

An abstract graphic on the right side of the page, composed of various shades of blue (from light to dark) in geometric, overlapping shapes that resemble a stylized, modern leaf or a dynamic, flowing form. It occupies the right half of the page, extending from the top to the bottom.

REMOTE WORKING WHITEPAPER

When You Need to Get Up To Speed Quickly

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Remote Working Whitepaper

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Welcome to the Remote Working Whitepaper. With an explosive growth of those working in the remote space, we are now seeing remote work take several forms. From entrepreneurs, to organizational remote work arrangements, from solopreneurs, to freelancers who travel the world and work from anywhere.

This white paper is grounded in our practical experience of leading remote and virtual teams globally since the early days of the 1990s. Since 2004, here at Potentials Realized part of our support has been to organizations large and small who were moving to remote work arrangement and who needed to virtualize their training and digitize their work functions. This whitepaper includes some of the key areas we provide coaching, mentoring, training and facilitation services around.

This whitepaper is geared for :

- Those that need to get up to speed quickly with remote work.
- Business leaders and owners who are shifting their work to the remote space.
- Professionals of all kinds who want to know where they can get started

This whitepaper provides a high-level look at some of the major components of remote work today. For more on this topic, we hope you will listen into the discussions at the Remote Pathways Podcast or visit the 52 Weeks of Remote Work series at the Remote Pathways blog. You'll find both at <https://www.RemotePathways.com>.



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"Technology now allows people to connect anytime, anywhere, to anyone in the world, from almost any device. This is dramatically changing the way people work, facilitating 24/7 collaboration with colleagues who are dispersed across time zones, countries, and continents."

Michael Dell, Dell

Context and Benefits of Remote Work

➡ Research by Flexjobs found a significant increase in those working remotely by 159% from 2005 to 2019. No surprise with the advent of technologies the last decade has ushered in. Think about the Blackberry, Video Conferencing, the iPad, tablets, Zoom and other technologies. Many of these started surfacing around 2005 or later.

The shift to remote work and virtual conversations is important for many reasons. Here are some of the benefits for employees, leaders and business owners I outline in Effective Virtual Conversations:

The move to just in time or real time processes

Time Processes- We live in an era of immediate gratification. Recent research points to the "Uber Effect", which is the ability to acquire anything real-time or just-in-time. This is changing the landscape of what is seen as effective in the learning space by professionals. Learning and other professionals are asking, "If I need it now, why shouldn't I be able to get it or access it right away?". On-demand and mobile platforms offer this real-time learning. Internet-based work allows for us to connect and work real-time, no longer necessitating long travel or delays in our collaborative spaces.

Time Efficiency

Virtual approaches provide many benefits in terms of time and budget. They provide a reduction in the amount of time people need to spend away from the office to engage in learning. Why travel if you don't have to?

Reduction of the Carbon Footprint (Eco-friendliness)

➡ Britain's Open University found that e-learning consumes 29% less energy than traditional courses. They found that the amount of CO2 emissions (per student) is also reduced by up to 85%.

Bringing Expertise Together

Virtual conversations and learning allow you to collaborate and learn from the best across time differences. These peer partnerships span geographic boundaries, changing the way we see the world, how we share information, and what we create.

Bringing Peers Together from a Wider Cross Section

The virtual space allows us to connect people from around the world with similar passions. With Zoom and other video-streaming meeting services, virtual meetings sometimes feel as if we are across the table from each other in terms of our ability to see each other and engage in real-time conversation.

Learning On the Go

With the advent of mobile technologies, smart devices being conversations and learning to us immediately – from the office to commuting, our phones have created a new window to the conversation and learning ecosystem.

Think about how your work space has changed in the last decade and how your work style has changed.

Remote work is being turned to by organizations of all sizes. From Solopreneur running a one-person show who want the flexibility and ability to scale their organization across borders by leveraging global talent and collaborators, to large organizations who have recognized that incorporating more virtual work may be of benefit and an appeal to the work force.

Remote work is not a one size fits all, nor is there just one type of remote worker. The next section introduces the Digital Dozen of the Remote Pathways series: twelve different types of remote workers.

Here are some other stats to think about:

↳ Softchoice's study the "Death of the Desk Job" found through their survey that:

- 62% of employees believe they are more productive working outside the office.
- 61% of employees prefer working the equivalent of an eight-hour workday broken up over a longer day, rather than in a single 9-5 block.
- 57% of employees work on personal and or sick days.
- 44% of employees worked on their last vacation.
- 24% of organizations have set clear policies and expectations around appropriate work activities after business hours.
- 74% of North American employees would quit their job for one that allows them to work remotely more often.
- 70% would quit in favour of a position that offers increased flexibility.

↳ Lister estimates that "by 2025, some 70 percent of the workforce will work remotely at least five days a month."

From flexibility to autonomy there are a lot of reasons why remote and virtual work is popular.

Some of the more common benefits employees see.

- Reducing the cost of travel.
- Fostering crosssectoral and crossfunctional learning.
- Saving time.
- Reducing ecological footprint.
- Harnessing the best of global talent.
- Reducing the time to commute.

Pitfalls to Remote Work

As more people and organizations turn to remote work conditions, it is important to note some of the pitfalls. It can be useful to consider what will help and hinder your remote work experience, especially given that most people are “on their own”. Consider what you might want to mitigate or minimize these pitfalls or shift your perspective.

In the [↪ Teams365 blog post #2080](#) I explored these four remote work pitfalls :

#1 A belief that “I can do it all by myself”

Remote work does not mean operating in a vacuum. In fact, collaboration skills are needed at a higher level by remote workers. Take time to consider WHO you need to collaborate with regularly and make a point of setting up virtual meetings and/or remote work sessions.

#2 Unclear expectations

Creating shared expectations is key to remote work success. Expectations needs to be co-created or created together. Expectations can focus on large and small issues including:

- Hours of work
- Level of connection with the office, the team, etc.
- Device use – personal and work
- Security and confidentiality around files and materials
- Boundaries

What are the expectations you need to clarify more fully?

