10 creative employee engagement ideas for remote workers

If your organization is like most, you've seen a dramatic upturn in remote work since the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. It's now clear that this trend is here to stay, with a recent study by Upwork predicting that 22% of the American workforce will be entirely remote by 2025.

While the work-from-home lifestyle isn't going anywhere, that doesn't mean that it hasn't presented many unique challenges for employers. Besides having to find new ways to track & monitor employee progress, keeping your remote team engaged is another huge concern. That's because there's currently an epidemic of low employee engagement levels across all industries in America.

According to Gallup's *State of the Workplace* report, 85% of workers are NOT engaged at work, which includes both in-house and remote team members. This noticeable lack of engagement earned the nickname 'quiet quitting,' and it's a serious issue for many organizations.

So how do you fight back & raise engagement levels for your virtual team?

With a remote team, employee engagement activities are even more critical than for in-house staff. That's because remote workers face a myriad of distractions while they're at home during working hours. Streaming services, family members, video games, and social media all threaten to steal your team's focus during the day – which is why you need to develop creative employee engagement ideas for remote workers.

We've compiled some of the most exciting & innovative engagement ideas from across the web to get your creative juices flowing, so don't wait to dive in.

What makes remote employee engagement unique?

An employee's engagement level refers to how motivated, passionate, and excited an employee is about their work. Ideally, every employee at your organization should feel engaged with their work and position, but that doesn't always happen.

Traditionally, managers and executives shared the same space with their teams, which made it easier to spot lower levels of engagement. After identifying the problem, managers could engage the employee one-on-one to discover their lack of motivation.

Team building activities, mediation sessions, gifts, and enticing initiatives are all ways to boost employee engagement for in-house employees. However, the advent of remote work in recent years has made identifying disengaged employees a lot trickier.

Not only that, but it's easier for remote workers to become disengaged in the first place.

Why is that?

It's because they're cooped up in their home offices far away from the rest of the team. Since they have no physical interaction with colleagues or managers, it's far easier for them to feel isolated, disconnected, and disengaged. That's not good news, as disengaged employees can negatively impact employee morale, productivity, and revenue.

That's why remote employee engagement is tougher than engaging employees in a traditional face-to-face office environment.

Yet, that doesn't mean that it's impossible to raise the engagement levels of your remote workforce, just that it takes some hard work and creativity.

For instance, virtual team building activities can work equally as well as in-person team building, which is why you'll want to make efforts to engage your remote team.

The benefits of an engaged remote workforce

As stated before, low engagement levels will negatively impact your company's performance, morale, and revenue.

The good news?

Boosting your team's engagement levels will have the complete opposite effect.

When remote workers are engaged, they're far more likely to:

- Enjoy better mental health and well-being.

- Remain at your company for the long term.

- Go above and beyond the call to action.

- Think about the big picture instead of only focusing on daily tasks.

- Provide constructive feedback to colleagues.

These are significant benefits, so let's take a more in-depth look at each one.

Engaged workers are healthier

Did you know that engaged employees are less likely to engage in unhealthy habits? According to another Gallup survey, an engaged workforce is more likely to exercise & eat healthily. Not only that, but engaged workers are less likely to struggle with chronic disease and obesity.

Gallup also found that engaged employees are 21% more likely to take part in employer wellness programs that encourage healthy habits.

So if you want your remote workers to enjoy the same health benefits, you should provide the following:

- Fitness challenges and initiatives.

- Breaks for physical activity during the workday.

- Automated reminders for physical check-ups and telehealth appointments.

- Wellness programs that encourage healthy eating & exercise.

The more you can encourage good health practices from your employees, the better — so don't forget to include health-related activities in your engagement ideas.

Better employee retention

Being able to retain top talent is a necessity for any organization that wants to succeed. If your top performers are constantly leaving the company, that's a sign that you need to improve employee engagement. However, if an employee clicks with your company culture and feels genuinely engaged, they're 87% less likely to leave you for someone else.

Employee retention is especially important for Millennials, as 6 in 10 are open to switching jobs at any given time, especially if they aren't engaged.

Yet, if they are engaged, the evidence shows that Millennials will stay at your organization even longer than other generations, which is a plus. Not only that, but they're 59x more likely to recommend your organization to their friends & family, which can help you build your brand.

Employee engagement reduces absenteeism

Absenteeism and burnout are two of the worst problems facing organizations today, especially in the age of 'quiet quitting.'

What's absenteeism?

It's where an employee either doesn't show up for work or does but gets very little done.

There are many causes of absenteeism, including the following:

- Excessive stress/burnout.

- An illness or injury.

- Depression & mental health issues.

- Disengagement.

As you can see, a lack of engagement & purpose at work causes quiet quitting & absenteeism. These are serious issues, as absenteeism costs companies an average of $2,660 - $3,660 per employee annually.

The good news is that increasing the engagement levels of your team is the remedy for this issue.

The proof?

Organizations that have high engagement levels report 41% less absenteeism from their teams, both remote and in-house.

