

# The Need For Speed

Organizational Agility and Resilience in a Working Remote World

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# Why Working Remote Matters

## Does it feel like the world has jumped forward ten years in 2020?

McKinsey reveals the massive changes that have been thrust upon every organization in [The Quickening](#), including:

- U.S. e-commerce penetration experienced a 10-year growth in three months.
- 75% of U.S. consumers have shifted their brand loyalty and the stores and websites where they shop.
- China has compressed several years of competitive, consumer, digital, global, and pre-existing societal trends in a few short months.

## What are the implications for businesses worldwide?

### Rethinking ways of working

- Speeding up and delegating decision-making
- Stepping up execution excellence
- Cultivating extraordinary partnerships

### Reimagining structure

- Flattening the structure
- Unleashing agile, empowered teams
- Making hybrid work, work

### Reshaping talent

- Identifying tomorrow's leaders today
- Relearning how to learn
- Rethinking the role of CEOs and leaders



**We've seen two years of digital transformation in two months.**

- Microsoft CEO Satya Nadellar



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# Remote Values and Principles

## Remote Values

How has working remotely impacted your organizational values and principles? We suggest organizations consider adopting four fundamental values to work remote effectively:

### 1 Emphasize Real Skills over Technical Skills

Technical skills are a priority that can be learned. Real skills are developed over time in the community with others and are essential to a thriving remote workplace culture.

### 2 Prioritize Cultural Resilience over Strategic Planning

Performing ongoing assessments of 1) remote workplace culture, 2) where an organization wants to be, and 3) changes required to get there are prerequisite activities for executing strategic objectives.

### 3 Inspire Individuals and Teams over Managing Tasks

Individual responsibility, integrity, and accountability are the behaviors that enable individuals to self-organize and self-direct their work. *Inspired* teams are continuously motivated to test, pivot, and innovate. Encourage *individual responsibility* rather than authoritative direction.

### 4 Pursue Outcomes over Outputs

Breakthrough success is built on the shoulders of many good ideas. Remote-first organizations should encourage risk-taking and celebrate the **emergent** ideas that teams generate.



## Remote Principles

*The following ten principles will guide your organization towards speed, agility, and resilience when working remotely:*

- 1** Remote teams perform best when they organize their work in iterations.
- 2** Effective remote teams place a high value on interpersonal skills and encourage teammates to grow in this area continuously.
- 3** Teams that plan their work are the most productive.
- 4** Diverse interpretations enhance innovation and make for a better outcome.
- 5** Teams that respect each members' vulnerability and integrity inspire trust between individuals.
- 6** The self-directed remote worker's highest priority is accountability to the team.
- 7** Continuous attention to enhancing meeting culture will improve individual and team performance.
- 8** Remote teams that consistently track outcomes, leverage innovations, and pivot efficiently.
- 9** Organizations and teams that combine globally diverse talent realize intrinsic advantages.
- 10** A common taxonomy is required to support organizations with remote workers.



**Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.**

*- Dalai Lama*



# Remote Strategy



***What are the building blocks of an effective strategy to build speed, agility, and resilience when working remotely?***

## **Values and Principles**

As we just explored, every team member must know *your* values and principles when working remotely.

Have you examined your values and principles to discover their effectiveness in leading remote teams?

## **Vision and Purpose**

The clarity of your vision and purpose is also vital when working remotely.

Do your remote team members know and understand your vision?

Are they aligned with your purpose?

If you're not sure, it is time to find out!

## **Goals and Objectives**

How clear are your goals and objectives to your remote teams?

How clear are your team's goals and objectives to you?

Are those goals and objectives aligned from top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top?

## **Structural Alignment**

The days of top-down command and control structure are ancient history.

Have you turned your organization "upside-down" to serve your customers?



## Communication

Communication in most organizations has been ineffective before we all started working remotely. It's even more vital to get it right in our working-remote world. What are you doing to get better and faster at communicating effectively with your remote teams?

## Culture Eats Strategy

Are you working at least as hard on your Culture as you are on your Strategy? Speed, agility, and resilience live or die with your culture first and your strategy second.

## Outcomes, not Outputs

Are your teams focused on delivering value for your customers first? If not, where will you find the essential gains in performance, productivity, and profitability necessary to compete in a working-remote world?

## Servant Leadership

What if everyone was a leader in your organization? What if everyone continuously pursued serving their team members and your customers? How will your organization be more resilient?

## Executive Action Team

Is your senior leadership inspiring leaders in your organization to lead remotely? If your competition is leading remotely, your competitive advantage may be slipping away each day you fail to do so.



**The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.**

*- Michael Porter*



# Remote Structure

**?** *What structural challenges and opportunities related to working remotely have been thrust upon your organization?*

## Recruiting Global Talent

You are no longer just looking for the best available local talent. In a working-remote world, the best available talent on the planet is available to you.

