



WHITEPAPER

# Training to Help Remote Employees Thrive



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The average workplace today is very different when compared to just a few years ago. While lockdowns and office closures forced by the COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly caused some of the shifts, the most impactful and lasting evolutions proved to be accelerated versions of changes that were already underway.

Employment trends are coming together to favor remote work — employees want the freedom to contribute from anywhere, and the current hiring market is talent-friendly. Companies able to create great remote and hybrid work options are well-positioned to become leaders in their fields, attracting top-performing workers, regardless of geography.

Along with the exciting potential of remote work, there are challenges. To make their remote workforces truly effective, businesses should focus on programs and policies specifically designed with this new employment model in mind.

Training should be a prominent consideration, as there are plenty of new skills, priorities and best practices coming to the forefront for employees who contribute remotely all or most of the time. From preventing burnout when working solo to hosting virtual team meetings and beyond, these new capabilities are worth nurturing, and video-based digital training is the ideal way to impart them.

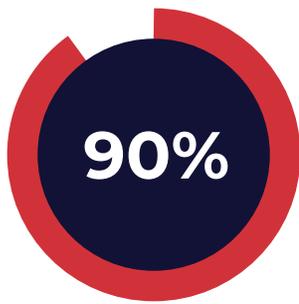
## Remote Work: A Permanent Shift Worth Embracing

While some corporate leaders may have predicted the 2020 move toward remote work would reverse itself as soon as COVID-19 infection rates declined, the shift has instead persisted. With benefits ranging from employee happiness and productivity to reduced office real estate costs, companies found virtual work suits them. Therefore, remote work is here to stay.

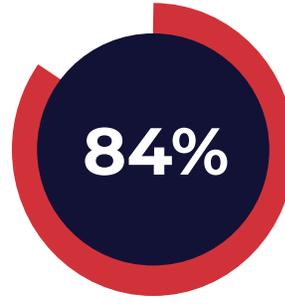
Companies that have built their work models around having in-person offices may push back against the remote trend and try for a return to normalcy. These moves may be misguided, however, because workers discovered something about themselves during the era of forced telecommuting: most of them enjoy working from home and have found themselves to be more productive when doing so.



The 2021 Owl Labs State of Remote Work survey found two major takeaways in favor of continuing to offer remote work as at least an option<sup>1</sup>:



of workers say they are as productive at home as in the office or more so.



of employees who started working from home during the pandemic liked it so much they would take a pay cut to keep the option.

The survey also found that due to COVID-19 shuttering workplaces, 70% of full-time employees in the U.S. now have some experience of working from home.

Productive, happy employees are a recipe for a strong, highly competitive organization, so it makes sense for businesses to maintain their remote work offerings. That's especially true when one considers the ongoing wave of employee departures known as the Great Resignation. More employees are choosing to leave their present employers and find jobs that suit them and their families better.

In one month, February 2022, 4.4 million employees voluntarily left their jobs, per Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. Employers reported 11.3 million open positions and hired 6.7 million new employees<sup>2</sup>. In such a high-churn environment, the power is in the hands of top-performing job candidates. Businesses offering remote work stand a better chance of retaining their current personnel and attracting applicants who have resigned from less flexible jobs.

## Training for the Remote Work Generation: Subjects to Focus On

Since telecommuting is not actually a new trend, simply one with a rapid rise in adoption, training content networks are well-stocked with courses targeting remote workers. These materials are designed to apply the common concepts of wellness and employee productivity to learners who don't commute to an office five days a week.

Practicing self-care and avoiding burnout are two of the most prominent themes in these course materials. While workers have had to grapple with the challenges of staying motivated and keeping up with pressure, there is an extra urgency when those employers don't share a physical space with their leaders and colleagues.

