Remote workers stay relevant, engaged, and connected despite working remotely by:

- Actively reaching out to onsite team members/managers via email or IM on project-related work topics (73%)
- Proactively communicating with colleagues (72%)
- Proactively communicating with team/project leader or manager (66%)

Read on for specific tips on how to effectively work remotely....

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2 For our purposes, “working remotely” is defined as performing one’s work while located at a site different from a client or onsite place of employment or team location.
Survey respondents were very generous in sharing their best practices and tips for successfully working remotely. Virtually all suggestions are presented here, even when duplicative, to emphasize the importance of these recommendations.

To the survey respondents, "Proactive Communication" means...

...Taking Initiative
- Include the customers/team in the process. Updates are helpful but results and outcome keeps me in business. Results are the key, so understand what the customer is looking for.
- Take the initiative to communicate with clients and colleagues.
- Take the initiative to communicate with others and to ensure that they know you are available to discuss projects and answer questions.
- Keep in touch with my managers, before they ask me about projects/timelines.
- Provide my manager updates on my projects before they ask for them.
- Understand the company culture and learn to navigate it effectively.
- Consider how aspects of my work may affect others, both on the greater team and "our customer."
- Initiate interaction with colleagues.
- Alert others of circumstances or project status whether the information is solicited or even strictly necessary.
- Communicate before there’s a crisis.
- Reach out before there’s a problem, or to suggest a solution/improvement, or sometimes just to say hello.
- Take the initiative by reaching out to the rest of the team regarding current projects (clarifications, timeline, etc.) and future projects, without waiting for someone on the team to reach out to me first.
- Keep my project workload and schedule visible to manager and colleagues.
- Send initial correspondence (that is, with separate subject line, not replying to an ongoing message).
- Communicate plans before executing them so the client know that I am planning for the future.
- Communicate in a way that anticipates issues, questions, updates.
- Not waiting until there’s a problem to get in touch.
- Offer proactive project updates to your manager, etc.
- "Check in" with team members and managers; scheduling updates and reports via email or telephone; asking questions early in a project or process to ensure that everyone is "on the same page."
- Give project status updates before being asked (including overall summaries, immediate communication of issues or potential issues, and celebrations of task accomplishments).
- Speak to stakeholders to find out their needs and inform them of my goals.
- Reach out to establish relationships and to communicate concerns before they escalate.
- Ask questions when they come up vs saying "I didn’t know what to do so I decided to do XX."
- Initiate a conversation rather than just waiting for the client to write first.
- Reach out to my manager or colleagues about projects.
- Make sure that I know that my plans are understood and that everyone is on board with it.
- Be on top of things.
- Ask questions and make suggestions from project beginning.
- Get in touch when communication has not been scheduled.
- Reach out to someone before they reach out to you or before a situation comes to a head.
- Answer questions that have not yet been asked.
- Preemptively communicate what is going on and what will happen when.
- Be the one to start the interaction.
- Check in to say that we are still on target for due dates without them having to reach out to me or sending questions when they arise rather than waiting for delivery of the project.
- Identify and address potential concerns or pitfalls before they become issues.
- Anticipate the questions or concerns that my contracting manager and/or coworkers may have and providing the information necessary to address those concerns before I am asked about them.

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Communicate with others about a job task in advance; anticipate the details around working on it, rather than after
- Reach out to interact with someone before they reach out to you
- Take the initiative to communicate or respond to a situation
- Initiate meetings, emails, phone calls without prompts
- Initiate the communication
- Raise concerns, ask questions, respond quickly
- Initiate communication rather than just respond
- Keep engaged, be accessible at all times, over-communicate
- Communicate possible timeline impacts before they are urgent, let people know when you will be out of the office, ask questions.
- Initiate the communication and let others know where each project stands
- Anticipate trouble spots or challenges and taking action to head them off at the pass
- Communicate whether there is an issue or not
- Plan ahead of time and communicate this plan
- Be the first to engage via email, phone, and/or instant messaging to anticipate and resolve issues
- Initiate discussions rather than waiting or reacting
- Communicate without being asked or expected to do so to get feedback/updates or push a project
- Reach out when something needs to be known/done instead of at the next scheduled meeting
- Get buy-in from the customer (manager or client) about the approach you plan to take for the project
- Ensure the customer (manager or client) has adequate updates on project status
- Communicate any concerns or questions
- Do not hesitate to initiate and/or lead discussion topics while maintaining a cooperative, receptive, and collegial attitude
- Reach out to colleagues early in the process with the goal of averting problems down the road
- Actively reach out to one’s client/manager
- Initiate communication for clarification of work demands or simply to stay connected.
- Share plans for projects ahead of time and keeping team members informed each step of the way
- Ensure that activities are not reactive, but instead proactive
- Initiate communication, rather than waiting for someone else to reach out or schedule meetings
- Get ahead of the ball and identify issues and potential solutions prior to an issue becoming a problem
- Anticipates or prevents a problem on a project
- Reach out with questions as they occur rather than wait for a scheduled meeting; I often schedule a pre-kick off meeting with the project owner to make sure s/he knows I’m engaged in his/her project
- Make contact with others when I have an idea or information to share, a question to, or need some sort of additional training for a project
- Communicate updates on projects for which I have responsibility on a regular basis so that my manager always has up-to-date information to share to his/her management
- Stay one-step ahead
- Not waiting for others to reach out regarding an issue
- Communicate my schedule for remote working in advance.
- Make the effort to tell others what’s going on
- Share with team information as soon as necessary; reply promptly to emails
- Detailed and complete emails with lists of questions, instructions, action items assigned to a specific person, use of bold type or red, effective subject lines
- Ask for real-time meetings if necessary and include all stakeholders
- Frequently review timelines and ask colleagues for updates.
- Keep abreast of factors that influence the success of the project and give input (via team phone conferences, email, or phone calls) where I believe it will be helpful
- Reach out to say hello or ask questions or provide updates without waiting to be queried
- Proactive communication means taking responsibility to ensure that all deadlines are met and that potential issues are raised and addressed in timely fashion to maintain timelines and complete projects.

