

eBook

Distributed hiring and remote working

The essential guide

greenhouse





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Introduction



Companies are increasingly expanding their distributed workforce models. As recently as one year ago, the [Greenhouse Workplace Intelligence Report](#) confirmed that employees were open to working remotely, and many companies confirmed that they'd started to make flexible work arrangements, part of attracting and retaining millennials and Gen Z.

At Greenhouse, working in distributed teams is already ingrained into our culture, but for many companies, becoming distributed is a significant shift. It's safe to say that making the transition from co-location to distributed can be challenging, especially at first.

Greenhouse is well-versed in supporting companies with longtime distributed working models, such as InVision, Webflow, Mozilla, Elastic and GitLab. Greenhouse empowers teams of all sizes to hire great talent, no matter where your colleagues sit.

We've set up a system that enables a structured hiring approach that makes the purpose and process clear for each interviewer and gives hiring managers the confidence that interviews are comprehensive and productive. This approach facilitates remote collaboration with a set of unique, automated notifications and tasks for each role on the hiring team to keep everyone on track.

Additionally, our partner ecosystem offers unique integrations with over 325 partner solutions that enable distributed teams to hire great talent without the need for in-person interaction. These integrated solutions include scheduling, testing, video conferencing and more to enhance a distributed hiring process.

Our goal with this eBook is to offer practical guidance to help you and your team adjust to hiring and working as a distributed company.

We'll be focusing on interviewing, hiring and onboarding, but you'll also find tips for communication, collaboration and company culture. Oh, and we also have a few fun tricks up our sleeves. Ready? Let's dive in.

Part 1

General tips for recruiters

Think about all the things recruiters typically do like sourcing, assessing, interviewing and communicating with candidates. When your team is distributed or you're working with distributed candidates, it's important to create and maintain the feeling of being in person.

At first glance, that may seem like a hurdle. Can you really have the same quality of interactions with candidates if you aren't meeting them face to face? But there are benefits to expanding your talent pool beyond one physical location. **Andreas Klinger**, Head of Remote at AngelList, says giving candidates flexibility with their location is a competitive advantage: "Remote teams almost have an unfair advantage in hiring. I regularly talk to San Francisco teams that lose candidates because other companies offer the opportunity to take a job, and then move to wherever they want to live and still have this international career. This has become more and more common."



Let's explore some valuable tactics for creating a positive experience for every candidate, no matter where they're located.

Reframing hiring with a distributed mindset

Start by outlining each step of the hiring process: how do candidates typically find and apply to jobs? At which stages are they interacting with recruiters, hiring managers and other employees?

Consider how you can transition any in-person interactions to virtual ones. For example, onsite in-person interviews can be conducted via Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype or another video conference tool.

Take-home assessments can still be done on a candidate's own time and submitted via email or other means.

There are plenty of technical solutions for interactive interviewing activities, such as whiteboarding for project managers, coding challenges for developers and virtual presentations for directors and executives.

| In-person activity | Remote alternative |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Coffee date | Virtual coffee date via Zoom or Hangouts |
| Coding challenge with developer | Remote coding challenge |
| Onsite interview with multiple people | Series of individual interviews or a group panel video interview |
| Campus recruiting events | Host Twitter chats or live events on Instagram, Facebook or YouTube |
| Office tours | Use videos and photos to showcase live events, conferences and team-bonding activities |

Assessing distributed candidates

When you know you're hiring someone who'll be working remotely some or all of the time, there are certain qualities to keep in mind. Here are a few steps we recommend taking.

Identify the required skills, qualities and experience that will help the new hire excel in that particular role at your company. Some common characteristics tied to successful distributed employees are self-motivation, trustworthiness, dependability, organization and good communication skills.

Your evaluation process for a remote job applicant begins with your first point of communication. Ask yourself: how quickly do they respond, whether it's a call or an email? Are they thorough and thoughtful in their replies, and how do they frame and deliver their own questions? Are they able to clearly set boundaries and communicate when they'll be unavailable?

When planning your interview scorecard, be sure to include questions that are specific to working among a distributed team.

Tips and tricks from our community

Here's how three Greenhouse customers plan and coordinate interviews with distributed teams and candidates.

For managing communication and collaboration, Ad Hoc's Director of Recruiting Elizabeth Hassel says, "We use Google Forms for managers to request opening a new job requisition. This signals our structured kick-off call where we learn about the position and team, and share a plan for the recruiter. We then set up a private Slack channel for those interviewing, recruiting and hiring (or leadership) on that job to ensure communication is smooth and consistent, and decisions and next steps are in a more public forum. This visibility means that we can let the team know about any roadblocks or challenges slowing down the interview process. We use Greenhouse scorecards after each interview to ensure we have actionable information."