#3 Thinking it can all be remote

When I was a remote team leader, one of the best investments for my team was an annual face-to-face meeting. I supported professionals across multiple countries, and while there was expense involved, bringing people together once a year or every 18 months for a multi-day working set of meetings was invaluable. The team appreciated the opportunity to connect with others who worked in other projects and countries, and we made use of every moment from dusk to dawn in formal and informal team activities. The investment paid off immensely and was not difficult to organize given the high level of engagement of the team.

#4 Micro-managing, not micro-monitoring

One of the greatest pitfalls is trying to “control” or micro-manage a remote team. High levels of trust are required in the remote workspace. As a former colleague of mine used to say “always micro-monitor, not micro-manage”.

Micro-monitoring means that you keep an eye on the end results, while allowing people to do their work in the best way they can. Micro-monitoring involves creating solid goals and clear measures of success, while monitoring these end results. It means checking in regularly to trouble shoot, explore resources, give feedback and iterate.

What does micro-monitoring mean in your context? How can that help you as a team have the space and means to excel?

Remote, Virtual or Mobile?

We often use the terms remote, virtual and mobile interchangeably. What do the terms mean?

Remote is usually used in the context of the CONNECTION of the person to the rest of the team or organization. If my business does have a physical presence, I am working remote when I am not onsite at the Headquarters or main office. I may also be working MOBILE at that same time, given that my work is taking me from one location to another, and I am connecting in while on the move.

Now some organizations are virtual in nature. They do not have a physical presence. Companies like Zapier consist of a web of different virtual workers. There is no "brick and mortar" presence of virtual businesses.

Teams may be called virtual or remote teams. Most things are similar whether I am part of a remote or virtual team. If I am part of a remote team, I may go into the office a few days a week or month. If I am part of a virtual team however there may be no main office I can report back into. This means that our culture and practices need to be very strong and clear, as they aren't necessarily visible like a physical office may be.

Who's working in the Remote Space? The Digital Dozen

There are a wide variety of professionals working in the remote space. In my work and writing, I term these the Digital Dozen™. Over the last three decades, I have had experience leading, training and coaching all these different types of remote workers. Move Let's look at twelve of the most common professionals in today's digital landscape:



01 Ned – New Remote Worker

Today an increasing number of people are moving to the remote space, like Ned, our avatar who can be found on the far right of the line up.

The new remote worker is learning the ropes. Just as we say in the in-person realm that it takes 90 days to learn a new role, the same holds true for new remote workers. This is where my upcoming publication – the First 90 Days for New Remote Workers comes in. We all have a day 1 regardless of role and all types of workers will benefit from strategic focus over each of the days.

New remote workers will benefit by learning from other's successes, processes and experience. Hopefully they are curious how to make remote work, work for them.

Their support needs are practical and tactical – HOW do I do things? WHERE do I go? WHO should I speak to? Think about how you can support new staff in these areas.

They may want to work autonomously and get things done and they may also want to connect with others.

Consider a mentor, peer partners and other supports in these first few days. Make sure expectations are clear and introductions are made. What feedback processes are you setting up?

How to Support New Remote Workers Like Ned:

Provide clarity: Roles, Goals, Expectations, Where to Go, HOW to do things

Give direction on tasks and be clear on the visible success measures. Take time to have them reflect and share with you what they have heard.

Check in regularly and be sure to “micro-monitor, not micro-manage”. Provide clarity about the tangible end results and success measures they are working to. Be specific about performance measures and provide examples of what's needed.

Virtual skills required: Work with them to identify what's new. It may be relationship building in the remote space or other.

02 Jo – Virtual Team Leader

Masterful virtual team leaders have embraced a paradigm of empowering the team to do their best work. Virtual team leaders realize quickly that influence and coaching skills are two of important tools in their toolkit. They can fluidly work across time zones, cultures, and differences.

Virtual team leaders excel when they develop excellent skills in troubleshooting, listening and coaching. They are also great at building trust and connection, and relationship building, with their team and across their team and the silos of an organization.

Early research has shown that some of the best remote team leaders have seen remote work well- modelled and have learned the skills as they go.

They usually play a Host and Liaison function including connecting people to the people, resources and ideas they need to do their work.

How to Support Virtual or Remote Team Leaders like Jo:

Provide thinking time and time to get things done.

Help them explore boundaries and what will keep them at their prime given that they are likely to be supporting team members across distance and time zones. A blurring of work and life can sometimes occur.

Virtual skills required: Virtual Team Leaders thrive when they are well developed in most skill areas, particularly influence, relationship building, coaching, project management, design etc.

03 Mel – Coach

The industry of professional coaching is stepping into its third decade of existence. Coaches have usually operated in a virtual and remote space with their clients. Coaches partner with their clients (who could be an individual, group or team) to support them to accelerate their progress to their goals, as well as deepen awareness around what's working and what's not. They may support clients from the corporate, voluntary sector and entrepreneurial arenas.

Coaches are typically great listeners and accountability partners, holding a focus on those important things you say you "will do". The coaching conversation usually focuses on ACTION and AWARENESS.

How to Support Professional Coaches like Mel:

Coaches love ongoing learning.

Coaches are usually very collaborative and are hungry for connection with peers.

Provide them with the tools, resources and space to have the conversations they need. What can you do to provide that perk?

Provide them with connection to others, connection to meaning, and space to speak as well. Self-care is important for coaches to undertake given that they are listening to others and empathizing.

Virtual skills needed: Coaches will bring extremely well-developed communication skills, and usually high levels of self-awareness. They may struggle in some of the more technical skills in business development including building a sustainable business, including a focus on systems and marketing. Look at Wheel of Small Business.

04 Serge – Serial Entrepreneur

Serge is a serial remotepreneur. He's built and sold lots of different businesses. He is a focused visionary and team developer. He is adept at building relationships. He embraces risk and uncertainty better than most.