How will you find them?

## Assessing Skills

What skills do you look for when seeking the best available talent? If your organization is like most, you tend to evaluate candidates on their technical skills.

While technical skills are essential, personal, interpersonal, and team skills are the real keys to speed, agility, and resilience. How will you evaluate those skills in attracting talent?

## Selecting Teams and Hiring

Who selects team members in your organization? Your answer needs to be “the team” if you genuinely want a competitive advantage in a working-remote world.

## Aligning Roles

Have you transformed the roles in your organization to build cross-functional teams and leveraged generalizing specialists? How have those changes affected your team facilitators, Product Owners, leaders, and managers?



## Considering Size

Size matters. What is the right size for your teams? What do you do when your teams get too big? How do groups act if their team needs more talent?

## Allocating Resources

How are resources allocated within your groups or between teams? When and how do you split and spawn new units?

## Developing Skills

What is your organization doing to develop individual and team skills? How often and how much do you invest in upskilling team members in technical and personal, interpersonal, and team skills?

## Creating an Environment

How do you support creating an effective environment for team members working remotely?

## Recognizing Contributors

How are team members recognized for their contributions? What rituals have become part of your culture? What practices do you need?

## Compensating Workers

What can your people look forward to regarding their base and incentive compensation opportunities? How has working remotely thrust new challenges and opportunities on your organization to align your goals, roles, processes, and rewards?

## Removing Members

What happens when someone needs to be voted off a team? Are they simply pushed off on another team, or are your teams empowered to make the right decisions for the organization as a whole? Do you trust people to do the right thing for your business?



**You don't build a business.  
You build people and then the people  
build a business.**

*- Zig Ziglar*



# Remote Communications

## 1 ? *How well is your organization communicating while working remotely?*

Here are four essential areas that can make a difference in your organization's speed, agility, and resilience:

### 1 **Language**

How has working remotely changed the precision with which team members must speak with each other?

Think about how our words impact effective communication when we're in the same room!

Next, add technology, being on the other side of the planet, working at different times of the day, and primary language to the equation.

How much does your organization prioritize communication in a working-remote world?

### 2 **Patterns**

All of us have different communication patterns that also depend on our communications objectives. Are we attempting to clarify, negotiate, persuade, motivate, teach, or something else?

How are our communication styles different from other team members?

What must we do to adapt and achieve our communication goals?



3

### Meetings

Meetings may be the one thing organizations cannot avoid, so they need to be productive.

How is working remotely impacting your meeting culture?

What are you going to do about it?

4

### Documentation

Here is another challenge and opportunity in remote communications: documentation.

Successful firms invest in creating a common taxonomy and having the discipline to publish documentation promptly and consistently.



**A meeting is an event at which minutes are kept and hours are lost.**

*- Joseph Stilwell*



# Remote Culture

**?** *As your organization has been increasingly pulled to work remotely, how has your culture changed? Have you gained or lost speed, agility, and resilience?*

## Speed and Agility

How does your organization respond to change?

Are you a passenger ship, unafraid of icebergs ahead?

Are you a battleship, where every role and process is precisely defined and executed?

Are you a pirate ship, where every person can perform every role and rapidly adapt to changing circumstances?

Which culture better serves the current and future world of working remotely?

## Resilience

Does your organization adapt and respond to accelerating changes that can happen in a moment, or are you waiting for the strategic plan update to take your next step?

Which approach makes you stronger in a working-remote world?

## Purpose

Are your teams aligned with your organizational purpose?

How do you know when they are out of alignment?

How do you get realigned when your wheels start to wobble?

## Competence

How are your teams and team members consistently improving while working remotely?

What are you doing to develop their capabilities as individuals, teams, and organizational members?



## Integrity

Are all your remote teams and team members able to speak their truth without consequence?  
What organizational behaviors encourage integrity, and which actions discourage it?  
How will you inspire more integrity?

## Transparency

Do all team members have access to all the information they need to deliver value for your customers?  
How do they gain access to this information when it isn't readily available?

## Commitment

Are team members committed to doing "whatever it takes" to deliver customer value, or are they holding back doing only what they must?  
How do you inspire more commitment from team members working remotely?

## Empowerment

How much authority does each team member have to step up and take responsibility for team speed and agility?

## Accountability

Is each team member accountable to other team members for producing outcomes that deliver customer value?  
How do you get more accountability from teams and team members?  
What are the consequences when accountability isn't present with your remote workers?

## Trust

Can you trust team members to do what they say they will do? Can they trust you and other members of senior leadership? How can you gain more reciprocal trust?



**Culture eats Strategy for lunch.**

*- Peter Drucker*



# Remote Outcomes



***Have you relentlessly chased the holy grail of improved productivity in your organization?***

***Does it appear further away than ever now while you are working remotely?***

***It's closer than you think. All you need to do is stop focusing on outputs and start focusing on outcomes.***

## Customer First

Nothing matters more while working remotely than shifting team members' focus on customer value as the first objective.