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To the survey respondents, "Proactive Communication" also means…

…Build Relationships
- Build relationships before they are needed
- Make contact to provide updates, when issues arise, or just to check in
- Communicate with others as if I communicate in person; if there is possible misunderstanding or miscommunication, try to talk by phone or in person
- Build a rapport with team members
- Bring potential problems to my colleagues’ attention
- Reach out to people more frequently than I may if I were onsite
- Reach out - for example, if in the office for a visit, walk around and say hello - make your presence known rather than waiting for others to come to you

…Use Technology Wisely
- Communicate using the technology most suitable to the recipients work style and preference
- Stay on top of project issues using whatever communication tool is most appropriate to address urgency of the issue; usually, email is less effective than phone or SKYPE except when time zones are a barrier
- Let colleagues know about my workflow and issues.
- Be judicious: sometimes use an email, sometimes a phone call
- Use email effectively -- focused subject lines and emails.
- Use phone/text when email does not work.
- Send notification, such as, “I received your project and can meet the deadline,” instead of allowing the requestor to wonder
- Phone communication is essential if not able to visit on site, in addition to other types of communication, since it builds stronger working relationships
- Immediate problems are dealt with by phone
- Emails, phone calls, and definitely face-to-face time when feasible
- Be willing and available for conference calls.
- Pick up the phone (and answer it!) when needed
- Nothing replaces eyeball-to-eyeball connections…use skype or zoom if in-person isn’t available
- Contact other team members by phone, fax, text, email, or Pony Express to ensure that they are frequently updated on the status of my work
- Initiate phone calls or emails

…Be Consistent
- Send weekly email summaries of project status and meeting participation
- Send weekly updates that do not require a response
- If leading meetings, always send agenda items/updates
- Keep all parties regularly informed and up to date with the status of my contributions
- Send regular emails, connecting via phone or messenger, regularly scheduled 1:1 on the calendar, occasional onsite visits, be present/participate when calling into meetings
- Reach out without prompting to provide updates or ask questions
- Communicate openly and frequently
- Follow up after online meetings with minutes, ask clear questions
- Let managers or colleagues know in advance when I have light or very heavy workload
- Clearly communicate on a timely basis regarding project or process-related work,
- Schedule (and keep!) regular conversations with Manager or Project Lead
- Communicate regularly, provide full updates on projects, and alert appropriate colleagues when something is completed
Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Make sure to update people on project progress
- Ensure expectations are clear throughout
- Check in with stakeholders throughout a project not just when there are problems.
- Stay informed via spreadsheets or other documents to ensure I know remote workers’ project status
- Provide consistent updates/progress reports to the team lead
- Keep leaders in the loop about what I am working on and my progress
- Check in periodically with status updates.
- Reach out instead of waiting for others to contact you
- Initiate the contact; being more detailed in communication
- Communicate plans for work, schedules, and time off etc. is made and agreed upon prior to executing
- Initiate communication on project status, questions, etc. on a routine basis
- Directly reach out to manager and colleagues with regular updates, relevant industry news, etc. and also keeping abreast with what is happening with them
- Contact relevant personnel to resolve problems before they come to me asking where a project is
- Proactively communicate even minor schedule changes; I send emails when going offline, even for an hour or so (lunch), to avoid perception as unavailable.
- Regular meetings, clear emails and phone call follow ups
- Communicate important information (e.g. content, timing, process) to the appropriate people so that my clients/boss are not surprised by anything coming from sources other than me
- Reach out to others (clients, managers, other stakeholders) to keep them informed of project status or if I have availability to take on additional assignments
- Provide a scheduled weekly status update
- Report to managers and clients on status updates and concerns before being asked to
- Keep people in the loop
- Regular calls to manager and colleagues to know what is going on in the organization and team, and what jobs are coming soon; not just when a specific issue needs to be resolved
- Always reach out to colleagues, team members, and manager to maintain a continued communication
- Ensure frequent conversations with manager to align the expectations to my deliverables
- Keep an open dialogue about project status so that they feel equipped to answer ad hoc queries
- Keep everyone informed and on the same page

