

The Long-Distance Teammate

What's in it for me? Learn how to form close bonds with your teammates even while working remotely.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work was becoming a growing part of modern work life. By now, most of us are pros at conducting a meeting over webcam, but other parts of the office experience aren't as easy to recreate at home. For instance, how are you supposed to build connections with your colleagues when you no longer see them in person? These blinks will teach you how physical distance doesn't have to mean emotional distance. By laying out clear and actionable steps to changing your mindset around remote work, you'll gain a better understanding of how to support others when you're working remotely. And, just as importantly, you'll learn how to support yourself. In these blinks, you'll learn

what the 3 Ps are; why you need to move your body; and how to practice ethical visibility.

Pay attention to the 3 Ps to be a great teammate.

One of the biggest challenges of working from home is being – and feeling – like an effective member of a team. There's no way around it – when you're not physically present in an office, it's hard to be engaged and form meaningful connections. Luckily, there's a model that can help you be a better teammate from the comfort of your own home office. It all comes down to 3 Ps: productivity, proactivity, and potential. The key message of this blink is: Pay attention to the 3 Ps to be a great

teammate. The first P, productivity, seems simple enough. The ability to do work is at the core of your role on any team; at the end of the day, getting your work done well is the most important part of your job. But when it comes to being a good teammate, there's more to production than your own personal output. Any team member can focus on their tasks and produce good work, but a great teammate will get the best work done in the time allotted and help the rest of his team and organization. The second P is proactivity. Proactivity is simple: it's the opposite of being reactive. If you've ever taken a driving class, you've probably heard that the safest drivers are constantly checking further down the road so that they have advance warning of anything that may pop up. Being proactive at work means keeping an eye out for obstacles in the distance and taking preemptive action to manage them. This behavior is especially valuable when working remotely, as it builds trust and demonstrates a sincere commitment to working well. The final P, potential, is perhaps the trickiest concept to understand and master. It refers to thinking about the long-term effects of your actions, and how they fit in with your goals and the goals of your teammates. This doesn't always come naturally – it's easy to tune out in a boring meeting or ignore an opportunity to help out Jim from finance with a nonessential project. But consider that these small opportunities offer rewards down the line and affect how your teammates perceive you. Who knows? Jim's project could turn out to be a wild success that boosts your reputation.

**To get in the right mindset,
remember that you're part of a
larger team.**

Being a good teammate starts with being in the right frame of mind. But when you're home alone without regular social interaction with your coworkers, it's easy to get stuck in negative thinking patterns. It doesn't have to be that way. You aren't alone, and you do have a concrete and meaningful purpose – you just have to make it part of your regular mindset. The secret here is to remember that you're part of something larger than yourself. Keep this meaningful mission in mind, and it'll keep you cruising along over those pitfalls of alienation. The key message in this blink is: To get in the right mindset, remember that you're part of a larger team. It's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when you're

working remotely. But whether you're a gig worker or a full-time employee, you're contributing to an organization with goals beyond your current project. And it's not just the organization that has long-term goals – you do, too. Whatever you're working on is a single brick in the building that is your larger career, so the way you think about your work today will have an impact on your long-term success. What's the big picture here? That your personal success and the organization's success are linked. Don't think of your job as simply consisting of your work. It's more accurate to say that your job is the sum total of your work plus teamwork – the work of supporting your teammates and contributing to the success of the greater mission. That's a big concept, so let's give specific examples. You probably have a manager and teammates. Do you know what your manager needs from you? Don't be afraid to talk to them to learn how you can better support the organization. The same applies to your teammates. Think about how you interact with them as you work. Are there any obvious ways you can make work easier for them? These questions will keep you in the right frame of mind as you continue working – remotely, but not alone.

Stay productive at home by asking yourself the four pivot questions.

