote work isn't going away anytime soon."

Enabling a remote workforce is not "business as usual." There are critical differences in managing in-office and remotely: communication, culture, and management must adjust. Luckily, remote work has rapidly increased over the years and there are several methods to make remote work a success.

The Remote Playbook aims to answer one simple question: "How do we transition to remote work?" Whether it's unwinding from offices completely and going all-remote or attempting to level the playing field for in-office and remote workers, the question of "how do we do this?" is a giant one. GitLab has been working on the answer since 2014.

For GitLab, being an all-remote company didn't start as an intentional decision; it was a natural evolution as our first team members started to work from home. As a complete DevOps platform, **GitLab the product** fundamentally changes how teams work by bringing cross-team collaboration and communication into a single platform. With everyone contributing to a single conversation within the tool, there was little reason to congregate in an office.

Today, GitLab is the world's largest all-remote workforce with **1,200+** employees across **67** countries, and we've been iterating and documenting how to work remotely for years. This comprehensive guide contains our lessons learned and proven methods on how to stabilize a remote workforce, diving into topics including asynchronous workflows, meetings, communication, culture, and management.

From very early on, we started writing things down. [Coming to the office] wasn't needed. **They weren't getting any extra information**. They were on Slack, on Zoom, in Google Docs, in GitLab pages, in GitLab Issues, in GitLab merge requests – they didn't need to be there.
— **Sid Sijbrandij**, co-founder and CEO at GitLab

5 Tips for remote leaders

01

ESTABLISH A REMOTE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Rally a team of experts who have remote work experience, can communicate nuances, and serve as resources to others. A core part of this team's role will be to document challenges in real time, transparently prioritize those challenges, and assign directly responsible individuals (DRIs) to find solutions.

02

ESTABLISH A HANDBOOK

This will serve as a single source of truth and should be communicated company-wide. This can start as a single company webpage or repository in Notion or Ask Almanac. One of the most sizable challenges when going remote is keeping everyone informed efficiently. Put concerted effort in systematically documenting important process changes in a central place to minimize confusion.

03

ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Whatever your current view on transparency, leaders shouldn't hold back during this time. Team members will expect frequent updates as leaders iterate on their communication plan in real-time. Consider an always-on video conference room per team, where team members can linger, or come and go as they please. This simulation helps acclimation, enabling team members to embrace the shift to remote in a less jarring way. It also shows intentionality around informal communication — an important element that occurs spontaneously in an office, and needs an immediate replacement in a remote setting. For a fast-boot on this front, consider replicating **GitLab's public communication guide**.

04

MINIMIZE YOUR TOOL STACK

While functioning remotely, strip the tool stack down to a minimum. Google Docs, a company-wide chat tool (like Microsoft Teams or Slack), and Zoom are all you need to start. If your team needs access to internal systems through a VPN, ensure that everyone has easy access and clear instructions on usage.

05

DRIVE CHANGE

For companies with a strong "in-office experience," it's vital for leadership to recognize that the remote transition is a process, not a binary switch to be flipped. Leaders are responsible for embracing iteration, being open about what is and isn't working, and messaging this to all employees. Managing a remote company is like managing any company. It comes down to **trust, communication, and company-wide support of shared goals.**
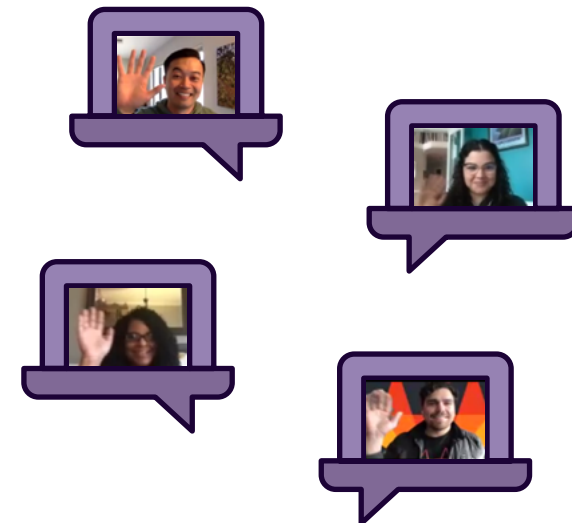
5 Tips for remote employees

01 **CARVE OUT A DEDICATED WORKSPACE**

Where you work is as important as what you work on and who you work with. Aim to dedicate a space where only work occurs, enabling you to focus while you're there and disconnect when you exit. The execution of this will look different depending on your workspace and who is present during your working hours, but the key is to find a space that is purely for work.

02 **SEPARATE WORK FROM LIFE**

This is likely to be the most difficult hurdle to clear, particularly for new work-from-home employees who have family in the home. You should have a dedicated conversation with family, helping them understand that just because you're home, that doesn't mean you're available. A shortcut to boundary setting is this: "If it's important enough that you'd commute to my usual office and come to my desk, then it's important enough for you to visit my home workspace." You may also consider a busy/available indicator.

When there's no physical office to leave, it's easy to work longer than is expected (or healthy). If useful, set reminders to begin and end work, and plan activities to fill the void where a commute once stood. Proactively planning what you'll do with your commute time is key to ramping into a workday and ramping off. This will look different for each individual, but leaving your home for a walk or running an errand is a great way to create unmistakable separation.

03 **ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE**

When there's no office to influence spontaneous informal communication, you must be intentional to weave it into your day.

- Schedule regular virtual coffee chats and happy hours using a video call.

- Create an always-on video conferencing room that your team can work from. (And remember, in a remote setting, it's OK to look away!)

- Talk about what you normally would. If sports, vacation plans, and hilarious tales of insubordination by children are common water-cooler material, work with your team to establish a chat channel to discuss things outside of work. The medium may be different, but the connection is the same.

- Drop any shame or embarrassment. Everyone is in the same boat — a forced work-from-home arrangement with no preparation. Don't worry about your background, and feel welcome to let your pets and family find their way into calls on occasion. It humanizes the experience and reminds everyone that we're people first, and colleagues second.

- Connect with family and community. Working remotely gives you an opportunity to spend time with a different set of people than just your coworkers. Look for opportunities to build bonds with others, which may have been impossible or limited when you had a commute.

04 RESPECT THE ROUTINE, BUT EXPERIMENT WITH CHANGE

While asynchronous workflows is a significant benefit of an all-remote team, temporary work-from-home arrangements may be less amenable to massive swings in time zone adoption. If this is the case, it's wise to formulate a routine that closely aligns with your prior routine.

However, don't feel beholden to a routine. A perk of remote is the ability to experiment with unconventional working days. It's understood that not everyone shares the same peak hours of energy and focus. If you feel that you work best in late evenings, for example, have that conversation with your team and experiment with a non-linear workday.

05 ROLL WITH THE CHANGES

Relax: you aren't born knowing how to work from home. Companies shifting from onsite teams to remote are likely to experience growing pains. If not taken in stride, this friction can cause serious harm — operationally as well as culturally. Remember that transitioning to remote, even if temporary, is a process. As you adapt to remote work, be open to trying and experimenting with new ways of working, communicating, and scheduling your day. .

