



# **The only remote working guide you will need in 2021** to unleash employee happiness

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For Xoxoday



# I - Good-bye watercooler, hello millions of Zooms

## “Now what?” - with the future of work?

If the terrible 2020 were to end an era, it would be the water-cooler management method. Our dreams for the future of work have become quite basic as we aim to recreate those same connections in our virtual work environment. We're dying to improve employee experience, happiness and well-being, regardless of whether your organization may be fully digital or hybrid.

For the lucky ones who have a job with good enough conditions to work from home, you can even craft a new work-life balance in search of more freedom and happiness. Unfortunately, the fruitful period of finding meaning and purpose didn't come right away.

Everyone had to go through the famous five-stages of the psychological Kubler-Ross change management model, starting with the not-so-fun denial and anger phases.

After all, workplaces could become workspaces, and water-cooler chit-chats, virtual coffees. The work from home acronym, WFH, is now mainstream, and the most repeated 2020 sentence was: “I think you're on mute” or “I can't hear you.”

The learning curve for Zoom, or all team communication tools, Slack or Microsoft Teams peaked, making a headset the new “must-have” replacing old workspace attributes as fancy shoes, makeup, ties, or work-attire.

# 2020 in 4 numbers

## In the US

71% of employees are currently working from home VS 20% before the pandemic  
54% would want to work from home after the coronavirus outbreak ends

## In India

88% of the workforce prefers having the flexibility of working from home  
69% believe their productivity has increased while working remotely

# 2020 in 1 quote

"Can we uninstall 2020 and install it again?  
This version has a virus."  
—Unknown

# 2020 in 1 word

"Surreal".

**So what are your plans to work on your employee happiness in 2021?**

**Let us help you here with a few tips.**

We'll go through the dos and don'ts of remote management and how you can hone your new skill set for the best virtual leadership. As a starter, resiliency is the foundation of everything.

# 1-1 If you want to WFH forever, your new soft-skill is called high resilience ---

The first step to unleashing employee happiness within the pandemic crisis context is called resilience. It has become the 2020 companies' holy grail - as we can't adapt to a crisis without addressing the most critical issues.

Resiliency, according to the The Oxford dictionary, is "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, toughness." However the beauty of the concept is how it crosses disciplines, falling into four categories: psychological, emotional, physical, and organizational.

It's also an attractive analytical framework for companies to ensure financial prosperity and sustainability, notwithstanding crisis and destructive economic cycles. The COVID timing makes it essential for getting a tactical tool to overcome the downturn.

**We can find three instances by digging into the best recommendations to move organizations forward in the resilience process.**

**1**

These resilient organizations acknowledge the threat and are comfortable anticipating and focusing on what could go wrong. They do research to understand the changing market.

**2**

They have strong, inclusive leaders, who intend to limit harm and incorporate a diversity of thoughts into their decision-making process.

**3**

These leaders value their people, recognize and empower their experts, and reinforce behaviors that help solve problems.

Have you heard about Brian Chesky's first move for Airbnb? Airbnb's IPO occurred on December 20 and was programmed long before the crisis. As a resilient leader, he pledged to innovate with new online experiences and products.

By that time, the first lockdown had severely affected Airbnb's numbers, but he chose instead to create shareholder value through risk-taking instead of a more defensive strategy.

Many large organizations have also built upon a culture of resilience in recent months, among them: Salesforce and Kaiser Permanente. Many local businesses such as restaurants, have also managed to organize orders with new mobile apps or delivery platforms in record time.

Amazing, right?

## So, what are the common attributes of all these incredibly resilient people?

### **They are:**

Optimistic but with a realistic outlook, they can find opportunities and see the positive within the negative.

They have values or spirituality that drive them, a higher purpose and tend to be altruistic.

They only focus their energy on what they can control and change.

They have a social support system while also supporting others.



# One idea is to try a coaching session *to increase your emotional resilience*

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Most of the coaching sessions for people focus on:

- Emotional regulation
- How to Increase growth mindset, compassion, self-compassion, and optimism

If resiliency is the cornerstone in building your 2021 virtual leader skill-set, what other skills should you learn?

