

# KEEPING REMOTE TEAMS ENGAGED & PRODUCTIVE



## Introduction & Contents

Many organizations are coming to terms with the fact that remote working is here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. Ensuring teams remain productive, connected and engaged is of utmost importance during this critical time of recovery for businesses worldwide, as well for their sustained success.

Engagement Multiplier pivoted at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, quickly developing and deploying a survey to aid managers of newly remote teams, even as we ourselves started working from home.

This ebook combines our expertise in employee engagement with real-world experiences shared by our clients and is designed to address the most common concerns leaders have with managing remote teams, and keeping them engaged and productive.

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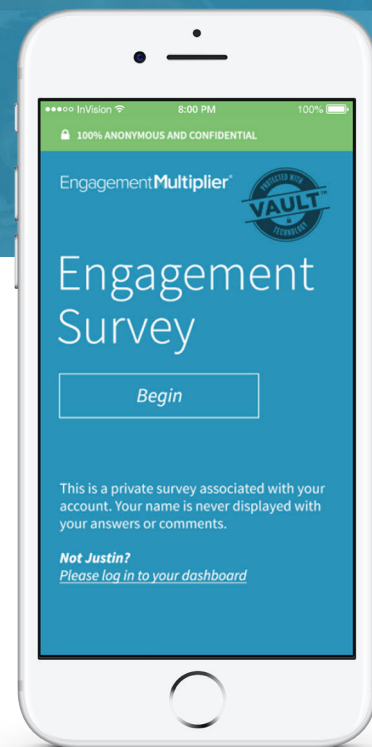
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**Free offer! Find out what's  
impacting your team's productivity -  
fast, easy and free of charge.**

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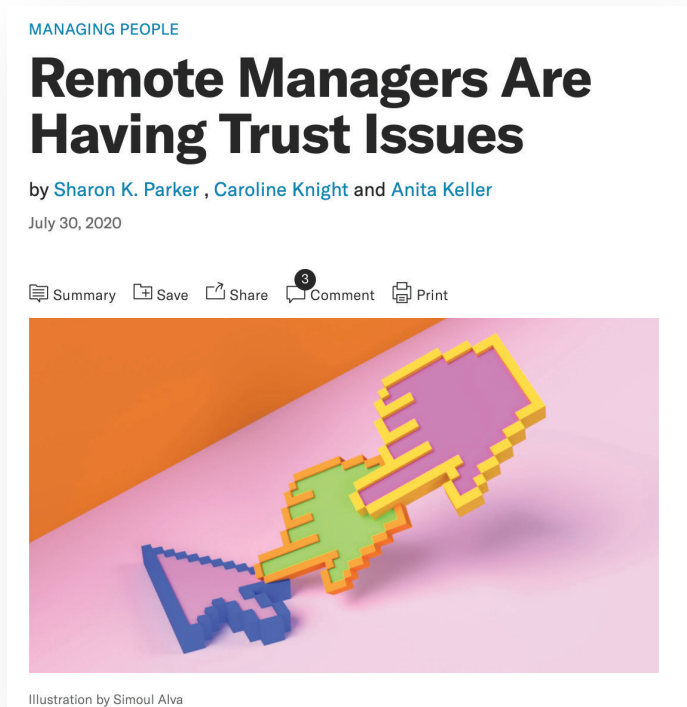


# Common Concerns Leaders Cite About Remote Teams

Is working from home the key to productivity or a recipe for disaster? Headlines about the topic run the gamut, and for a good reason: whether or not a firm's employees are productive at home has a lot to do with the work they do, their own individual circumstances and countless other variables.

The prevalence of remote work is raising a slew of new issues for leaders. Here are the most common concerns leaders have about employees working from home:

- Employees are less productive, encounter distractions at home, don't manage their time well and struggle to prioritize work correctly
- Communications are fragmented and people are left out of the loop
- Spontaneity is lost. Great ideas happen at the watercooler, and important information is exchanged in chance meetings or when people stop by each other's desks.
- Connection between the company and employees weakens, company culture erodes, relationships suffer, inculcating new employees into the team is difficult.



