

Get Things Done: The Ultimate Cheat Sheet for Remote Work

Print this out and keep it next to you. Then, when you feel like something isn't working, check this cheat sheet for ideas to get unstuck. Share with the team so they can identify opportunities for improvement, too. Happy remote working!

Recruiting

- When remote, think worldwide for team recruitment, and not just local.
- Conduct interviews with at least one live exercise on a smartboard canvas to explore how candidates think.
- Invite final candidates to sit in on a remote meeting. Get their ideas and feedback on what they saw.

Goal setting

- **Use the simple OKR method of tracking results for milestones:** Objectives/Key Results. Write them on your main canvas and add weekly comments and mark-ups to track progress.
- **Sort weekly meeting agenda items by most important first.** Stick to your meeting time. If you run out of time, roll agenda items to the next meeting or solve via collaboration on Slack or Email.

Management

- **If you are in the office but have remote workers,** try to work from home from time to time. When leaders take advantage of remote work, it sends a positive signal that this is part of the culture.
- **Get to know employees' routines** like when they pick up their children or what time do they break for lunch. Respect boundaries around these critical rituals.
- **Try to mirror in-office experiences** such as free lunch days or birthdays by sending a lunch or a cake to remote employees and celebrating virtually.

Meetings

- **Have set weekly 1:1 and team meetings.** It seems obvious, but it's critical to ensure successful meetings.
- **Have an agenda** at least one day prior to the weekly meeting so everyone can comment and be prepared.
- **Don't do status meetings.** Status should be covered by working towards a sprint goal and completing it or not. Only schedule meetings that focus on problem-solving or decision-making and require a conversation when meeting goals are at risk.
- **If too many tasks seem to be slipping or goals are not being met,** try 10-15 minute daily 'stand-up meetings' for updates on the work they've completed, what they plan to do next, and any obstacles that stand in their way.
- **Consider scheduling an important meeting as a lunch meeting** and have lunch sent to each employee or offer coupon codes for food delivery via DoorDash or UberEats, etc.

Collaboration

- **Have a single place,** infinite virtual canvases work great, where you can post your OKRs, project apps, files, and documents. Track progress, annotate freely, leave notes.
- **Make sure you have one platform for communication.** It can be email or Slack, or Teams. Pick one and stick to it.
- **Put time and effort into creating your Techstack.**
 - At a minimum, you should have:
 - Chat - Teams, Slack, Yammer
 - File Management - Dropbox, Google Drive
 - Meetings - Skype, Zoom
 - Shared smartboard - Vibe
 - Project management - Trello, Asana
- **Don't let the vision statement go stale.** Refer back to it frequently and/or amend it as needed to match reality.
- **Invite members of other departments** to do weekly AMAs (ask me anything).
- **When project planning, make sure all the team members are on board** and accepting the project management plan, and that all the critical steps are in place. Agree on steps. Who approves what phases? Do cross-functional teams need to be looped in? A shared canvas is a great place to ideate through this process.

Getting work done

- **Break projects into steps and milestones** and then convert this to weekly sprints or a kanban board. Track sprints on platforms like Trello or Asana. Put these on your canvas.
- Have team members **write down their daily or weekly goals** in your communication tool.
- **Create a system** where people can indicate they are 'heads down' or 'in flow' and can't be interrupted unless urgent. For example, Slack has a 'headphone' icon. One interruption can disrupt the flow for 10-20 minutes.
- **Create a team agreement.** Includes appropriate communication methods, SLA's for responding, situations that call for video and audio calls, the "core hours" individuals agree to work, what 'check-ins' are appropriate, the frequency and timing of team meetings, and 1:1 meetings.
- **Have occasional all-day co-working sessions** where cameras and audio are on all day, and people can ask questions and get answers in real-time (while also respecting 'flow' time), just like in a co-working space.
- **If team members indicate interruptions are hurting productivity,** try the Pomodoro Technique, where teams dedicate themselves to a task for 20 minutes with no interruptions. Slack has a feature called 'TomatoBot' to enforce this.

Team building - motivation

- **Brainstorm to create a shared, simple vision for your team.** It's a statement of the team's overall goal and how it supports the company's vision. For example, marketing might say: 'Communicate to our audience that we fuel data science to achieve their biggest goals'.
- **Reward teams at the end of successful sprints** with everything from shout-outs, to gift cards, to in-person retreats for meeting annual goals.
- **Share project files and docs as soon as they are created** so the team can track progress and not just final results.
- **Don't cold-start meetings.** Start with personal 'watercooler' moments like 'what did you do this weekend?' or 'what are you watching on Netflix?'
- **Periodically appoint team members other than 'managers'** to set the agenda and run virtual meetings. This can help all contributors feel heard and valuable.
- **Share customer feedback,** good or bad in weekly meetings so team members can gain perspective on their role in the ecosystem of the company.
- At the end of the week, **have each team member write down their 'good thing', 'bad thing', 'what I'm looking forward to'** to summarize the week and look ahead to next week. Smartboards are a great place to post these.
- **Pair new remote workers with a more seasoned remote 'buddy'.** Have the buddies meet regularly to train up and help the new person.
- **Do nothing. Encourage breaks.** Don't feel the pressure to be productive at all times. You need to take a break every day and do something for yourself. Whether that's meditation, making a healthy lunch, or watching YouTube videos, make sure you can refresh your mind.