Boosted productivity

Employee engagement is a critical aspect of productivity, and there's plenty of research to back this up. In particular, highly engaged employees are 17% more productive than their colleagues — and they boast 10% higher customer rating scores — according to a 2016 study by Gallup.

So if you're able to engage your remote workforce better, they'll become more productive than before, which

will positively affect your bottom line. Beyond that, employees with high engagement levels are more likely to innovate on the job.

Why is that?

Since they're passionate about what they do and think about it a lot, this leads to them developing innovative solutions & creative new ideas. If you're adamant about your team thinking outside the box, then you'll definitely want to increase your remote worker's engagement levels to help them do so.

Also, engaged workers are more likely to approach you with any questions or concerns they may have, which is another plus. If they feel comfortable providing you with constructive feedback, your entire team will grow stronger as a result — and they'll fully trust your leadership.

Increased revenue

The Gallup study linked previously didn't only find that engaged employees are more productive and provide better customer service — they were also more profitable. Specifically, engaged employees were 21% more profitable than their coworkers.

That's a significant increase, which reinforces why employee engagement is such a crucial component of productivity & revenue. If your salesforce feels valued, properly equipped, and passionate about their work, they're far more likely to outperform disengaged colleagues.

So if you're on the fence about taking measures to increase your remote worker's employee engagement, you'll be missing out on quite a bit of money if you don't. Appreciating your employees and engaging with them will literally pay off for you, which is why you shouldn't hesitate to do it.

Top 10 employee engagement ideas for remote workers

By now, it should be clear that boosting your employee engagement will yield numerous benefits to your entire organization.

When your team is excited about what they do, profitability & productivity rise through the roof. Better engagement also elicits loyalty, trust, & innovation from employees and leads to better mental health and higher levels of job satisfaction.

At this point, you're likely eager to learn how you can take advantage of these benefits, so here are 10 fun virtual employee engagement ideas that you can use with your remote team.

#1: Slack's gratitude journal (Gratitudely)

If you use the popular chat application Slack at your organization, you can use the add-on Gratitudely to create a gratitude journal for your virtual team.

How does it work?

It creates a new Slack channel for your team entitled '#gratitude-wall.' Here, the app will create random gratitude prompts during work hours from Monday to Friday. A gratitude prompt features a beautiful card that presents a question or statement for employees to write a journal entry about.

As an example, a gratitude prompt may ask a remote worker, *"What made you smile in the past week?"*

The idea is to periodically remind your staff of the things they're genuinely grateful for during the workday,

which can dramatically increase their engagement.

- Increased happiness and job satisfaction.

- Improved brain activity.

- An enhanced focus during the day.

- Boosted self-esteem and resilience when problems arise.

- Reduced stress levels.

- Better physical and mental health.

Besides Gratitudely, you can also use other apps to create a gratitude wall, which is more of a team bonding exercise. With the gratitude wall, your team gets the chance to express their admiration and appreciation for their fellow colleagues.

However, it's essential to keep an eye on the wall to ensure that no one is getting left out. If you discover that some employees aren't receiving any attention, you can create posts for them yourself.

Even if you don't use Slack, you can still create a gratitude wall manually using automated reminders and spreadsheets.

#2: Virtual coffee breaks

Just because your team works from home doesn't mean they don't need to take an occasional break. In traditional office settings, it's common for employees to gather around the coffee machine or water cooler to briefly get away from work and chit-chat with their colleagues. This quick break provides a sort of 'pick-me-up' that helps workers get through the day, and it's largely been missing from remote jobs.

The great thing about virtual coffee breaks is they replicate this feeling of catharsis, albeit in a digital setting. At least once a day, have your team brew hot cups of coffee (or their preferred beverage/snack for non-coffee drinkers) and then bring them on the Zoom call. Besides coffee, your team can drink tea, munch on snacks, eat ice cream, or simply sit and relax for a bit.

For around 5 to 10 minutes, let the work gloves come off while you engage in fun small talk with your team while they sip coffee & unwind. A cheery break like this will help shake off the cobwebs for the remainder of the workday, which can boost productivity.

Not only that, but virtual coffee breaks can foster a sense of community among your remote team, which can be quite difficult since you don't see each other much. By socializing, your team will enjoy a stronger bond, which can boost their engagement levels.

Expressing gratitude can provide the following:

#3: Video conferencing show-and-tell

Remember how exciting show-and-tell days were in elementary school?

Well, you can recreate that excitement with your virtual team via video calls.

Creating a special time for show-and-tell will give your team a chance to blow off steam and connect with their coworkers. If your team is a bit shy at first, ask them to show everyone their pets. That usually makes a fantastic icebreaker, as most people have cats & dogs wandering around the house while they work.

Your team will have a blast interacting with everyone's pets via webcam, which is a great team-building exercise. Also, don't forget to leave plenty of time for everyone to ask questions.

Besides pets, your team can show off anything cool they have around the house. If they have a laptop or tablet, they could even give you a tour of their home if they feel comfortable doing so.

You can also ask your team to show off any unique skills they may have, such as playing musical instruments or putting together model cars.