The number-one skill will always be management and its new version: virtual management. Indeed, the virtual leader should be a good virtual coach, a super-connector fostering team communication and team building. **And here's why**

# II- Lead with intentions, don't avoid hard things



## 2-1 This is NOT a copy-paste of in-person relationships \_\_\_\_\_

As much as we'd like it, unfortunately, we can't equate virtual cooperation with in-person interaction mirroring.

We obviously can't have the same social clues or feel the energy, so it's harder to adjust our communication to our interlocutor.

Also, since the default communication is no-talk, we have to force more contacts to compensate. It's especially true if the manager is to understand his team member, to be a good coach and give meaningful feedback.

I heard so many stories of new tensions developing between the Manager and their team members since the beginning of the pandemic. Lately, a healthcare industry friend told me his boss had difficulty connecting with him and valuing his work.

What struck me was how much trust he had lost in his boss within a few weeks and didn't feel like it was repairable. His manager, who had always managed well in person, didn't know how to fill communication gaps and foster dialogue virtually.

Management is a skill to be learned, it's a gym that needs practice, and so is virtual management. Many great organizations propose online training for remote management, and this is survival for managers who have never led remote teams before.

Remember, if you want happy employees, you need good managers and you need to train them.

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**57% of employees quit because of their boss.**

There should be no improvisation here. Bad management can harm employees, especially during a crisis, where financial drivers tend to guide leadership decisions.

## 2 quick tips for a happier workspace:

*work on your growth mindset and become an empathetic leader*



### Tip #1 - Learn virtual management

Just start by learning virtual management. You must always learn and improve your leadership skills. Leadership is a skill that every great leader has learned by preparing to lead.



### Tip #2 - Become an empathetic leader

Experts at the Greater Good Science Center have identified behaviors and attributes contributing to happiness at work. And guess what? They are primarily leadership attributes for empathetic leaders and it's about:

- Fostering positive emotions like gratitude
- Helping to build resistance to stress (mindfulness)
- Teaching the importance of trusting, collaborative relationships at work

The center's experts have created a very popular course, "The Science of Happiness," accessible to all and showing "Happiness at work also improves the bottom line." They explain how being happy at work is "critical to a fulfilling life and can make us more creative, invested, and productive in our work.

**Learning management and how to foster a great culture impacts the bottom line. Now, let's dig into the remote management teams best practices.**



# What is the best WFH formula to keep up your team motivation?

## 3-1 Communicate more, respect freedom, and flexibility. These are the winning rules

We've progressively seen over the past few years the evolution of the traditional employee engagement market toward more employee experience.

We tend to chat rather than get into more in-depth conversations about our work progress. All managers out there feel this struggle. How to manage when you don't know what's going on? In this remote-work freedom paradox, you can only empower people to share their work.

But never, do you want to spy on your teammates - It's counterproductive and unacceptable from an ethical standpoint.

### **Remember the big brother movie?**

The experience is a nightmare. When you don't meet in person, trust is the most valuable currency. Josh Bersin, the leading influencer in the HR market, has been denouncing this monitoring employee practice for years.

Micromanagement can be a sign of inexperienced management or lack of result-oriented culture, but it can always improve with training and processes. Unless of course, it is the expression of a toxic environment. In that case it's harder to solve.

Research shows a culture of trust and belonging is the first driver of employee engagement, with strong correlation between data.

The new 2021 Manager is a resilient, empathetic and decisive leader who acknowledges the difficulties, understands the market context, and listens to his people before deciding.

This approach by managers or their teammates should give the benefit of the doubt as a standard procedure and strive to make people feel safe and ask for help. They also know how to adopt a coaching posture to support people's growth.



