Remote Work Playbook

Vibe Inc, 2020

Table of Contents

# Remote is the future of work

The workplace is changing

The option to work remotely has become less of a trend and more of a must-have in the workplace. Consider these figures:

- With the advent of the Covid19 pandemic, the Global Workplace Analytics predicts that we will see 25-30% of the workforce working at home on a multiple-days-a-week basis by the end of 2021.

- Reports from 2018 show that up to **two-thirds of the American workforce** works outside of a traditional office space at least some of the time in their current job.

- In a survey of over 15,000, workers, the International Workplace Group found that when presented with two similar job offers, **80% of job applicants would turn down the position** that didn't offer remote work.

- Buffer's **State of Remote Work 2019** report found that 99% of remote workers said they'd like to work remotely, at least some of the time, for the rest of their careers.
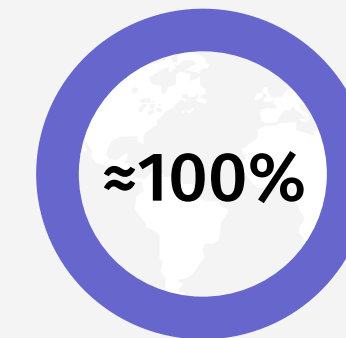
Looking at these statistics, you can't deny that flexible work options will play a major role in hiring and retaining the best employees now and in the future.
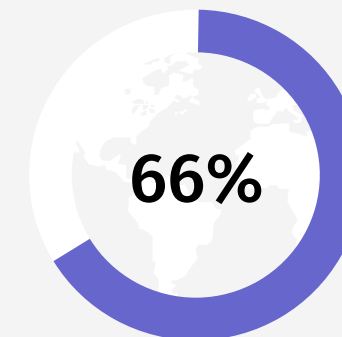
In 2019
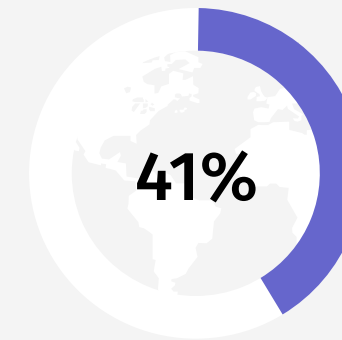
41% of Global Oganizations have remote roles

In 2020

≈100% of Tech Companies are working remotely

In 2020

66% of US workers working remotely due to Covid-19

Pain Points

While some companies such as Automattic, GitHub, and Toggl have been fully remote for years, your business might be in the early stages of deciding how to make work-from-home options available to your employees. Before diving in, it's important to think through the potential challenges that could come up.

For example, coordinating employees in various locations presents a unique challenge, especially if your team members are spread out across multiple time zones. You'll need to find a way to conduct team meetings—and make sure they're productive, too.

You'll also need to develop strategies for keeping your team members up-to-date on current projects and ensure that everyone has access to the data, tools, and other resources they need to do their best work.

And while good communication is key in any work environment, it becomes even more crucial in a distributed team situation. How will you build rapport and establish a true sense of camaraderie among your employees, even if they're rarely (if ever) in the same room?

The good news is that although getting started will require strategic planning, some creativity, and maybe a little bit of trial-and-error, the benefits of providing remote work opportunities make the effort worth it.

Benefits

The advantages of setting up your workplace to offer telecommute options far surpass the challenges.

When your team can work from home, at a coworking space, on the road, or wherever works best for them, you can afford to hire top-level talent without the constraint of location. This can lead to a creatively and culturally diverse team that might not have come together if you were hiring from a much smaller geographical area.

Remote workers can work on a schedule that maximizes their productivity and creativity, too. Buffer, a social media management company, found that remote workers considered a **flexible schedule to be the biggest benefit** to working remotely, and this makes sense. Some people have more energy in the morning while others do their best work in the quiet evening hours.

Having more team members work from home can be a financial boost to your company as well. Add up the cost of rent, parking, office supplies, amenities, company vehicles, etc., and it can be expensive to maintain a full staff on-site all year, every year. Letting your team work from home can cut those costs dramatically,

and that money can go toward employee salaries, more innovative tech, expanding the company—possibilities abound.

