

- This is the [Trussels' Guide to Truss](#), written by Trussels for Trussels. We share it here for others to see how we try to do what we do.

Disclaimer: Hi, friend! Thanks for caring so much about this that you are reading the disclaimer! We super-duper appreciate it. Our lawyers need you to know that the Trussels' Guide to Truss is a reflection of Trussels' personal experiences, and neither Truss nor any of its employees are making any promises about anything. In other words, we (that's all of us) hereby disclaim any and all warranties, duties or guarantees and this document is presented "AS IS". You assume any and all risks if you incorporate or adopt any of these practices. Also, we make no promises about merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, lack of viruses, accuracy or completeness of responses, results, workmanlike effort, lack of negligence, or whether reading this a loud at midnight after the correct eldritch sacrifices may summon an unknowable horror that devours souls and flesh alike. We have no idea and make no promises! Whatever happens is all on you. Hooray!

Disclaimer for Trussels: This is a living document and should be considered malleable and fallible. The Founders have not read this document in a long time, and certainly do not read every edit. It really is not an employee handbook or formal statement of policy. If you have any questions about this guide or want to know Truss's policy on any of these issues, please contact Jen or another Founder. If something seems like it's wrong, or missing, or whatever, please suggest a change or ask about it in #onboarding on Slack. You can see when it was last updated in the version history.

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Congratulations

Pre-First-Day

Hello, and welcome to Truss!

We've written this to help give you a sense of what you're getting yourself into. Most links won't work until you have your @truss.works email address, but the gist is still there. All such links are marked with a  before the link.

Please take a look and let us know if you have any questions.

What to expect on your first day

You should have received your Truss-supplied **laptop**. If you haven't, respond to this email to let us know and we'll work around it.

Work your time zone. This may change once you're on a project, but in general, be around during what you consider working hours. Many Trussels work 9a-5p in their local time, but you do you.

Note: The sweet spot when most Trussels' work hours overlap is 10a-2p Pacific / 1p-5p Eastern, so we all try to be around during that time.

We have set up three default meetings on your first day to get you started.

The first thing you'll have scheduled is an **onboarding meeting** with the onboarding manager. They'll walk you through things like signing into accounts and signing paperwork. This is just about getting access to tools and learning where to ask questions. You'll learn tips and tricks later.

You'll meet with your **manager** to start getting to know each other better (and about context).

We have **onboarding buddies** at Truss. Their role is to set a new hire at ease, begin a relationship, and create a go-to point of contact with someone who is not a manager.

If your onboarding meeting isn't until later in the day, and you want to say hi in the meantime, come hang out with us on Slack. Most activity in Slack happens during that sweet spot of overlapping work hours that we mentioned above.


Introduce yourself in #general with a few sentences about who you are, where you are, and what sorts of things you're into (doesn't just have to be work-related!)

Once you're done with your first-day responsibilities, your **day is done**.

Things we're sending you


Invitation to **Paylocity** — more on that later — arrives just after you sign

Information about **health insurance** (it'll say it's in California because that's where Truss is registered as a business. We promise it's ok, but please still check in if you're worried) — probably arrives along with Paylocity

A **laptop** — to do your work! — arrives before your first day. You'll run through the  [securely setting up your Mac checklist](#) during your onboarding call. This (and other) link(s) won't work until you have your @truss.works email address set up.

A company **credit card** — to purchase things more easily through the company! Upon its arrival please

ping #accounting for your Unique ID to activate the card — contact the onboarding manager if your card hasn't arrived and you have need of it. It is not tied to your personal credit.

Until your company credit card arrives, feel free to buy things with your personal card if you wish, so that you are not delayed in getting the things that make you effective from the outset. You can  [reimburse these things](#).

A **T-shirt** — to show you belong! — arrives a week or four after joining.

A **sticker** — to stick to things! — arrives a week or four after joining.

Things to know

We consider your first 2-3 days as productive if you successfully set up all of your accounts. If you run into any issues let us know. We know you're great, that's why we hired you, don't fret.

Don't sweat your hours the first week. Be present, attend your meetings, absorb as much as you can, and then be done when you need to be done. Just please don't work more than eight hours in a day. Rest and relaxation are important.

We'll get you onboarded to your project after you're set up at Truss (after a day or two). If you're not on a client project, you'll be on reserve helping with internal projects.

You'll be asked to introduce yourself on Friday during our weekly all-hands meeting, called Prac, or Practitioners Meeting. The person running the meeting that week will check in with you in advance and give you your choice of introductory topics so you're prepared. Just a couple sentences, no big deal.


And now, here's some more reading to get a sense of what you're coming into...

Practice: Our values

We hold [our values](#) dearly, and we take time to make them visible by explicitly appreciating people who have embodied them.

If you ever feel uncertain about what to do in a given circumstance, or if you're writing someone's review, or if you're about to be in Prac, or you're considering if a person you just interviewed would be a good addition, etc, these are the grounding rod for Truss.

Practice: Collaboration practices

Effective collaboration practices are our secret sauce — they make our work great. We expect folks at Truss to collaborate effectively. The skill is included in our  [leveling guide](#).

Some aspects of effective collaboration differ from typical software company practices and are worth highlighting.

For starters, here's a [high-level framework](#) for thinking about collaboration, and [some research](#) about which behaviors matter and why.

Here are some things you might expect to work differently from other places:

We are user-focused. Work ALWAYS starts with gaining an understanding of our users. Preferences such as

“I always use technology X to do Y” are irrelevant. We should always start with “Who needs what, and why? What kind of solution do we want, and what technologies get us there?”