## **Best practice: how to foster trust in your team with a team contract:**

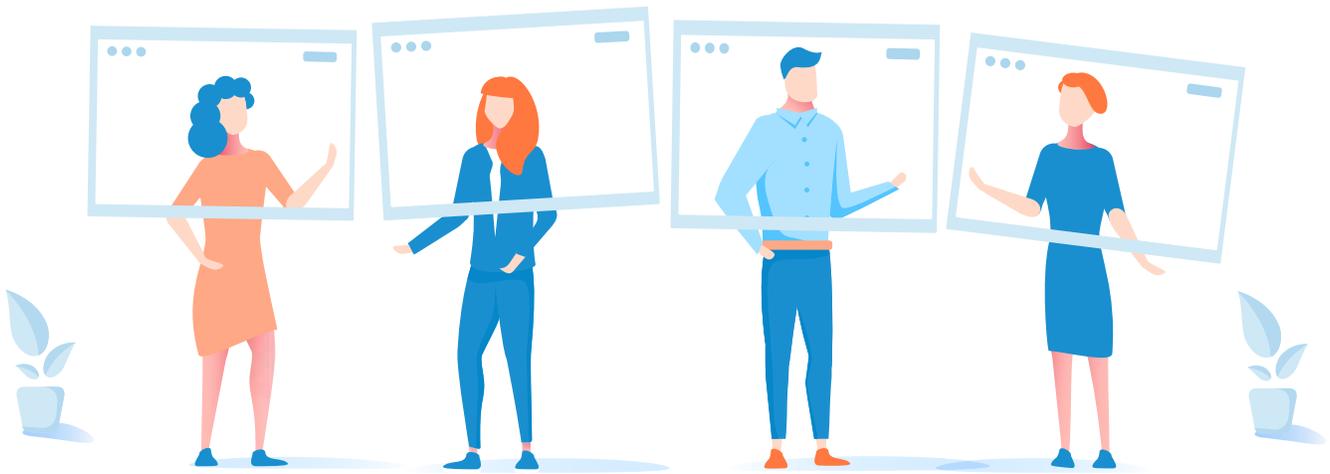
Setting clear expectations is a manager's sine-qua-non for driving efficiency and trust. Yet, as a remote team-leader, you must double-down your efforts with written communications to level up the team cooperation standard.

A team contract can communicate expected values and behaviors while making things crystal clear and accessible to all.

### **The most important values to include in your team contract are:**

- Keep the interest of others in mind
- Ask for help
- Give the benefit of the doubt
- Allow everyone to share their thoughts
- Have a forum to discuss tough issues





## 3-2 Put yourself in other's shoes and listen with full ears

As a manager, conflict avoidance has never been the best solution. In a remote environment, it's even more detrimental. You should know how to address any lack of communication and avoid falling into the trap of passive-aggressive virtual modes.

As a matter of fact, in our new pandemic world, you never know what's going on in your team members' daily lives. You don't see what you don't know or you don't ask about.



*One way of starting productive coaching conversations is to ask the crucial question: **how can I help you?***

The manager's main role should be to listen and support his team members to allow any coaching situation to happen and help people grow. Be a great coach and practice intention and deep listening. Ask crucial questions like "How can I help you?" And don't forget to give the benefit of the doubt to help people feel safe and open up.

Research shows that management is much easier if you build trust and relationships beforehand. And for this, no secret, it's all about creating new opportunities for people to connect and spend some good time with their peers behind the screen. Think of a workspace - not a workplace - where you only hustle, stress out without getting a breath of fresh air - you don't want it. So work on connecting your people as a primary measure.

# 3-3 Best-practices to connect your people remotely

If you don't want to overload your meetings with small-talks, you'd better connect with your teammates on other specially designed occasions. It's actually much more authentic and satisfying if the "let's connect sessions" are dissociated from the regular work.

Here are 3 good ideas across the board to connect people:



**1. Virtual coffees** - 30 minutes with your hot cup in your hands to do "as if" it was the good old days. Show your mug, comment on your coffee or tea. Talk about your Zoom background and try to make it fun or in a place you like to spark conversations.



