

HOW TO KEEP YOUR REMOTE TEAMS MOTIVATED

Unlock the secret to empowering your team and creating sustainable employee engagement





Motivated employees are valuable employees.

With many of us having shifted to work from home setups, it can be challenging for leaders to know how to keep remote teams motivated. Now more than ever, developing a [positive motivation practice](#) is the key to boosting employee satisfaction, adaptability, quality, creativity and ultimately, productivity.

Employee motivation levels can easily drop in a work-from-home environment, particularly if it's [thrust upon them without choice](#) in the matter. However, when nurtured in the right way, studies show that remote working can actually have a positive impact on business outcomes. The Harvard Business School 'Work From Anywhere' report revealed that working from home led to a "[13 percent](#) performance increase (compared to working from the office)".

Why motivation is now more important than ever

The mass shift to working from home at the start of 2020 has shown the world that a more flexible work arrangement is actually not only quite possible, but in some cases, very beneficial. The next few years could see a [sharp rise](#) in the amount of companies that adopt remote work options on a permanent basis.

This represents an exciting opportunity for you as a company culture curator to figure out how to best set up a framework that supports your team and taps into what motivates them whilst working remotely.

Before we dive into how you can positively influence employee motivation, we're going to explore the psychology of what really motivates people. Armed with that knowledge, you'll be on the fast-track to creating a cultural climate of high motivation leading to increased engagement and high performance.

The Science of Motivation

To help you on your way, we've laid out the facts and compiled a list of top tactics you can use specifically to motivate your remote team.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

First things first, what do humans need? According to Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation, our basic needs can be clearly divided into a pyramid of five fundamental sections: physiological needs, safety, social needs, esteem, and self-actualisation.

Our base-level needs (food, shelter, sleep) must be met before we can move up to the next tier. The ultimate goal? 'Self-actualisation', fulfilment and realisation of one's potential.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Many of us are in the fortunate position that our employees' base two tiers of needs, physiological and safety needs, are largely already met. The next two layers of the hierarchy represent the sweet spot for leadership teams to focus their efforts: You can generate the most impact by motivating your employees through enhancing their needs of belonging and esteem.

BELONGING

Belonging represents the need all humans have to feel as part of a group. Humans are social creatures requiring intimacy, trust, support and connection through friends, family and intimate relationships. We spend so much time at work that if we don't have meaningful relationships or feel a sense of belonging within our team, we quickly become demotivated.

ESTEEM

Whether it's self-esteem or esteem generated from the respect of others, humans have a deep need to feel valued and worthy. Positivity, recognition, praise for our performance, status, or a sense of accomplishment are all examples of the things we seek that boost our sense of self-worth. When our self-esteem plummets, we lose confidence, fulfilment and ultimately, motivation.

When these needs are being met, it fosters one's sense of self and ignites their energy, sending them well on their way to self-actualisation.

By finding out what your employees need on this deep level, you can truly understand how to best motivate them.

The Science of Motivation

Extrinsic versus Intrinsic Motivation

There are two key types of motivation, characterised as extrinsic and intrinsic motivators.

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATORS

Extrinsic motivation refers to external motivating factors, coming from outside the employee. Examples include top down pressure from management, bonus structures and quotas to reward good performances, as well as penalties or punishments to deter negative performance.