Many of these issues are related. For example - improving communication between team members can put projects back on track and fuel spontaneity. For this reason, we'll focus on building a strong foundation for your remote team, concentrating on productivity, communication and connection.

**“Research shows that managers who cannot ‘see’ their direct reports sometimes struggle to trust that their employees are indeed working.”**

- HBR, “Remote Managers Are Having Trust Issues” July 2020

# Maintaining Productivity

**Top Concern: Employees are less productive, don't manage their time well and struggle to prioritize work correctly**

We've found the secret to productivity is in providing employees structure that provides routine and focus and provides the flexibility needed to make working from home really work for both the business and its employees. Here are the keys to enabling productivity and setting remote teams up for success:

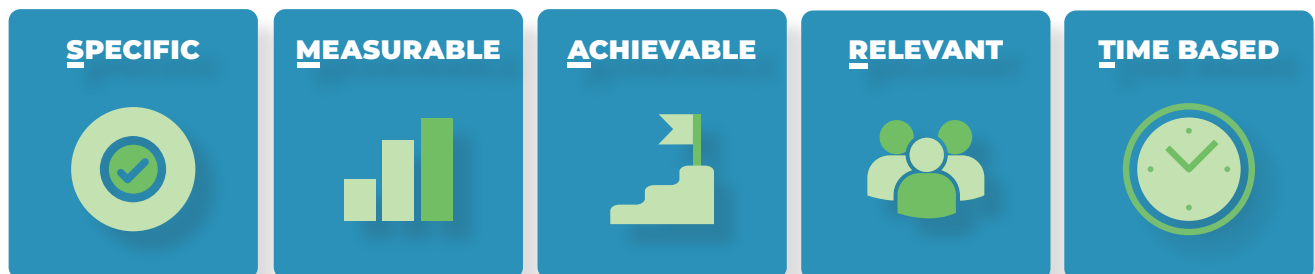
**Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities** is important to employees. If the current crisis has required your organization to make rapid changes, this could be an area where impact on employees shows. Revisit roles and responsibilities with remote team members, to identify anything that's changed and ensure leaders and teams are on the same page.

- Ask leaders and their teams - especially those that have experienced significant changes - to evaluate job descriptions, daily tasks and key responsibilities.
- Have team members start by writing down work they're actually doing that's not included in their job descriptions.
- Have leaders assess the work that's really being done. What needs to start, stop and continue?

**Establish SMART goals** to help employees prioritize work correctly and stay focused. Working with their leaders, have employees propose their 90 day goals to their leaders. Leaders should ensure the goals roll up to team or department objectives. Once aligned, ask employees to set monthly milestones toward goal attainment. Leaders should revisit those regularly with employees.

Even if job roles are temporary, or still evolving in the wake of change, establishing SMART goals for a short timeframe will provide essential clarity and structure. Additionally, SMART goals will define for all what success looks like, enabling employees to more effectively prioritize work and focus their efforts.

## S.M.A.R.T. GOALS



**Create structure that keeps teams focused and on track** with short, intentional meetings that start and end the week, and bookend the day.

**Daily:**

Start each day with a brief “energizer” meeting to get people connected to the day and each other, and end each day with a short “That’s a Wrap!” call to signal the end of work. It may seem simple, but these short meetings have an outside impact:

- Employees are clearly focused and accountable.
- Everyone - including the leaders - knows what’s going on across the team, and ideas start to fly.
- The risk of burnout is reduced.

**Weekly:**

On Mondays, have each employee share their goals for the week. On the Friday meeting, ask them to share their wins for the week, and what they’re most excited about for the next week. Here’s a simple and proven structure for quick morning and end-of-day meetings that create focus, energy and accountability:



### Morning Energizer

- Positive focus: Have each person briefly share what they’re feeling great about that day. This gets everyone talking - even the introverts - and replicates some of the regular office chit-chat and helps keep people smiling and connected.
- 3 “Rocks” for the day: Each person shares the three things that, when accomplished, will make the day a good day.
- Outstanding issues or questions: Opportunity to for the team to have a brief discussion or answer any questions that arise.



