

How To Hire Remote Employees



Today's business environment is complex, competitive, and ever-changing. Savvy business owners and managers alike need team members with the talent, technical acumen, and commitment to shared success that drives long-term growth and competitive advantage for an organization.

And in the wake of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic—which radically restructured the way companies in all industries do business seemingly overnight—business leaders have prioritized building teams that include remote employees with these same skills.

For some, however, learning how to hire remote employees is the first step.

Fortunately, with a little preparation and by following some remote hiring best practices, you can recruit remote workers with the passion, skill, and talent to fill your business needs, whether you're converting onsite positions to remote jobs, building dedicated remote teams, or expanding your company's capabilities with team members from around the world.

Knowing How to Hire Remote Employees

is Critical

Whether you're enhancing your talent pool with remote workers, transitioning your existing team to remote jobs, or considering remote candidates for new projects, the decision to hire remote employees requires some careful considerations.

And with three-quarters of all teams expected to have at least some remote workers by 2028, tackling these considerations sooner rather than later can save you some major headaches in the future.

You can overcome some of the most common challenges hiring managers face when filling remote job postings with some basic preparations.

Answering a few questions can go a long way toward helping you recruit the best talent, and find employees who are not only skilled, but a good fit for your company culture.

1. **What kind of remote candidates are we seeking?**

Upgrading your existing team with a flexible, work-from-home arrangement (part-time or full-time) will require a different budget and timeline than filling remote roles for a new project or hiring all new employees for a startup.

2. **Are we prepared to properly manage a remote team?**

From juggling time zones to establishing standardized software and templates to leveraging cross-functional collaboration for proper coverage, managing remote teams requires a solid remote work policy, a clear list of criteria for evaluating remote candidates, and managers who understand the need for work-life balance.

What technology, tools, and talent will we need?

To function at its best and minimize the waste and expense that come with miscommunication, the remote team will need standardized equipment and software. They'll need:

- Reliable Internet access;
- Whatever hardware is required to do the job (including laptops, printers, video cameras, etc.); and
- Existing skills in (or training for) a variety of software tools, including group communication and collaboration software, video conferencing, project management, data management, procurement/spend management, etc.

The ideal blend is the right mix of tools and a team who knows how to put them to their best use.

Look for folks who excel at active listening as well as articulating their own position. Adaptable, creative, and open-minded folks who understand and appreciate accountability are ideal.

Identifying the Right Candidates for Your Remote Team

There's no "perfect worker" for any given position, but you'll increase your odds of finding the *right* candidates for remote roles by looking for traits recruiters look for when evaluating job seekers for remote work.

1. **Self-Starters**

- Remote workers need talent and skill, but discipline is just as important. Self-motivated employees are engaged, eager to connect and collaborate with their team members, and look for ways to get the job done (properly) without a lot of hand-holding. They have very strong time-management skills; those with past experience in remote work can provide guidance

and assistance to those who are getting up to speed, and readily offer to do so.

In addition, self-starters respond well to honesty and constructive criticism, and find ways to meld their work style with their peers.

They take the initiative when they see a problem that needs to be fixed, and ask for help when they need it.

2. **Strong Communicators and Collaborators**

Look for folks who excel at active listening as well as articulating their own position. Adaptable, creative, and open-minded folks who understand and appreciate accountability are ideal. Those who have experience with agile systems can provide extra value by providing guidance in implementing or expanding agile methodologies in your own workflows.

Since they'll likely be working with other team members in multiple time zones, remote workers also need to understand and utilize asynchronous communication as well as real-time connections with others. They're ready to use their communication skills to make connections that will serve them and their team well whether they're on the phone, in a video chat, or meeting face-to-face.

3. **Organized but Flexible**

With supervision at a minimum and the need for effective and accurate communication and collaboration at their peak, it pays to hire remote employees who can tame the chaos and meet their obligations while still having the flexibility to roll with the punches.

This doesn't only apply to getting the job done, of course. In the new normal, the most productive and satisfied remote workers appreciate and embrace a healthy work-life balance.

A Good Fit for Company Culture

Determining whether a remote candidate is a good “culture-fit” before during the hiring process and before onboarding will save both you and your potential employee a lot of frustration. Those who share your company’s ideals and goals, can function effectively and contentedly within your workflows, and find your compensation, benefits, and work style attractive will be much more likely to join *and* stay once they’ve had a chance to test the waters.