The time and money that your employees save by not commuting to an office every day has a major environmental impact, too. FlexJobs, a telecommuting job board, found in a **2017 study of the U.S. workforce** that, "If the work-at-home workforce expanded to include those who could and wanted to commute half the time, the [greenhouse gas emissions] savings would equate to taking 10 million cars off the road."

With so much to gain, there's never been a better time to get into remote work. So let's start to assemble the team.

Team

Hire the right people

Everybody wants to hire the best people for their team. When you're hiring people to work remotely, there are considerations you must take into account.

Before interviews begin, you need to make sure you can clearly communicate the overall goals of the company and the role this position will play in contributing to those goals. The path is clear when you give people a sense of direction, and your remote workers will appreciate knowing exactly what to expect.

Next, you need to decide just how remote this position will be. Will all new hires work exclusively from home? Will people need to be in the office at least part-time? Will there be an established coworking space for local team members? People work from home for a variety of reasons, and their availability will be a factor in your hiring decision. Know beforehand how flexible you can afford to be and be honest in the interview about what you envision.

Work Culture

When people go on interviews, one of the things they pay attention to is the office space. The office's location, decor, and overall environment can give a lot

of cues as to what it would be like to work there. But if there is no office space—if your whole team works from home—you'll need to give interviewees a sense of team culture in a different way.

Content marketing agency **Animalz** offers prospective employees the opportunity to sign into a conference call with current staff to learn about company culture. This is a good way to not only introduce potential new hires to some of the team, but to see how they interact in this new situation.

Experience Matters

A job candidate's work ethic and previous remote work experience are important to consider when hiring. You want to avoid micromanaging your workers and give them autonomy over their position.

If you're building a remote team from scratch, lean more toward hiring people with past experience managing their workflow outside of an office setting. These could be contract workers, freelancers, or senior-level employees who have increasingly taken charge of their own projects. (This won't necessarily be your hiring strategy forever, but it's a good place to start.)

Fully remote company **Automattic has a creative way** to test their applicants' work-from-home potential: they conduct interviews through text chat to see if applicants can communicate effectively in that medium, since that's how most of their work will be done.

Meet the Team

Once, hired, you'll want a new remote worker to meet as many people as possible in their first couple of weeks. At the very least, they should meet with direct reports, their manager, and people on other teams they'll work closely with. This gives your new hire a chance to get comfortable with the team (and get some practice using your messaging and collaboration methods, too).

For a great checklist on the onboarding to-dos for remote workers, check out this **resource from Workable**.

How to build trusted relationship with your remote team

Remote workers love the flexibility of working from home, but they are also prone to feelings of isolation and loneliness. So it's important to find ways to build trust within your remote team.

Video conferences and chats will play a big role in establishing trust among your team members. Text chats leave a little too much room for things to get lost in translation; seeing a co-worker's facial expressions and body language will give you a better sense of how they communicate.

At Zapier, they have rotating **pair partners**. Essentially, each team member is paired up with someone else in the company and they check in a few times a day about work, how their day is going, etc. At the end of the week they rotate to a different partner. It helps people to connect as

well as learn about the other teams in the company.

Team members can also "grab coffee" with someone else on the team. The Muse suggests taking advantage of the time that would have normally been a morning commute to enjoy **some coffee while video chatting with a co-worker** about the plan for the day.

If you have a co-located team (meaning that some people work from a central office while workers are remote), be sure to answer the remote workers' emails and text chats first. They don't have the benefit of walking to your office, so giving communication with them precedence goes a long way in establishing trust and respect.

The more ways you can create collaboration and interaction within the team, the better the relationships will be.

Ways to boost camaraderie within your remote team

There's more to work than, well, work. You want your team to be able to joke around and feel a true sense of belonging, just as they would in a more traditional office setting. This is where you get to flex your creative muscles and build a welcoming environment.

Because you can hire from anywhere, your team is bound to have a variety of cultural backgrounds. Offer team members the opportunity to give a short presentation on one of their favorite cultural events or holidays. Or, celebrate a non-traditional holiday as a team. Maybe everyone gets a pizza from their favorite shop on National Pizza Day and you discuss each pie's merits on a lunchtime video chat.