## Planning

If you want to gain speed, agility, and resilience while working remotely, you need to move away from old notions and empower your teams with planning responsibilities.

Although you'll participate in developing the Quarterly Roadmap and approve the Monthly Release, you must surrender control of Weekly Iterations for your teams to reach the next level.

## Backlog

There will always be more work to be done that can get done.

The key to success is to empower your teams to decide what work is essential to do now and what can be deferred or eliminated.

## Grooming

This process enables teams and team members to "work the work" and determine the best course of action to do the work that produces the best outcome for your customer. The emphasis is on not doing work that doesn't produce outcomes.



## Demo

Your remote teams must get to “showcase their work” through demonstrations to team members, product owners, customers, and senior leadership.

## Estimating

Estimating is the powerful front side of the coin of productivity. Teams and team members must learn how to evaluate their work and share their estimates both within and across teams.

## Productivity

The most vital measure of productivity is the outcomes delivered for the customer. Did the team produce what was needed? Delivering customer value is a higher priority than measuring outputs.

## Simplicity

Simplicity is a vital concept in working remotely that demands focus on delivering only the Minimum Viable Product, valuing Work Not Done, and being willing to say NO!

## Predictable Velocity

Over time, proper estimating and delivering outcomes enables teams to predict what they can achieve in providing value for customers. This leads to increased speed and agility while building a more resilient organization.

## Continuous Improvement (Kaizen)

Remote-working organizations need to embrace the tenets of continuous improvement and the perpetual quest for perfection. Your competition will never stand still, so your organization must continuously strive for improvement as well.



**Improve quality and you  
automatically improve productivity.**

*- W. Edwards Deming*



# Remote Leadership

## Self-Awareness

Your actions as a remote leader are more important than what you say.

## Stewardship

What if you needed your team more than they needed you? How would you change your behavior *to serve* your remote teams rather than waiting for them to serve you?

## Motivation

How do you inspire others? Stay focused on your shared values and principles.

## Listening

We have all heard the ratio – two ears, one mouth – *listen at least twice as much as you talk*. It's extra crucial with your remote teams because the only way they can deliver customer value is by *sharing their insights*, not listening to yours.

## Empathy

Can you demonstrate the emotional intelligence strength of genuinely caring about each of your remote team members? *Empathy in action* is a game-changing step towards speed, agility, and resilience.

## Humility

What do you do when you make a mistake? Do you own the responsibility and acknowledge that you are human too in front of your teams? It's a vital step on the path from *me-driven* leadership to *team-driven* leadership.



## Mentoring

Mentoring is about helping people become more of who they are, not making more of who you are. Who can you mentor as a leader on your remote teams – *today*?

## Coaching

Coaching is different from mentoring. It is more directive and intended to help people eliminate negative behaviors and *adopt positive behaviors* to improve their remote teams' contributions.

## Foresight

Foresight is the ability to leverage previous experiences to guide future decisions. The power of foresight as a remote leader is to help team members reveal the stories of their experiences and explore how they can *create better outcomes* from both your own and their learning.

## Vision

Remote leaders *translate vision* into reality. It involves considering the past and present and framing a picture of the future for team members.

## Continuous Development

Continuous development involves becoming aware of team members' strengths and weaknesses, then developing action plans to leverage those strengths and improve their weaknesses.

## Culture of Trust

The objective of leading remote teams is to build a culture of trust. Your position and authority give you followers, but it is the trust that makes you a Leader.



## Leadership Challenges

Remote leadership creates different challenges and opportunities for Senior Management, Product Owners, Team Members, and Team Facilitators.

A *shared commitment* to building a trust culture is the overarching goal in developing speed, agility, and resilience in a working-remote world.



**Be the change you wish to see in the world.**

*- Mahatma Gandhi*





# About Remote Velocity

Remote Velocity brings decades of hands-on leadership experience leading remote teams around the world. Our firm commitment to values and principles, combined with disciplined strategies and practices, forms the foundation for us to help teams and organizations accelerate their journey to speed, agility, and resilience while working remotely. We work with individuals and groups to develop real personal, interpersonal, and team skills essential for effective remote work.



## **Andrew Nelson** **Founder & Managing Partner**

During more than 20 years of working in the information technology management field, Mr. Nelson has successfully led onsite, offshore, and remote teams, building highly effective technical solutions for diverse businesses.

His collective experience has culminated in a set of refined skills specific to Product Ownership, Agile Transformation, and Remote Resource Management. These skills converge around developing and implementing process and procedural improvements designed to optimize local operational efficiency and remote production.

As Remote Velocity's Founder and Managing Partner, Mr. Nelson leads its product and service development. He also oversees client engagements and accelerates their journey to speed, agility, and resilience.