...Be Authentic

- Actually care about the people with whom I work: ask how they are doing if they’ve been sick, congratulate them on an engagement, new baby, etc.
- Keep true to my schedule; this helps clients respect my schedule and assures them I’ll respect theirs
- Even when a timeline change is going to affect me, try to understand it affects them too
- Never be afraid to clarify or be direct
- Volunteer information, suggestions, updates, etc.
- Communication should be judicious and relevant - not just a rehash of the obvious
- Ask questions, listen, and explain; provide unsolicited input
- Ask as many questions in the beginning as necessary - style guide, exact deliverable etc.
- Reach out without hesitation; wait may hurt the overall outcome.
- Be critical and discuss if something doesn’t seem correct or standard practice with manager
- Find the right balance between being proactive and not overwhelming others with communication
- Make sure I get the answers I need through actively engaging subject matter experts
- Don’t be afraid to contact members of your team to ask questions, clarify work etc.
- Share updates on project assignments, emails, and important issues to my supervisor in a timely manner. If this does not happen, manager may perceive non-communication as “something to hide”
- Respond quickly to emails/calls even if it’s just to say I’ll get back to them soon; not letting emails “sit”
- Reach out when I have questions instead of just winging it

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The survey respondents share that the single-most important activity they engage in to be (and be perceived as) relevant, engaged, and connected despite working remotely is:

- Build relationships
- Expert knowledge, short turnaround times, and deliver what is wanted with accuracy
- Keep up with LinkedIn
- Work as same as in the office; using technology, there is no restrictions for working remotely.
- Email regular updates re: project timelines
- Produce high quality documents no matter if I’m working from home or working in an office environment
- Complete work on time
- Read and learn
- Be on time and participate in teleconferences
- Be a member of professional organizations
- Email, particularly group emails, that involve several team members
- Summarize my thought process when submitting my work
- Attend all team meeting and be heard
- Process improvement & training initiatives
- Timely communication and meeting deadlines
- Do my job: do what is asked of me in a competent and timely fashion
- Provide regular updates on projects
- Complete further training/education (online or in person)
- Be professional overall and while at online or teleconference meetings: I have organized many calls with remote workers where children are crying, dogs are barking, and doorbells are ringing
- Read AMWA every day (and look for new opportunities)
- Quick communication/replies
- Regular project updates to clients
- Keep colleagues informed of my availability—or, more important, letting them know when I will be unavailable for an hour or more
- Learn about the project and helping make the output as brilliant as possible
- Speak up in meetings, establish relationships with colleagues and be available
- Instant messaging and regular team and 1:1 meetings as well as video conferencing
- Managing communication between client, other contractors, and my team to promote efficient integration of our activities with the project team needs
- Establish and maintain relationships with colleagues and collaborators
- Talk on the phone with my manager and colleagues multiple times a week
- Be available during working hours or the working hours of colleagues overseas (or announce my absence from the office) to answer their questions or to forward my questions
- Conference calls
- Interact actively with my colleagues via teleconference, telephone, IM, and email
- Provide a quick response, even if that response is "I can't right now but I'll get back to you at X time"…and then following up at that time
- Provide periodic updates (e.g., sending drafts to show what I have been working on)
- Respond to emails and other messages in a timely manner
- Quick response to communications
- Providing timely follow-ups on work, either on or before the scheduled deadline
- Get quality work done on time
- Timely, professional, effective communication
- Stay in touch with coworkers
- Call into all meetings (even if I feel it is not really necessary for program process)
- Meet face to face when possible

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- Send regular status updates to my clients
- Ensure that my responses to emails are as immediate as possible.
- Telephone, Skype, etc. as a form of communication (rather than email)
- Communicate with my manager via email or phone regarding project status or queries.
- Two 1:1 meetings with my manager per week. It’s a time to update each other, ask questions about projects, find out about future project projections, and some company gossip
- Daily phone calls
- Consistently deliver high quality work in a timely manner
- Adhere to deadlines
- Express presence as often as possible; it is too easy for folks to “forget” you are there when in WebEx meetings or teleconferences for example
- Be proactive with my manager/client
- Keep scheduled meetings with my manager to give a brief update on the projects I’m working on and the progress or lack of progress
- Be online
- Provide rapid replies to emails, phone messages, texts with relevant information that the user asked for
- Regular email communication
- Frequent contact
- AMWA
- Proactive email correspondence
- Keep communication open/active so teams know what is going on and when to expect their next tasks
- Proactive communication with clients
- Reply to emails in a timely manner
- Meet deadlines
- Make noise when I’m not busy
- I have set working when my clients can expect me to be available by phone and email, and I respond as quickly as possible during that time. This shows that I am there, I am working and I am available.
- I need to engage using a variety of forms and styles of communication depending on each culture and situation; proactive communication is critical whether you’re onsite or remote
- Remember to be personable and “human”
- Answer emails promptly
- “Face to face” video meetings
- Positive, regular communication, 1:1 or small group meetings
- Continued development
- Have an opinion and share with emphasis
- Make myself available for conference calls
- Frequent contact with manager, especially phone calls and Skype
- Being available, as if I was at the office
- Be responsive to all who contact me and inform others if I will be temporarily unavailable
- Become a strategic partner by learning the science, program goals, challenging assumptions, etc.
- Participate in all company or departmental conference calls
- Speak up in teleconferences, Skype, and email regularly. Respond to messages within 24 hours
- Be active in AMWA
- Stay engaged with cross-functional colleagues, whether by holding collaborative meetings or simply sending a friendly email to thank them for their work or congratulate them on a milestone
- Communicate on a regular basis with my manager and or clinical team members which varies depending on the assignment/document/submission
- Participate in meetings to discuss changes and brainstorming to improve working practices
- Thought leadership
- Providing the reasoning behind my choices
- Promptly acknowledge every communication I receive