Thought experiments are normal and expected. High-quality output requires us to perform thought experiments to explore uncharted territory. Don’t shoot down ideas before asking questions. Entertain and explore other people’s ideas even when — especially when — they don’t make sense to you. Seek to understand what they are thinking and why, then map those ideas back to our understanding of the users.


When we poke at your ideas, we are not looking for you to defend your choice. We want understand your thought process. Your answer could simply be “I guessed,” and that’s fine! Being honest is more important than being right. Having others critique and analyze your ideas is not a reflection of the quality of your ideas, or you. We presume that the group’s output matters more than individual output. We ask questions and critique ideas to make the group solution better. This is true at every level. We expect you to critique other people, including your manager, the founders, leadership, and so on.


We often think of things within the RACI framework, even when that’s not spelled out. (RACI = Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed.)

Practice: Diversity & Inclusion


Diversity & Inclusion are in the DNA of Truss. We  **approach D&I strategically**. While we can never be free of bias, we  **work to diminish our biases**. We encourage continual self-reflection and practice.

Together, we increase a sense of safety by knowing fellow Trussels are working to diminish their biases, too. We represent this in our **Diversity and Inclusion Pledge**.

We also take steps to broaden and question the ways we include people. We have our foundations in a project with Project Include (see  **our documentation**). We prioritize attending events that serve underrepresented demographics. We have ongoing open and honest conversation in #inclusion. The D&I committee has regular discussion and working sessions.

One way we practice inclusion:  **sharing our pronouns in our Slack and Zoom display names**. Be sure to include yours when you set up Slack and Zoom.

Practice: Insider Language

Terms like “thought duking” and “Kayless” are added to the  **Insider Language / Truss Glossary** as we realize we have them. Here’s an example:

Crab Claws: that weird thing people do with their hands during video chats Clapping is loud and awful when on a conference call, and so “clapping” silently is better. We picked up **crab claws** from Defense Digital Service (our former partner clients for our **MilMove** project).


We use a handy slackbot called `/define`. You can use it to search for unfamiliar terms, TLAs (three letter acronyms), or even emojis. If something isn’t in `/define`, please ask someone to define it — and consider adding it once you know.


You’ll also see some things mentioned in this intro (“Prac,” “decision records,” and the things beginning with a #) which will become clear later.

Practice: Distributed-first

We are a distributed-first business.

While there is a large handful of Trussels in the San Francisco bay area, we are ultimately a distributed-first company with Trussels that live and work in entirely different cities or states across the country. Many of us work from home or co-work spaces, or work while traveling to clients.

We  run experiments to figure out how to better include distributed folk, and we have a [playbook for our established practices](#).

If you find yourself using a coworking space, please use  [the budget for coworking space](#). (More on this and other decision records after your first day.)

Meetings: What to expect


Because most of us can't bump into each other in the hallway, we have many meetings. It's something we're intentional about.


Here are some helpful notes:

We don't use email that heavily, so meetings can appear on calendars without much warning. It's helpful to have your calendar open and readily available.

You should add personal events to your calendar that you do not want scheduled over. You don't have to include the specifics but you should block off the time. These can include routine events (lunch, working hours) or one-offs (doctor's appointments, picking up a kid, special events).

We encourage you to add some focus time to your calendar at least weekly to give yourself unbroken time to concentrate on work. Some teams schedule work time together so they always know people on their teams are available at the same time.

We involve everyone at every level in our hiring process. After two weeks as a Trussel, you may see appointments on your calendar to review resumes or conduct interviews. There are  [resources](#) to help you understand the process. Ping #hiring if you have a conflict you cannot avoid.

At some point during your first week, please take 15-20 minutes to walk through  [How to Calendar Like a Trussel](#). Follow those instructions to get your permissions and working hours set up.

Practice: Equipment and setting up your workspace

Wherever you work, we want you to be set up for comfort and success.


For all employees, Truss has  [a \\$1,000 office budget](#) and a \$350 budget for headphones.

Equipment can include:

Peripherals (mouse, keyboard, monitor). Ask in #equipment-discussion for recommendations.


Charger. Getting an extra one so you can keep one in your regular office and have one on the go is super great.

Headphones. Whether you're in an open office, a coffee shop, or even a noisy house, a lot of calls happen


in the same space. In response, we recommend getting some form of noise-cancelling headphones. Follow  [this decision record](#).

#equipment-discussion is a great place for questions and equipment reviews.

Resource: Communication Expectations

Communication is essential. We have a number of tools to use here at Truss, though some are far more prevalent than others. Slack is our number one source of communication, while email is a tool we all have it is not as reliable or swift. This  [doc](#) will provide you more info on that as well as expectations around Zoom, communication during business travel, and general communication tips:

Practice: Expect to use Slack a lot

We value open and transparent communication, which makes Slack a better communication tool for us than email. (Our other major communication tool is  [Zoom, for video conferencing](#).)

All Slack channels begin with “#” — you’ve seen some mentioned in this guide already.

You’ve been added to 8 default channels:

#announcements: Must-read messages for everyone at Truss. Discussions about announcements take place in other channels, typically #general or #random.

#random: Not sure where it goes? It goes here! (This is also where we chatter during our weekly Prac meetings, instead of in the Zoom chat.)

#general: All-Truss updates.

#onboarding: Questions & improvement suggestions for onboarding.

#love: Share  for your fellow Trussels and the things they do.

#rage_cage: Vent frustrations IN ALL CAPS.

#rave_cave: A place to share things that make you the happiest, which is best accomplished by screaming (IN ALL CAPS).