<sup>1</sup> <https://owllabs.com/state-of-remote-work/2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/03/29/job-quits-february-openings-jolts/>

Recent years have been continuously stressful, making anti-burnout and stress-relief training especially important. The American Psychological Association polled employees for its 2021 survey and found 79% of respondents had felt work-related stress within the past month. Exhaustion was also common — 36% of workers had felt cognitive weariness, 32% were emotionally exhausted and 44% were physically fatigued.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to fighting back against burnout, companies can equip their remote employees with best practices they can use to not just survive but thrive. Common workplace actions such as effective time management and communicating with colleagues or clients are different when employees never set foot in a physical office, so remote contributors can benefit from specialized training around these subjects.



One issue to keep in mind when selecting an employee training curriculum is workers' needs differ depending on their duties. Supervisors and team leaders have an especially important role to play, as these are the employees whose conduct affects the morale and productivity of the workers who report to them. A well-balanced remote employee training program includes content relevant to numerous roles, helping the whole team thrive.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-burnout-stress>

## Examples of Useful Training for Remote Employees

By highlighting a few of the workplace training courses designed specifically for remote employees, it's possible to envision how these modules come together to create a comprehensive and valuable employee education strategy. These course offerings include, but are not limited to:

- **Working from Home:** Some learning materials focus on the overall experience of working from home and are meant for employees just getting used to this model. By teaching these professionals to set up an effective workspace, maintain a healthy work-life balance and more, the courses can ease the transition from traditional work to remote business. The goal isn't to perfectly recreate an office environment, but rather to inspire productivity in new surroundings.
- **Remote Worker: Safety Health and Security:** While remote work is a relatively new approach to business, it comes with some of the same requirements as traditional office operations. For instance, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safe-workplace rules also apply to remote employees. This means there's a niche for training materials teaching workers how to set up safe, comfortable workspaces at home, covering everything from health to cybersecurity.
- **Remote Leadership:** The shift to remote leadership is a common experience at companies increasing their use of work-from-home practices. This genre of training — teaching team leaders to keep in touch with employees even though they can't frequently connect face to face — is popular, and with good reason. A manager who motivates and empathizes with remote workers is a valuable and necessary asset.
- **How to Conduct a Virtual Interview:** Some of the common activities in business have taken on a new level of complexity in a remote-first work environment. This especially applies to interviews, as the necessary layer of technology between interviewer and subject can interfere with clear communication. By taking courses specifically addressing the best practices of virtual interviews, employees can overcome the difficulties and adapt to new circumstances.

The exact makeup of a company's training strategy for remote workers depends on factors such as the business's industry, size and approach to telecommuting — does it have a hybrid staff or is it fully remote?

When working with the right training content network, it's possible to put together the perfect selection of content and keep it updated over time. As conditions change and new materials roll out, leaders can add new training offerings for their teams.