### That’s a Wrap!

- 3 Wins for the day: Employees recount their accomplishments for the day, creating accountability for the “rocks” they identified at the start of the day.
- Insight round-out: Invite the team to share insights they gleaned from each other’s wins. The team will capture the new ideas and points of view the meeting generated, leading to actions that move initiatives forward.
- Signals the end of the day, creating important separation between work and home, helping employees maintain balance.

# Keeping Communication Flowing

**Top Concern: Communications are fragmented, people are left out of the loop, spontaneity diminishes and some people “disappear” from view and feel isolated.**

The flow of essential information throughout our workplaces is the lifeblood of our organizations. Just as our circulatory systems keep us hydrated, oxygenated and protected on a cellular level, the healthy flow of information within a company carries crucial information from the heart of the business to its outermost reaches. Note, we said “*healthy flow of information.*” If the lines of communication are compromised, the downstream impact can be disastrous.

**Symptoms of poor communication:** Here are some symptoms resulting from poor communication. Do any look familiar to you?

- **Scope Creep:** The definition of “scope creep” is an increase in deliverables or addition of new requirements - after the project has been approved and started. Scope creep is the enemy of deadlines and successful project completion.
- **Silos:** When a team or department is cut off from the rest of the organization, a silo forms. Teams that are unable (or unwilling) to share information with peers across the company are inefficient and can damage team culture.
- **Conspiracy theories:** People will make up what they don't know, and a lack of clear communication from leadership creates the ideal environment for rumor and speculation. When thinking of this ilk gains hold within an organization, trust in leadership will erode, and along with it focus and productivity.

## Developing a healthy communications flow:

Look at the expansive [definition of communication management](#) Wikipedia serves up:

*Communications management is the systematic planning, implementing, monitoring, and revision of all the channels of communication within an organization, and between organizations; it also includes the organization and dissemination of new communication directives connected with an organization, network, or communications technology. Aspects of communications management include developing corporate communication strategies, designing internal and external communications directives, and managing the flow of information, including online communication.*

Basically, there's more to good communication than stepping up the number of meetings or messages your leadership team produces.

## Improving Communication:

Improving communication involves both leaders and employees, and we're offering suggestions for elevating leadership communication and as well as the flow of information throughout the organization.

**Be a visible (and accessible) leader:** Visible leaders are those who are known by - and present for - their employees. They are not hidden away in the proverbial ivory tower. Being visible to your employees is central to effective leadership, and is crucial to building the trust that inspires the team to follow your lead. However, increasing your visibility within the organization is difficult if your team is working remotely. You can no longer take a lap and connect with key players. How to adjust? The answer can be found in developing new communication channels and trying new tactics.



- Prepare for more meetings, not fewer, and make a point of staying in touch with key employees beyond your own leadership team or direct reports. *Pro tip: Keep yourself (and your team) moving by scheduling "walking meetings" when you need to catch up. Grab your mobile and go for a stroll.*
- Set "Office Hours" during which you'll be available, and invite people to contact you at those times.
- Embrace videoconferencing.

**Communicate confidently and consistently.** Ensure all employees understand where the company stands, the direction it's taking and its progress toward key goals. If you don't do so already, develop cadences (both monthly and quarterly) of communication to the team. Don't forget to involve other company leaders.

- Keep projects and initiatives focused and create accountability for specific deliverables by routinely sharing project charters or goals summaries with the broader team, and offer progress updates on key initiatives. Public declaration of project purpose can provide powerful focus for the team, and creating a charter or project summary to share is in itself another guard against scope creep.

- Break down silos by providing updates on department strategies, progress against goals and (this is important) plans for the coming quarter.

Employees - especially those on the front lines - are often energized by hearing strategic plans. In addition to cultivating enthusiasm, you will also be facilitating the exchange of information between teams.

**Re-think meetings to improve information flow & people connection.** Do your company's meetings eat up endless time and sap energy, or are they a vital connection point for your team? If your firm's meeting culture could stand an upgrade, here's a format we call the EPIC Meeting (™) that will bring the team together, provide all with a landscape view of the business and what's in flight, and inspire spontaneous ideas, collaboration and information sharing. Here's why it works:

- The team will know what's going on, and who's doing what. No one is "out of the loop."
- It's focused and efficient. Team members walk away with the information they need, or an action item to pursue related information off-line, ensuring they're armed with the information they need to progress their work forward.
- The ability to quickly clear hurdles and get to decisions makes this framework extra effective.