#wins: A channel where we socialize company wins

You should also join any Slack channels related to projects that you’re on, and any channels for your team or discipline. You may also end up in a project-specific workspace with its own set of channels, depending on your project.

Feel free to join other channels that interest you. Some are about topics that you might find useful, such as #distributed, or #design-research. Others are just for fun, by their nature — such as #kids or #food or #pets or #selfies. Those are all decidedly optional. They can be a great way to get to know other Trussels in a social context.

There are also a few “affinity group” channels, which we’ll tell you how to join later.

If you like to celebrate your birthday or Trusselversary, join us in #celebrations. There are instructions in the channel description for how to let our birthday bot know when your birthday is.


You will likely end up with a mix of project channels, team channels, and fun channels.

Tool: **Paylocity** (payroll provider and bridge to benefits)

Paylocity is where you request time off and manage where your paychecks go.

Your benefits become active on the 1st of the month following your start date, but you can opt in at any time during the first 30 days of your employment. Truss offers HMO plans for Trussels in California as well as PPO plans for Trussels regardless of location.



Resource: A little history

If you're curious to learn more about our history and our goals, check out  [the Founder presentation from the 2019 offsite](#).


See you soon!

First day

Hello, new Trussel! Welcome. We're so glad you're here.

Your manager and your onboarding buddy should be in touch with you shortly after you join Slack. Ping @welcoming in #onboarding if you don't hear from them. Steps for onboarding You can find stories in our  [Hiring, Recruiting, and Onboarding Pivotal](#) (our project management tool of choice) with your name on them to track your  [onboarding progress](#).

You may end up doing these in a different order, but this is the gist of it.

- 1 Revisit some things from your pre-first-day email
 - a What to expect on your first day
 - b Things to know
- 2 Say "hi" in #general on Slack and share something about yourself: Where are you from? What do you like to do? Why did you join Truss?
- 3 Have your onboarding meeting
 - a Review our  [laptop setup and security guidelines](#)
 - b Set up your accounts in the order they occur in this guide
- 4 Meet other people
 - a Meet with your manager (this is usually pre-scheduled for your first day)
 - b Meet with your onboarding buddy

During your first week, you'll:

- 1 Get to know your practice area
- 2 Be onboarded to your project

- 3 Have the opportunity to join us for a Being Humans Together chat (optional). These happen on Fridays at 9:30 Pacific/12:30 Eastern, and should already be on your calendar. They're a non-work-related group chat where we get together and talk about ... well, anything really.

We try to be sure everyone has done the following in their first 3 months:

- 1 Join #colleagues-and-coffee to be automatically paired every 3 weeks for a "donut" with another Trussel. (During non-covid times, we would suggest meeting another Trussel in person.)
- 2 Lead your first interview to help us keep hiring good people

You'll then be a "Full Trussel"!

Getting started on the tools we use

You should have a bunch of invitations in your inbox. Your onboarding manager will walk you through each of these. If you don't have an invitation to one of the tools listed in this onboarding guide, please let your hiring manager know.

Here's who to contact for help on  [various business systems](#) (you don't need everything in here).

Tool: Google Mail (email)

We use G Suite for email, calendar, and shared files, as well as groups and a few other tools.

The first part to work with is mail. You'll need to log in to your `username@truss.works` email account to get all your other invites.

When you log in for the first time, your inbox will be full of calendar invites, shared document links, and tool invites. Hopefully, your onboarding meeting + this guide will help you make sense of the deluge.


Whereas we don't use email for a lot of internal communications, it is not uncommon to interact with external folks that way. It can be helpful to set up a signature (`Settings >> General >> Signature`). Parts that you may consider: name, pronouns, title, a link to the Truss homepage, and maybe a little bit of guidance for people who aren't used to working in a distributed manner.

` Dr. Sprout Trussel, Esq. (they/them) Senior Vegetable Relations <https://truss.works>

My working hours may not be your working hours. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your normal work schedule. `

Practice: Security guidelines & setting up your laptop

Let's get security practices in place before signing up for tools. Security can't just be slapped on later and make things actually become secure.

You'll also go over these tools during your onboarding meeting. Before setting them up, please review our  [laptop setup & security guidelines](#). The guide includes setup instructions for your laptop.

Security Tool: 1Password (password management)


We use this password manager to ensure that we use strong, unique passwords for all of our tools.

If you already use 1Password, spend a few minutes reading their documentation on using multiple accounts.

Security Tool: Fleetsmith (device management)

Truss maintains our devices via a tool called Fleetsmith. This means if we need to give device images to a client, or if we lose a laptop or a password, we'll be able to respond. Please think about how you use your work laptop in light of others potentially seeing what on a personal laptop would be private.

Security Tool: BackBlaze (backup)


We use Backblaze to back up our computers. It runs in the background and incrementally backs up files to cloud storage. Installation is currently manual — consult the  [Backblaze 101](#).

Tool: Slack (communication)

Your pre-first-day email contained some information about Slack. Single sign-on with your @truss.works email address is required to access the Truss Slack. Here are some more details to keep you going.

Practice: When setting up your Slack profile

Please use a [profile picture](#) or custom avatar (we recommend [Gravatar](#), which can automatically re-use your avatar across platforms), instead of a Slack default avatar. It doesn't have to be a photo, but it should be uniquely you.

Also, please  [add your pronouns to your display name](#). Examples: Rayyan (she/her), Quinn (they/them), George (he/him).


Some people also share their location in their name. Other people find that it adds clutter. If you'd like to remind people where you are, consider adding your city name or airport code to your full name field, rather than to your display name.