The stages of remote

There are different levels of remote work and every organization has unique needs. It's important to know the stages of remote work when considering what's best for the long term as there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

Company policy on remote work

	🇺🇸	🇬🇧	🇨🇦	🇦🇺
37% Hybrid-remote (part of the team works in-office, part of the team works remotely)	35%	39%	40%	36%
26% 100% remote, each employee works in their own native time zone	▲30%	▼23%	▼23%	▼22%
25% Remote work is allowed or tolerated, but is not the norm or default	▲21%	▼28%	▼28%	▼34%
12% 100% remote, every employee is synched to a company-mandated time zone	▲15%	▼10%	▼8%	▼8%

The green triangle represents significantly higher/lower at 95% confidence.

(source: **The Remote Work Report**)

No remote

Some enterprises don't allow for any remote work. This could be due to a leadership mandate, or the nature of the business itself. For example, medical care, live events, and manufacturing can't successfully complete tasks while remote.

It's worth noting that we are seeing new opportunities for remote work arise thanks to technological advancements. The da Vinci Surgical System, for instance, has been **used in telesurgery**, and communications infrastructure is robust enough in some locales to support **remote broadcasting**.

Multinational corporations with offices across the globe are inherently remote. An employee in one office is remote to another employee in another office, and a refusal to recognize this reality can make collaborating across offices difficult.

Learning how to facilitate remote work can be beneficial to "non-remote" companies.

Remote-allowed

Also called "remote-tolerated", this stage of remote allows approved employees in a company to work some (but not all) days outside the office.

This is commonly seen in agency and corporate environments where "remote Fridays" are sold as a perk to employment. In such scenarios, it's clear that leadership isn't piloting remote work as a means to judge the feasibility of all-remote, but rather compromising with employee demands for greater flexibility.
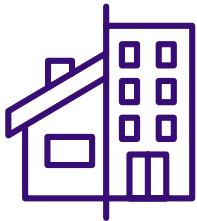
These employers are tolerant of some work outside of the office, but still expect an individual to spend the bulk of their time in the office.

| No remote | Remote-allowed | Hybrid-remote | Remote biased | All-remote |

Hybrid-remote

Hybrid-remote is more common than all-remote as it's easier for large, established companies to implement. In a hybrid-remote scenario, there are one or more offices where a subset of the company commutes to each day, paired with a subset of the company that works remotely.

For employers who are committed to a colocated model, but wish to expand their recruiting pipeline beyond their HQ, allowing remote employees can be beneficial. Employers may be able to find exceptional team members in a more diverse array of locales, pay them local rates, and sidestep ongoing talent wars in major metropolitan areas.

Employees looking for additional freedom, autonomy, and workplace flexibility will likely view "some remote" as better than "no remote" but hybrid-remote can have some challenges:

1. **Hybrid-remote employees may have less access to information**. Unless the employer documents everything, employees may be asked to handle day-to-day duties with less or incomplete information compared to in-person colleagues. Over time, this can lead to mistakes, confusion, frustration, and even underperformance.

2. **Fewer career and development opportunities**. Hybrid-remote employees who are out of sight may be passed over for promotions, advancement, and development opportunities. They may also have fewer opportunities to move horizontally within the organization, and less influence to create a new role to serve evolving business needs.

3. **The feeling of being a satellite office**. Hybrid-remote employees may feel isolated from the rest of the company. It's important to ask during the interview process how remote colleagues are onboarded, included, and perceived by others. Some employees may not be fazed by this treatment, but it can take a mental and emotional toll on others.

4. **Managing guilt**. It's not uncommon to hear remote workers express guilt if they work in a company that is primarily colocated. Their socialization involves colleagues who may complain about commutes, or express sadness due to an inability to attend family functions. There are inequalities in this arrangement as the remote employee has to empathize with colleagues despite not being required to endure the same inflexibility.

5. **The burden of lobbying for remote**. If an employee is hired in a remote capacity, but this arrangement is not supported equally across teams and managers, a situation may arise where the remote employee is constantly justifying the perceived privilege of not being forced to commute into a physical office.

6. **Determining whether remote is truly offered and supported**. Many large companies will tolerate remote employees, but they won't openly advertise roles as remote, nor will they publicly admit that they support remote work. This creates an exhausting game of hide-and-seek when searching for roles, in addition to searching for remote-friendly managers and teams within such an organization.

7. **Risk of being made an example of**. It's possible for remote employees in a primarily colocated company to be asked questions like "So, how did you finagle a remote arrangement?" This places remote employees in a difficult situation. Either they choose to champion the cause of empowering even more colleagues to work remotely, potentially harming their reputation, or they seem unhelpful by keeping the perceived perk to themselves.

8. **Demands for overperformance**. Remote employees working with colleagues who endure long commutes each day may encounter pressure to deliver results beyond those expected of in-person team members. This stems from a toxic culture of envy, where colocated employees deduce that if they must endure inflexibility and commutes, remote colleagues must produce additional results so as to not get off easier.

Remote, biased towards one time zone

Certain companies allow employees to work remotely but maintain "core team hours." InVision Studio, for example, has members spread across multiple countries and time zones, but aims to achieve "at least a 4-hour overlap with InVision's core team hours, 10am–6pm Eastern Standard Time."

This tends to attract employees who are in relatively close proximity to one another, or at least in a nearby time zone even if located in a different hemisphere.

All-remote, asynchronous across time zones

An all-remote company means there is no office where teams work. In all-remote companies, there's no effort to align team members to a given time zone. Rather, a bias towards asynchronous communication encourages documentation, discourages synchronous meetings as a default for collaboration, and provides greater flexibility for each member to determine the working hours that best suit their lifestyle.

For example, GitLab is a 100% remote company, where each individual works remotely and there are no company-owned offices. With team members in over 67 countries, many time zones are considered. This goes beyond enabling a work from home arrangement; all-remote creates a **work from anywhere** arrangement.

What "all-remote" does not mean

The terms "remote" and "distributed" are often used interchangeably, but they're not quite the same. "Remote" is preferred because "distributed" suggests multiple physical offices. "Remote" is the most common term to refer to the absence of a physical workspace, and being able to do a job from anywhere—at home with family, a coffee shop, traveling, or wherever is most comfortable and productive. All-remote does not mean isolated: Technology allows coworkers to stay closely connected whether through text or in real time via video conferencing.

At the organizational level, "all-remote" doesn't mean simply offshoring work, it means we're able to hire the best talent in the world. It's also not a management paradigm. There is still have a hierarchical organization, but with a focus on output instead of input.

All in all, remote is fundamentally about freedom and individual choice and valuing results, regardless of where work is done.

For employees, being part of an all-remote company does not mean working independently or being isolated, because it's not a substitute for human interaction.

The foundations of remote work

Traditional, on-site companies often take processes, camaraderie, and culture for granted. In a remote environment, these traits have to be cultivated deliberately, a difficult task that becomes easier once organizations embrace the foundations of remote work instead of trying to make remote work with an on-site mindset.

Document everything (yes, everything)

At on-site companies, people can visit each other at their desk to ask a question or just listen to conversations going on around them. While these are certainly convenient for receiving quick answers, they can also be distracting and make companies less productive. By adopting a handbook-first approach, team members have "a single source of truth" for answers. Even though documentation takes a little more time upfront, it prevents people from having to ask the same question repeatedly. Remote work is what led to the development of GitLab's publicly viewable handbook.

DOCUMENTING COMPANY GOALS

Each department and team's quarterly goals, or "objectives and key results" (OKRs), are clearly documented in our handbook for visibility across the company. Revisit these goals monthly, so there's as much transparency as possible around how each team progresses.

