managing a distributed team
by guest contributor Anne-Marie Lowery

A bit about Anne-Marie, she is a senior HR business leader in the tech industry and also runs a truly innovative coaching company called 'The Inside Out Coach' utilising the power of nature, the outdoors to connect, breakthrough and build new habits. Anne-Marie is a certified Executive and Life Coach and hold qualifications in Fitness Instruction and Personal Training. In addition, she holds a Degree in Communications Studies, a Masters in Human Resource Management and certified through the British Psychology Society for Psychometric Assessments.

Structuring your day - for you and your team

Starting the Workday :

- Similar to carving out a dedicated space, having a workday routine can be helpful to ensure you don't end up in a mode of working all the time. You should strive for a defined start and finish to your day, and that means creating "context barriers" that show the edges. Some tips for getting your day started in a regular way:
- Just like going to the office, take a shower and get dressed
- Have breakfast, or coffee. Read the news, or whatever you like to do before starting work. "Own your morning."
- Some may want to build a "commute" into their morning routine; they'll get in their car/on their bike, take a spin around the block, and when they get home it's "time for work."
- Go to work: Having some separation between "Home" and "Work" is helpful for both focus and for maintaining work-life balance. While some people may choose to use coworking spaces/hackerspaces to achieve this separation, this guide is going to focus on people who choose to work from home. Where possible keep your work-area and personal space within your home separate. Keep work-related activities in a dedicated area (room/space/desk) in your home, and if you need to work, go there. Avoid the temptation to take your laptop out to the personal spaces. If you can't set up a permanent work area, consider having a routine for getting things set up/shut down in a particular place.

During the Workday :

During your working hours, it's important to have some discipline but to also break up your day. When you think about being in the office, remember that you spend a good bit of time moving between meetings, grabbing coffee, and taking care of other things (even car maintenance, haircuts, and the dentist!). When you are remote, it can be easy to drift towards one extreme - getting distracted by all the non-work things at home - or the other - working non-stop and burning yourself out.

- Make sure you take a break for lunch. And also, make sure you have something good to eat for lunch! We sometimes take for granted the presence of the cafes and mini kitchens on campus.
- Take regular breaks through your day to get up and stretch, walk around, interact with your pets or family members who may also be home. Make sure to focus your eyes on far-away objects while on your breaks to give them some rest.

- Be present via Slack, Teams, or your comms tools during most of the work hours. If you're going to step out for a little bit, for example to run an errand, let your team know in advance. This helps with the expectation that remote workers are always at their computer.
- Set aside time to focus on project work. When you're on Slack or Teams all day, it's easy to have all your time disappear. Add some blocks of time where you turn it off.

Ending the Workday :

Maintaining a strict "quitting time," even though your laptop is just in the other room, is just as important as getting your work done. It can be tempting to let work continue to drift into the evenings where that wouldn't be normal for you in the office.

- If you built a commute into your morning, do the same in the evening.

- If you have separate space for work, commit to keeping your laptop in that space.