You can use a collaborative online space to hold fun contests or polls on a daily or weekly basis. Devote a Slack channel where everyone can compete to see who had the most creative breakfast that day, or use a canvas on an online whiteboard where people can vote on their favorite Nicolas Cage movie.

For a confidence boost, pair up two team members and have them **highlight each other's accomplishments** on a team Slack channel at the end of the week. A little bit positive recognition can go a long way.

And if you have the budget, it's a good idea to facilitate in-person experiences when you can. This can range from hosting get-togethers for team members who are within driving distance of each other, offering a stipend for a coworking space or even coffee shop meet-ups for nearby team members, or having an annual work retreat for the entire team.

Process

Tips for productive meetings

Everyone's time is valuable, and few things make that ring more true than being at a meeting that lacks focus and purpose. Go in with a plan of action and you'll keep your remote workers happy and productive.

First, accept that running a meeting with remote workers is going to be different than conducting a team meeting where everyone is in the same room. Creativity and collaboration will go a long way in making everyone on the team feel included.

Video conferences are an essential part of successfully managing a remote team, but before you start filling in the calendar, ask yourself: "Could the topic of this meeting actually be addressed with an email?" You might even find that a quick Slack message answers your question without having to rally the troops.

When you find that you do need to meet, whether for a weekly progress check-in or starting a new project, send a meeting agenda to attendees beforehand. Ask your team to review the agenda and send back any questions, concerns or ideas so that the person leading the meeting knows what else they might need to cover.

Take notes and make a list of action items while you meet. Do this in a collaborative online space so that you can make this information easily accessible to the team during and after the meeting.

While there likely won't be any actual water coolers present, be sure to leave time before and after the meeting for the team to chat. As the manager, you should be comfortable starting casual conversations with your workers, and they'll likely follow suit.

Best ways for effective daily sync

Managing a distributed team means that you'll have to encourage daily communication among your employees. This benefits everyone both personally and professionally; people get to chat and check in with their coworkers and stay current on projects.

How you go about a daily sync session will vary depending on the size of your team, how many people work remotely, and how the teams or departments are set up. But there are a couple of guidelines that can help any co-located team.

Start the morning with a short video conference. Stick to the same agenda every day to establish a routine that the team can get comfortable with. That way, the focus of the meeting is already established, people know how to prepare, and everybody can begin their work with focus.