**“Most meetings are unproductive. In fact, executives consider more than 67% of meetings to be failures.”**

- Inc. "The Cost of Unproductive Meetings" June 2014



# The EPIC Meeting™

The EPIC Meeting approach puts an end to pointless meetings that waste time and slow momentum. Adopt this simple framework and watch your team engagement and productivity soar.

WHAT	WHY IT'S IMPORTANT	HOW DO YOU DO IT	THE OUTCOME
<b>Energy</b>	<b>Boosting energy</b> at the beginning of a meeting sets the stage for more productive conversations and ultimately, better meeting outcomes.	<b>Get everyone to speak</b> at the start of the meeting by sharing one thing they're feeling great about right now (work-related or not)!	<b>Participants will be engaged and contributing</b> during the meeting, leading to better results.
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Every meeting should have a purpose</b> as well as clearly defined outcomes. It's impossible to run an effective meeting, unless everybody is clear on why they're there and the outcomes required.	Distribute an agenda in advance that states the purpose, objective and <b>what needs to be true at the end of the meeting</b> – rather than simply a list of discussion points/updates.	<b>Attendees come prepared and solution-focused.</b> Meetings become faster and more efficient when the focus is placed on outcomes.
<b>Insight</b>	During a robust exchange of ideas and perspectives, opportunities will emerge that <b>create transferable insights.</b> Sharing these insights amplifies the value and productivity of any meeting.	At the end of the meeting, have <b>everyone highlight a unique insight or learning</b> they've derived from the meeting.	<b>Capture opportunities and connection between ideas and people on the spot.</b> Amplify the value of the ideas and learnings from the meeting.
<b>Connection</b>	<b>Getting the team onto the same page</b> builds connection between people and to the larger business purpose. Employees are more confident that their efforts and input will be appreciated, and are more willing to speak up, share ideas and pursue opportunities. <b>Culture and purpose are reinforced.</b>	<b>Encourage adoption of habits and structure for meetings,</b> and adopt the steps outlined here to generate Energy, Purpose and Insight in all of your meetings.	Barriers to progress caused by fragmented communications and lack of direction are swept away. <b>The business captures more value and builds a stronger, more agile culture.</b>

# Connection & Culture

**Top Concern: Company culture erodes, relationships suffer, inculcating new employees into the team is difficult.**

We use the word “connection” to describe how well employees understand what’s going on with the business - and how much they care. In short, connection can be described as a “one team, one goal” mindset, characterized by employees who understand the company’s business, are aligned around the goals, and work cooperatively as a unified team. It’s useful to think of connection and culture together, simply because one can’t build a culture without first developing a connected team.

## **Building connection to the business:**

Do your employees understand the company’s goals and strategies? More importantly, do they understand how their own role contributes to the organizations’ success? If you can answer affirmatively to these questions, congratulations - your firm is in the minority. According to years of survey data, developing employees’ understanding of the company’s overarching business goals and their own contributions toward those goals is often overlooked. As you develop employees’ connection to the business - what the company delivers for its stakeholders, and how success is measured, your culture will take shape.

Ultimately, culture is expressed through what is done, not what is said.

Here’s how to help your leaders and employees look beyond the job description when it comes to setting goals that motivate your team and deliver value for stakeholders.

**Quarterly Business Reviews & Goal Setting:** Department silos impede connections between leaders and teams, and employees and the company. Creating transparency and sharing the ‘big picture’ across the team with a quarterly business review will immediately increase your employees’ connectivity by reinforcing their contributions to the company’s stated goals and its overall success.

- Create and share summaries of results, progress on key initiatives each quarter, and include forward-looking goals and plans for the coming quarter.
- While you don’t need to provide granular detail, enough specifics should be provided to ensure employees have a clear view of the company’s goals and its progress toward them.
- Have employees work with their managers to set their quarterly goals - paying attention to tying them to a larger company objective - and then sharing those with the rest of the team, will make the connection to the business tangible and real on the individual level. The SMART goals from the Productivity section are useful here.