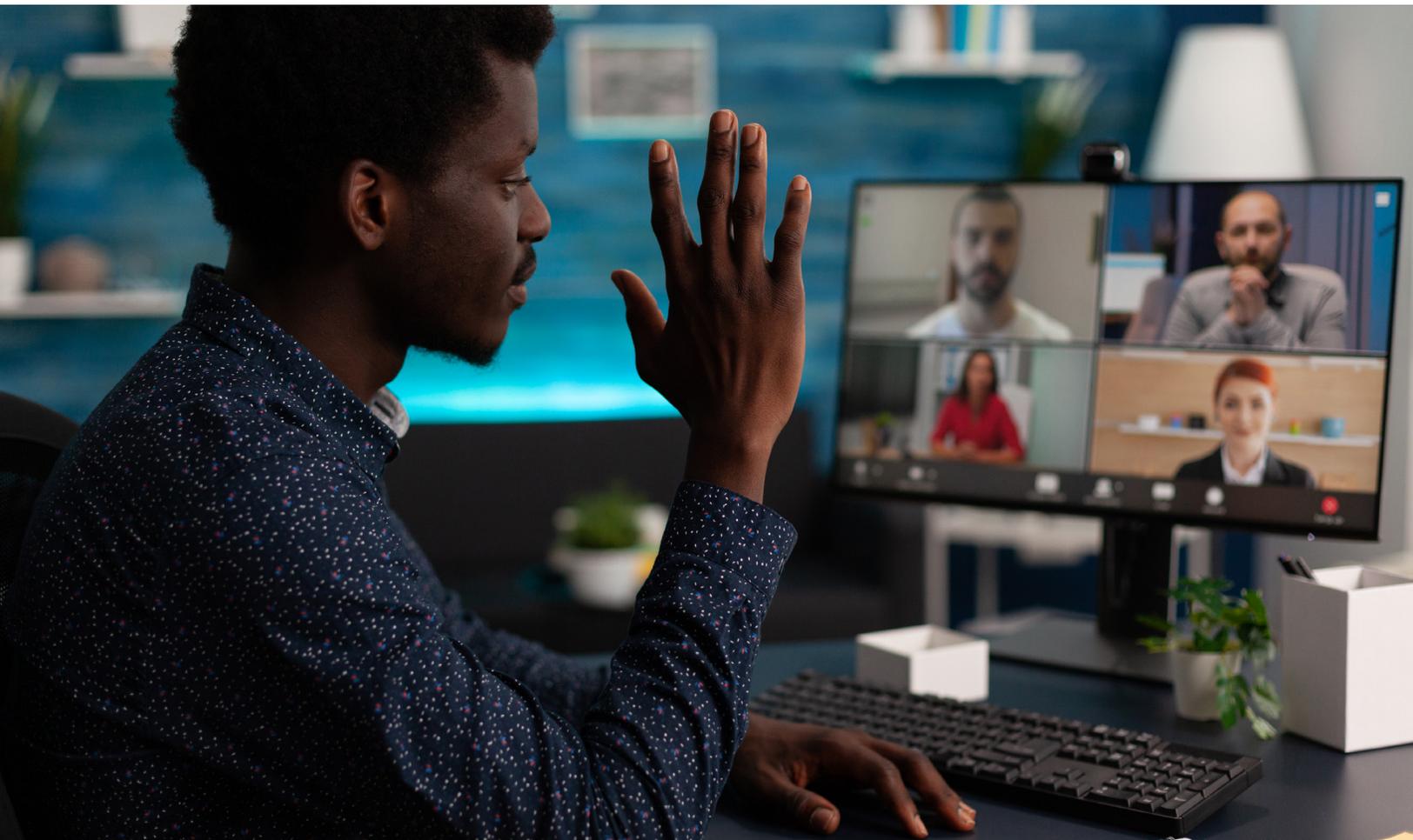
## A Perfect Fit: Remote Work and Online Training

A remote workforce comes with challenges that don't apply to traditional office-based teams. Among them: it's more difficult to train a remote team through traditional in-person sessions led by instructors. Leaders may find it prohibitively expensive and logistically challenging to gather their employees for live training.

Fortunately for businesses shifting to all or partial remote work, video-based online training works equally well for any workforce model. These courses can be accessed asynchronously, meaning learners can study on their own time, even when they live in different time zones from their colleagues.

Online training has advantages beyond its suitability for remote workers: When a company hires a new employee, the employee can take the same digital courses as other team members, without the need to bring in a live instructor. It's also more economically feasible to build a library of optional courses available to employees interested in building their skills independently.

The rise of remote work and the increasing use of online training are trends that were on the rise before COVID-19, they were accelerated by pandemic closures, and now are here to stay.



## A New Era of Work

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The years ahead look different from the past from a business leadership perspective. Companies acknowledging the change and embracing trends such as remote work and digital training are well-positioned to make positive and competitive moves in their industries. Their willingness to follow employee preferences may set them apart from competitors only interested in “returning to normal.”

Even as conditions in business evolve, the value of good training for employees at all levels remains strong. Leaders must simply work with their training provider to determine the best courses to enlighten and inspire today’s workers.