**2. Tea time with pastries is a good alternative** - If you manage to have pastries delivered to your team members on their birthday (Trello does that), you score points with smiles on faces.



**3. About games - we have so many games online now** - Poker, Chess, multiplayer video games. Of course, it depends on the culture of the company, but Minecraft could be fun for the construction industry.

The only thing is to be creative, not to force anyone but only to diversify people's opportunities to have fun and connect. Think about team building, a lot of options exist in the virtual world.

# Try this

## - Recommended by Miro

(Whiteboard for remote teams)

**Learning management, working on communication and building trust, are a must in a virtual world. However, the key to success and excellent execution is to strengthen communication with solid processes and written meetings or rules.**

## Ten common things game

“This game is good for starting a brainstorming session. Divide your team into small groups and ask them to spend 10 minutes coming up with a list of 10 things they have in common. If you prefer to keep the topic more business oriented, limit the list to work or industry-related topics.

It can be as simple as, “we all wear shoes to something more specific like, “ we were all hired in 2019.” Regardless of the answers, it will create a bond, generate discussion and laughter, and get the group thinking creatively. Allow time for each group of remote workers to share their list. This will create an electric, dynamic atmosphere, well-suited to brainstorming.”

## 3-4 Blurry work/personal boundaries are screaming for more structure

The enemy of productivity in remote work is the lack of structure or framework. Home-to-work had this ancient virtue of changing your work world before going to your home shelter. All studies now show people working from home work longer hours with a high risk of burn-out.

By the way, take seriously any signs of mental exhaustion or disillusionment over your work impact. While working from home, it's vital to set work/life boundaries and create a rich non-work life with old and new hobbies or activities. It's time to resume your guitar practice.

No surprise if routines are the most popular tool for individual productivity and well-being. They bring this super-power to save your energy on the necessities for the benefit of the most fulfilling stuff of your day. All artists and creators will tell you that routines are the prerequisite for good creativity.

But there can also be routines to take care of your well-being and limit the risks of burnout. When there is a radical change of environment, we have to make more decisions to adjust, and face disrupted habits. Recreating new routines is a path to more happiness.

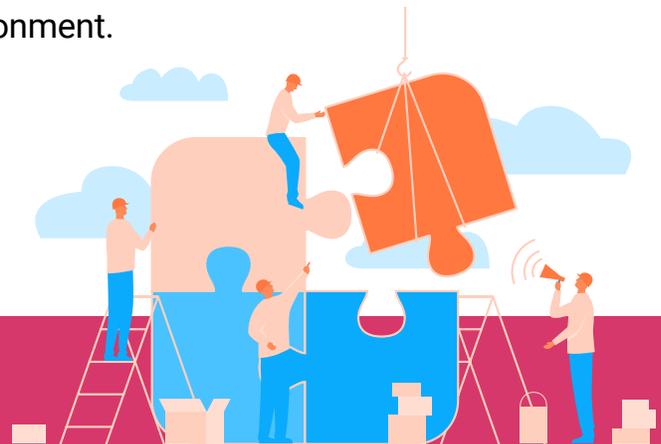
Routines are your personal processes. But, we can also learn a lot from the best-in-class remote companies.

## 3-5 Tips for teamwork efficiency from best-in-class remote companies

### Trello - Zapier - Gitlab

Successful remote companies, like Trello, Zapier, or Gitlab agree that effective remote working is about building a specific culture with shared norms and values. Of course, it's much easier to create a culture from scratch in the company's early days by creating core values serving the remote collaboration.

For example, Gitlab's values are collaboration, results, efficiency, diversity, inclusion and belonging, iteration, and transparency. All of these are forcing behaviors for high-performing teams in a virtual environment.



**This being said, 2 universal rules for efficient remote work are:**

### **1. Meetings preparation**

One of the most challenging things in the remote world is to respect everyone's precious time to get things done in a meeting. Thorough discipline to prepare elements in advance is the only solution for more productive brainstorming sessions, situation analysis, or decision-making processes.