Serge is great at sales, is focused, driven, and very fluid in moving across the digital workspace. It's likely that his virtual relationship skills are very well honed.

How to Support Serial Entrepreneurs like Serge:

Let them get their best work done – minimize interruptions, create a stimulating environment.

Help them focus on relationship building and influence.

Provide a thinking and learning space that can also blend opportunities to connect, brainstorm, experiment, get into action, and apply.

Mentoring may be of interest to remotepreneurs at all stages of their careers.

Virtual Skills: There's always a next level with all these skills including small business and entrepreneurial skills like design, strategic thinking.

05 Sujit – Project Manager

Project managers exist across most disciplines. They are typically an extraordinary organizer of people, resources, time and scope.

Project managers usually know that key success factors involve building relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

Project managers will bring, or want to develop skills in project planning, evaluation and assessment.

How to Support Project Managers like Sujit:

Provide ongoing learning, feedback, mentoring opportunities.

Virtual Skills: Could be around project management, communication, influence, and/or coaching.

06 Sally – Sales Professionals

Sales professionals were some of the earliest mobile workers. This group is one of the original mobile “on the road” digital natives. Think about the size of your first mobile phone. Could it fit in your pocket? Maybe not!

Sally, our avatar of Remote Pathways is a relationship diva, quick to build relationships and zoom into who the other person is, what's important for them to hear and what their preferences are.

Sales professionals are typically extraordinary communicators and time managers. They are fast on their feet. Communication skills are highly developed as are their organizational and CRM skills. They need to be able to access people and information on the fly, at any given time, to have a better conversation.

How to Support Sales Professionals like Sally:

In the virtual realm, Sally can benefit from continued support on accelerating her skills in "people reading", presentations and communication, along with how to leverage the CRM systems which are being used.

Additional skills may include influence, relationship building, coaching (including asking questions), project management.

07 Mo – Creative Solopreneur (Virtual Business)

Mo is a creative solopreneur. What's a solopreneur you ask? A one-person business. Just like Paul Jarvis writes in his 2019 book - *Company of One: Why Staying Small Is the Next Big Thing for Business*- many small businesses are opting to remain a small business of one, rather than build out a larger entity. Mo, our avatar, is a Jill of all trades, good at doing a lot of different things.

Solopreneurs are likely to be able to work with a variety of freelancers and other collaborators to help scale the business.

How to Support Solopreneurs like Mo:

Help them with project planning and execution. This may involve support around time management, delegation and learning how to build and lead their own team (full time, project supports and/or sub-contractors).

Virtual Skills:As a solopreneur and one person show, virtual skills in general need to be well developed, particularly Marketing, Relationship Building, Solopreneur Skills – found in the Wheel of Small Business.

08 Jane – Virtual Facilitator

Virtual facilitators may be working with teams across the world on their development and may also be focusing on educating others about this approach. In general, they are a gracious host and an excellent time manager.

Exceptional skills in growing trust and connection in the virtual space.

Good coach.

Comfortable navigating different types of technology.

How to Support Virtual Facilitators like Jane:

Provide training for their ongoing learning, especially in the area of the different technologies available. Provide support for time management, working across differences, and intercultural learning opportunities.

Virtual Skills: Virtual facilitators are all about "making things easy" in the remote space and with this in mind will benefit from enhanced skills in presentation and learning design, relationship building, coaching, project management, and relationship management, as well as "reading the room".

09 Malcolm – The Mentor

Mentors are seasoned veterans of today's workplace. Mentors help to navigate the unseen, and unspoken, waters of business. They can provide deep insights around how things are done and how to get there, based on their OWN experience.

It's not only more experienced professionals who provide mentoring. Junior mentors can provide mentoring for their seniors in what's commonly known as "Reverse Mentoring". Learning about technology and newer business practices. Research shows that mentors often learn as much as proteges do.

Mentoring is a low cost, focused conversation. Proteges or mentees (those being mentored) benefit from lots of stories about "how we once did it!"

For more on this topic check out the Mentoring Roadmap <https://www.MentorRoadMap.com>

How to Support Virtual Mentors like Malcolm:

Provide them with ongoing learning opportunities, providing them with tools and a process for mentoring. The mentee/protégé will also benefit if they have access to the same tools.

Virtual Skills: There are several skills which enhance a mentoring relationship including relationship building, listening, questioning, building trust and rapport across distance. Mentors may benefit from support around the technology available to leverage for the conversations.

10 Alex – Working from Anywhere

A growing number of professionals, like Alex, Work from Anywhere. That "anywhere" could be the local co-working space down the road, in the sky or on a plane. Some in the WFA crew are Digital Nomads and may fund their travels via freelance work.

Those who WFA are typically:

- Self-motivated
- Love to learn!
- Know that systems are the key to keeping things moving and organized and streamlined so that work and projects don't "take over" everything
- Focused but distractions still take a toll!

How to Support People like Alex:

Provide resourcing, time, space, and introductions to others.

Equip with virtual skills including Influence, time management, how to build and leverage matrix relationships (more on this later).

11 Victor – Voluntary Sector Remote Worker

Victor is a voluntary sector remote worker. Supporting volunteers, Victor was drawn to the service-based mandate of the organization he is attached to. He brings a big heart and is passionate about the work he does.

With limited fiscal resources, and always an eye on efficiency and scale, as a remote professional he has learned to be a “Jack of all trades”. He is well versed in leveraging talent, even half a world away, and can be a great resource in understanding how to work effectively across distance and differences.

Wants to create significant impact through his work and is often drawn by mandate, vision and impact.

How to Support Virtual Voluntary Sector Professionals like Victor:

Access to mentoring, coaching, resourcing, liaison with the people and things they need to expand their work.

Virtual Skills: Voluntary sector professionals can benefit from relationship building, coaching, project management, and how to... for example, do more than the main functions of their work.