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Participate in cross-functional projects for process improvement
- Meet deadlines
- To respond to every question, email, or phone call within minutes during working hours (9 am-5 pm)
- Stay on top of communication so my clients never have to wonder about the status of something
- Attend meetings
- Active participation in teleconferences when remote
- Proactive communication
- Frequent email communication
- Communication (usually email or instant messaging)
- Update the customer (manager/client) and incorporating their requests
- Remain up-to-date on current research, regulations, trends, and opinions
- Progress the work and be in communication with the project team
- Reach out with pertinent questions
- Get the job done
- Actually talking (as opposed to texting/IMing or emailing) colleagues and/or managers
- Quick responses to emails
- Keep team of SMEs apprised of document timeline, issues already addressed, issues to address (open issues), and next steps. Documents developed correctly and within the timeline is why I have my job
- Volunteer to take on additional tasks
- Attend networking events
- Weekly, regular check-ins via phone; phone because it’s too easy for people to ignore email or read between the lines, and when people read between lines things escalate way too quickly….it’s also important for the client to recognize and gain value in weekly calls, rather than just see it as a money-waste for them
- Contact with the team and getting the work done on deadline
- Keep the same level of communication with my manager and colleagues as when I am in the office
- As an editor, clients don’t want too much communication, which can be perceived as pestering them
- Respond to messages and emails in a timely manner
- Communicate frequently with project leaders
- Communicate frequently regarding timelines and progress of various documents coming through my group
- Deliver the deliverables
- Intermittent travel to be onsite
- Complete projects/tasks on time
- Speak up in online meetings, keeping on top of timelines and deliverables.
- Availability
- By keeping my boss updated even when they don’t ask and by being transparent
- Complete projects on time and per specification and providing project outlines and timelines, as well as timely updates
- Frequently communicate with other team members
- Make sure my skype connectivity is always turned on; I am always available for instant messaging and I respond very quickly to all emails
- Monitor my response times on emails and check on availability through the internal messaging system
- Respond to all emails and phone calls in a timely manner (ie, sometimes within minutes and definitely within a couple of hours)
- Phone calls and emails
- Responding to emails quickly (within 1 hour)
- Stay educated in my field and industry
- Email
- Produce quality work according to timelines
- Ask about end results of a project, after it’s left my hands
- Communication

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Know as much as possible about the product and the science and to organize emails and documents
- Communicate by phone, not just email
- Be immediately available via different means (phone, email, messaging apps) as well as using video conferencing for face to face
- Be available via Skype, phone, or e-mail
- Connect with colleagues/team members via email, chats and phone
- Be available for phone calls from the client and to make sure you respond quickly to emails. If the client has an IM system be sure to respond quickly; I have a small oscillating fan that I hook my mouse up to do it always shows a green light to others that I am available
- Do my job well
- Stay active on IM or email and team calls. Just make the most of the available technology
- Be available at odd times especially when working across time zones
- Provide frequent communication
- Regular communication and getting to personally know the team members I work with, which often requires me to be onsite for meetings or just a casual lunch
- Collect the work specifications in detail
- Video conferencing
- Produce quality work ahead of schedule
- Phone calls
- Weekly team meetings
- Manage writing projects for clients and interact with functional areas
- Be available to be contacted
- Demonstrate a full understanding of any project, including timelines, key stakeholders, background, history, group dynamics, science…well, OK, everything. Ask questions, check for understanding, follow up a bunch
- Contact clients on a regular basis to see if they have any needs
- Keep in touch
- Meet clients and colleagues in person as much as possible.
- Respond to emails quickly
- Ensure that deliverables with short deadlines get done quickly and at a high level every time! This creates visibility and reminds people that you can deliver a high-quality product. I have to say this is tied with being on site or meeting colleagues at a conference every few months. Reminding people face to face that you’re there is invaluable, too
- Respond promptly to emails or other communications
- Frequent emails
- Reply to emails or other requests in a timely manner (no more than 24 hours, usually same day)
- Constant communication with team
- Communicating proactively with project managers
- Write excellent documents on time
- Be proactive
- Lots of phone conferences and Skype meetings
- Complete projects on time and with high quality
- Conference calls with my managers/team
- Production of professional, high quality documents

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

The second-most important activity our survey respondents engage in to be (and be perceived as) relevant, engaged, and connected despite working remotely is:

- Networking and volunteering for activities/initiatives
- Some contact is critical but be careful to stay on topic and deliver
- Connect with friends/colleagues I know and have known for years through AMWA
- Ask questions if I have any
- Be onsite for critical face to face meetings
- Respond to emails quickly
- Attend conferences, seminars, informational sessions, etc.
- Respond to email or other communications promptly
- Stay technologically engaged
- Meetings--participating in them actively and with attention
- Encourage feedback on the current and future projects
- Reach out to team members by phone or SKYPE when there are issues. Don’t wait but be cognizant of time zone differences
- Present internally and externally
- Produce good work
- Continually try to build skills, take workshops, improve
- Ask questions
- Be an active member of AMWA
- Be prepared for calls
- Look for new opportunities (sending out resumes and cover letters)
- Produce great quality work
- Anticipate and/or suggesting resolutions to document-associated problems or issues
- Keep very well informed of developments in my field of medicine and passing along items of interest to my colleagues
- Keep up to date with issues; learn and respect the work that in-house colleagues are performing and to which I want to contribute
- Communicate frequently and participate when possible
- Provide background information, regulatory strategy, regular and consistent progress reports, and remaining available and accessible. Also doing good work of high quality
- Produce good work, on time
- Provide continuous, clear communications in email format regarding project statuses
- Meet deadlines
- Send updates
- Respond promptly to requests
- Proactive comms as described above
- Initiate emails if there is something I need or want to ask about, and trying to respond promptly when they email me
- Always complete my work by the deadline
- Produce deliverables on schedule
- Provide updates via email/text if a project is still in progress
- Get quality work done on time (this is all that really matters)
- Do excellent, professional work in a timely and independent manner
- Make myself available during business hours.
- Ask questions I know the answer to in order to ensure the team comes the same conclusion - seems more team oriented
- Engage during webinars
- Respond to emails, text messages and phone messages ASAP
- Check in with colleagues a bit more often than when I am in office
- Periodic in-person visits

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Communicate with the group I'm working with regarding project status or queries
- Go into office or meet colleagues at conferences once per month for about a week
- Respond to emails promptly
- Mentor junior staff; involvement in hiring/interviewing staff
- Respond to emails quickly
- Be proactive with communicating with your manager.
- Participate in the occasional group activity with co-workers
- Meet my deadlines
- Be available for phone calls (because some people prefer in-person discussions rather than emails) within a short time or on the same day, even at times that are inconvenient for me (e.g. evenings for me to talk to people on the West Coast)
- Telephone calls
- Continuous learning that I share
- Always respond to emails in a timely fashion; delayed responses can damage how the sender perceives my engagement
- Seek ways to improve my own work and seeking opportunities to share knowledge with others
- Instant messaging is important
- Participate in general company communications
- Talk on the phone whenever necessary rather than just through email and letting my clients know that it is ok to call me if they need me urgently
- Be willing to use whatever communication channels the manager/client prefers: email, Slack, Google Hangouts, phone, etc.
- Positive, regular communications by participation in weekly team meetings
- Preparation
- Engage in the conversation
- Try to stay current through self-directed learning - webinars, reading email blasts about new therapies or guidelines in my therapeutic areas, podcasts
- Prompt reply to emails or IMs
- Make sure to attend telecons and making sure to keep coworkers updated on my workload/availability
- Connect with others as much as possible on days when I'm in the office
- Set up 1:1 meetings with team members at the start of a new project
- Stay in contact with executives
- Come onsite for meetings when it better accommodates the task at hand
- Follow trends in social media and participate
- Professional development
- Respond to questions and concerns as quickly as I can...always within 24 hours.
- Instant messaging or instant meetings
- Coordination
- Team communication
- Set up regular calls with colleagues
- Build strong work connections, be responsive, and reliable
- Provide project updates to my key contact
- Provide unsolicited assistance on projects. For example, I recently provided my client with a list of acronyms and their full spelling, used in the preparation of documents
- Attend professional and networking events, so clients and colleagues can see that it's important to me to stay abreast of new developments
- Email communications
- Being onsite on a regular basis for "face time"
- Anticipate or follow up on every email, voicemail, etc., immediately/ASAP - even if you don't have the answer. Let them know you're working on an answer/response to the inquiry
- Be available remotely for team meetings/telecons and going on site if/when needed; for me, this generally involves long-distance travel as my clients are global