Never set up a meeting without a detailed agenda and ideally send session material (Powerpoint, Google doc, shared link, any collaborative tool including the work) BEFORE. Limit meetings to 30 minutes. The more time we have, the less productive we are.

### **2. Get the most of asynchronous communication.**

The bonus in asynchronous communication is to benefit from the additional time offered by the time-zone differences. You can always take your time to re-read and "listen" to your message's tone. Emoticons help soften communication that can be too direct and hurt the recipient or, in the worst-case, destroy trust over time.

**Now you know. You have to do the work. Are you ready to be a great virtual leader?**



# Quiz: are you ready to be a great virtual leader?

## 1/ What is the attribute of resilient leaders among the following?

- A- They are 100% optimistic
- B- They want to change everything
- C- They have a strong inner compass with values that drive them

## 2/ What is NOT a key-word for happiness at work?

- A- Gratitude
- B- Trust
- C- Long meetings

## 3/ Why routines can help to avoid burn-out?

- A- By saving brain energy
- B- By clarifying expectations
- C- By improving your organization skills

## 4/ What are the critical words to use for a team contract to build trust?

- A- Win, cheer everyone and believe in the purpose
- B- Help, give the benefit of the doubt and have a forum to discuss tough issues
- C- Energy, collective excellence and virtual coffees

## 5/ Why should you be an excellent virtual coach above all?

- A- Because it makes me popular
- B- Helping people grow starts with listening
- C- It goes with the good manager skill-set

## Check your result, Are you ready for a happier workspace in 2021?

**5/5:** All good! Bravo, you're ready to set new standards for a happier virtual workspace, go for it!

**Less than 4:** Well, you're not ready yet, and it's Okay. Maybe you want to work more on your resilience? Or learn how to be a great virtual coach?

*You can learn management, best practices but did you know that tools could also help you in your role? Empulse can foster that great virtual experience, mobilize your team toward goals, and drive employee happiness with rewards and recognition.*

**Answers: 1-C, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-B+C**

# IV- Empulse helps you foster the best experience for everyone



## 4-1 Connect across the board with shared interests and more transparency

Measuring employee experience can be challenging, but eNPS surveys are the best way to gauge workplaces' progress. The eNPS scores are easy-to-use and come with a compelling indicator to measure the software ROI and be able to show the positive impact for the Investissement. Xoxoday comes with an overall 67% improvement in eNPS scores.

### What is the eNPS score?

Employer Net Promoter Score, or eNPS, is a scoring system designed to help employers measure employee satisfaction and loyalty within their organizations. It is based on the Net Promoter Score system from Bain & Company, Satmetrix Systems, Inc., and Fred Reichheld, that gauges customer loyalty.

### How to leverage your eNPS score results?

Among the themes that make employees happier, there are two or three notable differences that employees point out. The first is transparency. Organizational transparency builds trust because it contributes to the fairness perception.

Pulse surveys allow leaders to get ahead of the trends to understand the sentiment of the workforce, spot problems early on, and take action quickly. All the existing surveys and polls can be accessed with a link on the Empuls App at a collaboration tool of your choice.

Here is an example of Xoxoday customer testimonials illustrating how Empulse can help increase transparency with a new rewarding system:

*"Both the HR and the employees of Brenntag benefited greatly in terms of the transparency of the rewarding process. The rewarding criteria are well laid out and communicated to the employees. When rewarding is carried out, all employees are made aware of why and how the winners were awarded. This has allowed the HR to introduce clearly defined engagement programs and employees to evaluate these and perform accordingly."*

## 4-2 Align and mobilize with purpose and goals

The most proven method of living out core business values is to lead by example and reinforce positive behaviors. Why? These offer a strong psychological dimension for motivation as they give meaning for pursuing the effort over time.

For this, Xoxoday provides badges for each company's values to show appreciation and value the employee's impact. It can also be badges to celebrate teamwork across the board.

### **Building happy teams is a single click away**

With the Xoxoday Empuls App available for Microsoft Teams and Slack, you can leverage employee engagement benefits such as improved productivity, stronger teams, more efficient managers, and the ability to measure, and boost engagement.