If there are too many time zones to cover with a daily morning meeting, consider setting up company-wide Slack channels where people can check in. Channels like "What We Accomplished Today," "Potential Roadblocks," and "Three Goals for Tomorrow" help to keep everyone in the loop with the team's project and on track with their own work. Streamline the process even further by using the **Standuply app** integration in Slack.
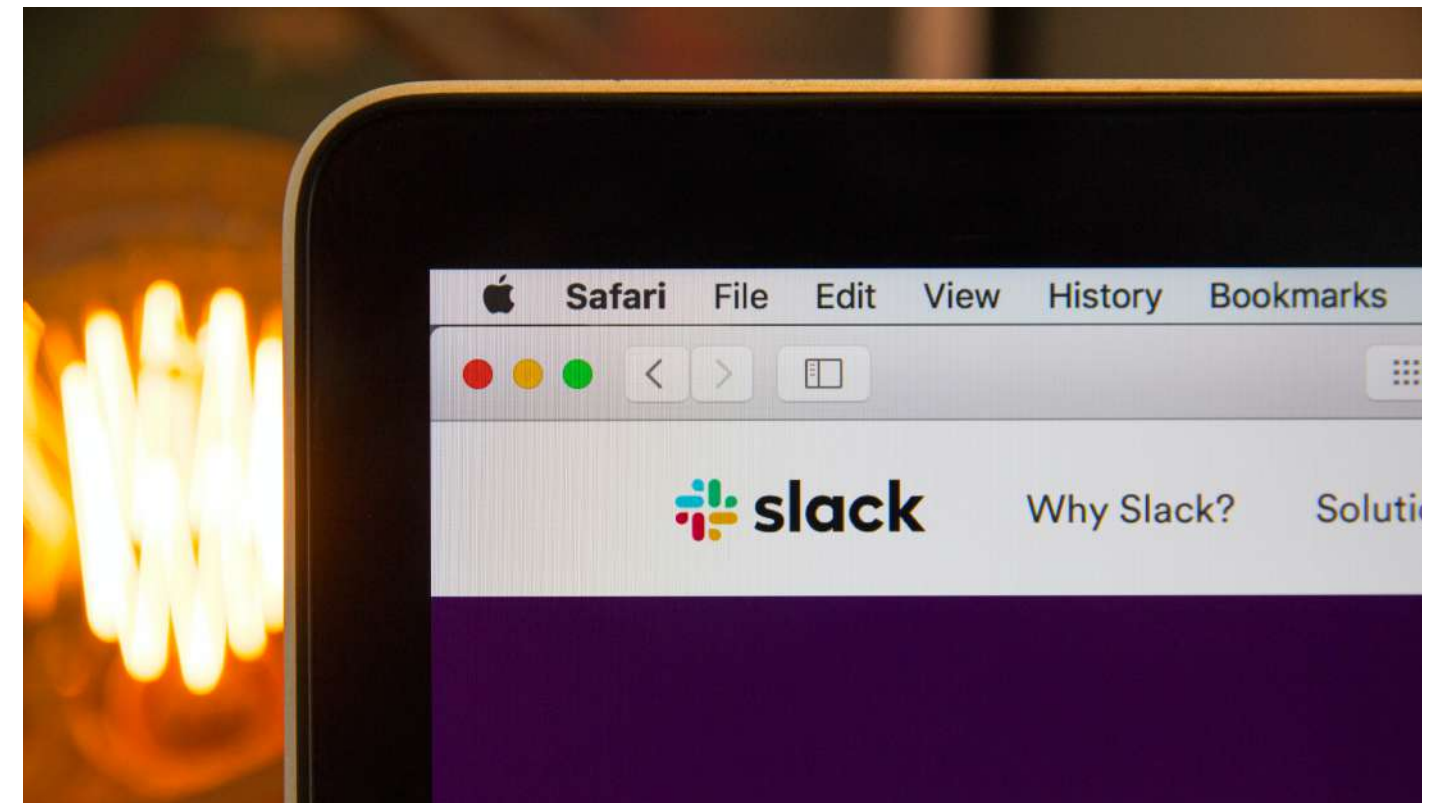
How to run effective weekly one-on-ones

Remote workers are accustomed to flying solo while getting their work done, but that doesn't mean they don't value personalized feedback. Weekly one-on-one sessions with each member of your team gives them the opportunity to candidly discuss what's going well, where they might be struggling, and how their role on the team is shaping up.

One-on-ones are a chance to help your workers, so it's important to keep the tone positive. That doesn't mean you're avoiding tough topics; you just need to be a little more creative in how you're framing the situation.

Start by asking what Joe Hirsch calls **"hero" questions**. These are questions that let your employees highlight their strengths and personal project wins. One example of a hero question Hirsch suggests is, "What strengths did you find most useful on this project?" From there, the conversation can move to what they thought went well and where they think they could improve next time.

Business expert Mark Horstman from the **Manager Tools Podcast** advises that one-on-ones be scheduled every week, and these meetings should be no more than 30 minutes long: 10 minutes for your employee to discuss their points, 10 minutes for the manager to speak, and 10 minutes to collaborate on ongoing progress. This gives you an in-depth understanding of your employee's strengths and goals, and from there you can strategize how those will work with the company's goals.

To help with running this type of meeting, check out tools like **Small Improvements**.

How to collaborate across different time zones

Time zone coverage makes it possible for your team to always be on—or at least, more "on" than you'd be if everyone worked 9-5 from the same office. Now, you just need to make it work.

Depending on how widely the team is distributed, finding an ideal time to hop on a video chat can be tricky. So during the interview process, try to give job candidates a sense of what times you'll need them to be available, both regularly and under special circumstances.

That being said, too many time constraints could make an awesome new hire less excited to be part of the team. With this in mind, schedule important meetings in advance and give plenty of notice. And because consistent check-ins are essential, keep an agreed-upon time blocked off each week to make sure everyone can attend important meetings.

