TAIVARA
Technology Innovation

5 Insights to Manage a Remote Development Team

Overview

With most companies now working remotely and most likely continuing to do so in the future, it's more important that ever to manage remote teams well. This is especially true in the realm of software development.

For more than 10 years, Taivara has successfully co-created digital products for a wide variety of clients with our virtual development team and by also collaborating virtually with our clients' teams. Through this experience we have gathered the following 5 insights of managing remote development teams.

We hope that these insights will help you in navigating the virtual development world.

The 5 Insights for Managing a Remote Development Team

1) Structuring the Workday

2) The Technologies That Make it Possible

3) Traits of a Successful Remote Worker

4) Team Management Best Practices

5) Keeping Your Team Motivated and Engaged

1. Structuring The Work Day

The long list of benefits to working remote is contingent upon creating a conducive environment that sets up your team for success. In a remote working environment the focus needs to be heavier on the work produced, and lighter on the structure of the day.

◆ **Uninterrupted Work Time:** Deep focus is a force multiplier for quality coding. This is the easiest "win" in building a productive design and engineering team.

◆ **Structure-Lite:** When working with talent around the world, a highly structured environment won't work for everyone's schedule. Being flexible makes it possible to work productively despite different time zones, internet bandwidth, and other factors that come with a global team.

◆ **Set expectations around communication:** Empower your team to reach out to peers at any time, because your peers are empowered to ignore you (see "Uninterrupted Work Time"). That said, bouncing ideas off smart people is invaluable when thinking through difficult problems and we often hop on Hangouts or Zoom to do this. Set expectations around a method to reach out if something is urgent. For us it's: "call or text".

2. The Technologies That Make it Possible

What's different about managing a remote team from a traditional team? Leveraging all kinds of technology makes it even more efficient than if you were sitting across from each other in an office. What technologies are necessary and where do they fit in the process?

- **Slack/Microsoft Teams:** Great for written daily standups. Have your team write a few bullets on what they did yesterday, what's being done today, and what's blocked. Result: More time efficiency. However, this puts responsibility on individuals to read & stay updated on team member's work, which may impact theirs.
- **Google Meet/ Zoom/Microsoft Teams:** Good for both 1 on 1 meetings and team meetings. Using video features helps teams communicate more effectively.
- **Jira/ Microsoft Boards/Trello:** Necessary for feature documentation, prioritization and general sprint and project management
- **Gitlab/Microsoft Repos:** Necessary for coordinating code versioning, change control and facilitating the important task of code reviews.

3. Traits of a Successful Remote Worker

◆ **Problem Solvers:** This is the most important trait when hiring or contracting for a remote team. Problem Solvers think through the holistic approach and consider key elements from defining the problem, identifying the constraints to devising a solution.

◆ **Generalist/Polyglot:** A generalist engineer has more tools in their belt. This makes programming more about solving problems and less about churning out code in "X" framework to "Y" specifications. In general, the process is more creative and it's easier to hand a less well-defined problem to someone who can think critically rather than one who specializes in one technology.

◆ **Trustworthy:** Remote work is impossible without trust! And trust is a two-way street. Expect your team to do what they say, clarify and agree to expectations, hold each other accountable, but be as understanding as you can be when things don't go as expected.

◆ **Leadership**: Each of the previous traits positions your team perfectly for decentralized command. Give senior team members the authority to make product, architecture, or technology decisions based upon their role as often as necessary.

4. Team Management Best Practices

- **Set delivery dates**: Always be clear about expectations.
  - Hard deadlines should be known well in advance, achievable (driven by team estimates), and the team should be held accountable for meeting them.
  - Avoid arbitrary deadlines - this can lead to a soul crushing "death march".
  - Praise and encourage honest communication about progress.
- **Confirm understanding:** It's effective to recap, or even better, ask a teammate to communicate their understanding back to you.
- **Take responsibility for failures:** Give credit to individual team members for success in public. Provide constructive criticism in private.
- **Continuous improvement:** Foster an environment of learning. Whether you're taking on new projects or building onto existing products, your team should be encouraged to be sharpening their skills, and adding new ones for the future.

5. Keeping Your Team Motivated and Engaged

◆ **Build rapport:** Use whatever way your teammates are most comfortable with to build rapport. Some people like to chit-chat about life, some would prefer to bond via technical code review, some don't desire rapport at all.

◆ **Assign pair-programming:** When pair-programming makes sense, these do a great job of encouraging group participation in code review.

◆ **Zoom/Google Meet/Microsoft Teams:** Whether it's a happy hour, a lunch, or a friendly hangout, these video meetings are a fun way to connect and feel together while apart.

Contact Us

For more than 10 years Taivara has provided software development and digital product co-creation expertise.

If you would like to discuss managing a remote development team, or any aspect of digital products co-creation, feel free to contact us..

Call us at 614-300-7374 or email us Today at hello@taivara.com

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