Similarly, TaxJar's Lead Recruiter Elisa Campos relies on a number of tools to keep her team on the same page: "For recruiting, we depend on cloud-based tools for all communication about pipelines, meetings with hiring managers and interacting with anyone on the hiring team. This includes working in something like Slack, Basecamp or even Asana to list out tasks and information pertaining to what you are working on. This is visible for the rest of the team to see, and also ensures everyone is on the same page. We also use Airtable to keep track of our projects and job postings."

When it comes to assessing a candidate's aptitude for being a distributed employee, Darren Murph, Head of Remote at GitLab, says, "Ask for examples of scenarios where they worked to complete a project remotely, be it from a plane, hotel, conference, etc. Listen for their ability to tell a story. Remote employees need to be exceptional not just at communicating, but at thinking two questions ahead and proactively explaining with precision and detail."

Creating an inclusive hiring experience

Consider ways to make your job descriptions and website inclusive for distributed applicants:

Always mention whether a job can be performed by a distributed employee in the job description.

Share photos, videos and stories of people working from home on your career page.

Provide an FAQ about what it's like to be a distributed employee at your company.

Offer a stipend to help new employees purchase whatever they need to work comfortably and effectively from home.

Send distributed new hires an exclusive item as part of their welcome kit.

Showcase all the places your employees are currently based on a map or make note of distributed employees in your list of office locations.



Aptitude for or experience with distributed work

Sample questions and prompts you can use when conducting remote interviews:

Give me an example of a time you were able to be creative while working remotely or with distributed team members. What was exciting or difficult about it?

Tell me about an experience you had when you needed to rely on written communication to get your ideas across to your team.

Tell me about a time you had to be very strategic (or agile) in order to meet all your top priorities while working remotely on a team project.

How do you decide your working hours, especially if other team members are in a significantly different time zone from you?

How do you handle distractions and interruptions when working from home?

When have you worked remotely in the past and which strategies have you used to manage your time?

When have you been responsible for proactively communicating the status of a project?

Which technology and tools have you used to work remotely in the past (for file sharing, project management, communication, etc.)?

What work learnings or experience from your personal life could also be applied to remote work?

Be sure to cover:

Communication preferences

Prioritizing multiple projects and deadlines

Handling distractions and interruptions

Self-motivation/autonomy

Part 2

Video interviewing best practices

If your entire recruiting process is going digital, there's a good chance video interviewing will replace a large portion of your in-person interviews. After all, video is the medium that most closely approximates in-person exchanges (that is, of course, unless you're using actual virtual reality equipment – if that's the case, please get in touch to let us know how it's going!).

While video does feel a lot like talking to someone in real life, moving from in-person to video interviews will require some changes, both in mindset and behavior. Here are our tips for a seamless video interview process:

Share examples of effective video interviewing to help shift your company mindset. If you encounter resistance, remind your coworkers that video interviews are not only more cost-effective (reducing all the time and expense associated with travel), they also allow you to expand the reach of your search beyond one geographic region.

Allow candidates to book their interview slots using a tool like **Calendly**. That will save both you and the candidate a ton of time on back-and-forth email exchanges.

Make sure everyone is familiar with your software of choice as well as your expectations. If you want candidates to turn on their video, be sure to let them know ahead of time so they can mentally prepare and download the appropriate app so they feel comfortable and ready.

Automate your calendar's pre-interview reminders so you have enough time to stop whatever you're doing and mentally and physically prepare to shift into interview mode. You may need to experiment a bit to find the timeframe that works best for you, like 30 minutes or 15 minutes before the start time.



Test your technology. Make sure your camera and sound are set up properly, test your internet speed and silence other app notifications and your mobile phone. Interviewing is already nerve-racking enough for candidates without a symphony of dings and chimes interrupting their thought flow.

Ensure your location is conducive to conversation and as distraction-free as possible. Try to find a quiet corner with good lighting and sound. If you don't have a dedicated office and you're taking the call from home, kids or pets may come into the frame. Don't sweat it – acknowledge the interruption and take it in stride without letting it take over the conversation. We're all human, after all.

Prepare the right interview questions. Having a structured hiring approach ensures you ask all candidates the same questions and use the same rubric to assess their responses. It also prevents repetitive interviews with different team members. This is especially important since you might not have the time to do a quick sync with other interviewers as you might in person.

Leverage structure to drive efficiency. Using a hiring tool like Greenhouse can help promote a structured hiring process and centralize all recruiting efforts and information to make your team members' lives easier.

“We take video interviews seriously, as if we were meeting in person. We always remind ourselves that how we present ourselves on video, and the experience a candidate has, will be their first impression of our company.”

Elisa Campos

Lead Recruiter at TaxJar

How video interviewing can help add diversity to your workforce

Video interviewing isn't just a convenient tool for working with distributed candidates – it can also help you create a more inclusive hiring experience. Here are a few reasons why:

When using video interviewing software, everything is recorded and stored in one secure location. That makes it easier to review and limit the effects of any unconscious bias that may have occurred during the process. You can also generate reports to quickly identify trends in the hiring team's scoring and assessment of candidates.