INTRINSIC MOTIVATORS

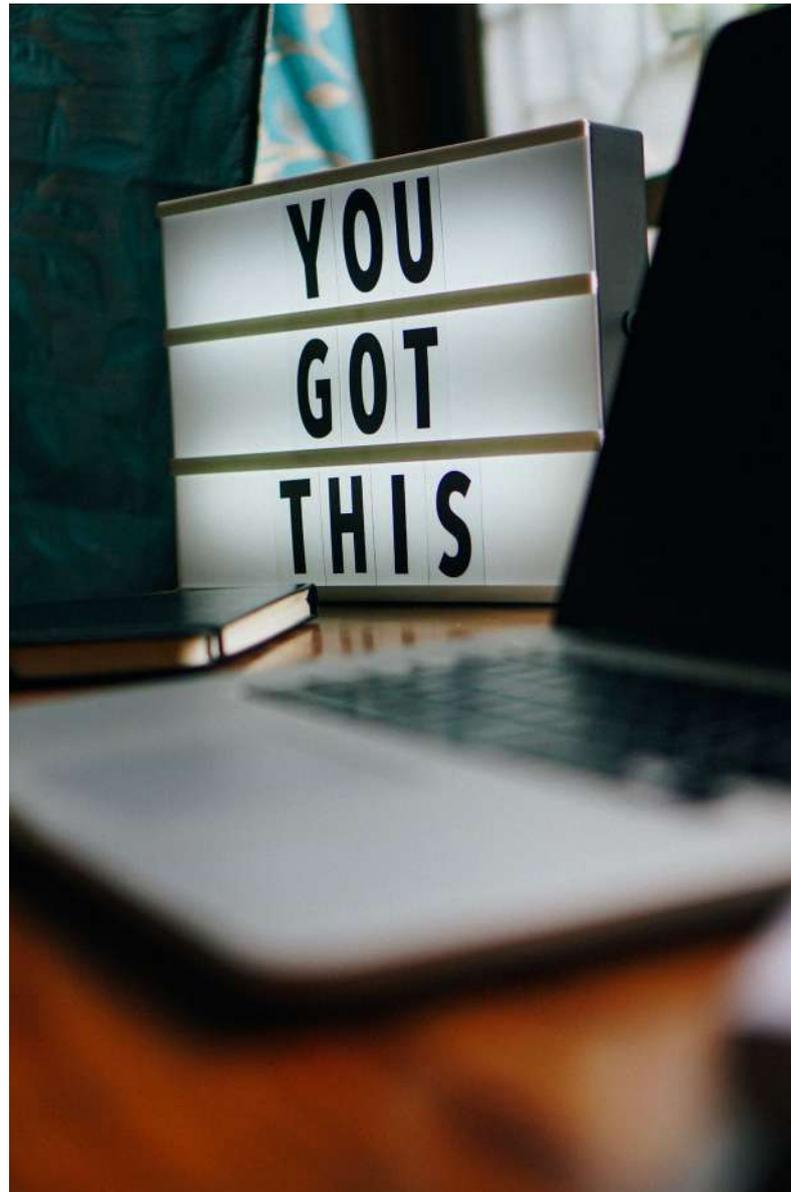
Intrinsic motivation refers to propulsion or drive coming from within the employee. It's when employees perform actions or tasks because they feel compelled to internally.

Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators have their respective places within employee motivation programs but the likelihood is that many workplaces still rely solely on extrinsic motivators.

Whilst external motivators can work for menial tasks, they are [less successful](#) when it comes to creative tasks, complex projects and longer term tasks.

Add in the context of working remotely and the increased level of employee autonomy that inherently comes with this, you'll quickly see that intrinsic motivators are the way forward.

Let's go a little deeper and explore how you can motivate your staff through tapping into what internally matters to them.



The Science of Motivation

The RAMP Model of Intrinsic Motivators

The “RAMP Model” contains [four intrinsic motivators](#): Relationships, Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose.

These four motivators cut to the core of what employees need in regular doses to feel deeply engaged at work.

Whilst external motivating factors can lead to low-level motivation or ‘compliance’, creating an organisational culture that activates these intrinsic motivators instead, enables genuine employee engagement, bolstering output, performance and ensuring employee retention.

R elationships	The desire to be respected and connected to others
A utonomy	The desire to have freedom and discretion in one's job.
M astery	The desire to improve skills and develop expertise.
P urpose	The desire for meaningful work.

Two intrinsic motivators of the RAMP Model, Relationships and Purpose, directly correlate to the two middle tiers of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Belonging and Esteem.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships address our essential need to belong. Humans intrinsically desire meaningful relationships that are built on trust, respect and mutual appreciation.

By providing opportunities for your employees to connect with each other and form strong relationships, you will establish inclusion within your workplace culture. Your employees will become increasingly motivated working within an environment that fosters teamwork, collaboration, fair treatment, and diversity.

If you've recently moved to a remote team setup, your challenge now will be to create the same sense of community within your culture that you had before.

PURPOSE

Purpose is an intrinsic motivator of feeling like you are working towards something meaningful, driven and bigger than yourself.

This is a powerful motivating factor for many employees as it extends beyond just the personal to the macro level. Feeling like an impactful asset working towards a unified goal negates feeling like just another cog in the machine.