**Measure Outcomes, Not Inputs:** Re-calibrate key performance indicators by measuring outcomes, rather than inputs, in order to define success. Here's an example of the difference focusing on outcomes versus employee activity can make:

- Imagine an inbound call center that traditionally measures the volume of calls reps handle hourly and daily. What would happen if the company instead started to measure time to answer and customer satisfaction? The former (volume of calls) measures work done, versus providing an aspirational target. Increasing speed to answer and customer satisfaction encourage the behaviors required for success, and provide positive targets for the team.

Measuring outcomes creates essential connection between individuals and teams to business results.

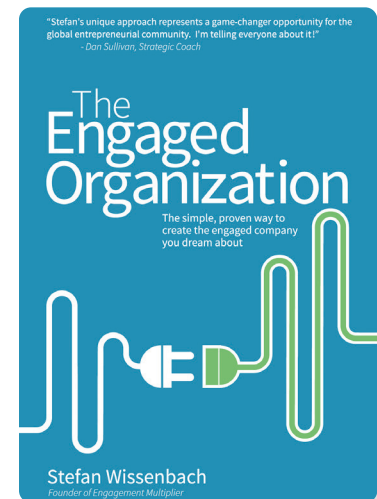
BONUS: By switching to an accountability-driven, outcomes-based system of measurement: you'll be setting your leaders up for success, too, freeing them from being micromanagers and instead enabling them to concentrate on results.

**Purpose:** The “purpose” in an organization is normally written for the benefit of the owners, the shareholders or the customers. And yet there is only one audience for whom it's actually critically important: The employees. An Engaged Purpose is written for the support and involvement of your employees, and will give them a “why” for showing up every day.

If your organization hasn't defined its purpose, or, if upon reflection, the purpose rings hollow, seize the moment to establish a new purpose at the heart of your company. The authors of [“In a Crisis, Companies Must Know Their Purpose”](#), published via PwC make clear the opportunity at hand:

“This moment in history provides an opportunity, and a spur, for all organizations to ground themselves in their purpose — that is, to focus intensely on the core questions: Why do we exist? Why are we here? Whose needs are we here to meet?”

The rewards for doing the work to develop a purpose that unites employees behind a common cause are rich. According to our founder and CEO Stefan Wissenbach, a clear, shared purpose has a connecting effect within the business, creating common context and understanding. “Everyone in the business feels connected to and excited by the organization's ultimate purpose, goals and how the business will achieve them,” he writes in his book, [The Engaged Organization](#).



**An Engaged Purpose has three elements:**

- What the organization does, and who it's for,
- Why the team enjoys delivering the outcomes that their organization delivers,
- How teams go about enjoying the process of delivering that outcome.

**ENGAGEMENT MULTIPLIER'S ENGAGED PURPOSE**

Unlocking hidden potential and improving the lives of  
owners, leaders and employees

We enable businesses with brave, caring, identifiable owners and leaders to measurably  
improve morale, culture and retention; and innovate, thrive and grow.

We are deeply connected to, and energised by, the transformational  
impact of 'engagement' for both businesses and individuals.

We are proud and protective ambassadors of our authentic, caring community, and  
culture where personal growth and unique abilities are championed,  
enthusiasm abounds and fun is a priority!

An Engaged Purpose™ details the transformation you are trying to create and inspires your team, while providing the structure and framework to align individual daily activities with the larger aspirations of the organization, uniting the team and creating a powerful driver of employee engagement!

**“You may have devised the best purpose in the history of humankind, but if it is locked up in an ivory tower and not making it to the front line, you are hampering your organization’s ability to perform at its full potential.”**

**- Stefan Wissenbach, Founder & CEO of Engagement Multiplier**

Here's a primer on creating a powerful Engaged Purpose for your business:

## 5 STEPS TO CREATING AN ENGAGED PURPOSE



### 1. Discover What Energizes your Employees

#### What is an Engaged Purpose and why is it important?

An Engaged Purpose details the transformation you are trying to create and inspires your team, while providing the structure and framework to align individual daily activities with the larger aspirations of the organization. It makes attracting and retaining productive talent and growing a business much easier by simplifying difficult decisions and making an uncertain future easier to navigate.