12 Sam – Selling Her Start-Up

There is also an entire category of professionals who grow their start up and scale it to a point of selling. Our avatar Sam is selling her start-up. She is a savvy entrepreneur and has the metrics down. She is well connected to the people, numbers and places.

All about profitability, possibility and passion! She is visionary and “practical, tactical”.

How to Support Those Who Are Selling Their Businesses like Sam:

Highly successful remote workers and leaders need support too! Areas they may need support in include creating a vision for what's next for them and their career, renewal issues, relationship building and time management.

Virtual Skills: Taking it to the next level!

In addition to the 12 Digital Dozen there are two other types of remote workers that you may find along the remote road– the Digital Nomad and those who in general Work From Home. Those that Work From Home may not consider themselves Remote Workers.

And the Digital Dozen is joined by two others:

13 Darren – Digital Nomad

Digital Nomads is a term to describe professionals who connect in from different locations. Like a nomad they may be moving from place to place and often use freelance revenue as a fund for their travel.

Our Digital Nomad Darren pops up all over the world and “Works to Live!”. Digital nomads are often very comfortable in uncertainty, don't need a high level of structure, and flexibility may be their second name!

How to support Digital Natives like Darren:

Getting things done, systems, learning on the fly, working across differences, cross-cultural skills, insights and knowledge.

Virtual Skills: Could be anything! Relationship building, getting things done. etc.

14 Harry – Work From Home

Another category of remote workers which are cross-sectoral are those who WFH – Work From Home. According to [Global Workplace Analytics](#), 4.7 Million in the US work from home at least half of the time . In Canada, a 2017 Regus study found that 47 % of Canadians work outside of the office, with 37% of those surveyed who reported that work from home . This person may be attached to a large organization like Alex, or like Mo, are a one-person show.

How to Support Those Who Work From Home like Harry:

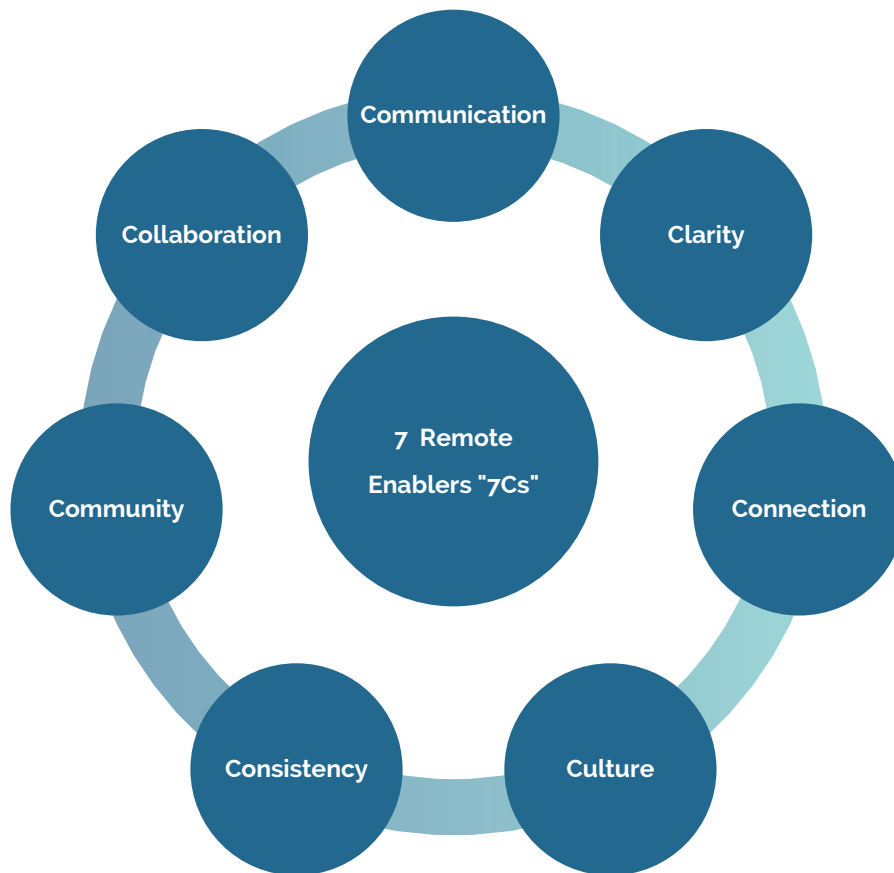
Support them around getting things done, setting up systems, creating more intentional boundaries between work and life, as well as support for productivity.

Virtual Skills: All of the virtual skills.



What's different in the remote space?

Remote teams operate across distance, time and culture. This usually requires enhanced skills in communication, boundaries, clarifying assumptions and being able to navigate the diverse preferences, cultures and ways of working of a global team . What is not clear or visible can become a challenge or pitfall for a remote team.



What ingredients enable exceptional remote work? I like to call these the 7Cs which anchor exceptional remote work – Communication, Clarity, Connection, Culture, Consistency, Community, and Collaboration.

Communication is likely to take place along different channels, and at different times of day. The communication realm of the remote space may include phone, text, instant messaging, email, video streaming calls, and messaging across multiple apps like Slack and Trello.

The challenge with communication is that is often has no context -we don't see "what's beyond the screen". Many times, we don't have the visual cues that tend to make up the majority of regular communication messages.

On top of this, communication can vary across both geographic culture (some cultures are more direct than others), and industry culture.

Finally, we have our own individual preferences to communication. As a Gen Xer, I may prefer to have communication bundled and emailed to me, rather than up in the Cloud. Taking time to understand each team member's focus and preferences is critical to remote work. Conflict may emerge for a variety of factors including different styles, lack of clarity, misunderstanding or interpreting instructions differently.

Connection with others helps remote work and includes connection to others inside and outside the team and understanding their work. Remote team members are likely to be part of matrix relationships, where they report to, and are part of, multiple teams. Matrix relationships offer another layer of complexity and opportunity in this work. Connection also means understanding how our work fits into the bigger picture, as well as fits into the bigger context of others work. Given the isolated nature of remote work, proactively focusing on connection is important. Take a look at the Remote Working Myths or more on this.