The video component helps remove the geographical barriers that limit your recruitment efforts while ensuring more diverse people have access to your hiring process.

With video interviewing, candidates with disabilities don't have to worry about travel arrangements, allowing them to better focus on the interview and more accurately represent their skills.

Recorded video interviews can be repurposed as useful educational resources for your whole team to support evidence-based hiring decisions.



Questions to ask a remote candidate

Spark Hire is a simple and affordable video interviewing platform used by 4,000+ companies, and also happens to be a **Greenhouse Customer-Preferred Partner** and customer. Based on his extensive video interviewing experience, Spark Hire CEO Josh Tolan recommends the following questions when interviewing remote candidates to assess role fit and how they could add to the culture.

In what type of work environment are you most productive and happy?

How would past coworkers describe your work style?

What management style motivates you to do your best work?


When working on a team, what role are you most likely to play?

What were the positive/negative aspects of your previous job?



Greenhouse integration partners supporting distributed work

Video interviewing

AspiringMinds
Cammio
EasyHire
Entelo (formerly ConveyIQ)
Hireflix
HireVue
Interviewer.AI
Jobma
LaunchPad Recruits
Lindy
myInterview
RecRight
Retorio
Showcase
Spark Hire 
Talentcube
Talview
Vidcruiter
Wepow


Remote-specific job boards


FlexJobs
Remotive

Productivity tools with Greenhouse integration

Coda
Slack

Technical assessment partners

Aspiring Minds
CoderPad
CodeScreen
CodeSignal
Codility 
Correlation One

DevSkiller
DoSelect
Filtered
Geektastic
HackerEarth
HackerRank 
HireArci
Hired Assessments
Interview Mocha
InterviewBit
Qualified
Remote Interview
TestDome
Vervoe

Other assessment partners

Adaface
AdaptiLab
Affintus
AMCAT
Arctic Shores
Bryq
Cangrade
Central Test
ClassMarker
Correlation One
Criteria Corp
CSPA
Cut-e
Day100
Echovate
Empirical Hire
eSkill
Evalground (formerly Codeground)
FluentIQ
Fortay
Glider.ai
hackajob

Harver
Hire Smarter, Inc.
Humantelligence
InfoMart
Interview Mocha
InterviewBit Assessments
Journeyfront
McQuaig
Moonshot Insights
Objective Management Group
Optimize Hire
OutMatch
Pipplet
Plum
Pomello
QuantHub
Retorio
Saberr
Scoutible
SHL
SimpleCitizen
Skillist
SkillSurvey
Sokanu
StaffGeek
Talegent
Talytica
Tazio
Test Partnership
TestDome
The English Quiz
The Hire Talent
The Predictive Index
Traitify
TTI Success Insights
Vervoe
Willowy

 **Customer-Preferred Partner**

Part 3

How to run remote interactive interviews

Now that you've aced the basics of video interviewing, it's time to consider some of the more interactive interviews that may be a little more challenging to run remotely. Keep in mind that not all interviews are alike. Depending on the role in question, you may be trying to assess a candidate's coding skills or their presentation prowess, or just trying to get a more nuanced sense of their work style and personality.

Greenhouse's Director of Talent Acquisition Jacqui Maguire emphasizes the importance of having all the licenses you need for various tools. In some cases, you may even need multiple licenses. Work with your IT, procurement and legal teams to ensure you're squared away before you begin rolling out tools to the entire company.

Be sure to consider and prepare for the types of interactive interviews you're likely to have. We've outlined a few common types below.

Remote interviews for technical recruiting

Jacqui says, "For technical roles, such as software engineers, so much of their interview process is to see them code. For in-person developer interviews at Greenhouse, we set up paired coding stations side by side. That's exactly what we've replicated remotely, too: a virtual side-by-side session using video conferencing and online assessment platforms."

Knowing how to conceptually design the code and solve a problem is also important for software engineering roles. "On top of the coding that candidates showcase for us, we also conduct a virtual whiteboarding session to test their system design skills," says Katie DiCioccio, Technical Recruiting Manager at Greenhouse.



Candidates are able to access more virtual tools than ever before. “These days, there are a number of ways companies are helping candidates prep for an all-virtual interview process,” says Katie.

“While those in the tech space have been doing virtual interviews for a while, there are some ways in which these **remote interviews** could actually be viewed as more effective for programmers, especially in comparison to coding on a whiteboard (the standard for in-person interviews),” says Parker Phinney, Founder of **Interview Cake**, a study tool that preps software engineering candidates for programming interviews.