DOCUMENTING ONBOARDING
An intentional approach to documentation also helps with onboarding new team members, because everything they need to know is in one place. At GitLab, we provide onboarding buddies to ease the new job jitters, and host a GitLab 101 for new GitLabbers to ask questions.

DOCS INSTEAD OF WATER COOLERS
Leveraging written documentation over physical "water coolers" is more inclusive. While decisions made around office water coolers may be familiar in traditional workplaces, the input is limited to those present. Those who are not present feel left out and miss a valuable opportunity to hear different perspectives.

This way of working is more inclusive. By documenting everything, no one is left out of the conversation and a diverse set of perspectives can be heard.

Have more organized meetings

"How do you do meetings right?" is a common question asked of all-remote companies like GitLab. The truth is that much of the same advice that is applicable to in-person meetings also applies to meetings within an all-remote company, with a few notable distinctions.

MAKE MEETINGS OPTIONAL

At a global, all-remote company, all-remote company, the usual assumptions about availability are opposite the norm. Coordinating over many time zones can make synchronous meetings impractical and inefficient. Anyone who has worked in a corporate environment has likely seen the sarcastic "I Survived Another Meeting That Should Have Been An Email" award. Don't book a meeting by default — strive to make meetings optional.

Aim to record all meetings, particularly when key individuals aren't able to join live. This allows team members to catch up on what transpired, adding context to notes that were taken during the meeting.

HAVE AN AGENDA

We're often asked, "But how do you whiteboard without everyone physically together?" This is where our approach to meetings differs significantly from many on-site companies, but also one of the ways we're able to be more efficient.

At GitLab, we use Google Docs for collaboration and make sure every meeting has an agenda for documenting discussions, decisions, and actions. Everyone in the meeting can add notes at the same time, and we even finish each other's sentences sometimes.

By brainstorming in text - rather than drawings - we're forced to clearly articulate proposals and ideas, with less room for interpretations. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it's also open to as many interpretations as there are people viewing it. With Google Docs, we use indentations to go more in-depth on a given topic. This method retains context for comments and discussions, even if someone wasn't present for the original conversation.

Align values with expectations

Values drive action. If your values are structured to encourage conventional colocated workplace norms (such as **consensus gathering**, or recurring meetings with in-person teams), rewrite them. If values are inconsistent with the foundation of remote work, there's bound to be disappointment and confusion. Values can set the right expectations and provide a clear direction for the company going forward. At GitLab, we are proof that all-remote teams can be just as, if not more productive, than traditional teams, and that's because we have aligned our values with remote work every step of the way.

You're welcome to study **GitLab's values**, and learn more about how this collection contributes to an all-remote environment.
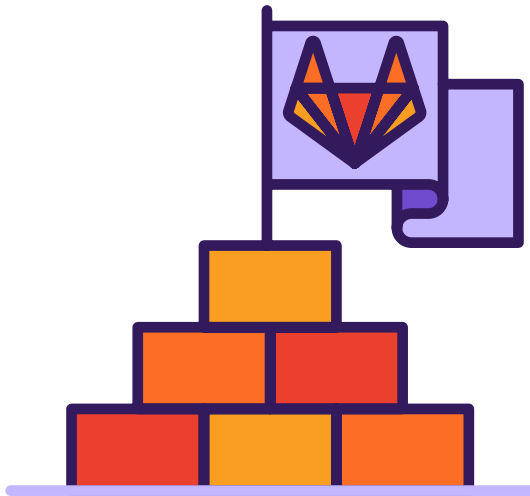
Key takeaways

1. Document everything and adopt a "handbook-first" approach for company communication.

2. Making meetings optional, require every meeting to have an agenda, take diligent notes, and record meetings for absent attendees.

3. Structure company values to support a remote work environment.

DO

- Encourage social interaction
- Document everything
- Have meetings when necessary

DON'T

- Limit interaction to work-related topics
- Rely on 1:1 transmission of information
- Making meetings mandatory

Making the transition

The reality is that almost every company is already a remote company. If you have more than one office, operate a company across more than one floor in a building, or conduct work while traveling, you are a remote company. It behooves all teams to adopt remote-first practices, even if some interactions occur in a shared physical space.

Create an ergonomic workspace

While long-term remote workers have had years to tweak and iterate on their **home office**, those who are thrust into working from anywhere may be ill-prepared. Organizations shouldn't expect team members to be masters in office design and ergonomics. What works best for one person will look different to another person. The goal of office ergonomics is to design your workspace to allow for a comfortable working environment for maximum productivity and efficiency.

On the following page are some tips from the **Mayo Clinic** on how to arrange your workstation.
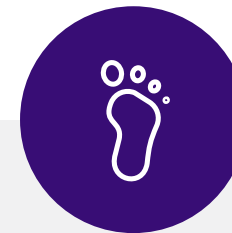
CHAIR

Choose a chair that supports your spinal curves. Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor. Adjust armrests so your arms gently rest on them with your shoulders relaxed.

DESK

Under the desk, make sure there's clearance for your knees, thighs and feet. If the desk is too low, place sturdy boards or blocks under the desk legs. If the desk is too high, raise your chair. Use a footrest to support your feet as needed. If your desk has a hard edge, pad the edge or use a wrist rest. Don't store items under your desk.

FOOTREST

If your chair is too high for you to rest your feet flat on the floor—or the height of your desk requires you to raise the height of your chair—use a footrest. If a footrest is not available, try using a small stool or a stack of sturdy books instead.

KEYBOARD & MOUSE

Place your mouse in easy reach and on the same surface as your keyboard. Keep your wrists straight, upper arms close to your body, and hands at or slightly below the level of your elbows. Use keyboard shortcuts to reduce extended mouse use. Adjust the sensitivity of the mouse so you can use a light touch to operate it.

MONITOR

Place the monitor directly in front of you, about an arm's length away. The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level. The monitor should be directly behind your keyboard. If you wear bifocals, lower the monitor an additional 1 to 2 inches for more comfortable viewing. Place your monitor so that the brightest light source is to the side.

TELEPHONE

If you frequently talk on the phone and type or write at the same time, place your phone on speaker or use a headset rather than cradling the phone between your head and neck.

Adopt a self-service and self-learning mentality

All-remote companies thrive through documentation. Crucially, this requires every team member to be equally invested in perpetuating documentation, creating a virtuous cycle of self-searching, self-service, and self-learning. Managers should continuously reinforce this expectation.

ASSUME YOUR QUESTION IS ALREADY ANSWERED

It's not what you know, it's knowing where to look. This is true at GitLab and other organizations that are intentional about documenting processes, and it is entirely counter to how typical work environments are structured.

It is imperative that new team members operate with the assumption that their questions are already answered. This is a profound process shift that may feel unnatural and inefficient.

For team members this requires retraining. Managers should help team members resist defaulting to tapping on the virtual shoulder of someone as soon as an inquiry comes to mind. Rather, team members should redirect that effort into searching.

Make documentation everyone's responsibility

The ideal response to learning an answer is to document said answer in an act of paying it forward, such that every new hire that comes after will be able to find this information more quickly. Plus, it removes the company-wide burden of having to develop this answer from scratch again. This mentality encompasses many sub-values.