Practice: Public vs private messaging

Because of our commitment to transparency, Truss encourages you to use public Slack channels when possible, rather than DMs. If anything you're sharing or asking about might be useful for other Trussels, use a public channel. If you're not sure which channel to use, go for #random. Use DMs for personal conversations or when you're discussing something that's not of broad interest — making one-on-one lunch plans, for example.

Practice: Affinity Groups

We also have some private Slack channels specifically for affinity groups — that is, groups formed around shared gender, race, or other identities.

You can `/list-groups` to see these affinity groups, and then follow the directions to join as appropriate. You can also learn more in  [this guide](#).

Tool: Zoom (videoconferencing)

We use Zoom for our meetings. You've already used it when you interviewed and for your onboarding meeting! It allows people to join by either video or phone audio. 🗝️

If at least one person in a meeting will be distributed, we encourage everyone in the meeting to use Zoom.

All employees get a Zoom Pro account, so they can host meetings lasting unlimited minutes for up to 100 participants.

When you set up Zoom, you should assign scheduling privileges to our scheduling helpers so they can add (or remove) meetings on your schedule.

Log in to Zoom <https://truss-works.zoom.us/>

Select **Settings** from left navigation

Click or scroll down to **Other** and find **Schedule Privilege**

Click the plus sign and assign to the list of emails that appears when you type in `!aim2assist` in Slack

Please set your **host key** to our standard internal key. This will allow other Trussels to take over as the host of a meeting if for some reason you are unable to attend, or run into connection difficulties in the middle of a meeting.

Log in to Zoom

Select **Profile** from the left navigation

Scroll to **Host Key** and click edit

Find out our number by typing `zoom host key` in Slack

Replace your host key with the `zoom host key` and click save.

🗝️ Here is a doc of the tips and tricks we've figured out for using Zoom as a Trussel. And as a reminder, you should 🗝️ put your pronouns in your Zoom name.

Tool: G Suite

G Suite Tool: Drive (file storage)

We keep our internal files on Google Team Drive.

Here's how we use it:

If the information should be private to you (drafts you don't want to share, or peer feedback that isn't public and should only be shared with a couple of people), use **My Drive**.

If the information should be available to people within the company, use the 🗝️ **Truss team drive**. **Most information should be stored here**. We are very comfortable with internal visibility of information. To help prevent accidental sharing of confidential information, this drive does not allow sharing to people outside of Truss.

If the information should be shared with people outside of the company, put it in the 🗝️ **Truss Public team drive**. This drive does allow sharing with people outside of Truss. We have a 🗝️ doc explaining how to share with external folks.

There are a handful of Team drives for the small amount of truly confidential information we have. If you need access to one of those to do your job, someone will add you.

Note that we don't want a "team drive" for each team. For example, there isn't an "Engineering" or "Design" team drive. Instead, there are folders inside the Truss team drive, so that it's easier for folks to work together across practices.

While it could be better organized, files are named clearly enough that poking around produces results. Because things are visible to anyone in the domain, you should get proximal results if you do a search. For example, all of the docs referenced in this guide can be found in the Drive.

It's pleasantly surprising just how much supporting documentation we have. It's worth searching (and asking) for files that might help you to better understand the problem at hand. There is currently a working group (#wg-info-architecture) to provide naming conventions and better organization.

A note on commenting on docs

Truss is a highly collaborative environment, and we tend to leave a lot of comments for each other on docs.

You won't know if people have responded on or added conversations to docs you care about unless you change your notification settings. Click on "Notifications" and select "All".

G Suite Tool: Google Calendar

Google Calendar keeps this org running.

Please check out this 

[important and mildly humorous doc about how to configure your calendar to help yourself and your teammates.](#)

It covers how to block out time to stay productive and fed, how to use the company-wide calendar, how to avoid deleting events for everyone, how to see your coworkers' OOO time, and how to make scheduling easier for others (especially for hiring!).


Tool: Pivotal Tracker (project management)

We use Pivotal Tracker for our internal work, and for client work unless the client expects another tool.


Here is  [how we Pivotal](#) (and by proxy, do agile).  [Here's Nick discussing the strategy of it in a talk.](#)  [Mark also walked some folk through the tactics.](#)

We have a neat bot you can use in some Slack channels by typing `/pivotal [story name]; [story description]`. A story will be added to Tracker without ever having to leave Slack.

Tool: Vanguard/Ascensus 401(k)

Here are  [directions to enroll in your Truss Vanguard 401\(k\) Enrollment Brochure](#). It won't find you until you are in the system — the onboarding manager will go over this with you in your meeting.

The [Vanguard website](#) is where you can make updates to your deferral rates. Please note that deferral changes are updated manually by the payroll administrator, and are only changed within Paylocity on

Mondays, as per  [Truss Decision Record 0022](#). Please update your deferral rate changes by the Sunday evening before a pay day if you want the change to take effect for a given payroll cycle.

Tool: Poster Guard

Most every state, and some cities, require some form of labor law posters to be displayed at the workplace. As a distributed company, your workplace is where ever you feel like opening your laptop. Rather than send you the world's ugliest laptop sticker with teensy-tiny font, we use [Poster Guard](#) to email you the correct HR poster annually and if there are any mid-year updates. Ya'll have been signed up for this service as part of the onboarding. As posters are updated on any level - federal, state, city, you will receive a notice to view. Check your Truss email. Click the link. Enter your email in the form. View the PDFs. Rejoice.

First week

Resource: Employee directory

Want to know who you're working with?  [Here's a complete list of Trussels](#). You can read Trussels' bios on [our website's team page](#).

