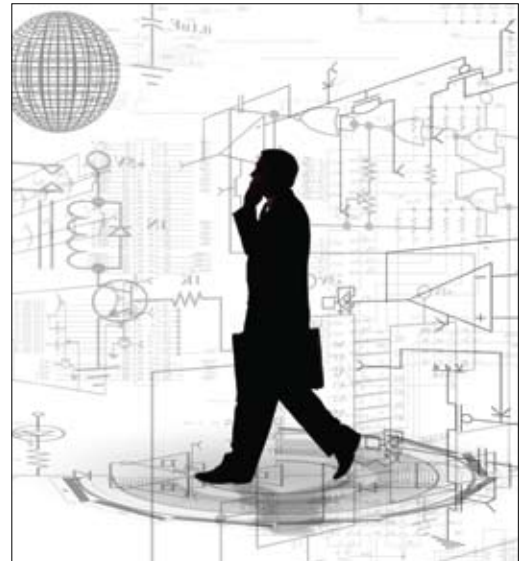


Compliments of Your Technical Communication Experts at Freund Associates

Technology has made the world both a bigger and smaller place.

Rarely is business conducted at a specific location for a certain number of hours per day any more. We now have the luxury of working wherever in the world we happen to be! However, managing remote workers and/or offsite subcontractors presents a new set of challenges for executives — challenges that require a new set of management strategies and guidelines. These guidelines can make your mission-critical jobs easier for everyone, wherever they happen to be...as long as everyone knows what those guidelines are. This issue of *Ask Dr. Freund* provides answers to your questions about how to manage remote teams successfully, something we've been doing at Freund Associates since our inception in 1996.



Question 1:

Why should I consider managing my employees and projects remotely? I want to know my people are in the office and being as productive as possible. Can anything really replace in-person meetings?

A: Yes. Teleconferencing and videoconferencing have made conducting meetings across town or around the world both efficient and affordable. When you consider the time and expense of having your people travel to meet at a specific office or hotel to conduct a meeting that can be done remotely, it is easy to see how productivity and performance can improve. Assuming you have hired a disciplined and motivated team of professionals, you will be pleased at how much you all can get done and how much easier it will be to do it.

Question 2:

Now that I have embraced the concept of managing remotely, how do I begin?

A: Based on years of managing teams remotely at Freund Associates, I discovered that establishing clear guidelines upfront will dramatically improve your chance of success. These guidelines should be communicated and acknowledged by every member of your team via e-mail, personal letter, or signed work agreement. General guidelines should include the day, time, and length of a scheduled tele- or videoconference and that attendance is required unless other arrangements are made. If you can schedule regular conference calls, for example, every Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. or every other Friday at 3:00 p.m., you and your team can plan your schedules around them. Build it into your "corporate culture."

Question 3:

Now that I have the “buy-in” from my team and everyone has our regularly scheduled meetings on their calendars, how do I ensure that this time together is as productive as possible?

A: This begins and ends with you having an agenda, the more detailed the better. This should be prepared and delivered to your team at a predetermined time prior to the electronic conference. The agenda outlines the topic of the meeting and who will be conducting it, followed by a list of items that may or may not require contributions from other team members. Additionally, you should allow each member a specific time allotment for their contribution or presentation. When every member of the team sees the agenda and their role in it, there is an inherent measure of personal accountability and thus, a greater chance of all participants joining the conference fully prepared. One reason that so many despise in-person meetings is the fear that they will be called on “by surprise” to produce information they do not have, or make a presentation they are not prepared to make. This results in embarrassment, resentment and ultimately, counter productivity.

Question 4:

How do remote teams handle group presentations?

A: Along with your agenda, you and your presenting team members should e-mail to all conference attendees any files and attachments — presentations, image files, documents, or spreadsheets — that will be required for discussion. Everyone should have ample time to review the files while preparing their comments and contributions. If the size or number of files makes this difficult, or different members need to make their own presentations, then you might consider using WebEx, the Web-based application that allows simultaneous sharing of a presenter's files or webcams. You can even record the meeting's proceedings on the hosting computer for later review. This is an invaluable tool for conducting presentation-intensive teleconferences.

Question 5:

What else do I need to know about successfully managing my teams remotely?

A: I would suggest starting with smaller, less complex projects or projects with longer timelines. This will allow all team members to get comfortable with new technologies and the fact they have to do their “homework” before attending regularly scheduled conferences. Since the time and frustration of travel is eliminated, there should be no excuses for being unprepared. Once you and your team have seen the benefits of working remotely on smaller projects, you'll be able to take on larger, more intensive ones. In addition, when you see that your team's performance — and your bottom line — have improved, be sure to acknowledge that fact, either with a small reward or other form of thanks. The team that is so critical to your success will feel valued and, thus, more likely to continue performing at optimal levels.

Question 6:

What other costs might I slash or eliminate by using remote management to the max and “Going Green”?

A: Once you have seen how remote management can save you time and money, you will be tempted to explore other options to become even more efficient. Since you no longer need to have your team at “company headquarters” and everything that goes with it, including desks, equipment, a conference room, etc., you may consider downsizing to smaller office space. There are many energy cost savings associated with this big step, which also supports the recent “Go Green” initiatives that so many companies and their environmentally-conscious clients are now embracing. Want to learn more about the benefits of managing teams remotely? Call Dr. Freund today at 201-512-0022, or visit www.freundassociates.com...and keep those questions coming!