The occasional technical glitch can happen to anyone, and it's possible that someone might miss a video conference. To make sure that they're in the loop, use collaboration tools such as Notion, Google Docs, or a Vibe whiteboard, that will allow team members to check in and make notes during the meeting that can also be shared out afterwards.

Collaboration tools have many benefits outside of meetings, too. They can be used within teams and across the entire company if needed. They're a great way to continue to build camaraderie between teams.

When you have employees in different time zones working on the same project, have them arrange virtual project hand-offs: when one person is done for the day, they can send an update to the next team member who is starting their workday. This keeps the project moving forward, motivates the team to stay on task, and is an easy, fun way to connect with co-workers.
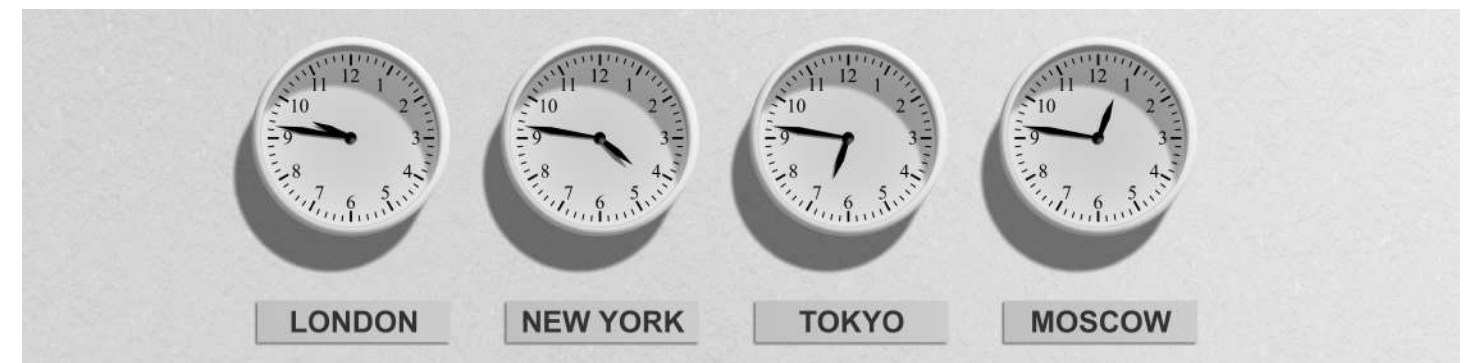
Toolkit
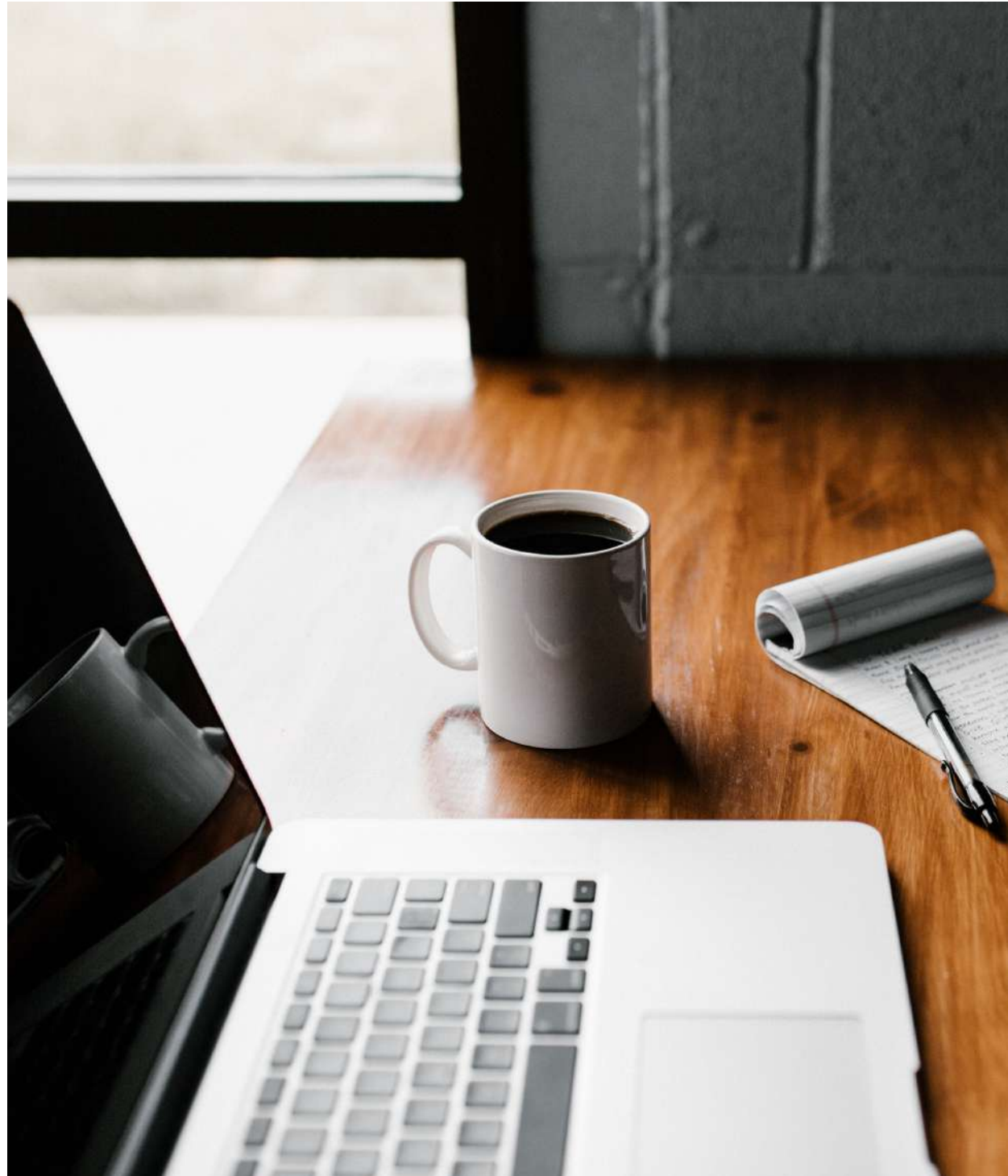
List of a remote ready full tech stack

