

Maximize Team Effectiveness, Part One: Remote Work Starts With Your Culture

How can you maximize team effectiveness, as well as better steward Church resources, by leveraging cultural shifts in the workplace?

If you ask people where they go when they really need to get work done, very few will respond “the office.” If they do say the office, they’ll include a qualifier such as “super early in the morning before anyone gets in” or “I stay late at night after everyone’s left” or “I sneak in on the weekend.”

What they’re trying to tell you is that it is hard to actually get work done at the office. The average office has become the last place people want to be when they really want to get work done during the day. How many Pastors actually study for Sunday in their office? Most have a home-office or office-within-the-office they retreat into.

That’s because offices have become disruption factories.

Meaningful work, creative work, thoughtful work, and important work – this type of effort takes stretches of uninterrupted time to get into the zone. But in most offices, such long stretches just can’t be found. Instead, it’s just one appointment or distraction after another.

Millions of workers and thousands of companies have already discovered the joys and benefits of working remotely.

Is it time your church considered current remote working options?

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [The Year Without Pants](#), by Scott Berkun

Fifty million websites, or 20 percent of the entire web, use WordPress software. The force behind WordPress.com is a convention-defying company called Automattic, Inc., whose 120 employees work from anywhere in the world they wish, barely use email, and launch improvements to their products dozens of times a day. With a fraction of the resources of Google, Amazon, or Facebook, they have a similar impact on the future of the Internet. How is this possible? What’s different about how they work, and what can other companies learn from their methods?

To find out, former Microsoft veteran Scott Berkun worked as a manager at WordPress.com, leading a team of young programmers developing new ideas. *The Year Without Pants* shares the secrets of WordPress.com’s phenomenal success from the inside. Berkun’s story reveals insights on creativity, productivity, and leadership from the kind of workplace that might be in everyone’s future.

- Offers a fast-paced and entertaining insider’s account of how an amazing, powerful organization achieves impressive results

- Includes vital lessons about work culture and managing creativity

The Year Without Pants shares what every organization can learn from the world-changing ideas for the future of work at the heart of Automattic's success.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Culture is incredibly important when it comes to considering moving into the possibility of remote work. The stronger your culture, the less specific training and oversight is needed.

You don't need everyone to be physically together to create a strong culture. After all, culture really isn't found in a handbook or in a poster on a wall. Culture is about the actions and values being lived out day by day in your organization.

If your culture is strong, and is centered on your vision, then physical location of work being done toward those ends is – or should be – a minor concern. As a practical matter, most organizations today have blown past the work/personal life boundaries of prior generations.

Isn't it time to recognize that, and bring a little common sense back into the equation?

Many people assume working remotely is a sham. It violates the bright yellow line that we pretend exists between work and home, a line shattered by laptops and movie e-mail years ago.

The very idea of working remotely seems strange to most people until they consider how much time at traditional workplaces is spent working purely through computers. If 50 percent of your interacting with coworkers is online, perhaps through e-mail and web browsers, you're practically working remotely.

If remote work allows location to become irrelevant, you can hire the best talent in the world, wherever they are.

Remote work will succeed or fail because of company culture, not because of the feature itself.

Self-motivated people thrive when granted independence

Managers who want better performance must provide what their staff need

Remote work is a kind of trust, and trust works two ways. If someone who works for you wants to work remotely or use a new e-mail tool or brainstorming method, little is lost in letting him or her try it out. If his or her performance stays the same or improves, you win. If it goes poorly, you still win, as you've demonstrated your willingness to experiment, encouraging everyone who works for you to continue looking for ways to improve their performance.

Most people doubt online meetings can work, but they somehow overlook that most in-person meetings don't work either. Being online does mean everyone might be distracted, but plenty of meetings today are filled with people with their laptops open, messaging each other about how bored they are.

Scott Berkun, [The Year Without Pants](#)

A NEXT STEP

When considering the move to having remote work as a regular part of your organizational routine, the strength of your present culture is a huge first step. Even with a strong culture, though, you as a leader need to be prepared for comments and criticism from within your organization, from the stakeholders outside the organization, and from the people your organization serves.

To prepare for dealing with these criticisms, write potential excuses for why remote work won't work for you. Use the ideas below as starters, and add your own unique ones.

- We can really only work when we're all in a room
- If I can't see my team, how do I know they're working?
- Homes, coffee shops, etc. are full of distractions
- Sensitive information won't be secure offsite
- What about when someone needs something NOW?
- I'll lose control of my team
- We have a lot of resources (read, money) tied up in physical spaces

After you have completed the list, review it, and counter as many of the criticisms as possible. Don't make this a solo exercise; involve your whole team in this process.

Working remotely isn't without complication or occasional sacrifice. It's about making things better for more people more of the time.

Excerpt taken from SUMS Remix 67-1, issued May 2017

*This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** Book Summaries for church leaders.*

SUMS Remix takes a practical problem in the church and looks at it with three solutions; each solution is taken from a different book. Additionally, a practical action step is included with each solution.

As a church leader you get to scan relevant books based on practical tools and solutions to real ministry problems, not just by the cover of the book. Each post will have the edition number which shows the year and what number it is in the overall sequence. (SUMS Remix provides 26 issues per year, delivered every other week to your inbox).