1. **Write things down**
2. **Be respectful of others' time**
3. **Responsibility over rigidity**
4. **Move fast by shipping the minimum viable change**
5. **Ambitious**
6. **Ownership**
7. **Sense of urgency**
8. **Bias for action**

For many companies, the frenetic pace of business creates a false sense of justification for bypassing documentation. Once this happens, the only way to consistently learn is to ask another person repeatedly. At scale, this is an extraordinarily wasteful process that leads to exhaustion, watered-down instructions, and huge knowledge gaps as team members cycle in and out.

Most employees are not empowered to shift an entire company culture to one that favors documentation. Thus, one typically builds a skillset of how and when to ask other humans in order to extract information vital to achieving their goals. They know it's a suboptimal approach, but may feel that they have no reasonable alternative. When you aren't given a handbook that is regularly updated and reliably actionable, it feels odd to seek answers first in documentation. Humans tend to trust other humans more than words written in an online repository, which is why it's so vital to humanize a handbook by empowering all members of a company to contribute.

Managing a remote team

"How do you manage when everyone is remote?" is a common question for those leading or managing within an all-remote company.

In truth, managing an all-remote company is much like managing any other company. It all comes down to trust, communication, and company-wide support of shared goals, all of which aid in avoiding dysfunction. Remote forces you to do the things you should be doing way earlier and better. It forces discipline that sustains culture and efficiency at scale, particularly in areas that are easily deprioritized in small colocated companies.

It's important to not assume that team members understand good remote work practices. Managers are expected to coach their reports to utilize asynchronous communication, be handbook-first, design an optimal workspace, and understand the importance of self-learning/self-service. Leaders should ensure that new remote hires read a getting started guide, and make themselves available to answer questions throughout one's journey with the company.

Tips for hiring new team members

1. **Be clear and direct in all communications with candidates.** Virtual interviews can be tough for both sides, so set expectations for both yourself and the candidate at the beginning of the process. Encourage questions, ask for clarification when needed, and be helpful and responsive with any follow-up interactions.

2. **Look for candidates that align closely with company values.** While working remotely, it's important to stick to company values in order to maintain a team mentality – so it will help to assess candidates for those values too.

3. **Look for qualities that make a strong remote employee.** Those include timeliness, dependability, respect, collaboration, perseverance, empathy, kindness, and ambition.

4. **Use video calls to interview and engage with candidates.** Knock down some barriers to communication with video conferencing. Inform candidates ahead of time that the call will be through video, to give them time to prepare and ensure a stable internet connection.

Key takeaways

1. The reality is all companies are already remote in some way; adopt remote-first practices even if some interactions occur in a physical space.

2. Take care to create an ergonomic and efficient work space. The optimal work environment will likely vary from person to person.

3. Documentation is everyone's responsibility. When you ask a question and receive an answer, write it down.

DO

- Adopt a remote-first mentality
- Focus your workspace
- Document answers to questions

DON'T

- Try to replicate the in-office environment
- Tap on the virtual shoulder for answers

Remote communication strategies

Implementing effective communication strategies is an integral component in developing a strong remote work environment. Good communication habits enable team members to feel connected to others and aware of business decisions and operations. Communication is the solution to ensuring that teams don't feel isolated and lost.
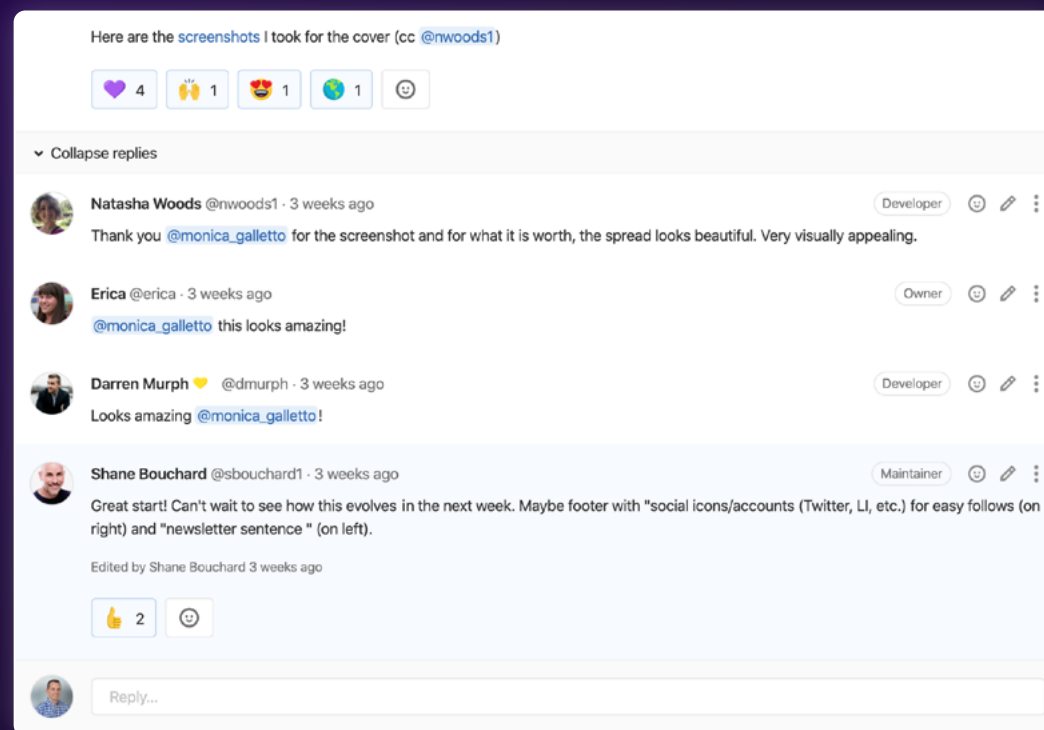
Documentation

The motto of remote work should be: "[The faintest pencil is better than the sharpest memory](#)." All companies should strive to write things down—to document everything from meeting notes to quarterly objectives. Documenting everything enables a stronger, more informed, more trusting, and more connected team.

Daily documentation

Before meetings, the lead should create an agenda and ask participants to review and add items for discussion. During meetings, participants can write down decisions, ideas, or notes. Because teams are distributed, documentation helps team members understand who is responsible for specific tasks or understand the reasoning behind decisions.

This is one of the harder things to apply on a daily basis. Taking the time to document a solution isn't very satisfying in the moment, and is easy to deprioritize when other seemingly urgent tasks seek your attention.

To relieve tension, empower DRIs to make decisions. It's vital to place a high degree of value on pausing to document. This requires leadership to praise and reward the act of documenting, measuring these contributions as diligently as one would measure sales or conversions.
This also requires humility, and a recognition that human memories aren't perfect. It's impossible to predict the future, but documenting a solution as soon as it's discovered guarantees that the answer will be available should it ever be needed later.

Text-based communication

Textual communication can feel unusual or even uncomfortable for those who come from a colocated environment, where in-person meetings and vocalized communiques are the norm. Embracing text communication and learning to use it effectively requires a mental shift. Mastering this should be seen as a long-term commitment, though there are tips to breaking down barriers and experiencing benefits.

WHY TEXT COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESSFUL REMOTE WORKING

In remote environments with team members spread across an array of time zones, communicating through text is ideal. Not only is it inclusive and considerate, but a bias towards communicating through text creates a company that documents everything.