Write a list of 10 high-energy statements you believe might energize employees about their job and the organization. Don't overthink it! These should be short and general statements. For example, you might list things like: Help others experience success.



### 2. Ask Your Employees

Use the list you just created to poll your employees about which statements resonate with them most. This will help you create an Engaged Purpose that really matters to your team.



### 3. Write A Draft Statement

Referencing the feedback you receive in step two, choose the top 2-3 statements selected and draft your purpose statement. It's crucial to make this as clear as possible, so your team can easily understand and work towards this purpose.



### 4. Share Your Purpose With Your Team

Share the top 2-3 statements that energize your staff from step two - as well as your drafted purpose statement that you created for them. This will show your team that you're listening to their feedback and took the time to incorporate it.



### 5. Make Sure You Follow-Up

When you show your Engaged Purpose statement to your team, ask them in a confidential survey how they relate to it. It's important that you're prepared to make changes based on the suggestions from your team. Incorporating feedback will help everyone connect to the Engaged Purpose.

EngagementMultiplier®

## Bringing It All Together

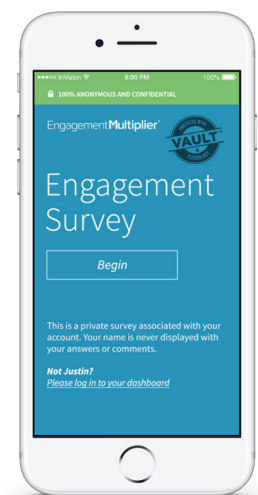
While this isn't work that can be done in a stroke overnight, taking action to build the engagement of your remote employees and creating the structure to help them be more focused and productive are things you can start doing right now. Here are some tips to help you get started and achieve success.

**Establish a benchmark and get started.** The best time to survey your team is when they're under some pressure - the feedback you will receive will be more directional and clear than during "business as usual." Resist the urge to delay gathering feedback or running an employee engagement survey because of the current pandemic environment or, for that matter, any other unusual circumstance, such as a large project or new investment. Understanding how your team responds to pressure is important.

**Survey your team.** If you have an employee engagement platform, run a survey and get fresh data. If you are a current Engagement Multiplier client, you can either run a full employee engagement survey, or you could use the Working From Home & Winning on-demand survey, to gather focused feedback from your remote teams. If you are not an Engagement Multiplier client, we have good news - we're making both the Benchmark Assessment (our full employee survey) and the aforementioned Working From Home & Winning focused survey available to you free, no strings attached. Details are on the next page, and one of our Engagement Specialists will be happy to help you determine which survey (or combination thereof) make the best sense for you.

**Embrace incremental change.** Allow yourself to embrace making incremental changes consistently, and you'll quickly find that not only is the task of developing a more engaged team not as daunting as you might have thought - it's also a journey that's surprisingly inspiring and gratifying. As your employees become connected and communicative, you will be pleased by the increase in organizational speed, the uptick in innovation and the powerful ripple effect your customers will experience.

**Challenge yourself to recognize and reward change as it's happening.** You've heard the old saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt." As you begin the engagement journey with your team, challenge yourself to recognize, reward and communicate the incremental changes that happen. It can be difficult to set ingrained assumptions aside. Encourage your leaders to see their teams clearly, and celebrate changes and improvements as they occur.



**Survey Your Team  
For Free!**

**Keep your eye on the prize:** A team of energized, focused employees are not just more productive and profitable - they're also easier to manage, needing the light touch of guidance, rather than the heavier lift of motivation. Fair warning, you may find yourself falling in love with your business again!

### In Closing

Congratulations on taking the first important steps toward bolstering your team's engagement. Creating an environment that brings your team together, harnesses their power and focuses their attention is one of the most powerful acts of a leader, and it's one that can deliver spectacular and sustainable results.

## FREE OFFER FOR EBOOK READERS Improve Your Team's Productivity

Find out what's stopping your team from being their best and take focused action to improve their engagement and productivity - by as much as 20%!

- Our platform is fast and easy to use.
- Personal service is here if you need it.
- Try the full Benchmark Assessment free. The resulting data is yours to keep.

Claim your free employee engagement survey here:

<https://signup.engagemultiplier.com/productive/>