**Companies that implemented Xoxoday reported a 10% increase in employee engagement** and a substantial reduction in attrition. Integrate Empuls to find out the workforce engagement jitters, understand what is working, and fix aspects that require improvement.

After all, supporting employees to perform better is an organization's core responsibility. Believe it or not, it is possible for employees to be both happy and productive. From a business viewpoint, a happy workforce leads to success, more success results in happiness.

## One Number:

37% have better clarity on goals & vision.

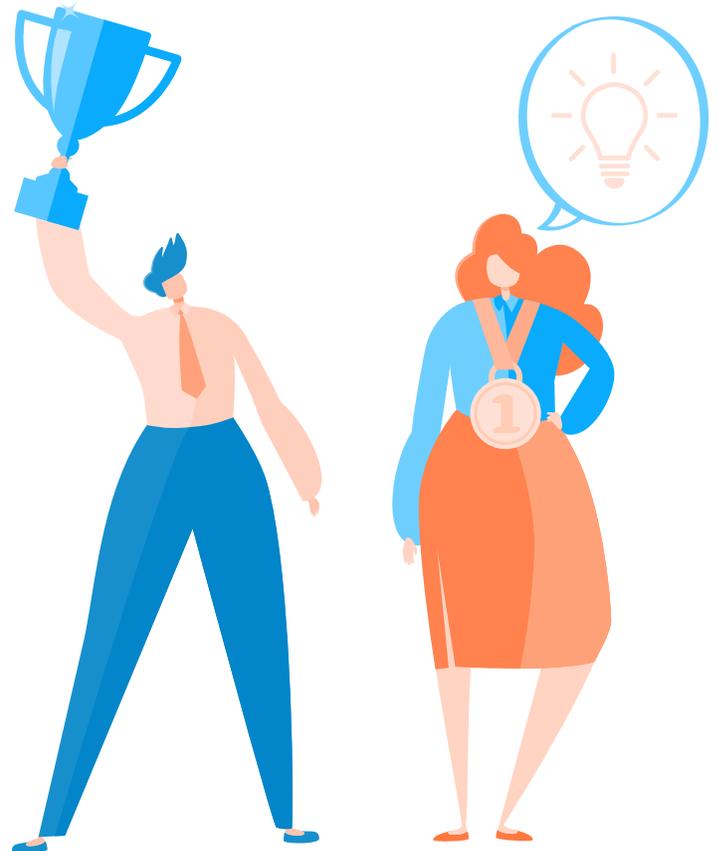
## One key practice:

1:1 feedback remains the best tool to align goals within the organization.

## 4-3 Drive employee happiness and well-being with rewards and recognition

What do you think is the most powerful driver of employee engagement? Employers with good recognition and career development programs demonstrate higher productivity, revenue, customer retention and employee retention.

For the global companies, the pain points with rewards is localization and choices. You don't want to create an inequity between people located in big cities or near headquarters companies versus more distant places or countries.



To address this problem, at Xoxoday, we offer multi-currency options, real-time rewards over 70 countries, and multiple categories that make the employee and his/her family and you win.

Now you can dream of what you'd like from the following categories: fashion, automobiles, baby and kids, beauty & wellness, electronics, experiences, fintech, learning, entertainment, food, sports and fitness, charity, cash cards, saving.

**Everything about engagement = Empuls,**  
*because engaged employees build stronger teams*

Engage and motivate employees directly on Slack and MS Teams without having to switch platforms. The integration between Empulse App and Microsoft Teams and Slack is aimed to communicate, recognize, reward, align, and motivate employees to build a happier workforce and an engaged organizational culture.



**Your employee happiness begins today.**

*What is your favorite best practice you want to implement TODAY?*

At Xoxoday, we deeply understand the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and engagement drivers of people, be it an employee, supplier, contract staff, gig or consumer. We bring simplicity and continuity to a complex, everyday problem.



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