“A good technical interview should feel more like a **coworking session.**”

Parker Phinney
Founder of Interview Cake

“For example, in a virtual interview, the candidate gets to use their own computer, in their own space,” Parker continues. “They’re probably not using their usual coding environment (code isn’t usually written in a web browser), but tools like **CoderPad** have autocompletion and Vim/Emacs mode, so they can actually get quite close to the feel of their usual coding setup. And most importantly, they can run code as they go – a crucial part of debugging that simply isn’t possible on a whiteboard.”

And, of course, it helps to anticipate and prepare for technical difficulties. Parker says, “As with any video conferencing, the format can feel a bit awkward. There can be delays/lags, and it makes the candidate feel more like they’re giving a speech and less like they’re having a conversation.”

When the technology is working as expected, you can focus on creating a great candidate experience. Parker says, “A good technical interview should feel more like a coworking session. That puts less pressure on the candidate and gives a better signal to the interviewer about what it actually feels like to work with this person.”

Remote interviews for senior hires

Candidates for leadership and executive roles are traditionally asked to do presentations in front of a live audience. That in-person feel can be re-created in a virtual interview. “In many cases, where we’d previously asked for in-person presentations, we’re offering all-virtual options,” says Jacqui. “Especially for those executive- and director-level roles, there’s an inherent element of presentation to them. We make sure to take that into account before the interview process.”

Katie says, “Before a virtual interview, we offer candidates an opportunity to get into the video conference room and practice before they begin and others join. Greenhouse has invested in virtual tools and in distributed teams to enable this.”

Virtual coffee chats

When it comes to shared experiences and expressing company culture, all-virtual interviewing does have some drawbacks compared to being in person. But rather than focus on the challenges, focus on re-creating those in-person elements virtually.



“We’re used to taking candidates out to lunch or for a coffee chat when they’re in the office, so we want to make sure to connect them to the Greenhouse culture in other ways,” says Katie. “We adjust by checking in with candidates more often throughout the interview process and sending them additional content. Those actions help to leave an impression beyond what they may get from the virtual conversations they’re having with interviewers in their home offices.” Virtual interviews also result in time saved for other areas of the interview process.

“Having extra time in our schedule between interviews (changing conference rooms, for example) allows us to **give that time back to the candidate** in the form of a break or practice time before the next interview starts,” says Katie.

“We want to make sure each candidate feels connected to Greenhouse, our culture and our values – and part of that is showing that we’re rooting for their success.”

As always, it’s vital to approach every virtual interview, interactive or otherwise, with empathy. “Be flexible with the candidates. Be willing to meet them halfway,” says Jacqui. “With many interviews being held virtually, we always remind our interviewers that candidates may be juggling scheduling, personal and work challenges. It’s important to take that into account when evaluating their scorecards.”

Check out these tools to help make interviewing more interactive

Talent acquisition tools

Online assessment tools and tests become even more important in a distributed hiring model. In Greenhouse, we make it easy to build **take-home tests** into your interview plans and offer integrations with a variety of **testing solutions** that specialize in testing candidates for specific job functions, from sales to developers. For instance, our Customer-Preferred Partner **HackerRank** focuses on assessing developers.



Flexible candidate communication tools help bring your company culture and working environment to life for candidates. For example, **customizable candidate email templates**, including links and attachment capabilities, help you create a consistent and unified message. Candidates can get a good understanding of life at your company without physically coming to the office.

Notifications and task management tools like those provided by Greenhouse empower the distributed hiring model by streamlining the communication of hiring notifications and task management unique to hiring team roles. With well-defined roles and responsibilities, foundational workflows are configured with **job** and **offer** approval processes, **hiring team configuration** and **email templates**. These workflows facilitate distributed collaboration with a set of automated and unique **notifications** and tasks in the Greenhouse task management dashboard, via email and through our **Slack integration**. Teams can also leverage **@mentions** and **notes** on candidates to keep the hiring team updated.

Distributed interviewing tools

Comprehensive interview kits enable you to **create scorecards**, focus attributes and custom questions that make the purpose of each interview clear and engaging for interviewers and candidates alike. They also give hiring managers the confidence that interviews are comprehensive and productive, no matter where they are conducting interviews.

Video interviewing tools like those from Greenhouse provide options to ensure that these conversations are as effective as in-person discussions. That means using the right **video interviewing tools**, like our Customer-Preferred Partner **Spark Hire**, for your company.

Mobile options are especially helpful when there's a quick pivot to distributed hiring, as we know not everyone has the right technology in place at home. As such, **Greenhouse mobile** options are very useful. For instance, interviewers can fill out a scorecard on their phone in the **Greenhouse Recruiting app** during a video interview when they don't have another monitor in place.

Calendar syncing while remote is easier than ever with companies such as Calendly offering **free integrations** with Zoom and GoToMeeting. Having the flexibility to schedule with agility helps everyone stay more connected.



