UPWORK

Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding from Anywhere

By Tsedal Neeley, Harvard Business School

Book summary

"Remote Work Revolution" is a practical guide showing workers and business leaders how to build teams that work closely together—while spanning geographies, generations, job roles, and cultures. Each chapter offers best practices for remote teams and addresses common challenges, such as building trust and alignment among team members and maintaining productivity.

In addition to anecdotal stories and research, each chapter has an action guide for leaders and teams to help them create lasting change. The brief activities are designed to bring teams closer together by increasing understanding of and implementing key remote work practices. Since life and business are ever changing, the author encourages teams to revisit the action guide at regular intervals so that teams remain effective, connected, and engaged.

8 ways to succeed from anywhere

"Remote Work Revolution" is divided into chapters that focus on the following goals. The book's action guide includes steps readers can take to achieve each one.

01 Hold a team launch to ensure every member understands and agrees on how they can work together most effectively.

Follow up with periodic relaunch sessions to maintain performance. In a team launch, everyone must agree on shared:

- Goals that make clear what the team is working to achieve.
- Understanding about each member's roles, functions, and constraints.
- Knowledge of available resources, from budgets to information.
- Processes for how teammates will collaborate effectively.

02 Build trust in colleagues you've never met in person by:

- Determining what information is needed to develop the level of trust required to get a job done.
- Developing empathy by seeing how others experience you and your actions.
- Creating virtual experiences that promote cognitive and emotional trust.

03 Increase and sustain productivity by:

- Equipping teams with the tools (e.g., technology and office equipment) and resources they need and trusting them to figure out how best to achieve their work goals.
- Encouraging autonomy—don't micromanage or use surveillance tools, which are often couched as wellness and productivity efforts.
- Reminding the team of their shared mission, and showing each person how they contribute to it.

04 Know how to use the right digital tools by:

- Mixing synchronous and asynchronous tools to match your goals and reduce tech exhaustion.
- Promoting nonwork exchanges on internal social tools, like Slack, which can increase trust and bonding. Lead by example so employees feel comfortable doing so.
- Remembering that rich media, like video, is more effective in more ambiguous situations. Lean media, like text-based chat, is more effective in straightforward situations.

05 Transform your agile team to operate remotely by:

- Promoting spontaneous collaboration by sending a brainstorming email or group document prior to a meeting.
- Giving each person a dedicated time to speak at every meeting.
- Scheduling frequent launches and relaunches.

06 Inspire a global team to succeed across differences by:

- Encouraging less fluent members to speak up, and checking in with them to make sure they understand what's being discussed.
- Focusing on how the diversity of backgrounds makes the team more capable instead of different.

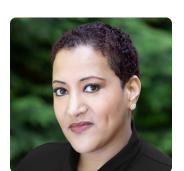**07** Shift leadership style for virtual teams by:

- Minimizing differences to avoid subgroups and strained relationships.
- De-emphasizing status, like job titles, by recognizing individual strengths.
- Binding teams by stressing group identity or team goals and how each person contributes to the goals.
- Encouraging team members to appreciate each other's differences and feel safe voicing disagreements.

08 Prepare your team for a global crisis (e.g., climate change, geopolitical issue) by:

- Staying in the know by consuming a variety of international media to anticipate how global issues may impact your business.
- Framing your situation and risks by talking to colleagues, workers, and subject matter experts for insights.
- Acting immediately once you have a strategy—it doesn't need to be perfect.
- Being ready to make big changes, such as hiring new leaders, to meet the crisis and understand what's needed to pull through.

> "Teams and leaders who use this book will have the cumulative knowledge and skills necessary to break through routine norms and embody enduring behaviors that benefit yourselves, your groups, and your organizations as a whole."
>
> Tsedal Neeley

About the author

Tsedal Neeley is the Naylor Fitzhugh Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. In addition to teaching, she advises companies on remote work, increasing agility, global expansion, and digital transformation.