5. Technically Savvy

Remote workers need to be familiar with whatever software and hardware is required to get the job done. This doesn’t necessarily rule out folks with substantial experience but more traditional work histories, of course, provided they’re willing and able to take some training to get up to speed.

For example, at an established brick-and-mortar company that’s making the transition to full-time remote jobs for their teams, the combination of veterans with deep experience and new hires with technological savvy can create ideal conditions for cross-training and building strong collaborative bonds.

Where to Find Remote Workers

You know who you’re looking for—but where can you find them? Job posting websites like LinkedIn and Indeed can bring in a bumper crop of candidates, but you can narrow the scope (and improve the chances of finding highly qualified candidates with the best talent and culture fit for your organization) with a few other options.

Consider:

- **“Boomerangers”:**

- 4. Also called *boomerang hires*, these folks already know your workplace, culture, and standards because they worked for you before and left on good terms. In a competitive market, past employees can be woo’d to

return with the right offer, whether it's a better position than their current job, better benefits, a more flexible schedule, etc. Their experience and familiarity can be strong assets, especially if you're constructing a remote team consisting of existing staff and new hires.

• **Remote-Focused Recruiters:**

Staffing companies who specialize in placing remote workers (e.g., Robert Half, FlexJobs, etc.) will help you locate the candidates who have the technical skills, talent, and experience working for and with remote companies to fill your needs.

• **Existing Team Members:**

Whether you're filling positions from within or looking for referrals, your current staff can be a valuable resource in establishing your remote workforce. Current team members who have the necessary technical acumen can provide mentorship to new hires who have the skills but lack familiarity with your company. And referrals will likely be high-quality, given your team's knowledge of your organization's work style, culture, and business needs.

Also, don't overlook the allure of a well-tailored benefits package when posting job descriptions to recruiters, hiring companies, and job boards.

Remote workers have many of the same concerns as those in the office, but may not have access to important options such as career development programs or those face-to-face interactions that provide internal and external networking opportunities.

Professional development options (such as conference and seminar tickets, online courses, etc.) can help remote workers grow into even greater assets for your company, while quality-of-life perks such as generous vacation plans, comprehensive health care, and discount programs for local resources or memberships to professional associations and co-working spaces can help you retain them.

Tips for the Interview Process

Remote hiring sometimes means the interview process itself will be remote. Depending on company and legal requirements, it may even be the only way you can connect with remote candidates.

If you're interviewing virtually via video interview or phone, consider your options when assessing job seekers.

• **Make the process as painless as possible**

For initial phone or video calls, use a standard, readily available platform such as Slack, Zoom, Discord, Skype, etc. You can move on to more advanced tech once the evaluation process begins in earnest.

• **Assess their culture fit and skills**

Tools such as Harver and ThriveMap help you evaluate potential hires for culture fit. Hiring managers can take the skills assessment portion of the hiring process to the next level with tools like Jobma (which allows for video-based, asynchronous interviewing) and SparkHire (which allows you to record and compare video interviews to find the right candidates).

Suggested Interview Questions for Remote Employees

As you're evaluating remote candidates and selecting the best from the available talent pool, be ready to ask the questions that will help you further refine your selections and ensure potential remote workers have the combination of talent, skill, and techn knowledge you need.

Some of the questions you might ask include, but aren't limited to:

- What are your greatest challenges as a remote worker?
- Do you have a history of working remotely or for remote companies?
- Describe your process for staying organized and on-task.

- How do you keep your motivation high during long periods with no face-to-face interaction with your team members? What methods do you use to “keep in touch” and stay engaged with your tasks and supporting company goals?
- Share your experience with collaboration and communication software when working remotely. (You can expand on this question to cover other software as well, depending on the specific needs of the position and your organization)
- What’s your communication style? How do you avoid miscommunication when you’re on social media, using instant messaging apps, or writing an email?
- Name four characteristics that make you an effective and flexible remote employee.
- How do you maintain work-life balance when working remotely? What needs and expectations do you have with regard to daily, weekly, and monthly scheduling?

Recruiting Remote Employees Doesn’t Have to Be a Struggle

Identify your priorities, search out candidates who meet your requirements and match your company culture, and invest in the tools, training, and tech you need to bring everyone together for maximum performance.

Sooner than you might think, you’ll have remote teams who are ready to face new challenges, work together creatively and effectively to support company goals, and create a strong collaborative bond that spans the globe.

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