Group: Founders

Truss has three founders:

Everett, our CEO. He'll be interested in your passions and how to align them with Truss's values, practices, and goals so we can all be stronger together.

Mark, our CTO. He'll be interested in learning with you (especially about new tools), and why and when we adopt things.

Jen, our COO. She'll be interested in how to further improve our team and workplace through empathy, process, and gains in productivity.

They are all great and approachable.

Group: Truss Leadership Team (formerly “Bubble Prince”)

Bubble Prince is the term formerly used for the Truss leadership team; it includes the founding team and:

Andrew Hughey Director of Product Management.

Michael Burstein General Counsel.

Jeremy Avnet Director of Infrastructure Engineering.


Jesse Taggart Director of Research and Design.

Kimber Dowsett Director of Security Engineering.

Nick Twyman Application Engineering Practice Lead.

Nicole Miles Head of People Ops.

The name “Bubble Prince” came about because Mark (our CTO) brought up that we're not always good at

naming things clearly, saying “we definitely shouldn’t call it ‘bubble prince.’” And here we are. This is an example of a term you can find in the  [Insider Language / Truss Glossary](#).

Resource: Departments and Practice Areas

Truss has three departments lead by the founders:

BizOps (business operations), lead by Jen Leech (COO)

Key Practices (the product/service we sell), lead by Mark Ferlatte (CTO)

Sales (commercial and government), lead by Everett Harper (CEO)

Key Practices consists of the following practice areas:

Application Engineering, lead by Nick Twyman

Delivery Management, lead by Amy Meng

InfraSec, lead by Kimber Dowsett & Jeremy Avnet

Product Management, lead by Andrew Hughey

Research & Design, lead by Jesse Taggert

Meeting: Manager 1:1s

You have likely already met with your manager. 1:1s are an essential practice at Truss. Everyone meets with their manager on a regular basis, at a frequency comfortable for both of them.

This meeting could be a Zoom call or a meal or a beverage or a walk, or a combination. The idea is to talk about life and work, but not necessarily about the specifics of a project both parties are working on. Nothing in our reviews should ever be a surprise, because things should first be coming up in 1:1s.

We recommend Kim Scott’s book *Radical Candor* to our managers, if you’d like to know more about the style we go for.

Meeting: Being Humans Together (BHT)

Every Friday at 9:30a Pacific / 12:30p Eastern, we have an optional half hour meeting to allow Trussels to get to know each other on a more personal level.


At BHT, people can share things going on in their lives, or even to show and tell something interesting to the group. Frequently, the facilitator also has a particular prompt for the week.

Meeting: Friday Practitioners Meetings (a.k.a. Prac)

Every Friday at 10a Pacific / 1p Eastern, we have Prac. It’s a time for us to hear from the founders, get updates on projects, recognize each other’s contributions, and so on.

Find upcoming agendas and past notes in Google Drive at Truss > Meetings >  [Practitioners Meetings](#).

Meeting: One Topic Talks (OTT)


Often on Fridays after Pracs, a Trussel signs up for a 20-40 minute time slot to practice a talk or explore a topic; occasionally someone from outside the company presents to us. We often record these, and store the  [recordings on Google Drive](#).

OTT spots are taken up on a first-come-first-served basis — just claim the event by changing the event title on the company-wide calendar.

Meeting: Ask Me Anything (AMA)


Hosted every Friday at 2p Pacific / 5p Eastern by a member of the leadership team. Got a question, get an answer, really..ask them anything!


Resource: Truss roles and responsibilities

We try to define  [who should be doing what with the customer and on the team](#) to ensure we meet expectations. Discuss with your manager which role(s) you'll serve in.

See also  [this draft document on team lead / feature lead responsibilities](#).


Resource: Company-wide projects (CWP) and Truss Events calendar

We have a wide range of practices, disciplines, and working groups that comprise our CWP, they are listed in the  [CWP spreadsheet](#).

Short-term projects are individual efforts or done via working groups (in Slack prepended with #wg-), operational disciplines are done via committee or as a team, and practice areas are covered by #bubble-prince.  [More here on how those auxiliary groups work](#).

Many of the meetings for various groups can be found on the Truss Events calendar.

Tool: Harvest (timekeeping)

We keep track of our time using a tool called Harvest. It can be used as a web interface, desktop application, and on mobile (or any combination of these). Please take a look at our  [internal guide about how to use Harvest](#).

We track time in 15-minute increments.

If you work through lunch, record your time in the appropriate category. Examples of working through lunch: a client lunch, a 1:1 with your manager, or a meeting.

If you're not working through lunch, do not record that time unless your project has specific rules stating otherwise. Your project lead or delivery manager will know. Examples of not working through lunch: a long lunch outside, lunch with a friend, eating and surfing the web.

When you are not working due to a company holiday, you should leave those days blank in Harvest. Similarly, vacation time and sick time are not tracked in Harvest. Use Paylocity to request vacation and sick time.

Note that when you join a new project at Truss you will be added to a specific Harvest category for that

project. Typically the delivery manager or a member of that project will do this, and typically this information can be found in a project onboarding doc/project Slack. If you have questions, please direct them to the project you're joining.

Practice: When you're messaging on Slack

Slack should not be considered private.

We work with both government and commercial clients. There will almost certainly come a time when we are sued and all our communications get aired. This is fine — we believe in transparency — but consider that before posting (including DMs and private groups) and whether something would be better said by phone or Zoom chat.

A note on @channel and @here:

These are useful tools if you need to get everyone's attention

@here only pings people who are currently active in Slack

Useful when you're not sure who specifically to ping, but you'd like some assistance on something.