If you have employees working remotely—whether that means full-time, part-time, or just on occasion—you need to make the best tech available to them. A remote team is only as strong as its tech stack, so make sure you're working with the right combination of tools.

Project Management:

Using an app to outline project workflow means your employees won't have to guess and send countless emails to see how everyone's work is progressing.

Examples: **Asana**; **Trello**; **Monday**

Messaging:

Less formal than email, a messaging service allows the workplace to maintain a conversational tone while still getting work done in the office (virtual or otherwise).

Example: **Slack**; **Microsoft Teams**

Video Conference:

Connect face-to-face with remote employees through video and voice for enabling collaboration and building connections.

Examples: **Zoom**; **Skype**

Collaboration:

A virtual whiteboard that lets team members collaborate through sketches, annotations, and shared files puts all of the best ideas, insights, and latest developments in one place.

Example: **Vibe**

Documentation:

Keep all of your team's files, notes, task lists, and other essential content uncluttered and easily accessible.

Examples: **Dropbox**; **Notion**; **Google Docs**

Integration:

Streamline tasks and save time by setting up your regularly used apps to work together.

Example: **Zapier**

Distraction-Busting:

Block sites and apps that take your attention away from you work and set timers for regular mental breaks.

Example: **Freedom**; **Focus Booster**

Security:

A trusted password manager generates and manages secure passwords for all of your online accounts. This protects your work and most important information without the hassle of creating and remembering individual passwords.

Example: **LastPass**

Why Vibe?

Why Vibe?

With its own distributed team, Vibe understands the importance of making collaboration as seamless as possible. That's why we're so focused on creating the best experience for your business. Your team can access all parts of a project via laptop or mobile device, web browser or app, and know exactly what's going on with Vibe.

Our software integrates a growing list of third-party apps to make connecting from all around the world a smooth experience. This means you can create your perfect tech stack without having to invest in new apps. Use the tools your team has already had success with. Better yet, you can easily integrate a different set of apps if you find something that works even better.