Documentation is an essential competitive advantage. Companies which rely on vocalizing end up repeating themselves in meetings, creating an inefficient environment with tremendous opportunity for knowledge leaks. While communicating and documenting through text may feel like a burden in the moment, it prevents a toxic cycle of meetings and touch points which serve only to "bring people up to speed."

Communicating answers to problems via text makes documentation easier. It's vital to understand that nurturing this habit serves more than the person receiving the answer. It is, in essence, paying it forward. Documenting solutions makes a more efficient future for every new hire who joins and asks the same question, not to mention existing team members who join a project or conversation midstream and need to understand what steps have been taken thus far (and why).

Below are several reasons to master the art of textual communication in a business:

- Allows for team members to work **asynchronously**

- Information is **available** to all at the same time

- Allows for **deliberate** thought and processing time

- Inherently **inclusive** (works with screen readers and translation tools)

- Easily **queried** via keyboard or script

- Can be structured and formatted to showcase a **train of thought**

Documentation is an essential competitive advantage.

Understanding low-context communication

Providing as much context as possible can help decrease confusion and misunderstanding.

Here are a few considerations:

1. The goal of low context is to be **considerate** of the people or audience you're speaking to. It's important to recognize that what you write may be read in the future, or by someone coming into the conversation at a time after the initial thread began.

2. This is one of the more challenging elements to master, particularly for those coming from careers in colocated spaces. In colocated environments, high context communication is the default. High context is less direct with an emphasis on human relations, and it's more sensitive to non-verbals and the feelings of others.

3. Getting oneself in a low context frame of mind can be useful. Start by assuming that recipients of your communication **don't know anything** about the topic, and wish to learn as much as possible as fast as possible.

4. It's easy to imply your experiences with text communication, but remember that not everyone has similar life experiences to relate to, hence the need to be precise.

5. Be specific so that you force yourself to think through what you're saying. Generally, there's value in **taking the time to be deliberate** about communications. Re-read communiques before sending, particularly if they may be perceived as negative or inflammatory. The ability to self-edit before sending is a boon to text communication. Vocalized words cannot be unsaid once uttered.

6. Aiming for precision in communication requires you to put yourself in another person's shoes and **to understand their current perspective**. It's important to view text communication not as a way to impose your will, but as a means to listen, understand, and collaborate.

7. This isn't suggesting that your communication should be cold or clinical. In the GitLab #thanks Slack channel, for instance, we encourage team members to be specific about what they are thanking someone for, such that you don't need prior context to understand how a value was lived.

Why text communication can be difficult

The internet is forever. Words have impact long after they are written, and even when communicating internally, the manner in which you speak with one another should be viewed through an external lens.

For those who struggle with this, consider what you would type if your manager or a family member were in the room observing the conversation. This tip will not serve all scenarios, but it's worth considering if stakes are high in a conversation.

Below are several reasons why text communication can be difficult.

- **Cultural and communication style differences**
- **Delay in immediate feedback due to time zones or other meetings**
- **Lack of non-verbals**
- **Emotional distance**
- **Tough to fully consider the scope of your audience(s)**

It's important that managers lead the way in helping their teams feel comfortable in communicating in this way. Patience, understanding, and positivity should also be encouraged to prevent team members from feeling attacked or misunderstood.

Letting values guide communication

Text communication can be easily derailed, and assumptions can lead to good-mannered communiques being viewed as a slight. Here are useful values to reference if you are unsure how to communicate through text:

- **No ego:** Don't defend a point to win an argument or double-down on a mistake.
- **Assume positive intent:** If a message feels like a slight, assume positive intent while asking for clarification.
- **Get to know each other:** Building a rapport enables trust.
- **Say thanks:** Taking every opportunity to share praise creates a climate where feedback is viewed as a gift rather than an attack.
- **Kindness:** It costs nothing to be kind, even if you don't believe someone deserves it.
- **It's impossible to know everything:** You can't know how your words are interpreted without asking.
- **Short toes:** GitLab is a place where others can feel comfortable with others contributing to their domains of expertise.

If, during a text conversation, you feel that someone is not communicating in the spirit of a company's values, respectfully ask if they believe that they are in a 1-1 setting. It's easiest to assume the worst and quietly disengage, but doing so creates several additional problems. One, the person communicating isn't given the gift of feedback, so their perspective will not change. Two, the person concerned remains timid about communicating with someone, which can lead to toxicity and dysfunction if unaddressed.
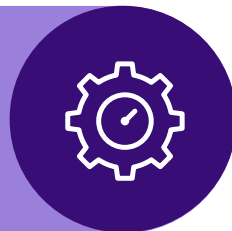
Asynchronous communication

In a world dictated by calendars and schedules, people are conditioned to operate in synchronicity—a manner in which two or more parties exert effort to be in the same place (either physically or virtually) at the same time. Asynchronous communication is the art of communicating and moving projects forward without the need for additional stakeholders to be available at the same time your communique is sent.

In a remote setting mastering asynchronous workflows is vital to avoiding dysfunction and enjoying outsized efficiencies. Increasingly, operating asynchronously is necessary even in colocated companies, especially when multiple time zones are involved.

Mastering the art of communicating asynchronously has a prerequisite: documentation. At its core, asynchronous communication is documentation. It's delivering a message in a way that doesn't require the recipient(s) to be available — or even awake — at the same time.

If your organization has no standardized method of documentation, establish that first. Otherwise, team members will be left to determine their own methods for communicating asynchronously, creating a cacophony of textual noise which is poorly organized.

In a remote setting mastering asynchronous workflows is vital to avoiding dysfunction and enjoying outsized efficiencies.

Creating good habits

Asynchronous communication means receiving information when we can handle it—usually not "live." This is important, since most people need head space to focus on what they do.

The first step in creating an atmosphere where colleagues are comfortable working asynchronously is to avoid the mentality that meetings are necessary. By making meetings optional, recording and documenting everything, diligently following agendas, and leveraging the right tools, remote companies are less reliant on being online at the same time.

This mentality must be actively reinforced. For example, in team social calls where dozens of people join a video chat to bond as a team, an agenda allows those who cannot make it to add shout-outs or discussion points that others can verbalize. This is an intentional approach to not only working asynchronously, but also socializing asynchronously.

Minimize interruption by setting up a "preference list" for how to contact your remote team. Asynchronous also refers to the fact that you're not expected to immediately respond if, for example, a colleague or even your boss emails you on the weekend. Just reply on Monday. Likewise, if something is urgent, team members can ping someone on chat whenever—that's how team members can filter through information to know whether something is urgent.

[Asynchronous] allows you to reorganize the company in a divisional organization more easily and embrace remote working even if you're colocated. Everything that works in an async fashion can also work sync but not vice-versa.
— **Leonardo Federico**, co-founder at **Sametab**

Meetings

Have as few mandated meetings as possible. The notion of "optional meetings" is absurd to those who only think in terms of synchronous communication—you're either at a meeting to contribute, or you aren't. The beauty of asynchronous is that team members can contribute to meetings that occur while they sleep.

Meetings are more easily made optional when each one has an agenda and a Google Doc attached to each invite. This allows people to contribute questions/input asynchronously in advance, and catch up on documented outcomes at a later time.

The person who called the meeting is responsible for contextualizing the outcomes. By placing this burden on the meeting organizer, it acts as a filter for whether a meeting is truly necessary. That's a big responsibility, which keeps the quantity of meetings in check.

