Checklist: How to work remotely as a team

agile 42

SOCIAL CONNECTION

☐ **Re-create a (virtual) team identity.** Focus as much on individual identities as the team identity. Maybe even create digital icons and avatars to keep things interesting.

☐ **Create digital rituals or traditions.** Every office environment has informal traditions or rituals, whether it's the Friday team lunch or a regular coffee break at 10.15. Identify these rituals and recreate them virtually.

☐ **Co-create a working agreement.** Agreeing on common practices and behaviours becomes especially critical when working remotely. What are the common working hours? What channels of communication are used for what problems? How will decisions be made?

☐ **Use a buddy system.** Working remotely can be difficult and lonely. A buddy system - 2 to 3 people sharing how they're doing with no expectation of receiving work in return - keeps communication up and avoids micromanagement.

VIRTUAL WORKING

☐ **Make the goal visible**. Scrum advocates agreeing on a Sprint Goal - the focus of the following 1-2 weeks of activity. Use the same idea to keep the team focussed in the short-term.

☐ **Visualize workflow.** Use an online work tracking tool that allows everyone to see who is doing what during the week. Track activities in 4 to 8 hour chunks (tasks) so there is a continual flow of completed activities.

☐ **Synchronize daily.** Create multiple communication opportunities through the day (stand ups and stand downs for example). Keep the discussion short and sweet. Keep the goal front-of-mind, and coordinate activity towards achieving the goal.

☐ **Create asynchronous communication channels.** Distributed teams struggle with availability. When I want to ask a question, you may not be available. Use asynchronous channels that allow information or questions to be shared between team members who may not be there right now.

☐ **Empower the teams.** Push decisions into remote teams (with clearly defined enabling constraints). Make the span of control and context of decision-making clear (written down) and track decisions made.

CREATE ATTENTION

☐ **Set up before kick off.** Nothing saps the energy of the attendees more than fiddling with technical set-up and waiting to get everyone online. Test the connections. Set up the collaboration tools ahead of time. Have a moderator helping attendees so that the facilitator can focus on facilitating.

☐ **Prepare collaboration tools.** Facilitating a collaborative work session eventually leads to a break out and discussion. Creating templates and pre-prepared graphics or content templates lowers the barrier to collaboration, and allows a focus on discussion and ideation rather than learning how to use the tools.

☐ **Create movement.** Engaging multiple senses increases the cognition needed to absorb content. Increased cognition increases retention and understanding. Do this through video, virtual whiteboards, creating hand-drawn slides and diagrams over pristine powerpoint slides.

☐ **The basics: Set a clear agenda.** Know what the purpose of your meeting is, and be prepared to stay on track. Consider some of the practices used successfully at Amazon.

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