What can you do to create more connection across the team? Beyond the team?

Clarity is one of the most important enablers. This involves clarity of focus, clarity of priorities, clarity of expectations, clarity of roles and responsibilities. In the remote space, we need to make things EXPLICIT, and be regularly exploring our ASSUMPTIONS.

What clarity is needed for team members to do their best work?

Team culture becomes even more pronounced or diluted in the remote space, so a focus on this can be really important, especially when people are part of multiple teams. Culture is "how we do things here".

Culture encompasses both visible (behaviors, language, artefact) and invisible manifestations (norms, values, basic assumptions or beliefs)." – Rosinski, 2003, p 20.

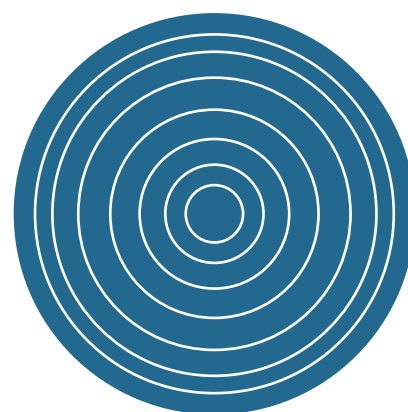
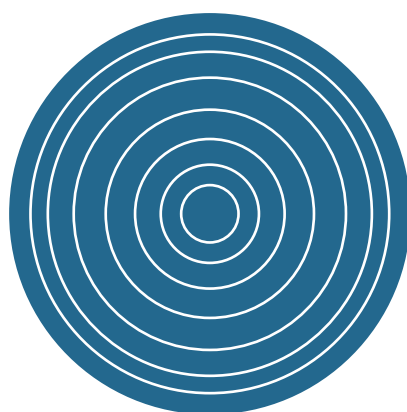
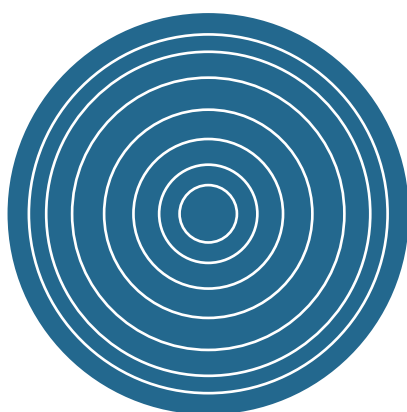
In shaping a culture there are the things we can see and help to define us (our taglines or the way we start meetings) and there are things that we don't see. Team culture can remain very diffuse and not clear in the remote space. Taking efforts to clarify and intentionally shaping what team culture is, and how we do things, becomes paramount for remote team performance.

Consistency is also key when we are dispersed or operating in different locations. It's consistency of messaging, practices, and the way we do things. For example, every Monday we meet at 7:30 amET, regardless of how many people can attend live.

Community Remote Workers are hungry for connection and community. What are you doing to build a sense of connection and identity across your team or organization? Community can range from boosting communication across internal social platforms to interactive virtual lunch and learns.

Collaboration Collaboration is an essential skill set when we work remote. As you'll see in the remote work myth of "no person is an island", we still need to place an emphasis on relationships. Who do you need to collaborate with in order to get things done? What can you do to collaborate better? Where are those collaboration windows and requirements?

Connection Beyond community, how are we connected? What are the process pieces which help us do our best work? What type of communication exists? What helps bring people together on a regular basis both formally, and informally? Across a team and between teams?



What's needed for success in the remote workspace?

Six things remote workers need

As teams move to a mobile, distributed or remote work force, what do people need? Whether it's because the talent pool is dispersed, health issues are impacting movement, or commute times are pressurizing employees, it's important to get the shift to working remote right. How can we set out teams up for success.

Six things remote workers will need to do their best work are:

1. Clarity regarding reporting relationships. Who are they to report to on what issues? When is reporting required? If matrix reporting relationships exist, what do they report to whom? What issues need to be co-reported?
2. Clarity regarding expectations regarding working – hours, approaches, breaks, how to log and share work etc.
3. The technology and ability to connect with others in the team and across the organization. Working remote can be a lonely endeavor and just as social time is important for face-to-face teams, so is face-to-face for virtual team.
4. Regular check ins and feedback. Regular check-ins and feedback may revolve around the questions:
 1. How's it going?
 2. What's working? What's not?
 3. What support do you need?
 4. What are your current priorities?
 5. What resources do you need in order to get the results you need?
5. Platforms so they can see each other and connect with their team. This could include regular virtual potlucks where the team actually connects for a meal from each of their locations. It could also include face-to-face time – quarterly or on a regular basis.
6. Clarity regarding how to flag issues: What issues to raise and when? Who should they be flagging issues to? When is the team leader available and how?

What other elements do you see as essential for new virtual teams to hit the ground running?

Making the Shift to Working Remote

Making Remote Work, Work For You

Whether it's "part of the plan" or it is a larger context issue (due to health or immigration), making the shift to working remote is a reality for many in the workforce.

The shift to working remote may "feel" like a big shift. Bigger than it may appear at first. Remember to keep the 7 Cs in mind – clarity, communication, connection, culture, collaboration, community and consistency!

Three practical focus areas to keep an eye on if you are moving from an in-person workplace to a remote workspace :

1. Find a dedicated place to work. Having a comfortable, secure, and efficient workplace is critical for remote work. What is the dedicated space you have? Consider lighting, layout, comfort. What needs adjustment? Depending on the type of work you do it may be a standalone desk or table, with access to internet and/or phone. Consider if you need doors, a filing cabinet that locks, and/or other things to do your work. It can be tempting to spread everything out, but boundaries in remote work arrangements helps you to create balance. Consider what space will be dedicated to working, and what you want to put away at the end of the day.