Plugging the knowledge leak

Asynchronous companies should implement a low-context culture so that communication is precise and direct. Team members forecast what questions may be asked and add in as much context as possible in its delivery. By assuming that the recipient is asleep, or perhaps doesn't even work at the company yet, this added context removes ambiguity and decreases the likelihood of misinterpretation.

This may feel inefficient, as communiques may take longer to compose. However, the long-term benefits are remarkable. At GitLab, we have years of documented decisions loaded with context. This enables new hires to sift through archives to understand what went into a decision.

As companies scale, people will come and go. By utilizing asynchronous communication, an organization is able to retain knowledge throughout these natural cycles.

Asynchronous companies should implement a low-context culture so that communication is precise and direct.

Informal communication

In colocated environments, informal communication is naturally occuring. When individuals are physically located in the same space, there are ample opportunities to chit chat and carry on conversations outside of formal business settings. Making social connections with coworkers is important to build trust within your organization. One must be intentional about designing informal communication when it cannot happen more organically in an office.

Informal communication is important, as it enables friendships to form at work related to matters other than work. Those who feel they have genuine friends at work are **more likely to enjoy their job**, perform at a high level, feel invested in the company, and serve others within the organization. For remote companies, leaders shouldn't expect informal communication to happen naturally. There are no hallways for team members to cross paths in, no carpools to the office, etc.

In a remote environment, informal communication should be formally addressed. Leaders should organize informal communication, and to whatever degree possible, design an atmosphere where team members all over the globe feel comfortable reaching out to anyone to converse about topics unrelated to work.

At GitLab, we rely heavily on video calls and encourage everyone to connect and bond as empathetic beings with interests, emotions, fears, and hopes—not just colleagues. We recommend everyone at GitLab dedicate **a few hours a week** to having social calls with anyone in the company.

We do this in a few different ways:

COMPANY CALL

A company-wide video call where team members can join discussion groups on a wide range of topics. To make this meeting easier across time zones and to encourage participation, we have these meetings multiple times per day.

GROUP CONVERSATIONS

Four times a week, the company gets together virtually to discuss an area of the business. Slides are provided for context but not presented.

COFFEE CHATS

Instead talking around a coffee maker in a breakroom, schedule these one-on-one meetings on a video call at a time of your choosing. The Slack app **Donut** can randomly choose a coffee partner to facilitate introductions.

COWORKING CALLS

These video calls are scheduled working sessions where team members can work through challenging tasks with a coworker, or simply hang out while each person works on their own tasks.

SOCIAL HOURS

Informal social calls organized within immediate teams to get to know each other on a more personal level.

SLACK

Use Slack channels for informal communications throughout the company, whether it's a team-specific channel, a channel dedicated to a specific hobby (like video games or cooking), or even sharing cute pet photos.

ZOOM

Visual engagement helps us relate to each other on a more personal level. In fact, when our team members meet face-to-face for the first time, the most surprising factor is usually each person's height.

Devote time to fostering relationships

If you've spent any length of time in a corporate setting, you've probably seen a company institute a regular "happy hour," to gather employees to converse about topics unrelated to work. In remote environments, there should be a greater emphasis on dedicating time to building bonds.

Remote teams can have informal social calls organized within immediate teams to get to know each other on a more personal level, such as a "show and tell" call or a "happy hour" to chat about weekend plans.

Leaders shouldn't expect informal communication to happen naturally. Organize informal communication and design an atmosphere where team members feel comfortable reaching out to anyone to converse on non-work related topics.

Using emoticons, emoji, and stickers can supplement the lack of human nonverbal cues in a computer-mediated environment. The results show that proper use of emoticons, emoji, and stickers, especially positive emoticons, is conducive to both relationship formation and cognitive understanding. They not only help participants express emotions and manage interrelations but also function as words to aid message comprehension.
— **Ying Tang and Khe Foon Hew**, researchers at the University of Hong Kong

Using emojis to convey emotion

Though emojis have commonly been reserved for personal conversations that occur outside of the workplace, remote employees should feel comfortable using them in everyday discourse with team members.

[Perception has shifted on using emojis in professional settings](). In Slack alone, over 26 million custom emojis have been created since the feature was introduced. In all-remote settings, where you may never meet a colleague in person, leveraging visual tools to convey nuance in tone, emphasis, and emotion can lead to more empathy and a tighter human connection.

Emojis can create a more inclusive communication environment. When you're working with colleagues where the business language isn't someone's first language, more universal indicators (e.g. "eyes" for "I've seen this" or "smile" for positivity) can reduce the mental burden of deciphering a message.

Tools for effective communication

Remote communication works best when there's company-wide alignment on how and where to input communication. Leaders should carefully select their tools, aiming to direct communications to as few channels as possible.

A common frustration in large organizations—regardless of what stage of remote they're in—is the chaotic splintering of communication. Projects frequently end up strewn across email, chat, text messages, unrecorded meetings, Google Docs, etc. While there are a litany of unified communication tools available to wrangle all of that, you're best served by choosing a single system for communicating progress.

At GitLab (the company), that destination is GitLab (the product). Any side conversation that occurs in a meeting is documented in an agenda, and the useful elements are contextualized and ported to relevant GitLab issues and/or merge requests. The same goes for side conversations that happen in Slack or email. Relevant portions are ported over into GitLab (the product), which is the single source of truth for any ongoing work.

If your team isn't able to commit to learning a new tool, like GitLab, you can rely on Google Docs to document decisions, create agendas, and store notes.

Since remote communication often relies heavily on text, some team members may feel uncomfortable with their writing. Grammarly is a good tool for those who want to feel more comfortable drafting written communication in English (American or British). There is a free and premium version.

Key takeaways

1. Documentation is an everyday task.
2. Implement a low-context culture so communication is concise and direct.
3. Use emojis liberally to foster a more inclusive environment.
4. Standardize your communication tools and uses to prevent the splintering of communication.

DO

- Record discussions and obtain transcripts
- Assume positive intent
- Default to over communication
- Set a standard for unified communication tools

DON'T

- Rely on synchronous communication methods
- Assume team members have the all the facts
- Pressure team members to respond to questions or complete tasks that aren't time sensitive

Establishing a remote company culture

Culture comes in two forms when you're working remotely: workplace culture and personal culture. It's important to maintain a stable sense of both while working remotely.

Culture is driven by values

To be effective, and to impact culture in a meaningful, sustainable way, values must be more than words written on a page. Apathy towards company values leads to cultural degradation and dysfunction. Values can only shape an organization if they're respected and lived by each team member.

This is particularly meaningful in an all-remote setting. With less physical interaction, there's less buffer to compensate for indifference towards company values. Team morale is closely linked to the overall respect given to values.

An overarching belief in a company's values contributes to less ambiguity in decision making. Respected values serve as a universal north star, aligning team members on how to address any challenge or disagreement, even when there's debate related to approach or outcome.

Sustaining workplace culture

"How do you build and sustain culture in a remote environment?" or "How does culture work remotely?" are questions we frequently hear at GitLab. In co-located settings, culture is often implied, built from how team members treat one another, what is rewarded, what is chided, and what is deemed acceptable during in-person interactions.

Building a culture across a company where there are no offices requires intentionality. While technology and tools are enabling companies to operate efficiently in a remote setting, it's important to focus on documenting culture first, then using tools to support.