@channel will ping everyone who does not have do not disturb turned on. DND is defaulted to 6p to 8a local time in our Slack. Use @channel wisely. For example:

you need all hands on deck for an outage or

something is important enough that e v e r y o n e in the channel needs to know right now.

🔒 **Specify the time zone** when you mention a specific time. We have Trussels spread across the US, and we don't default to a particular time zone across the company.

Ping someone directly (@[their name]) when you need to make sure they see your message. We don't expect anyone to stay on top of every channel.

If it's an emergency, call or text instead of using Slack.

Tool: GitHub

You'll be invited to our GitHub org via your @truss.works email address. You can create a new account with your @truss.works email address, or we can add your existing account to our org. (If you're not an engineer, you may not need to be in GitHub much or at all.) Ask in #truss-infra more information or assistance.

We tend to use one GitHub account with multiple client organizations (and GitHub supports that model well), so it's really up to you. You will need to maintain account security (2FA, etc) for the account you do use.


Resource: Client projects

What projects is Truss working on? You can check out most recent 🔒 **Pracs** for a list of clients and current status.

Your project might have an onboarding doc specific to the project you'll be working on.


Take a look at the 🔒 **Truss Clients Folder** to find more documentation — especially important if you are in

bizops or are a client or team lead.

Also look at  [Client Project Descriptions](#) inside that folder for more up to date information about the projects.

Practice: Client privacy


We tend not to talk about our clients or the work, unless an exception has been agreed on. There are NDAs which lend more specificity. Each project should document any things which are okay to discuss about a project, limitations of NDAs or Controlled Unclassified Data, etc. Talk to your project lead if there are any questions.

It can be fun to tell your friends “I’m sorry, I can’t talk about my work” secret-agent style. For more on why please see our  [Clients are Confidential decision record](#).

Resource: Team page

We want to let the world know you work here! Please submit your headshot and bio in the Pivotal story requesting it.

[Here’s what the team page looks like](#) — each of us has submitted a photo and bio.

If you’re worried about writing a bio, feel free to use  [this framework](#).

We do not require a professional photo for your headshot. A high-quality shot that represents you the way you like is fine.

Tool: Alternate email address

While working with government agencies, you will often encounter websites that do not recognize your @truss.works email.

If you need to sign up with a system like that, you can use `**username@teamtrussworks.com**` to circumvent this issue. This alias is automatically created when your @truss.works address is created.


Only use the alternative one when necessary.

If you want to send emails from your @teamtrussworks.com email, follow [these Google directions on sending email from a different address](#).

Practice: Helping us hire: digital screens

When we hire, we want to be sure we maintain our values and expand our diversity. To do this, we distribute the hiring load across all Trussels, in part to gauge how an applicant responds to our demographic makeup.

 [Here are some training materials for digital screens](#).

We have  [a hiring handbook](#) to guide you through the process.

 [These are the positions we are currently hiring for](#).



We use Lever to track our hiring pipeline. See the next section.

You may be asked to do a “digital screen” shortly after your first day. There’s no interaction with the applicant — you’ll make sure their resume makes sense and that it’s worth Truss doing an intro interview with them.


Ask in #hiring for support or pairing if you want! Screening and interviewing folk can take up to 3 hours a week, but ideally less than that. Please raise a flag if you’re approaching that threshold or are otherwise feeling distress.

Hiring Tool: Lever (hiring support)

To manage applicants and our hiring pipeline, we use a tool called Lever.

Our  [hiring handbook](#) has many details about how to use it. If the candidate is senior and needs to be expedited,  [here’s](#) the doc on that. Post in #hiring if you have any questions.



Practice: Staff resumes

Please upload your resume to our  [staff resume folder](#) on Google Drive. This helps us prepare to get clearance for folk on some projects, and to bid on proposals, and to not have to scramble for either or be left in the cold if someone is taking a much-needed vacation. You can always update it later.

Second week

Resource: Decision records (TDRs)



We use decision records to document specific organizational choices and why we’ve made them.

See what makes a good (and bad) TDR in the  [101 doc](#). You can see all active TDRs our  [Decision Record folder](#).

Software projects will also likely have an index for architectural decision records, or ADRs, which work similarly.

Resource: Truss leveling & salary

We find that internal transparency about levels leads to a healthier working environment.

This includes  [each Trussel’s salary and level](#), and  [what being at that level means, as well as how to lose or gain a level](#).

More info on that can be found in the reviews section.


Resource: Time off at Truss

What holidays do we take as an organization?

How do we handle sick, parental, and other leave?

How much notice do you need to give before taking a vacation?

What happens if we have a crunch time to get something done for a client and we work more than 40 hours one week?

Please read  **Time off at Truss** — it is very important to us that we maintain a healthy work-life balance, and that we take care of our bodies and our selves.

Trussels each get 160 hours of vacation per year, and you start accumulating this time with your first paycheck.



All Trussels also get 160 hours of sick time, if you need it please use it to get healthy. If you have a medical condition that causes you to miss more than five consecutive days, or find that you need more than the allotted 160 hours please let us know. Truss may move you to short term medical leave or otherwise try to accommodate you.

Practice: Reserve

When Trussels are not on client work, they are on #reserve.

Reserve includes things like:

- Building out personal and organizational capacity
- Assisting with sales proposals
- Increasing personal capacity by learning things

You can find more on the purpose of Reserve by checking out the  **Reserve playbook**, see their work in the  **Reserve Pivotal**, and add the Reserve calendar to see and add yourself to standups, retros, and planning sessions.