You can turn employee show-and-tell into a fun game/contest by adding judges to take things a step further. Similar to the popular show X-Factor, you can announce prizes (gift cards, company swag, etc.) and winners at the end.

#4: Online training & career advancement

Your employees won't feel engaged if they feel stuck in their current positions. That's why you need to promote a culture of advancement & continued education to keep your top performers within your organization. As such, it's wise to create detailed online training modules for the various positions at your company.

For instance, if there are more advanced positions that require special skills, create training modules for them for your existing employees. Also, share new job postings with your remote team first to give them a chance to see if the positions fit their skill sets.

Creating special training for onboarding new hires is also an intelligent strategy for increasing engagement. After all, why not make efforts to engage new employees straight off the bat? That way, they'll come out of the gates swinging instead of feeling awkward and confused at first.

Another employment engagement idea for remote workers is to develop career maps for your employees most interested in advancing. This can be as simple as using a Word file to list all the different positions they could advance to, including any necessary training.

This extra step communicates that you truly value your employees and that you want them to get the most out of their careers.

Lastly, remote work can be isolating and boring at times, so having online training modules for your staff is a great way to keep them occupied & engaged during the workday.

#5: Virtual murder mystery

A fun & exciting way to mix things up with your remote team is to take part in a virtual murder mystery. Similar to the board game *Clue,* your team will try to determine who committed a murder based on the evidence available.

What's great about these mysteries is they're excellent team-building exercises, as teamwork is crucial to find success.

Besides building camaraderie amongst your staff, these mystery games are just plain fun. You're sure to forget about work pressures when trying to solve a *Knives Out-style* murder mystery with your friends.

Where can you find fun murder mysteries for your virtual team?

[This website](#) offers exciting murder mysteries for remote teams, with two options to choose from that contain mind-melting puzzles that are equal parts challenging and fun.

#6: Virtual escape room

Escape rooms have long been used as team-building exercises for companies, and now they've entered the digital space. Much like murder mysteries, your team has to work together to solve a series of clues to escape the room. Escape rooms vary by style & difficulty, and there is no shortage of options out there.

If you've noticed that your employees are a bit burnt out, a virtual escape room can provide a cathartic release that will reinvigorate them. If your team wants to make it out alive, they'll have to communicate and work together to solve complex math problems, quizzes, riddles, and more.

To make it even more fun, you can encourage your team to dress up in appropriate clothing for the escape room. For instance, if you go with a [space-themed](#) escape room, your team can dress up as astronauts & aliens.

#7: Virtual happy hours

A fun way to celebrate employee birthdays & work anniversaries is to hold a virtual happy hour with your team. After all, it's commonplace for in-house employees to socialize and grab drinks after work, so why not recreate that experience in the digital realm?

You can meet up via video conference either in bars or at your home to share alcoholic beverages while chit-chatting.

To make it even nicer for your team, you can send each employee a care package containing the ingredients needed to make the drinks. That way, nobody has to pay for their own drinks, and everyone can have fun playing bartender for the evening.

That also ensures that everyone remains home while drinking, which is safer and easier for everyone.

#8: Encourage their feedback

Besides providing fun events for your team, you can also increase engagement by providing a more open & honest work environment. In particular, you should encourage your team to give you their honest feedback on how things are going.

One way to go about this is to create an employee engagement survey that you present to your team. In it, ask them how they feel about their daily tasks, any concerns they have, and their views on the company's management.

That will show that you genuinely care about what they think, making it far more likely for your team to give you their feedback.

#9: Provide incentives & perks

You can't expect your team to go above and beyond your expectations if there isn't anything in it for them. As such, you can dramatically boost your employee's engagement levels by providing enticing incentives & perks for a stellar performance.

Sales teams understand this perfectly, which is why it's extremely common for them to provide prizes as incentives for salespeople that exceed their quota (think the Cadillac El Dorado from *Glengarry Glen Ross*). However, you can do the same thing for your team, even if you aren't in sales.

What aspects of your employee's performance matter most for your company?

Once you discover what they are, provide incentives & perks for employees that are able to meet your high standards. It could be that achieving perfect customer review scores is the most important — or knocking out a set number of service calls during the day. Whatever it is, ensure that you have attractive incentives to encourage your team to give it their all.

#10: Give credit where credit is due

Last but certainly not least, our final employee engagement idea for remote workers is simply to give due praise where it's been earned. It's all too common for managers to only focus on what employees AREN'T doing instead of what they are doing. As a result, many employees become discouraged due to a lack of recognition for their hard work.

Make a habit of pointing out stellar performances wherever you see them and make sure not to forget anyone. If your team regularly receives praise for doing a great job, they'll feel more engaged, valued, and respected.

Final thoughts: Employee engagement ideas for remote workers

Those are our picks for the top employee engagement ideas for remote workers. By boosting your remote team's engagement, you'll see increased productivity, employee well-being, and revenue.

It's crucial to provide fun breaks from work, employee recognition, and opportunities for advancement to keep your team engaged and excited about their jobs.