2. Consider what pieces of work are done best remote, and what you will need to be able to access. It's important to have everything at hand in order to do your work. What needs to be accessible remotely on Dropbox, via a VPN or other? How will you keep documents secure?

3. Set up a routine that works for you, and those around you. Focus, structure and routines are just as important in the remote workplace. Consider what is going to be the best routine for you in terms of start and stop times, breaks etc. Be firm with your time and boundaries as you are working! The blurring of work-life is often a bi-product of the remote work lifestyle.

What routines are going to create a good balance of structure and flexibility? What boundaries do you need to employ?

4. Set regular office hours, and break times too. Just as in any office, it's important to set regular office hours, and break times. We can only be productive for so long, so build in breaks as well as a start and an end. You may find that without the commute, you can start even earlier, and end earlier in the day, or perhaps you want to fit in a swim (as I do) or workout at lunchtime, to clear the cobwebs and create space for thinking.

5. Make a concerted effort to build relationships. Relationships are critical to success in the remote workplace. Schedule focused time on socializing and building relationships with your colleagues. Whether it's going into the office a couple of days a month, or dedicated virtual social time, take time to foster the relationships with your colleagues. Streaming technologies make it much easier to have a virtual "lunch time" or coffee get together, like you might in the workplace. What time will you set aside for outreach and building relationships in the short and medium term?

6. Be proactive in communication with your team and your boss. As in this last point, consider how you can best stay connected with your boss and the team. What updates are important to provide, what meetings do you want to schedule? You may find that you are more intentional and deliberative in your communication. This might actually set a nice precedent for others in the office as well!

What is going to help you be most productive and efficient when working remote? Essential Remote Work Kit :

These include:

- A dedicated workspace
- Access to power station/charging areas
- Printer
- Filing cabinet (which can be locked)
- Baseline office supplies - envelopes, pens, file folders, tape, stapler, scissors, labels, etc.
- Computer supplies - cords and chargers, surge protected power bars, extra ink
- A place where things can be put away when not working
- An ergonomically comfortable chair
- A headset and/or microphone for virtual calls
- A good built in webcam or external webcam
- Excellent (not just good) Internet connection
- Lots of storage!

What else do you think might be useful to have on hand?

What organizations can do to support the shift to remote work

A tipping point around remote work seems to be starting to occur - with more and more organizations realizing that a key part of the talent equation is more flexible working arrangements. With large and small companies embracing remote work arrangements, we are seeing very compelling research and data around how remote work can support employee engagement and productivity. Read about what Craig Thornton of Telus shared recently about how remote work benefits both employer and employee.

This was a focus of my 2017 writing in my book *Effective Virtual Conversations* and continues to be a significant part of the work I am focusing on with teams and organizations today.

As someone who has supported remote workers and teams for several decades now, it's great to see the tide turn again back to putting the flexibility in workers' hands.

We've looked at it from the employee's perspective. What about the macro, organizational level? What needs to happen?

Four things organizations will want to ensure they do are:

1. Specify expectations around work output and quality – What gets measured in any workspace should be the work output. Unfortunately, what often gets equated with success is how much time goes into making something happen. In the remote space, the success unit is OUTPUT.

Therefore, consider questions such as: What will success look like with work output for each employee? What are the expectations in terms of work, use of materials, security etc.?

2. Provide connection with the office and other team members. Collaboration is just as important – and sometimes even more so – in the remote space. Be sure to spend time focusing in on orienting people across the organization and provide virtual events so people can get together. Invest in remote team development. How are you connecting people formally and informally?

Beyond meetings, are there virtual events people can join – lunch and learns; co-working opportunities etc.?

3. Adopt the mantra that “out of sight does not mean out of mind”. One of the pitfalls with the transition to a remote work environment is that people can feel that they are not connected. Out of sight does not mean out of mind. Look at how you communicate and value connection and teamwork. Think about how communication and meetings can become more intentional and focused. Think about how you are bringing people together and connecting them with the communication which is needed.

4. Provide the tools and resources to make this happen – The transition to working remote arrangements takes time. It also requires a mind shift in many instances, along with practical tools, systems and resources at the organizational level. What tools and resources are needed? What changes in the way you work is required?



Five Digital Tools for Remote Workers

Tools in the remote space help us share, communicate and ensure consistency.

Five of my favorite tools which have made remote work, work, over the years for me and those I collaborate with are:

Dropbox - Invaluable for any kind of file sharing and transfer. Particularly useful if you have large documents, video files and any other media that you need to send for review, reading and use. Dropbox has free accounts and you can also upgrade to a Business Account. I haven't come close to my 1T of data storage with my Business Account, and I have found it being used by organizations of all sizes today.

Google Docs is another invaluable resource for working on documents collaboratively. As with other platforms consider the security needs of the projects/documents you are working on.

Zoom is another great virtual meeting space and allows for both dial in and video streaming access. The nice thing about Zoom is that it is very user friendly with respect to screen sharing and recording. Free accounts currently allow you to establish as many meetings as you would like for up to 40-45 minutes a time. Leveraging the power of breakouts and annotation transforms a meeting from being "talked at" to one which is like you are "in the room".

Skype - Skype is really a global telecommunications tool. Whether you are able to go with video-based calls, or voice only. Skype provides an excellent platform for 1-1 conversation as well as small group conversation. Group calls also allow for slide sharing. One caveat, with the different versions of Windows, the range of devices, and other platforms you may have access to the "full version" of skype or a "lighter" version which may not allow you to establish group calls, only join them.

And for those that work remote on a regular basis you may want to stake out some other **working locations** if your own location is not keeping you focused. On a monthly basis I head to a couple of different libraries for writing, research or even focused projects. Co-working spaces from We Work to Laft and smaller locations also exist.

I'm a very productive person generally and find that these locations give productivity a booster shot, perhaps because I limit my time there and always go with a project/task or two in mind. Finally, co-working spaces offer the benefit of being around others, a new perspective and having a dedicated space to work.