Creative and effective onboarding for remote employees

Creating a thoughtful experience for distributed candidates is critical, but what happens once you've extended an offer and they've agreed to join your team? It's just as important to take an intentional approach to onboarding your distributed new hires. Let's consider a few tips to guide this process.

Pre-boarding

As soon as a candidate signs your offer letter, your goal is to make them feel welcome and well informed. Make sure they understand what they need to do, what they need to know and who their point of contact is if they have any questions. Look for ways to show new hires how thrilled the team is about their decision to join. For example, you can ask anyone who interviewed the new hire to send an email congratulating them once the offer is accepted and ask all team members to send them a LinkedIn request.

There are also plenty of tools available – such as Greenhouse Onboarding – that can streamline the pre-boarding process. **Grace Leeker**, Total Rewards Manager at Greenhouse customer RXBAR, says, “We use Greenhouse Onboarding to be sure that no one gets forgotten. The feature that sends specific emails depending on the type of hire is incredibly helpful. We also love using the e-signature templates. We have the new hires sign everything they need on their own time instead of taking time to do it on the first day.”



Onboarding

New hire onboarding is one of the most critical stages in the employee experience: 90% of employees make the decision to stick around long-term within the first six months of employment. At the same time, many companies overemphasize the administrative aspects of onboarding (getting set up with payroll, taking care of tax forms and the like) rather than the more nuanced aspects of making new employees feel welcome and set up for success.

“We use Greenhouse Onboarding to be sure that **no one gets forgotten.**”

Grace Leeker
Total Rewards Manager at RXBAR

So it's no big surprise that one in three workers would rather go on an awkward first date than attend orientation or onboarding for a new job. For your remote, distributed, contract and part-time workers, it's even more important to foster a sense of belonging and engagement early on in their working relationship with your company. Here are a few tactics to incorporate when onboarding distributed employees.

Organize onsite (or online) visits

Set up an onsite visit for distributed employees' first week on the job to give them the opportunity to meet coworkers and attend training in

Hear more about effective company culture in this Talent Maker podcast

Featuring Claude Silver
Chief Heart Officer
VaynerMedia



person. If that isn't possible, consider how you can best replicate it in a virtual environment, like setting up Slack chats or Zoom virtual coffee meet-ups while sharing videos and virtual tours of the office.

Offer tool tutorials

Make sure your onboarding program includes time to introduce new hires and train them on the tools they'll need both to perform their job and for company-wide activities such as email, chat, tracking time, signing up for benefits and requesting time off.

Build a buddy system

Pair new hires with a buddy or mentor to help ease their social transition into a new working environment. The buddy can be on hand to answer any questions that come up during a new hire's first few weeks. Buddies don't need to be on the same team – in fact, assigning a cross-departmental buddy is a great opportunity to help new hires create connections outside their immediate team.

Onboard as a cohort

Cindy Gordon, Chief People Officer at PolicyGenius, explains that, “It's important to think about the individual's experience – not just the hiring manager's needs.” That's why PolicyGenius, like Greenhouse, has implemented a cohort system so new hires go through onboarding programming as a group rather than on their own.

Promote social sharing

Some companies, like Greenhouse customer **VaynerMedia**, have a private Instagram account just for employees. New hires can catalog their first week on the job through photos and stories. This not only helps them build relationships with their new colleagues, but it also lets them participate in company culture in a way that's uniquely suited to VaynerMedia.

Let your values guide the process

Don't just tell new hires that your company values matter – look for ways to show them. For example, you might assign their new hire buddy to answer questions about how your values are lived day to day.



Tips and tools for onboarding remote employees

Services like DocuSign and HelloSign make it easy to execute paperwork remotely.

Having new hires receive equipment like laptops and phones a little early is okay, but don't ever let it show up late.

If you're super trusting, you can provide your company's online office supplier's account information so new hires can order their preferred equipment before their official start date.

Put together a care package that includes what you'd regularly give a new hire, and maybe add something extra to show that even if they aren't in the office, they are very much a part of the team. Another unique touch is to use a service like GroupGreeting to send virtual welcome cards.

Notify your employees when new hires start and prompt them to check out their internal company profiles. Greenhouse Onboarding does this via email and also encourages team members to connect with new hires on platforms such as LinkedIn and Slack.

Reach out to new starters personally if there is anything going on that's directly related to them or relevant to their role, or even just to ask their opinion or give them a heads up on any company news or important project updates.

Make it clear that your virtual door is always open and they're welcome to contact you at any time.

Don't forget freelancers, contractors and part-time workers

Just because someone isn't a full-time employee doesn't mean they don't deserve a thoughtful onboarding experience. As we mentioned above, your freelancers, contractors and part-time workers might need a little extra planning to ensure they're set up for success.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when onboarding remote freelancers and part-time employees:

Consider the tools they'll need to do their job effectively. List out everything they'll need for communication, collaboration and project and file management, and make sure they get access to it all before they receive their first assignment.