Ever had one of those days where you're at your desk all day long but somehow it feels like you haven't gotten anything done? If so, you understand that being busy and being productive are two very different things. This is an especially significant problem when working remotely. The lack of a commute means you can start working the moment you roll out of bed. But since there's no divide between your workspace and your personal space, it's easy to get distracted or caught up in work that's not really a priority. Luckily, there are strategies to keep you on track and doing the work that really matters for your team. The key is to ask yourself four pivot questions. Here's the key message: Stay productive at home by asking yourself the four pivot questions. The first pivot question is: Where is your focus right now? While you'll often have multiple tasks thrown at you at once while you're working, the human brain can only focus on one thing at a time. It's far better to focus on a single thing, block out distractions so that you can get it done, then move on. For

example, if you have an important memo to write but your team is messaging each other, consider muting notifications in the chat so you can focus on your work. You can then return to the conversation after. The second pivot question is: What's the best use of your time? It can be tough to determine what exactly you should be working on when left to your own devices at home. To set priorities, write out your to-do list, then think about the big-picture goals each task contributes to. What will help you and your team meet your goals? Don't be afraid to reach out to a manager or coworker if you have questions. The next pivot question is: How can you influence others to maximize your productivity? Part of being a teammate is teaching others how to work with you. Oftentimes other people don't even know that they're interrupting your workflow. So don't be shy about setting status updates and letting people know that you'll be focusing on something else for the next hour. The final pivot question is: What habits help or hinder your productivity? Humans are creatures of habit, so try to establish habits that keep you healthy and productive. They can be as simple as remembering to close your office door when you work. Whatever the habit, start small, be patient, and reward yourself each time you do it correctly – it'll engage the pleasure center in your brain and create positive feedback loops.

To ensure that your messages are received and understood, pick the right tools and consider your audience.

It's no secret that communication is critical, but it's even more so when you're working remotely. You must take steps to be proactive in closing the distance between you and the rest of your team. Being open, honest, and clear with your communications can help everyone stay on the same page even when you're not in the same room. But what exactly is communication? It's not just about sending a message – it's also ensuring that that message is received and understood. These final two steps are frequently overlooked, but without them, you're just talking to yourself. The key message here is: To ensure that your messages are received and understood, pick the right tools and consider your audience. The nice thing about speaking in person is that it's easy to tell

when you're being heard and understood – a lifetime of socialization has given you the tools to do that. But when working remotely, you have to communicate via technology, and that adds a layer of difficulty. There are a number of tools for online communication, and they're changing all the time. But the good news is that they can be divided into three main categories: what we say, how we say it, and how we look. What we say tools are text-based mediums, like chats and emails. How we say it tools are audio-based mediums, like phone calls and voicemails. And how we look tools are video chats and recorded videos. When choosing what platform to use, think about purpose, timing, and audience. This will allow you to match your platform to your communication needs. For example, if you're trying to give a complicated set of instructions for something that's not time-sensitive, email's a better choice than a phone call. On the other hand, if you have a sensitive personal matter that will require some back-and-forth, a phone call is the way to go – that way, you can ensure that the other person is hearing your tone and understanding what you need to convey. Also, keep in mind whom you're communicating with. People have different preferences, and that's OK. If you've heard from a teammate that they really prefer receiving instructions in voice messages, try to do that whenever possible – it'll keep things moving smoothly and ensure that they're in the best position to hear what you have to say.

Practice ethical visibility to give your accomplishments the recognition they deserve.

Working out of sight can sometimes feel like you're out of mind. That's why it's important to still make sure that your work is visible and valued even when you're not in the office. Aside from being dispiriting, having your contributions overlooked will hamper your career prospects. But how do you make sure that your contributions are recognized without coming off as hungry for the spotlight or tooting your own horn? The answer is ethical visibility. This is a framework that puts your accomplishments in the context of your wider organization while staying supportive and appropriate. The key message of this blink is: Practice ethical visibility to give your accomplishments the recognition they deserve. With ethical visibility, the first and most important thing to

remember is that the focus should be on the goals of your team or organization, not you. For example, when you make suggestions, put them in the context of what your team is trying to achieve. Words like “we” and “us” are critical in this regard; “since we want more engagement, maybe we can try boosting our social media presence” is better than “I think we should use more social media.” With this in mind, how do you make yourself seen? When it comes to your boss, remember that you’re not the only person she’s thinking about. Don’t monopolize her attention; instead, make a point of participating in meetings and discussions in a way that adds value and brings your team closer to its goals. Volunteering for tasks that aren’t directly required is also a great way to make a positive impression. Participation is also the name of the game when it comes to your teammates. Congratulatory notes and brief conversations about things not related to work are a great way to establish deeper relationships and ensure that people know who you are and what you stand for. No matter who you’re dealing with, remember to stay aligned with the culture of your organization. Some virtual offices will be more casual and boisterous and others will be more straight-laced. That’s OK. Just be sure to remain aware of the culture so that you can stand out while still fitting in.