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Writing
- Participating in symposia, lecture series, meetings, and appropriate surveys
- To be available
- Attend and plan meetings, including regular check in with the client
- Keep updated on industry news
- Meeting participation
- Be organized and be the authority on how to use templates, Word, company SOPs, regulatory guidelines, and make effective use of the SMEs time
- Speak up at meetings
- Keep up with industry updates
- Clear communications about roles, responsibilities, and expectations; this is most important when you're mid-stream and someone feels that things aren't going quite right...get on the phone and talk it out, do not engage in email discussions; follow-up with an email to summarize the conversation
- Speak to my manager and colleagues about project concerns when I am onsite
- If I need to choose extras to provide clients, I let them know if I've attended a conference or professional development to show I'm brushing up on my skills and keep me competitive with other freelancers. It's not necessary though; being available and doing the work on time is far more important
- Collaboration in the manners that are most conducive to the team members feeling that remote workers are engaged. This means that a flexible approach is required
- Availability is made clear and is transparent
- Send an "as we discussed" summaries of meetings, conversations, and decisions. Ask team members to confirm/correct the summaries
- Actively responding to email inquiries and scheduling documents
- Regular communication with team members and/or project lead
- Make timelines and providing frequent feedback to teams on decisions, changes to schedules
- Flexibility
- Keep files on the shared drives to allow for transparency
- Promptly answer emails
- Consistently meet project timelines with projects that address the client’s needs and have high quality
- Make sure that I have an online time table accessible to project managers or managers or colleagues that lets them know which project I am working at any given time
- Not hesitate to pick up the phone when necessary - not all conversations are via emails or instant messaging
- Attend all meetings
- Regular, consistent communication with project teams
- Respond quickly
- Maintain good relationships with team members
- Find out about colleagues' families, hobbies, etc. and occasionally asking after them
- Quality work
- Help with business development
- Regular meetings just to touch base
- Make sure communication is clear and relevant
- Be aware of the tasks at hand and being involved in discussions
- Attend meetings regularly
- Be responsive to IM queries and/or emails ASAP
- To do my job well and get things done on time
- Stay informed on effective communication
- Communication is always at the heart of organization issues, regardless of worker locale
- Meet timelines and let team members know in advance when they can expect something from me that requires their input; I use "banners" on work calendars to keep them informed that a document is coming to them for review
- Doing more research than needed to do the job

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Best Practices for Working Remotely

- Rapid reply to sponsor/client emails/communications that are directed to me
- Be an active participant in team meetings over Skype
- Regularly scheduled 1:1 meetings by phone
- Lead meetings remotely
- Within my workplace, I participate in our within-company chat rooms to discuss specific projects, keep up with industry news and professional techniques, and be social
- Don’t be shy; communicate directly as necessary
- Engage personally to the extent I can with team members, gauging their personal style (funny, efficient, chatty, serious) and communicate to that style
- Always respond to emails quickly
- Keep up with what is going on with the project by reading emails carefully and checking any new material that is uploaded to SharePoint (or whatever online site the team is using)
- Meet people face to face
- Actively participating in telecons
- Phone calls when I have enough/complicated questions to warrant them
- Have regular 1:1 with team
- Proactively communicate with my line manager
- Write excellent documents on time and/or ensure that my contract writers do the same
- Communicating frequently via email or instant messenger
- Going to the client’s office periodically; twice in the last 2 years, I’ve spent 30 days at a time at a client’s facility to work on regulatory submissions
- Attend all meetings to which I’m invited
- Timely communications
- Effective communication by email and telecons

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And some last tips respondents wanted to share...

- My chief concern in managing remote workers is making sure that they feel connected to the office and that they know that I am available to respond to their questions and concerns.
- I’m much more efficient and happier working from home.
- Working remotely is fantastic. You stay away from all the office noise and drama. It is easier to stay focused on the task at hand when working remotely.
- I was once in a “results-only work environment” (ROWE) where the entire team worked remotely and all nonessential meetings were optional. In a short time after going with ROWE, our sense of team began to erode. I think team meetings, even just for the sake of team building, are very important to prevent professional isolation. For freelance remote workers, I’m not sure how that isolation is alleviated.
- I have been successfully working remotely for 4 years. The single-most important element of success is to have a management structure that is supportive of non-localized teams and provides the tools and support necessary to accomplish the job.
- I must actively and intentionally find time to spend with people outside of work.
- I’ve been remote for 14 years now and have customers coast to coast and in 4 foreign countries. Excellent results win good references and referrals. New business finds me more often than I go looking for the next job.
- Working remotely should be the norm in our business. When you have to write, you can plow through it uninterrupted and not have any distractions.
- Flexibility of schedule is the most important benefit of working remotely, and it would be difficult for an on-site job to compensate for the loss of this benefit.
- I have been both a remote worker and managed global remote staff. Traffic is a nightmare. Productivity and job satisfaction are key and working remotely can go a long way towards meeting these goals.
- Most in-house people I work with really appreciate the help and outside expertise I can offer, so I try to emphasize calm professionalism and provide solutions to help get the job done.
- Success for an effective, experienced, and knowledgeable remote external worker boils down to effective communication and coordination of activity, providing ways to meet client needs even before they realize they have them.
- Working for a stable company is conducive to building positive relationships with colleagues. I think it is easier for someone working onsite to be promoted than someone working remotely because of the greater degree of personal interaction afforded the person working onsite.
- Almost my whole department is remote; the few employees who live near the campus usually work from home as well. The rest of us are spread out around the country (and we used to have someone in Hawaii). The company has become used to working with us and when we first started this way of working, the remote writers were the ones getting the best reviews -- the ability to focus without frequently being disturbed helps.
- Most of my related experience is managing a remote worker. I am in the office most of the time myself with an occasional remote day. The employee was laid off a year ago and, as I tried to find new work for her within the organization, I found that many people didn’t seem to remember who she was even though they had interacted with her directly via email. I attribute this to the fact that while she did good work, she wasn’t great with proactive communication as described and, when she was in the office, she arrived extremely early in the morning, left early, and did not make much effort to build relationships.
- I don’t necessarily worry about being perceived as “passive, unavailable, disconnected” so much as I worry about being perceived as “not doing the work fast enough” because I am only working part-time and most of my clients are full-time. I find that they struggle to understand why it takes me so long to complete a project, because they are coming from a very different perspective/context.
- I have worked remotely for more than 10 years and, while it can be isolating, it doesn’t have to be. The flexibility to work wherever you are trumps that.
- Employers rarely understand how unproductive the majority of their onsite staff really are. You just have to produce to be successful in either setting.