Practice: Bonding with a distributed team

We're a distributed company! That means we need to be extra-intentional to bond with each other and build trust.

Here are a few best practices:


If you are visiting a place where other Trussels are, Truss will pay for coffee or lunch for a meetup.

#colleagues-and-coffee — this Slack channel pairs Trussels up to meet on a regular basis.

We each have 150 allotted to us each month as an employee effectiveness budget that doubles as a “discretionary kindness budget.” If you want to send someone a present, card, etc, you are welcome to do so within this budget.

#book-club — a Slack channel where we pick a book to read together, and then get together to discuss it.


#movie-club — a Slack channel where we pick a movie to watch asynchronously and then get together to discuss it

See these (and more!) in the  **including distributed folk doc**, or find the once monthly meeting on the Truss Company-Wide calendar.



Practice: 36 client hour week

To keep Truss financially viable, practitioners not on Reserve should aim to work 36 billable hours per week. The other 4 hours are for things like interviews, Prac, and Company-Wide Projects.

Of course, there are weeks where reviews, hiring, or other necessary internal work takes up more than your remaining 4 hours. When this is the case, we understand that either you will have fewer client hours or you will have to work more than 40 hours a week.

In the latter case, we will get you back by giving you  "surge time" to catch up on some PTO. This should be rare, and only done with your manager's approval.

If you have to work more than 40 hours a week to meet your Truss obligations, that is on us and we need to fix it. Please check in with your manager to set expectations, and know that we really prefer folk not work more than 40 hours a week.


Our thinking on this is laid out in the  [Decision Record about working hours](#) as well as the  [Harvest Time Tracking Guide](#).


Practice: Helping us to hire: paired interviewing

After you have been at Truss for 2 weeks, you may be paired with someone else to conduct an interview. Ask in #hiring for support or pairing if you want!

Remember in week one when we talked about digital screens? Review that section to remember what we look for when hiring, the tool we use (Lever), and how much time per week it might take up.

 [Training materials for behavioral interviews](#).

We have  [a hiring handbook](#) to guide you through the process.

 [What we are currently hiring for](#). This is also announced in the #hiring slack channel.


Resource: Support

We have a team that acts as both executive assistants for some folk and to schedule interviews for hiring.

If you ever want to schedule something and include an oversubscribed person (usually Bubbles), please check the pinned message in #aim2assist to see who wrangles them. They can see some things on calendars other Trussels can't.

If you have questions about a scheduled interview or something else related to hiring, ping @hiring-support.


Tool: Expensify (expense tracking) + our credit card

We track our expenses in Expensify. You'll set up an account and join our organization. Please use your Truss card, rather than a personal card, for anything related to Truss or our clients whenever possible. Please check out  [the Truss Guide to Credit Cards, Expense Categories, Expensify, and Reimbursement Policy](#).


(Want a low-stakes way to try out Expensify? Consider making your first expense from the "Employee

Effectiveness” budget to send your Onboarding Buddy something.)

Practice: A deeper dive into Slack


There’s a lot we can say about Slack. So much, in fact, that we’ve created  a separate document with tips for staying on top of it.


Practice: Onboarding survey

Please fill out the  onboarding survey. This form helps us understand and improve our onboarding process. You are welcome and encouraged to fill it out more than once throughout your onboarding. We discuss and act on ways to further improve in #c-welcoming.

First month

Practice: Harassment prevention training


We like to think we’re pretty great here at Truss, but we’re not perfect. So we want to be sure we have a way to catch and respond to issues. To that end, we have  a policy and video we need you to review (we promise they’re not as bad as many you’ve seen).

When you’re done, download the blank certificate and policy, sign it and put in  this folder, and let your manager and onboarding manager know.

Meeting: Quarterly stakeholders meetings

Once a quarter, Bubbles present an update on the company — how we’re doing, and what we’re aiming for. It’s a special thing where Truss leadership demonstrates radical transparency with the team. It’s usually 90 minutes long and replaces a Friday Prac.


Practice: Reviews

We do  peer feedback, manager alignment, and comp review on a rolling quarterly basis. This will be announced repeatedly in Prac and in #announcements.

Tool: Retrium (retro support)

Retrium is a retro-specific tool that we’ve found useful. Set up an account at <https://app.retrium.com/signup> with your @truss.works email, then please ask in #bizops to be added to the list of approved users.

Practice: Employee effectiveness

Regardless of how or where you’re working, we want you to be set up for success. Each employee has  a monthly employee effectiveness budget to use at their own discretion.


Things that may or may not impact you

Meetings: Manager’s meetings (#puma-wranglers)





Resource: Style guides are nice

We have  [a visual style guide](#) and  [a copy style guide](#).

Practice: Travel

When traveling for work, please log the time in Harvest on the client with a note that it's for travel (see more in the  [Harvest Time Tracking doc](#)). You can use your Truss corporate credit card to book Truss-related travel so you do not need to carry any costs out of pocket.

When using a service that customarily takes tips — restaurants, hotel room housekeeping, ride shares — please tip. Truss expects people to tip on the corporate card. (20% for restaurants or rideshare, a few dollars a day for housekeeping, etc.) When it's possible to patronize a service that offers a living wage as a baseline, rather than a tipping system, we encourage you to do so.


We have documents about  [booking travel](#),  [car rental business account](#),  [mandatory info required for car rental insurance \(reference\)](#), and  [security at borders](#).

International travel

If you want to go outside the United States, especially while on a government contract, you'll need to check with the program manager, potentially our lawyers, and definitely the client.