If you host regular onboarding sessions on general topics such as your company's mission, values and brand, invite freelance and part-time new hires to join in (and compensate them for the time they spend attending them).

Make sure they have a point of contact for their day-to-day work as well as for general questions like how to submit invoices or request access to tools.

If you're inviting them to join your Slack channel or other virtual community, give them a quick overview of your company norms for each platform.

Invite them to social gatherings (whether virtual or in real life) to help them build camaraderie with the rest of the team.

Promoting company values in a distributed work environment

“While the importance of culture is driven home during onboarding, continual reinforcement is required to keep it top of mind,” says Darren Murph, Head of Remote at GitLab. “In the course of business, it’s easy to lose sight of values and culture when focusing on OKRs and KPIs. However, it is vital for leadership to remind themselves and other team members that values should never be pushed aside or lowered in priority. Every decision a business makes should align with their values. Otherwise, values will be seen as ‘merely words’ and culture will disintegrate.”

Here are a few ways to continue promoting your company values in a distributed working environment:

If you have a central headquarters, create a visual representation of all employees and showcase it in a prominent place. If your entire team is remote, create an easy-to-access company directory that includes everyone’s photo, role, start date and maybe a fun fact or two.

Ask for input. Whether you’re having guest speakers at an all-hands meeting or setting your strategy for the coming quarters, be sure to involve distributed employees in the planning and execution of company-wide initiatives.

Keep everyone in the loop. Be sure to set expectations with employees about the type and frequency of communication.

Facilitate frequent check-ins with leaders. For example, if your employees are based in different time zones, rotate ask-me-anything sessions with the CEO so that each group gets an opportunity to attend live and other offices can watch the recording on demand.



Organize a “distributed culture committee” (you can come up with a more clever name for it if you’d like!) with a cross-section of employees from different teams and locations. Ask members to plan ways to forge connections and community through one-off or ongoing initiatives, like an hour-long midday “coworking time” to catch up and get some face-to-face interaction or a virtual happy hour or lunch.

Look for tools to support your culture-building efforts. In addition to tools that promote communication and collaboration (Slack, Trello, Dropbox, etc.), you might want to consider Culture Amp to stay informed on employee engagement and sentiments, Donut for assigning random buddies to build social connections across teams and Blueboard for rewarding employees who embody company culture.

“Tools like Slack (which integrates nicely with Greenhouse) allow us to bring that combination of business and project communication and more social endeavors. **As a company, we have a weekly Tuesday night all-hands with full staff.** This serves for updates and policy or initial memo announcements. We have a DJ for these events and usually one team presents an aspect of the work that they do to keep us all connected as a company and up to speed outside our immediate universe.”

Elizabeth Hassel
Director of Recruiting at Ad Hoc



The connection between employee recognition and employee engagement

It's no secret that employee recognition is an essential driver of a great employee experience. Here are some of Greenhouse's tactics that you can easily adapt to a distributed work environment:

We have an “#employee-warm-fuzzies” Slack channel for consistent, visible shoutouts. Employees from all locations can join in the fun and celebrate their coworkers' accomplishments.

On work anniversaries, employees mark the occasion with a photo, a card and, at the five-year mark, a personalized bobblehead designed by their fellow teammates. Employees regularly share photos of their gifts via Slack and social media so everyone can join them in celebrating.

Through quarterly goal-setting and weekly 1:1 chats, employees are empowered to do the best work of their careers, even if it means switching roles or teams.

We host the annual Gnomie Awards (less known than the Grammys, but more meaningful than The Office's “Dundies”). It's an amazing opportunity to recognize employees who best embody the values of Greenhouse.

We have a dedicated employee experience team who organize everything from workspaces and “fun days” to anniversary awards.

Every social interaction has an intentional distributed version. For example, if the New York team is having an ice cream party or a lunch and learn, we consider how to extend the fun to our distributed teams, such as providing them with a coupon code so they can order in.

Quick team-building ice-breakers for remote teams

Introduce your hometown

Use an interactive world map and have each team member add a star to their hometown. At the beginning of each team meeting, one member can give a quick introduction to their hometown and answer questions from other team members about it. (Or you can try a variation like places where people have a favorite memory or ate the best meal they've ever had.)

Remember your company's culture

Give a prompt such as “My favorite company value is,” “My favorite thing about our company is” or “My favorite thing about our product is” to remind employees that even while distributed, company culture is a shared experience. Ask every team member to choose an image that represents their answer and then present it to the group. Let the abstract creativity flow.

Express yourself, virtually

Break out into partners for five minutes of 1:1 conversations. Then, come back to the larger group and introduce them to everyone. You never know what you might learn and sometimes it's easier to talk about someone else than it is to talk about ourselves.