Core Skills for Any Remote Worker

What skills does a remote worker need for success? This section builds on the 9 skills I share in my 2017 book, *Effective Virtual Conversations*, listed in Figure 1

A core skill for remote workers of all kinds is relationship building. No person is an island. While we may feel disconnected, we our work is intimately connected with others. One of the most important areas to develop skills in, which may be an automatic, is in building relationships. When we are not "seeing" people naturally without a scheduled intended meeting, it can be important to become more proactive with outreach to internal and external stakeholders.

Building relationships	Building trust	Creating connection amongst the team
Providing clarity	Intentionality	Working across differences
Intercultural know-how	Innovation	Resilience/Agility

In addition to the skills listed throughout this whitepaper and in the figure, there are several additional core skills ranging from proactivity, to asking questions, listening, being curious, being intentional and working together.

Let's look at them in turn.

Proactivity – "Remote does not mean disconnected". We want to avoid the "out of sight equals out of mind" mindset. Being proactive when working remote or working with those who work remote is key. This means being proactive with communication, meetings, feedback, outreach, and relationship building. What can you do to be more proactive? What are the conversations you want to have this week?

Asking Questions – Assumptions can abound in the remote space. If we don't see, or know other people's context, we can fall into the trap of thinking we know or understand their world. Asking questions becomes a critical skill as we shift to building relationships in the remote space. Questions can clarify and expand our understanding. Consider starting questions with WHAT to create an opening for dialogue. Avoid questions that start with WHY if trust levels are low, as these will often put someone on the defensive.

Be Present – When you are in conversation, are you present? Are you multi-tasking? Research shows we can't do two heavily cognitive tasks at once, so if you are on a conference call, or having a conversation, just do one thing.

Listening – Listening skills are critical. In the remote space we often can't see each other. We lose the visual cues in many remote conversations, especially if we are not streaming. With email, tone may be lost – misinterpretations are common. With this in mind, the tone and choice of words take on even greater significance. What are you listening for? What's not being said? Even if we can see each other, what is happening outside of people's screen?

Be Curious – Ongoing learning is part of the reality of remote workspaces. Not knowing everything (or even 10% sometimes) is also part of the reality of remote work. What are you curious about? What do you want to know more about? What do you still have to learn? Adopting a learner's mindset or shifting into a growth mindset is key.

Be Intentional – Intentionality is also key skill set required. Part of designing good conversations may be to hold an intention or create a shared intention together. As a team you may make it a practice to set intentions, as well as clarify goals, measures and revisit your vision and your WHY (or purpose)

Work Together – What are your intersection points you and your colleagues or partners have together? Opportunities for collaboration? Spend some time getting to know each other (more on this topic next week), as well as spend some time designing your conversational touch points.

In the Spotlight

Communication in the Remote Space

Many of the skills we employ in the in-person world become augmented when we work remote, especially communication. Communication is critical in any work place context. As we shift to remote work, it become even more nuanced, with considerations around:

- What is the best way to communicate an issue which needs to be addressed by my colleague 12 hours ahead in terms of time, but who I will not cross paths with?
- What are my colleagues' preferences in terms of communication? Consider:
 - Do they like a lot of detail? Context? Just the briefest of information?
 - What is the channel of preference – Phone? Email? IM? Slack? Other?
 - If we are using different platforms, like Slack, how can I share more detail, context and background in the message I am addressing?
- What considerations and adaptations should I make given that English is not all our first working language?
- What's my request around this? Do I need a response? By a certain time? Is it open-ended? Be specific and detailed.

Given the volume of information coming at people it also can be important to reinforce key messages through multiple communication touch points. Just saying an important message once is not enough. Consider reinforcing messages in different ways. For example, via email, talked about in the team meeting, shared via video message etc.

Finally, check for understanding. In one-on-ones, via email and/or chat, what do people understand? What have they heard from the messaging? Have them rephrase or feed back to you what their understanding is. What we intend to communicate is not always what is heard.

Communication is a cornerstone of high performance. Clear communication across distance, time and culture can be even more complex.

What are you doing to ensure that your communication is the best suited for the context and message? What are you doing to ensure that it's understood as it is intended?

Remote Working Myths

There are several myths to remote work. We explore more than half a dozen at the Teams365 blog at Potentials Realized including:

- Everyone knows what I am doing
- They need it now
- Time spent equals productivity
- I can't delegate
- I do it all alone
- I can multi-task
- The best way to present is to talk at people
- I can't engage people in a discussion virtually

Let's at some of these more in-depth.

Remote Working Myth - No person is an island - I need to do it all alone!

A prevalent remote working myth is "I do it all alone". The work of a remote worker can feel isolating and like we are in a vacuum. Even if we are a solopreneur, it's unlikely that we are working alone.

In fact, collaboration needs to be at a higher level for remote workers. We may need to be more proactive in reaching out to meet our colleagues and seek out knowledge about where things overlap in our work. This knowledge is critical for scaling our work as remote workers.

Here's a quick exercise to try:

Think about the current projects you are working on. What tasks do you need to collaborate with others? Where could collaboration benefit the project?

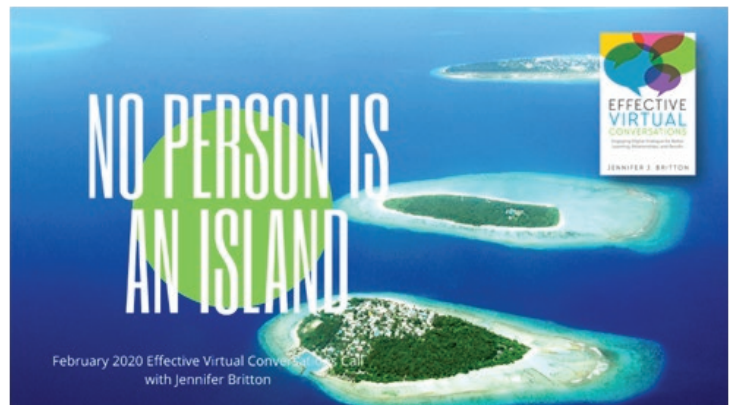
Make a list of all the people you would like to get to know better, in service to the projects you have on the go. Earmark time every week to meet with one or two people.