NO UNWRITTEN RULES

There should be no unwritten rules in remote culture. Intentional documentation is essential to avoiding dysfunction within a remote company, and this also applies to culture. At GitLab, this begins with our company values: Collaboration, Results, Efficiency, Diversity & Inclusion, Iteration, and Transparency. If you'd like to borrow them while your company is in a remote situation, feel free to adopt and adapt them to your needs.

REINFORCING YOUR VALUES

Whatever behavior a company rewards will become the company's values. Even when operating remotely, new hires and promotions serve as important decisions to promote and reinforce values.

GitLab reinforces its values by what:

- Leadership does.
- We select for during hiring.
- We emphasize during onboarding.
- Behavior we give each-other 360 feedback on.
- Behavior we compliment.

- Criteria we use for discretionary bonuses.
- Criteria we use for our annual compensation review.
- Criteria we use for promotions.
- Criteria we use to manage underperformance.
- We do when we let people go.

In negative feedback, one should be specific about what the problem is. For example, saying someone is "not living the values" isn't helpful. Provide actionable feedback, and don't leave any details up to interpretation.

NEVER TAKE CULTURE FOR GRANTED

While culture is easily reinforced when interacting with coworkers all day, every day, it requires intentional work when operating in a remote environment. While the importance of culture is driven home during onboarding, continual reinforcement is required to keep it top-of-mind. It's easy to lose sight of values when focusing on OKRs and key performance indicators (KPIs). However, it's vital for leadership to remind themselves and other team members that values should never be lowered in priority.

If your company gathers team members together on a regular basis (virtual meetings included!), consider resurfacing values or providing opportunities for groups to live out those values through community service. Just as certain training is recommended or required each year as part of a company's ongoing learning and development efforts, reminding team members of values is vital to sustaining a strong culture.

GRATITUDE AND TRANSPARENCY

Persistent negativity can erode culture. While feedback is a gift, there's a fine line between reacting with hope and determination when facing a challenge and allowing a sense of apathy to permeate a company. Leaders should be cognizant and act swiftly if there's a noted drop in outward gratitude or transparency.

PUT STRUCTURE AROUND CULTURE

It may sound counterintuitive, but there's great value in putting process and structure around culture. It's important for leadership to set the tone, but it's even more important to document what will define your culture. Each time a scenario arises where there is no clearly defined answer, look to your values to determine the answer, and then document.

Documentation is a shared benefit, and is something that should be embraced by all members of the organization. While it may feel inefficient to document nuances related to culture, creating good habits ensures that culture is as strong in the future as it was in a company's infancy.

Prioritize mental health

Burnout rarely happens all at once. It typically takes one by surprise, eventually coming to a head after days, weeks, or months of overwork creep. This can happen in remote or in-office environments. Here are some ways to avoid burnout, both for yourself and for your team.

DON'T CELEBRATE WORKING LONG HOURS

Be careful when thanking someone publicly for going above and beyond to not send a message that work should always take priority. While working one additional hour to move a project forward is likely not debilitating when viewed in a vacuum, it can trigger a revised baseline where you must continue to overwork in order to maintain the new status quo.

This becomes toxic when managers fail to recognize that a given sprint shouldn't reset the baseline of what is achievable on an ongoing, sustained basis. It becomes disastrous when team members don't feel safe bringing this up to their managers in a 1:1 setting.

Particularly in a company where results are valued above all, managers should be careful to not assume that results garnered in a given period of overwork are the new norm. This places team members in an unfair scenario where they feel pressured to perpetually overwork in order to meet expectations.

More broadly, as other teams witness this, they will be less likely to go above and beyond in special cases for fear of trapping themselves in a similar cycle of overworking just to meet unsustainable expectations.

DOCUMENT PROCESSES AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

Burnout, isolation, and anxiety are issues that impact team members across all companies, regardless of organizational structure. While they aren't always intertwined, there is significant interplay between them.

In a colocated setting, it's entirely possible for a team member to appear well, but struggle with these issues internally. That said, it tends to be easier for those in an office to reach out to a trusted team member if burnout impacts their ability to thrive in the workplace.

In a remote setting, where in-person interactions are less common, it's easier to fall victim to isolation. This is particularly true for those who are not well acclimated to remote work.

Because team members are likely to work alone, it's more difficult to remember that colleagues are available to call on—especially if someone is already overwhelmed or suffering from anxiety. This reality makes it all the more important for companies hiring remote workers to place a great deal of focus on documenting processes for team members who face these difficulties. Consider offering professional assistance and document resources during onboarding and reinforce options in ongoing learning and development sessions.

Remote workers may feel less comfortable reaching out to a person when experiencing mental duress, so it's vital to ensure that resources are easily discoverable.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

Oftentimes, if someone is feeling burned out, they aren't the only one feeling that way. GitLab team members have compiled a list of symptoms related to burnout. A few are highlighted below.

- You're constantly tired
- You no longer enjoy things
- Your job performance suffers
- Your physical health suffers (headaches, irregular breathing patterns)
- Your relationships are strained
- You feel socially zapped
- You disable video for team calls to prevent others from seeing your pain
- You are perpetually concerned with whether you are doing enough
- You worry that your contributions are too few or too insignificant
- You feel unable to choose family first

Be careful of thanking someone publicly for working overtime. Managers should be careful to not assume that results garnered in a given period of overwork are the new norm.
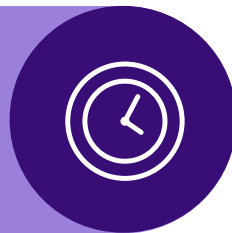
Remote workers may feel less comfortable reaching out to a person when experiencing mental duress, so it's vital to ensure that resources are easily discoverable.

WORKING TO PREVENT BURNOUT, ISOLATION, AND ANXIETY

Prevention is a team sport. Leaders must work to establish a workplace culture that empowers rather than restricts, managers must be proactive in sensing the signs of mental strain, and team members must feel comfortable surfacing issues while they are still manageable.

Below are several recommendations for avoiding and preventing burnout, according to GitLab team members.

1. Set clear boundaries between work and home
2. Take vacation
3. Take a "mental health day" to lower your stress (spend time outdoors, exercise)
4. Know when to take a break
5. Put a break reminder on your computer
6. Switch off when you're away from work
7. Don't suffer in silence
8. Don't go straight to work after you wake up
9. Remove Slack from your smartphone or at the very least, turn off notifications for it
10. Keep each other accountable. If someone in a different time zone should be asleep, tell them
11. Use your Slack status to share a message with the team that you are unavailable
12. Schedule random coffee breaks

Encourage a healthy remote work lifestyle

Working remotely presents a number of lifestyle benefits, even when abiding by quarantine and social distancing recommendations during the current coronavirus outbreak. By ditching the requirement to be seen in a physical office, team members structure their work around their life as opposed to the other way around. This is a profound shift, and it may not be entirely obvious how to maximize one's new reality.

Consider asking yourself what you'll do with the time you save by losing the commute. Perhaps you'll be inspired to exercise or cook. There's nothing wrong with reclaiming that time and using it to bolster your overall wellness, from improving your sleep habits to furthering your education.

For those accustomed to social interactions within a colocated work setting, it can be jarring to move into a remote environment where you primarily work alone. It's important to pay close attention to your mental health and emotional health. If you sense a void from missing out on face-to-face interaction, act deliberately and early.