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I used to feel guilty if I wasn’t available when a client called; I assumed they would think I was out shopping or doing laundry or otherwise not working at home. Now I realize that they aren’t always available for my phone calls either. We all have meetings that make us inaccessible from time to time.

It’s a minor detail, but I ensure that my mobile phone number is on the signature of my email (in addition to my office phone number) so it is easy for colleagues to call if needed.

As a writer, you can get so much more done when you’re working in your home office and are not disturbed by all the noise in the office. The downside is that you do miss some socialization, and you may not become as close to your coworkers.

This is my 19th year of working alone from home. I’ve been successful, but it is a lonely work life. I have to make a lot of effort to get out of my house and meet with friends, so I don’t feel like a hermit.

Takes more effort to demonstrate presence when remote. Also, always need to be accountable with your work and demonstrate that accountability on a continuous basis.

Despite contortions to check email constantly and to be available by phone as needed, working remotely has huge benefits for me. I can work not only from home much of the time, but also from various other cities if I need to visit relatives and work from there.

Having ad hoc conversations via phone, email, or IM is essential to feeling “present” while working remotely. I make sure my team members are comfortable texting or calling me just as they would walking over to my office.

Key for remote work is communicating with your teams and always following through on what you’ve agreed to do.

I keep an eye out for and share publications or other information that I think my colleagues would value (hello, AMWA Update!)

I am freelance, which I feel is often thought of as someone who can’t make it in an in-office position. That is not true at all, and we all have different reasons for why we go different ways. I cannot describe in enough detail how working remotely and having flexibility and no commute has changed my life and my family’s life for the better. My children are able to have simple experiences like having a parent get them on/off the bus or go to a school event that could never happen if I was still in the office with an hour commute. I often tell people that I work more remotely than I ever did in an office because there are less distractions. I do miss having coworkers, and client meetings do not replace the relationships that you form. However, for me at this time, the pros of flexibility outweigh the cons of not experiencing the office environment.

Hearing the client’s voice (on the phone or in person) every now and then is a big help.

Time management is more difficult remotely in that you can be distracted more easily (dog needs out, fix lunch/dinner, etc). But it is also harder to not work after hours.

90% of my managers/co-workers are also remote, so I don’t feel like I need to go above and beyond to show that I’m producing.

Developing positive working relationships and being flexible about the type of work to be done allows me to stay connected to a company.

As a manager of remote employees, it takes extra effort on my part to make sure my employees are properly engaged and feel part of the team. Employees also need to make the extra effort. Remote working is great to concentrate on specific writing tasks, but not good for integrating into a small working group.

Since working remotely, I feel I get more done with fewer interruptions. I also find that I get a lot accomplished in the evenings, so I use this time to get caught up on lower priority projects.

Working remotely can present challenges, but once I sorted out a methodology that worked, no one seems to care or notice.

Engaging locally with professional event opportunities

I manage 2 fully remote staff writers and have had no issues. Our company is embracing remote staff.

It’s hard, but you need to remember to treat remote employees as if they’re onsite.

In my experience, working remotely can easily shield you from office politics, which is both comfortable and risky, as you experience less pressure but may lack visibility and knowledge of how you are being perceived. Regular visits and face-to-face communication are needed.