Another more team-oriented way to figure out how you don't need to do it alone is to dedicate 5-10 minutes of a team meeting into finding the common links between projects. This can be supplemented by what you are including in Slack or in other areas.

Who do you want to reach out to today?

Remote Working Myth: Out of Sight = Out of Mind

There is a belief that "out of sight, equals out of mind". Proactivity is key in the remote space.



In fact, both research and practice have shown the need for more consistent and frequent communication to keep things moving on remote teams.

This can be accomplished via several avenues including:

Creating opportunities for peers to connect on a regular basis. This might include more formal activities, or it might include more informal events like virtual potlucks or co-working sessions. In a remote team, focus should be made on providing regular peer connections.

Consistent meeting times for the team. It can be a very slippery slope when remote teams try to find a time when everyone is available. This may never happen! Get into the practice of establishing a set time so everyone can start adjusting their schedule to meet this. For those that are not there, have peer partners provide an update and/or check in.

Put attention on team development for the team. It's often assumed that remote teams don't need a focus, however, if we treat everyone as separate bubbles, it's hard for people to feel part of a bigger entity. Research in the last few years has found that only about 1 in 4 remote teams put a focus on team development. Going back to the basics around team effectiveness, teamwork skills and building a team identity can go a long way. AND it can be done virtually as well!

Build a strong team identity. Team culture is key in remote team success. It helps with connection and alignment. Our identity includes WHO we are, and HOW we do things. It will include rituals and practices we engage in (for example, always meeting on the first Thursday for a virtual pot-luck, taglines and other images that share who we are).

Ensuring regular one-on-ones with staff. [Be sure to check out past Teams365 blog posts for more on hosting 1-1 calls, and questions you might ask.](#)

What's going to support your team from not feeling "out of sight and mind"?

Remote Working Myth: Boundaries Aren't Important

Another common myth is that "boundaries aren't important" and that remote work is always flexible.

One of the main challenges of remote work is that we are usually pulled in a number of different directions by people who can't see what we are working on. Not knowing the context can provide a lack of clarity around priorities and workflow. At the same time, we may also want to accommodate all requests and say yes, rather than discerning what is a priority across multiple stakeholders.

On another level, boundaries can become blurred in our home/work life, especially if we are working from home and have not set up a dedicated area for work. Check out the section, "setting yourself up for success in the remote space", and make sure you have what you need.

Consider the different boundaries that are important in your work, this might include:

- Boundaries between different tasks and projects you are working on
- Boundaries between the different teams you are part of
- Boundaries between your working hours and non-working hours
- Boundaries between when you are ON and OFF
- Boundaries between priorities
- Boundaries between your work and home space

What do you notice as you explore these boundaries? What conversations do you want to have?

Remote Working Myth: It Needs to Take Longer

Working remote usually involves having a number of balls in the air at any given time. With that in mind, brevity is key, as is keeping projects moving along. Prioritization and communication around these priorities are crucial.

Another myth for remote work is "it needs to take longer". As you go about your work consider what you can do to create more focus, brevity and conciseness. Consider areas such as meetings, paperwork, and communication touchpoints.

Less is more in the world of the remote worker. What can be distilled down or made clearer?

Too much information may lead to a lack of understanding or different interpretations.

What are the sound bytes you want to make sure you communicate?



Conclusion

Listen into the Remote Pathways™ Podcast as we explore the people, pathways and processes of exceptional remote work.

For a variety of reasons, remote work is likely to be the future reality for many workers. What can you do at an individual and organizational level to avoid the pitfalls, myths and help your employees and teams thrive?

At Potentials Realized, we are dedicated to providing you with the resources, and conversations to focus on your best work in the remote space. Reach out to us to explore how we can support you with your remote leadership, teamwork and productivity.

About Potentials Realized and Jennifer Britton

As someone who has led teams in the virtual space for almost 30 years now, Jennifer know how much of a challenge AND opportunity it is. Please share these activities and resources with your entire team. Every team member in the virtual space is an important link towards success. What new insights have you had? What are you inspired to do now?


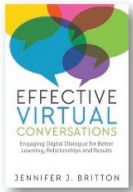
Here at Potentials Realized we offer supports for all kinds of teams and leaders, with specialized services for remote and virtual teams, through:

1. Consulting on remote work arrangements, leadership, virtual learning and virtual/remote teamwork;
2. Coaching for individuals, teams and groups;
3. Facilitation of Remote Team Days : half-day to multi-day sessions for teams to explore the results and relationships they want;
4. On-Demand Learning opportunities via the Teams365 teachable portal;
5. Co-hosting the Remote Pathways podcast which you will find at RemotePathways.com.

As an award-winning program design firm, founder Jennifer Britton is focused on providing a variety of learning supports for leaders, team members, and business owners - from individual, team and group coaching support, to books, publications and on-demand courses.

In the first 15 years of our business, we've supported thousands of professionals from many industries including financial services, public sectors, health care, sales, and education. Two of Jennifer books - Effective Group Coaching (2010, Wiley) and From One to Many: Best Practices for Team and Group Coaching (2013, Jossey-Bass) have been adopted as a required text by many coach training schools.

Since that time, Jennifer have gone on to publish three more books - Effective Virtual Conversations (2017), Coaching Business Builder Workbook and Planner (2018) and Plan Do Track Workbook and Planner for Virtual and Remote Professionals (2019). You'll find these last three on Amazon or at our Potentials Realized store at <https://www.PotentialsRealized.com>.

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	www.PotentialsRealized.com	Twitter: @jennbritton
	EffectiveVirtualConversations.com	Instagram @ jenn.britton
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