As a leader, you have plenty of options to arm your employees with a sense of purpose. You can double down on your company values, share these openly with your staff and use them as a guiding light for your actions.

How can you implement all of this newfound knowledge into actionable initiatives? We have got you covered and put together 8 effective ways to keep your remote teams motivated.

A man with a beard and brown hair, wearing a red sweater and grey jeans, is laughing heartily with his eyes closed and mouth wide open. He has his fists clenched in a celebratory gesture. The background is a blue, textured wall.

**8 WAYS TO
KEEP YOUR
REMOTE
TEAMS
MOTIVATED**



Tip #1: Establish a Culture of Trust

Nobody likes being micromanaged or having their boss peeking over their shoulder and the same goes for remote workers.

With less immediate visibility over what your employees are working on at any given moment, it might be tempting to over-manage them, asking for constant updates or tracking the hours they are online. But this is a surefire way to demotivate them.

It's important that your employees feel they are trusted to show up, do their work, meet deadlines and be given autonomy in order for them to stay motivated.

Limit the amount of meetings so it doesn't seem like you are checking up on them too much.

Provide space for them to think creatively, to experiment, to play, and to set their own goals where possible.

And remember, above all, you actually need to genuinely trust them. If you can't, it might speak to a larger performance issue.

“ Building a culture of trust is what makes a meaningful difference. Employees in high-trust organisations are more productive, have more energy at work, collaborate better with their colleagues, and stay with their employers longer than people working at low-trust companies. ”

Tip #2: State Your Purpose



As we've learnt, imbuing employees with a sense of purpose is crucial in helping to motivate them.

McKinsey points out that “any crisis provides an [opportunity to build a common sense of purpose](#) with your employees, who will be looking for leadership and ways to engage themselves.”

You could take this opportunity to go back to your core set of values and ask yourself if they need a refresh in the context of working remotely. Why not get your employees involved in this process?

You could also dedicate time in your all-hands meetings to remind your team of the impact their work is having on your customers, users, the business as a whole or a social cause.

This will fuel that motivating need all humans have relating to esteem and purpose.

“ Although there is no universal formula to engage employees, it is generally true that people will feel more enthusiastic about their jobs when they are empowered to achieve something meaningful beyond their expectations, feel connected to others, and when they work in an environment - and for someone - that is fair, ethical, and rewarding. ”



Tip #3: Provide Guidance and Set Realistic Goals

“ A motivating work environment provides clear direction so that employees know what is expected of them. ”

Research on emotional intelligence revealed that many [employees wait for guidance](#) from their managers when it comes to reacting to sudden changes within the company or in crisis situations. If managers come across as stressed and helpless, this will consequently have an effect on their teams.

It is, therefore, important that you instill as much confidence as possible in your employees in order to motivate them.

That being said, times have been really tough and the world may seem unrecognisable for many of us.

Show empathy by letting your employees know that it's alright if they take some time to adjust to a new way of working but also share a clear action plan with them to instil confidence that you will guide them through it.

Create a [motivating work environment](#) by setting realistic goals at an individual, team and organisational level. This provides clarity and your employees understand what is expected of them.

Tip #4:

Motivate Through Creativity and Empowerment



It might seem counterintuitive at first but try not to focus heavily on processes and tactical work where possible.

Going remote, the temptation is there to introduce a number of slick, overarching processes or adopt a business as usual approach and amp up the tactical work.

Provide flexibility and room for creativity and meaningful problem-solving as this can be powerful in [increasing motivation](#). Of course, business must continue to run efficiently but this all comes down to creating space.

Encourage employees to carve out moments for thinking, to let concepts sink in and for ideas to marinate.

There's often less distinction between personal life and work life when working from home so your employees need to be highly motivated and supported in order to thrive.

Simple things like not having the daily commute anymore to mentally prepare for the day ahead or shake off the day gone by can be a huge adjustment to the way your employees mentally process their impact that day.

Encourage them to go for a walk as a “faux-commute” or schedule a group meditation break after lunch.

Tip #5:

Encourage Collaboration and Engagement



According to [Buffer's 2020 State of Remote Work Report](#), 20% of employees feel that collaboration and communication are their biggest struggle when working remotely.