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- I think it is preferable to build a strong onsite work experience before working remotely. It is difficult to constantly ask for help when remote. It demands a lot of attention and time from others that they would otherwise be willing to give when meeting personally (on breaks or at lunch).
- I tend to hyper-manage my email and phone (ie, respond quickly to messages) so that people don’t think I’m not working.
- Seek feedback on your performance. Stay positive and be collaborative.
- I have not found working remotely to be much different from working on site other than I am generally removed from client company politics, which is a welcome benefit! Most small companies that I work with are composed primarily of virtual teams, so our work is always valued.
- One stress I have is fear of an internet connection failing during a meeting, which you don’t have to worry about when you’re onsite. My company laptop doesn’t do well with my WiFi even though every other computer in the house does (ie, it’s not the internet service). I recently resorted to attending meetings standing up in my garage with my keyboard at eye level because that’s where the only coaxial cable outlet I have is (and thus the only place I can make a direct connection to my router).
- Working remotely allows for enhanced productivity if the writer has a solid work ethic and makes the effort to stay engaged with their teams.
- Working remotely requires a lot of discipline to maintain deadlines and quality to avoid the pitfalls asked in previous questions. I find that I can accomplish twice as much in half the time when working remotely.
- There are times when a F2F meeting moves a stuck project along but there isn’t a significant benefit to me to meet peers and team members F2F just for a “getting to know you” activity. Nowadays, dealing with remote team members via teleconference or email/IM is very common and works well with good technology. Difficulties encountered in projects are seldom due merely to remote teammates. The only exception is the teammate who habitually attends meetings while driving and thus no access to the document in question.
- It would be really nice if people were considerate of each other in the workplace (onsite and remote), rather than assuming the worst. It’s important to remember to be respectful of each other and yet one also needs to have a relatively thick skin.
- Working remotely and still being an integral member of the team is possible, but it does require a bit of extra effort to adapt to individuals on the team with regard to what they are comfortable with, but remote workers can be integral members of the team.
- My team is scattered geographically, so being remote or in an office location doesn’t typically impact my day to day work. Being transparent about day to day activities up front helps to build confidence and trust that remote workers are delivering their work as agreed and allows for more flexibility as workers gain more experience and tenure.
- Remote is doable. I have clients all around the world. Sometimes different time zones can be a challenge, but all is doable.
- Working remotely is not easy! There are inherent challenges to this way of working, and support from onsite managers is key!
- Communication is key - but, the electronic tools often let me down (connection problems, noise on the line, and document management software...).
- I have been working fully remotely since 2006. Working in an office hindered my work progress. I couldn’t get water or go to the bathroom without 5 people wanting to talk about the weather or were asking about my weekend. Morning rush hour made people miserable and most people brought that misery to work with them. Onsite people tend to be more judgmental (what others were wearing, how long were smoke breaks, talking about what time others arrived, and more). Onsite temperature, desks, chairs, and food was always one-size-fits-all. However, on the flip side, we became family. I gained connections and dear friends who will remain throughout my life and most of us still keep in touch and can’t wait to run into each other again and we always provide references for one another.
- Before any company kicks off a large extended-duration project, they should bring in all of the remote workers at least once, in the beginning, so that everyone onsite and offsite can start off with that much needed camaraderie!

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- Communication works both ways. I have had clients who totally ignore my phone calls and emails and then wonder why work is not getting done. Some clients are not good at working with remote personnel and need to be educated on how to do so. There is a fine line between involvement and micromanagement. As someone with over 20 years of experience, I don’t want to be micromanaged but I do need their guidance and input on their project.
- I share relevant industry information with clients if I come across something new and interesting to them.
- I think remote working is a reality and, where it does take extra effort, it’s just a different type of effort than what’s needed when you’re onsite. If you’re like me, you don’t like to pop into people’s offices or stand around chatting but it’s needed so remote workers do have things to do to be perceived as engaged, but so do onsite folks. The activities are just different.
- Recently started at a coworking space to have the separation of home and work life and feel more like a professional.
- If I know I will be away from the computer during normal business hours (eg dentist appointment) and it is possible to set up an instant email response saying I’ll be away from X to Y time. Also, IM systems are sometimes linked to your outlook program and you can set up a notice that you will be away from computer from X to Y time but will be in touch ASAP.
- If client/manager has had an issue with previous remote workers appearing to be out of touch during regular working hours, try to find out what exactly happened in the past and give the other writers a heads up about the clients “pet peeve” so they can proactively avoid similar situations.
- Considering how many meetings have international tram members participating by phone, it is less relevant whether the medical writer is in the room or on the phone.
- I provide phone, internet, any peripheral equipment such as docking station, and the actual office space. It would be nice if companies provided some kind of allowance for such expenses.
- You cannot be a wallflower and be a contract regulatory medical writer in the pharma industry.
- Virtual teams can be successful depending upon good leadership and advocacy within a company, and more companies nowadays are recognizing they need to be flexible to get the best talent.
- My company is 100% remote, and we do several things to stay connected. We have within-company chat rooms for quick communications, weekly webinars, and weekly meetings with video cameras. I think that helps us feel less isolated.
- For whatever reason, I’ve found it easy to adjust to working remotely, maybe because when I started, I knew the team in house before I worked remotely, but also because I worked at a global company where many team members were ex-US and therefore people we never (or rarely) met. So I gained lots of remote skills just working with them.
- Be respectful of the work and time of your coworkers. Don’t try to micromanage but seek frequent feedback to be sure their work is on the right track. If you can, set interim time and task goals to keep work moving along.
- It helps to respond quickly to requests from other team members and try to be as helpful as possible.
- Be flexible and present is a biggie! Not to say that I work long hours that drag into the evening or weekend just because there’s a fire (I don’t; I still protect my time), but I’m willing to reshuffle priorities constantly and chip in even if that wasn’t specifically something I was slated to do as “part of my job.” I provide value where I can.
- I can’t stress enough how important it is for my clients to see me as part of their team - essentially an employee who just doesn’t happen to live nearby. It’s been critical for me to spend extended periods of time at a client’s office during submissions, when I basically put myself at their disposal 24/7.
- My ability to advance has, at times, been limited by working remotely. Several companies have refused to allow remote managers. This is one reason I started my own freelance business.
- What doesn’t happen remotely is idle coffee break/bathroom break chatter. It is harder to get to know likes/dislikes and personal stuff when working remotely.
- Remote regulatory writing is not quite the norm but it is certainly much more common now than many years ago. Big pharma, particularly, seeks experienced, remote writers with proven track records and may preferentially hire them depending on a limited local market for onsite writers.

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