Show off your workspace

Have each team member take a photo or show a quick video of their workspace and choose one item that's particularly meaningful to them to describe in more detail.

Create common ground, even from far away

Ask team members to come up with 10 things they all have in common. You can decide whether to limit answers to work or allow more general answers.

Distributed work best practices for everyone

So far in this eBook, we've mostly focused our attention on topics that are relevant to talent acquisition and people teams. But there are four other best practices for distributed work that can be helpful to everyone, regardless of department.

1. Create clear rules

It's critical to establish norms around working hours, appropriate attire, communication channels and other expectations for an in-person working environment. When someone works in the same physical office as their coworkers, they can pick up a lot of this information simply by observing others – in a distributed environment, however, it has to be much more explicit. Be sure to clearly communicate things like what time the workday generally starts and ends, how to communicate online hours, how long people should take for lunch and which communication channel is appropriate in a given work situation.

2. Prioritize transparency and communication

When employees are co-located, it's easy to share information simply by talking to someone when you pass them in the hallway or stop by their desk. When these casual encounters no longer occur, it's important to be intentional about how company leaders and managers will share updates (and how they'd like to receive feedback from fellow employees). Outline when and through which channels leaders will provide information. And give employees clear ways to get in touch and share their thoughts with their team, leadership, HR, IT and any other relevant departments.



Free LinkedIn Learning courses for optimizing remote work

The value of working remotely

Time management: working from home

Be a strong teammate

Gaining a productive mindset

Remote workers are the future of business

Balancing work and life

Thriving @ work

Managing stress for positive change

Managing people at a distance

Welcome to better virtual meetings

3. Show emotional intelligence and increase self-awareness

Emotional intelligence, or EQ, is the ability to perceive how people are feeling and adjust our own behavior accordingly. This skill is valuable in almost any setting, but especially when people don't have frequent face-to-face interactions. You can look for courses or training to develop your own emotional intelligence or recommend them to your people managers and company leaders. Greenhouse integration partner Plum offers the ability for everyone to complete a **Plum Profile** to better understand their preferred communication and work styles. Encourage your coworkers to learn as much as they can about themselves and share their findings with their manager and teammates.

4. Don't forget the fun!

There's usually space for a little levity in most workplaces, whether it's people bringing in their best chili recipe for a company cookoff, giving it their all in a sack race at a field day or showing photos of their adorable dog to anyone who happens to be in the kitchen at the moment. It may take a little extra work, but you can replicate those watercooler moments in a virtual environment. Encourage employees to create Slack channels for their hobbies and interests such as pets, cooking and favorite TV shows. Organize virtual happy hours or coffee meet-ups via Zoom, either by team or randomly. Create shared music playlists for coworkers with themes that support focusing, brainstorming or even a dance break.

How we do it: The Greenhouse distributed work toolbox

Zoom for video chats and meetings

Lumity for managing benefits

Slack for watercooler chats and timely communication

Culture Amp for employee engagement, onboarding and exit surveys

Trello and Asana for project management and requests

Dropbox for file management

Donut for assigning buddies

Blueboard for employee recognition and rewards

Top priorities for distributed teams

Employees

Setting working hours and work schedule expectations to accommodate a household with multiple working partners or family members and parenting priorities, and setting boundaries for offline time.

Establishing communication channels and guidelines and clearly identifying the process for escalating important issues virtually.

Providing training around booking and running virtual meetings.

Providing more visibility into workload and project status.

Leadership

Communicating company strategy and updates (you can get creative by hosting AMAs in Slack, sending videos with a personal message and maintaining other touchpoints of human connection).

Managing conflict.

Overseeing team members' workloads.

Providing guidance on career ladders, promotion opportunities and areas for improvement.

Essential company functions (people, finance, IT, etc.)

Hiring the right people to move the business forward and taking advantage of any downtime or unexpected changes to build the right processes and strategy to address existing gaps.

Ensuring all employees have the systems and tools they need to thrive.

Communicating changes to company policies and informing staff of important updates.



Best practices for managing a distributed team

Greenhouse's Director of Technical Operations Mike McClurg has been working remotely for over six years, both as a software engineer and as a manager. Here he shares his advice for managing a distributed team.

Treat your teams as distributed first

Use a chat app for team communication instead of physically turning around to speak to the group.

Use collaborative editing services for shared docs.

Ensure that all meetings have a video conference set up automatically.

Consider team members' time zones when setting meetings.

When you have remote members join meetings, consider having the meetings fully remote, where all members join from their desks or phone booths, to put everyone on equal footing.

Find a way to invite distributed members to team-bonding events over video conferences – two of my teams have regular watercooler meetings scheduled for Friday afternoons.

Formalize your team's work practices

This goes hand in hand with intentional communication. Distributed teams can't rely on in-person communication to facilitate ad hoc work practices.