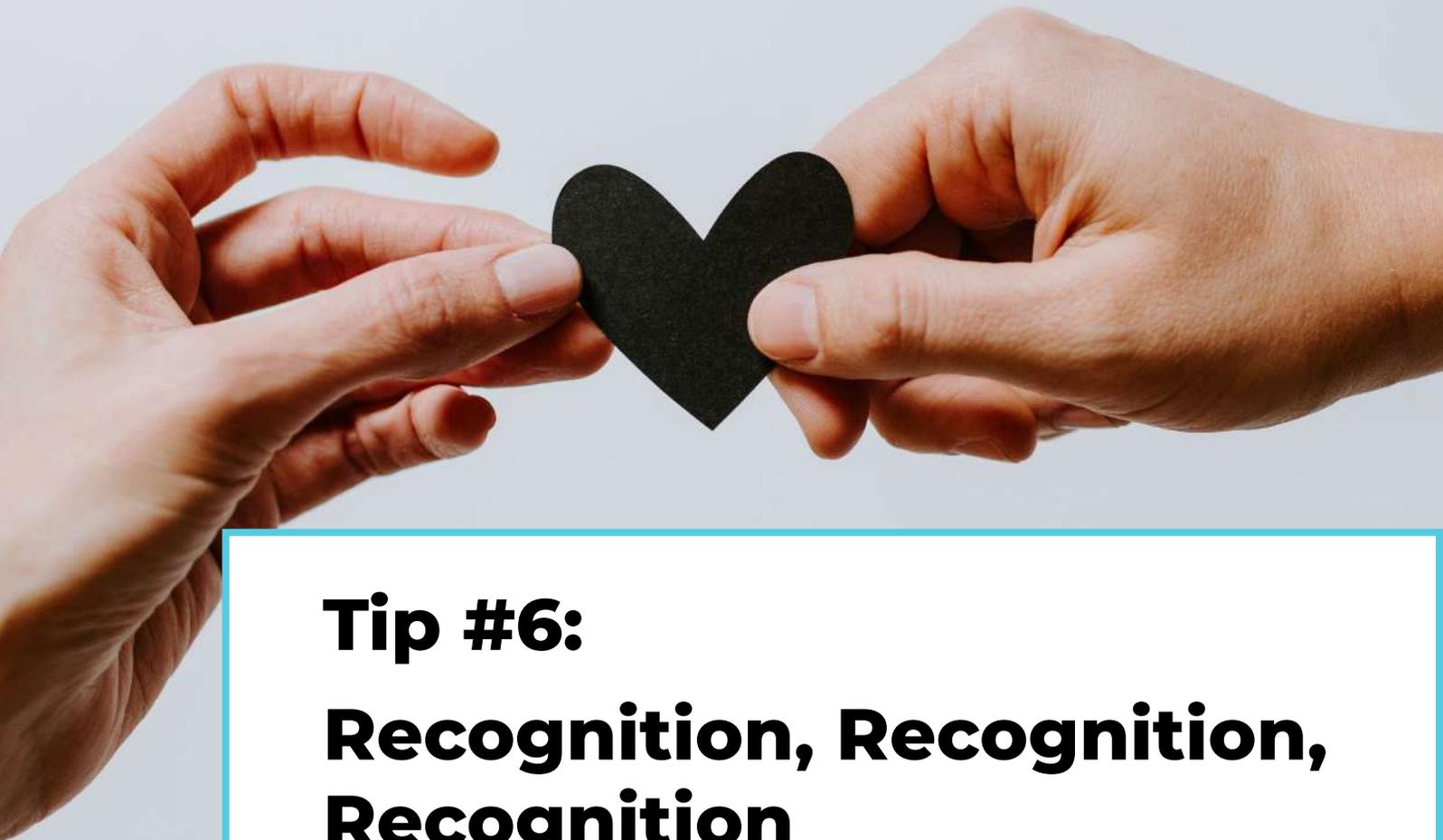
It can be a minefield navigating various communication tools but if you can manage to find an effective way for your teams to collaborate, it could have a significant impact on motivation.

A [Stanford study](#) reported that employees who worked collaboratively stuck at their project 64% longer and had higher engagement levels.

Don't let remote working deter you from encouraging collaboration as it taps into that intrinsic motivator of relationships and belonging.