When giving or receiving feedback, be kind and open, and listen to others.

Giving and receiving quality feedback is at the core of being a good teammate, but it can be easy to lose track of this when you’re working remotely. All too often, it can feel like you’re throwing work into the void, only getting brief email confirmations or a quick thumbs-up in a messaging app. There’s a better way. If you’re aiming to be the best teammate you can be, you need to know how to give feedback – even (and especially) if it isn’t an explicit part of your job description. Luckily for you, it’s not hard to develop this skill. It’s all about applying the same principles of effective communication you’ve seen before. The key message here is: When giving or receiving feedback, be kind and open, and listen to others. First things first, an important clarification: feedback can be positive or negative. It’s easy to forget that positive feedback is a thing, too, but it can be just as important as negative

feedback. Don't be shy about reaching out to a coworker to praise them on the presentation they just did. It's also important to be as specific as possible with your feedback, both good and bad. A generic "good job" isn't very helpful – it's far better to say that "the presentation you gave did a really good job of explaining complicated info through visuals." When you need to give negative feedback, it's important to make it a conversation. Nobody likes being talked at, and you'll make more progress if you get their side of the story and understand their perspective. And while this should go without saying, be kind. Make it clear that you care about the other person. For example, don't just say, "You're too quiet." Something like, "You have a lot of good ideas, and I want to see you share them more in meetings" will be better received and more meaningful. When you're receiving feedback from someone, remember to keep an open mind. Your reflex may be to defend yourself, but try to fight that – instead, just listen to her and give your side of the story only after she's finished. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand something either, and thank her when it's all over. After all, feedback is ultimately a good thing, even if it's negative. It means the other person cares and wants to see you improve – and that's what being a good teammate is all about.

Don't forget to take care of your body and establish a quality work-life balance.

It's time to talk about the one thing that makes everything else in these blinks possible: your health. Your physical health is often overlooked in discussions around work, but it's critical – after all, you won't be productive if you're not feeling well. Working from home brings a new set of challenges. It often means that you're less mobile, more lonely, and more stressed, all of which can have a detrimental effect on your health. A core part of being a good long-distance teammate is self-care. Establishing good routines to stay on top of your health and set a good work-life balance is essential. The key message here is: Don't forget to take care of your body and establish a quality work-life balance. Taking care of your body starts with getting a good night's sleep. This can be trickier when you're working from home. But sleep, unlike your work, isn't negotiable. Your body needs a consistent sleep routine, so stay

away from screens before bed and limit caffeine and alcohol in the evenings. Your body, and your work, will thank you. Working remotely also means a lot less physical activity for many people. With your commute gone, and a home office that's almost certainly smaller than your work office, you have fewer chances to stretch your legs. Try incorporating a walk, or at least some stretches, into your routine. Some fresh air and a quick break from your work can be just the thing to reset your mind and give you new energy. Don't be afraid to try different forms of physical activity until you find one that works for you - whether it's walking the dog or playing tag with your kids for a few minutes. Anything that gets you moving and away from your work is good. Work-life balance is the other key part of setting a healthy routine at home. With the physical divide between an office and a home eliminated, it can be tricky to set boundaries. Know this: there's no magic formula for this stuff. Work won't always fit the traditional nine-to-five, and that's all right. What's important is that you have things outside of your job that give you pleasure, and that you take time to enjoy them. Again, this can take many different forms. Maybe you meditate, or play chess, or attend religious services. The point is that you have something outside of work that makes you happy. Treat yourself well - after all, you're a teammate, too.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks: Working remotely brings new challenges when it comes to connecting with your teammates. But you can overcome these obstacles and be a supportive member of the team. Get in the right mindset by staying aware of your role within the larger organization and the goals you want to achieve. Use clear and open communication to form connections and ensure your accomplishments are recognized. Actionable advice: Follow-up after a meeting ends. When a meeting wraps up, there's a brief window of time for a follow-up to be effective. If you have an action item that you want to address or a quick follow-up question for a manager or teammate, do it right after the meeting ends. This will allow the issue to be addressed immediately, and it's a great way to practice ethical visibility. Got feedback? We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to with The Long-Distance Teammate as the subject line and share your thoughts!