Here are three ways to avoid feeling isolated:

1. Schedule breaks to interact with friends/family in your home or nearby in your community. If government restrictions allow, it may be helpful to schedule walks with nearby friends or enjoy a quick board game with your children or significant other.
2. Leverage video to connect face-to-face and serve as a nice break from the quiet of an at-home workspace. Video calls will help you feel connected to your team, friends, and family while staying at home for extended periods of time.
3. Engage with colleagues on non-work topics, via Slack or ad hoc video calls. Foster a sense of connection with others over more than just work, the same as you would in typical "water cooler" conversations.

By ditching the requirement to be seen in a physical office, team members structure their work around their life as opposed to the other way around.
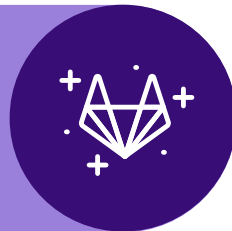
Key takeaways

1. Your reward becomes your values. Build respect for company values by consistently referring back to them when giving feedback.
2. There should be no unwritten rules in a remote culture.
3. Make mental health a priority and make mental health resources easily accessible.
4. Schedule breaks and make time weekly to engage with colleagues on non-work topics.

DO

- Proactively keep good mental health
- Make a list of actions you can take to de-stress or unplug when needed
- Leverage video calls to connect with coworkers on non-work related topics
- Set a status when you're away from your desk, or block your calendar for time away

DON'T

- Feel compelled to be online at all hours
- Work straight away after waking up
- Leave details up for interpretation
- Be tied to your computer 24/7
- Be afraid to set boundaries with loved ones

Using GitLab for remote collaboration

GitLab is a collaboration tool designed to help people work better together whether they are in the same location or spread across multiple time zones. Originally, GitLab let software developers collaborate on writing code and packaging it up into software applications. Today, GitLab has a wide range of capabilities that are used by people in all kinds of companies and all kinds of roles from sales and marketing to legal and customer support.

DOCUMENT WHILE YOU WORK

Instead of critical information getting lost in email or chat, writing down what's happening inside of GitLab Issues means the plan, process, and execution are automatically documented. Other users can be tagged to comment and collaborate. Since Issues are a many-to-many channel, it's easy to loop in more folks without the clutter of a reply-all thread.

TRACK WORK FROM DREAM TO DONE

Adding labels to GitLab Issues lets you categorize work into different stages, such as planning, in-progress, and complete. GitLab Boards give you visibility and control over how work is being done. It's like moving digital post-it notes across an online whiteboard that everyone can use, not just the folks in the conference room.

CONNECT STRATEGY TO EXECUTION

GitLab Epics and Roadmaps provide a way to organize and visualize your entire portfolio of work over the long term. While Issues represent everyday tasks, Epics represent entire features or projects. Roadmaps let you plan work by seeing which work is competing for space and track progress against an assigned completion date.
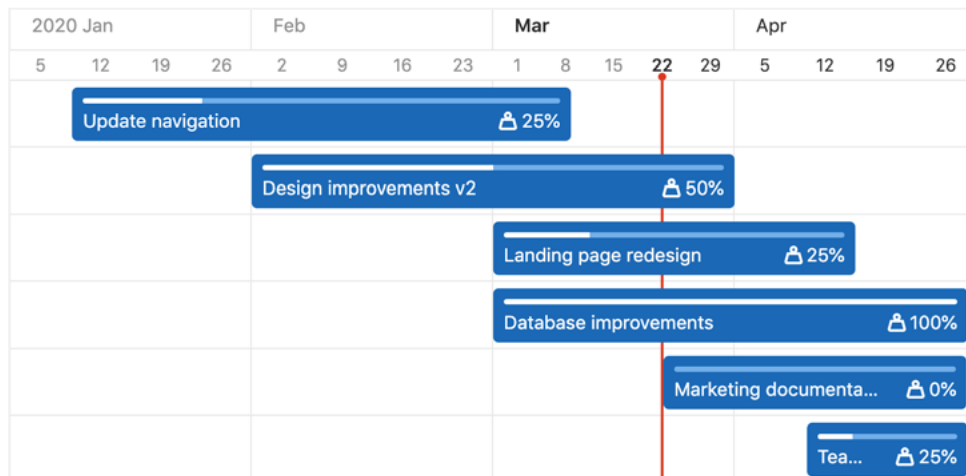
VERSION EVERY WORD

One of the advanced uses for GitLab is to treat copy like code. You can store, version, review, and approve not only software code, but any text at all. Using GitLab's version control and "code review" capabilities for your text-based copywriting, you'll be able to track versions, know who changed what when, make multiple proposals to the same document, and easily manage approvals.

The Remote Work Report by GitLab: The Future of Work is Remote

March 2020

GitLab

Get The Remote Work Report

We asked and over 3,000 of you answered. Created to foster innovation, collaboration, and evolution in the future of work, GitLab's Remote Work Report drills down into where we are today and what's needed for tomorrow.

Learn more

GET THE REMOTE WORK EMERGENCY PLAN

If suddenly remote work is the only option, how can you make that happen? We've got all the answers here thanks to a long successful history with remote work. From tools to procedures and BTDT advice, you'll find what you need to dive right in to working remotely.

Learn more

GET THE REMOTE NEWSLETTER

Do you want more remote (and less office) in your life? Sign-up for a biweekly dose of tips, tricks and new remote opportunities.

Sign up
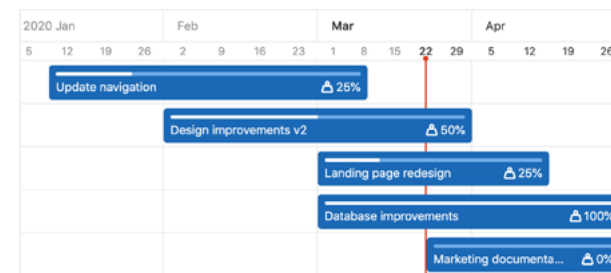
TRY GITLAB FREE

All GitLab features — free for 30 days. GitLab is more than just source code management or CI/CD. It is a full software development lifecycle & DevOps tool in a single application.

Start your trial

About GitLab

GitLab is a DevOps platform built from the ground up as a single application for all stages of the DevOps lifecycle enabling Product, Development, QA, Security, and Operations teams to work concurrently on the same project.

GitLab provides teams a single data store, one user interface, and one permission model across the DevOps lifecycle allowing teams to collaborate and work on a project from a single conversation, significantly reducing cycle time and focus exclusively on building great software quickly.

Built on Open Source, GitLab leverages the community contributions of thousands of developers and millions of users to continuously deliver new DevOps innovations. More than 100,000 organizations from startups to global enterprise organizations, including Ticketmaster, Jaguar Land Rover, NASDAQ, Dish Network and Comcast trust GitLab to deliver great software at new speeds. GitLab is the world's largest all-remote company, with more than 1,200 team members in over 65 countries.

Credits

This guide was built by remote work experts with dozens of combined years of experience across the spectrum of remote. Though GitLab is all-remote, the guiding vision of this work is to educate and equip everyone — regardless of work environment — with best practices. We want you to thrive as a remote worker. Connect with us, contribute your own learnings, and keep being awesome.

GitLab encourages enterprises and individuals to share this resource with others, and use these helpful materials in whatever way helps them the most.

Made with ❤️ across six continents.

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