So, next time you're assigning a project to Jim, why not encourage him to get Jaya and Hans involved?

“ Working collaboratively in a team boosts employee performance whilst increasing engagement levels. ”



Tip #6: Recognition, Recognition, Recognition

We've all experienced it before - that warm fuzzy feeling that comes from being genuinely appreciated and recognised by your team or manager. Work makes up a considerable amount of your time and without recognition, motivation dwindles.

Peer motivation, employee recognition and appreciation are, in fact, among the most [effective employee motivators](#). And celebrating the successes and recognising the efforts of your team is now more vital than ever.

[Brian Kropp](#), Group Vice President at Gartner, pointed out that especially “during periods of disruption, [employees’ desire for being recognised](#) for their contribution increases by about 30%.”

Tailored, positive feedback and recognition at an individual level is always best but remember, it's not only your job as a CEO or HR Manager to recognise each individual employee.

Encourage employees to positively call out their colleagues wherever possible and introduce an [engagement platform](#) to empower them to do so on a regular basis.

“ Organisations that have recognition programs in place experience a 14% improvement in their performance. ”



Tip #7: Create Remote Watercooler Moments

It's important to make time for social interactions that are not related to work.

[Studies](#) have shown that personal interactions make work more enjoyable and meaningful, which can have a significant impact on motivation.

You should, therefore, encourage opportunities for teams to just bond.

Set up a weekly happy hour over Zoom, create a channel in Slack for people to share what they're streaming or reading at the moment, or encourage the use of GIFs or share memes where it's appropriate just for fun.

Social isolation and loneliness can be prevalent side-effects of remote work and can even be detrimental to your staff [retention efforts](#).

“ 19% of remote workers say that they struggle with loneliness when working remotely. ”

Wherever possible, try to encourage fun and unique moments for your team to get to know each other. This familiarity actually works to build trust within a team.

And having a meaningful connection with the people you work with translates to a huge motivation boost performance-wise.



Tip #8: If in Doubt, Ask the People Who Matter Most

When it comes to knowing what best motivates your people, who better to ask than your team themselves?

Get their feedback, ask how they are doing and what you can do to empower them to do their best work. Are they well set up and they have everything they need? Would they like more meetings or are too many meetings getting in the way of their productivity?

Often the best way to motivate your team is probably something you never would have thought of and that's fine. By asking them directly, you'll show them that you care about their well-being and satisfaction levels.

Ready for the icing on the cake?

“Employees who feel their voice is heard are [4.6 times more likely](#) to feel empowered to perform their best work”. It's a win-win really.

As leaders in your business, you have an exciting opportunity to implement a successful employee motivation practice that will engage and propel your remote team forward.

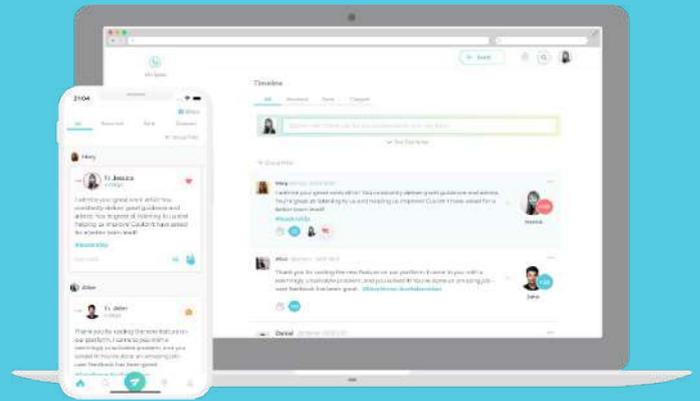
By promoting and introducing initiatives that balance both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, you will unlock the secret to empowering your team and are well on your way to creating sustainable employee engagement.

Your One-Stop Motivation Platform

Unipos helps teams to connect, recognise and celebrate one another, creating transparent, collaborative and purpose-driven company cultures.

Users send messages, along with virtual points, to their teammates, thanking them for small, everyday collaborations and providing positive feedback.

All points collected through the platform are donated to a sustainability initiative of their company's choice, so each employee personally contributes to a bigger cause, enhancing their sense of purpose.



Do you want to find out how Unipos can help you motivate your remote teams?

Then contact us today:



<https://unipos.me/en/>



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