Client or team meetings take on a new dynamic with the Vibe board. No time is lost on learning new navigation, searching for old notes, or recapping past meetings. You can present to clients using multiple resources in real time; no need to email with links and samples
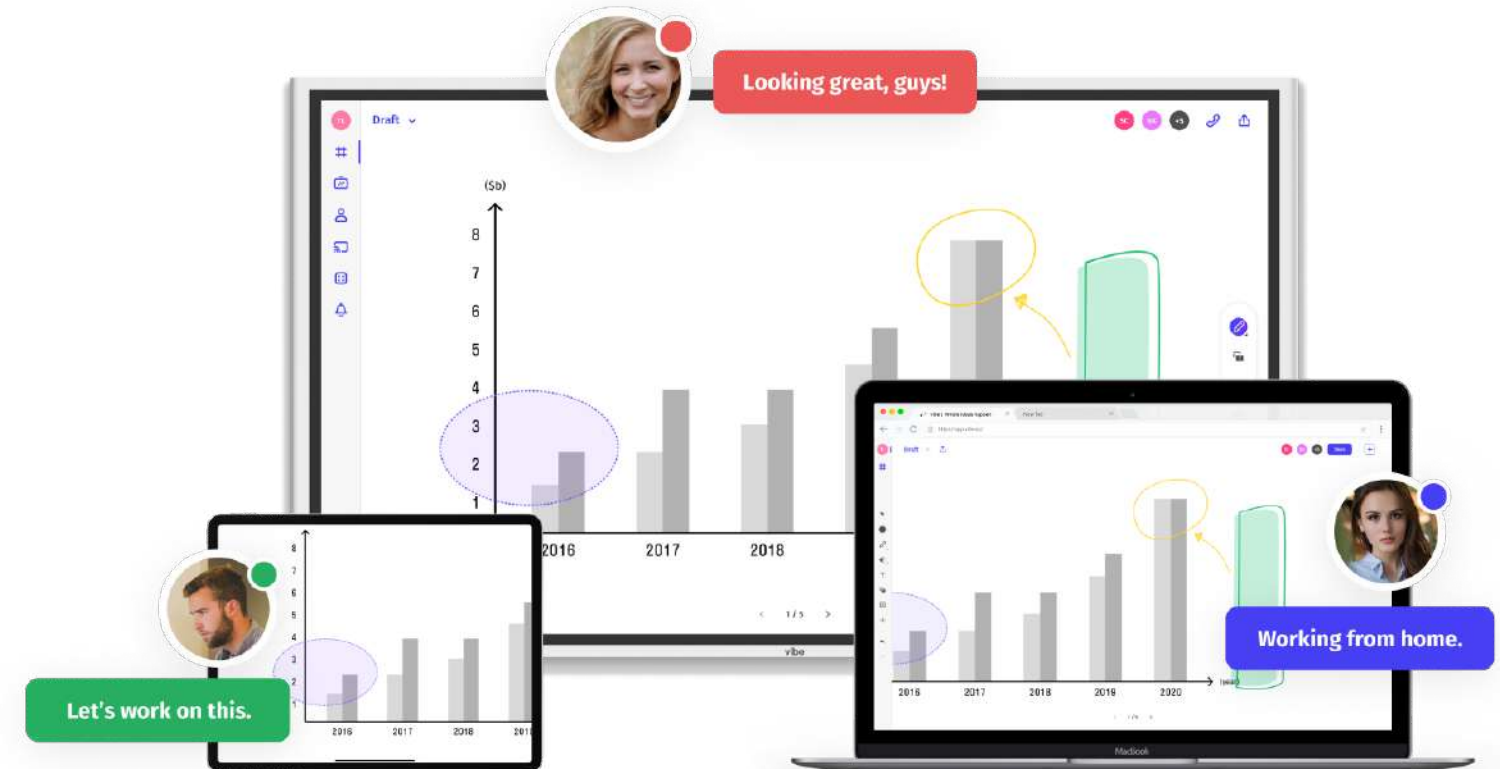
post-meeting. Team members can jump right in and continue to build on what's already there on the project board.

With the right mindset, proven strategies, and innovative tech, your remote team can find success. If you'd like to learn more about how Vibe can help, visit us at **vibe.us**.

Talk to an expert?

https://vibe.us

Book a Demo

v¹be

Please contact sales@vibe.us for any questions on your specific needs and requirements