Have empathy for your coworkers

This is really the golden rule for running distributed teams. We should strive to make all our team members feel like they belong – to do that, we have to be able to understand how they feel.

Be intentional about your communication

Schedule daily team stand-ups and don't miss them.

Schedule regular team meetings for work planning.

Schedule 1:1s frequently enough that you don't start to feel like your teammate is a stranger.

Schedule regular watercooler conversations or times for the team to all “meet” socially.

If possible, make time for everyone to physically meet, either in an office or at a central location.

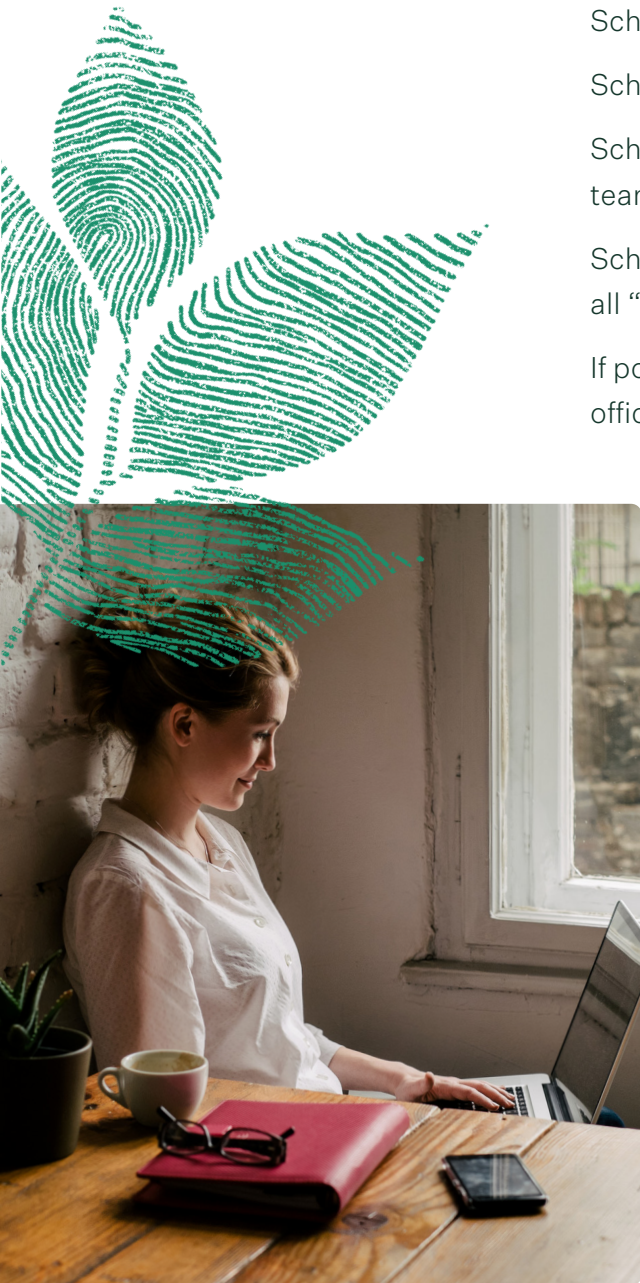
Conclusion

When it comes to working remotely, it's important to embrace agility and quickly adopt best practices. That's why we put this guide together: to share some of our own lessons as well as those of our customers and partners. We hope that we've given you some clear ideas for concrete next steps.

Greenhouse is here to support you – and by leveraging our tools such as **Greenhouse Recruiting** and **Greenhouse Onboarding**, we help you to hire for what's next.

Don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to learn more about how these products can best support your team.

Check out all of our hiring guidance at greenhouse.io/guidance





Greenhouse is *the* hiring software company.

We help businesses become great at hiring through our powerful hiring approach, complete suite of software and services, and large partner ecosystem – so businesses can hire for what’s next.

Based in New York City with offices in San Francisco, Denver and Dublin, Greenhouse Software has nearly 4,000 customers. Some of the smartest and most successful companies like HubSpot, Cisco Meraki, BuzzFeed, J.D. Power and Warby Parker use the Greenhouse hiring software platform to improve all aspects of hiring, helping them to attract top talent.

Greenhouse has won numerous awards including Glassdoor’s #1 Best Place to Work, Forbes Cloud 100 and Crain’s Fast 50. The Greenhouse talent acquisition suite has recently been named a leader in the IDC MarketScape Worldwide and U.S. Modern Talent Acquisition Suites for Medium-Sized Enterprise 2019 Vendor Assessment. Greenhouse lives our mission of helping companies become great at hiring, having been recognized as an Inc. Magazine Best Workplace in 2019 and 2018. Greenhouse has also been named to the Inc. 5000 2019 Fastest Growing Companies, Deloitte’s 2019 and 2018 Fast 500 North America Technology Ranking and Crain’s New York Business Fast 50.

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