Many of our clients specifically forbid taking a work laptop outside the U.S. This is **very important**. If you do want to go overseas and bring a Truss laptop, we will need to wipe it and install basic communication tools like G Suite and Slack, but you will not be able to connect to any client repositories, drives, or infrastructure.

Practice: Annual security training


Many of our clients require that we take annual security training. Use your Google credentials to log into the  [Habitu8](#) learning portal and complete the available trainings. The first time that you log in, you will automatically be enrolled in the required trainings. The trainings are a series of videos (3-5 minutes each) separated by knowledge checks. You should be able to complete the trainings in under an hour.

If you have an interest in other security topics, you can watch any of the available videos in the [Video Library](#) at any time.


First 3 months

Practice: Visiting other Trussels

While we think we can be a high-trust environment while also being a fully distributed company, there's still something to be said about seeing another person face-to-face.

We'd like to be sure that each Trussel has a chance to meet at least one other Trussel in the flesh within their first three months. We also have  [a guide for how to visit other Trussels](#).


Practice: Helping us to hire: Interviewing solo or as lead

After 90 days, you may be lead on an interview or do an intro interview solo. 





[Here are some training materials in how to conduct intro interviews.](#)

Remember in weeks one and two when we talked about helping us to hire? Review that section to remember what we look for when hiring, the tool we use (Lever), how much time per week it might take up, and what resources are available to you.

Practice: Mentorship

We encourage informal mentorship (and co-mentorship) at Truss. You can read  [all about our approach.](#)

Meeting: Offsites

We had a super rad  [offsite in April 2019](#). You can  [read the summary](#),  [check out pictures](#), or  [read through the notes](#).

Resource: Conferences

See our guide to  [conferences and professional development](#).


Resource: Public relations

We work with a PR firm called Press Friendly. Their primary job is to align with our business strategy, create a 12-month PR narrative, place articles in publications and conferences ([partial list is here](#)), and conduct practitioner interviews to get expert opinions, stories, and data.

PR planning happens quarterly (see  [the Press Friendly folder in our public Drive](#)). You can review, or even submit ideas of your own  [here](#). PR updates are  [documented weekly](#).

While we don't require sharing and spreading our content, it does make an enormous difference. We have attracted candidates as well as prospects (on vacation in Italy!) because they read an article that a Trussel shared. We will share when articles are released in the #marketing channel at minimum.

Practice: Writing for the blog

If there's something you're particularly excited about, we'd love to help you blog about it for the Truss blog. Please take a look in our  [how-to that Kaleigh wrote](#).

Tool: Twitter/LinkedIn/etc


If you'd like to post about your work or experience at Truss we'd love to have you share it. This is optional.

You can choose to link to your Twitter in your team page bio


If you write any posts or speak at any conferences, Truss will pump your posts and talk up on Truss accounts to help increase engagement


If you do use LinkedIn, please make sure your profile is up to date. Clients routinely use it as a way to see who we are.


Practice: Helping onboard new Trussels

To help people acclimate more quickly, we have  [an onboarding buddy system](#). Buddies can be found in #c-welcoming, and rotate approximately every 3 months. Any trussel that has completed their onboarding can become an onboarding buddy.

Practice: Starting a new auxiliary group within Truss

If you see a need for a new working group, committee, guild, or affinity group at Truss, please follow  [this guide in how to set up an auxiliary group](#).


If you're setting up an affinity group, please consider adding  [the affinity groups slackbot to your group](#).

If something you have done will cause a change for Trussels, please create a copy of  [the Internal Communication Template](#) and follow the steps.

Practice: Bringing a new tool to Truss

Are you just not getting what you need out of  [the tools we already use within Truss](#)? Want to use something new?

Start by validating with stakeholders that we need a new tool, that you have a plan for how it will be administered, that it's in your budget, and so on.

You'll need  [a security review](#). We don't have time to review everything that folks install via brew or the Apple app store. But we do want to review SaaS or licensed software and any applications or integrations that have access to our infrastructure or core services (slack integrations, g-suite integrations, etc). There are probably a few other examples of things that we definitely want eyes on.


 [Any contracts will need to be signed by one of the founders](#) or Truss's general counsel.

Check in with #accounting on how to get those bills paid.

Let #legal know where a copy of the license can be found.


Make sure that there are at least two admins for any tool you are using to make sure we can still access it if one of you ~~gets hit by a bus~~ wins the lottery and moves to a remote mountain top.

Practice: Changing Projects

If you are no longer happy working on your current project, talk to your manager. They will work with you to figure out if there are upcoming projects that might be of interest or other possible options. If you are no longer ethically aligned with your project, please review  [this document](#) (and talk to your manager).


Alternatively, if you see another project spinning up that you are interested in, talk to your manager and perhaps the client lead for the new project, or drop in the project's slack channel.

Perk: 1Password Families

Our 1Password license allows Trussels to obtain a  [1Password Families](#) license, which will allow you to use 1Password at home and share the benefits with up to five family members. If you already have a paid subscription for 1Password, you may use your complimentary license from Truss to cover that cost for the duration of your time with us. When enrolling in 1Password families, please use your personal email address.

If you leave Truss, you will need to add your own payment information to the 1Password Families account. You will never be locked out of your data if your subscription lapses, but you will not be able to add new passwords to your vault.

Perk: Tall Poppy Security Training

All Trussels receive access to the  Tall Poppy platform, a service providing tools, tips, and tricks for protecting privacy, fighting targeted harassment, and support for folks who have been victimized online. This isn't corporate security training focused on our business. This is human-centered perk meant to support Trussels' overall safety and well-being.

Congratulations

You're now "Full Trussel." We're still not completely sure what this means, but we're still proud of you.

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