3 Tips for Starting a New Job Remotely

In 2021 it is very possible that you will be starting your new position remotely. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many companies have pivoted to remote work in order to keep employees and their families healthy and safe. However, what companies have realized is that most employees can remain highly productive while working from home, which has led them to adopt remote work permanently. Other companies may return to in-office work at the appropriate time but are likely still utilizing remote work for the time being—at least until the majority of employees can receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

So what does this mean for people on the job hunt? They will likely be starting their new job from the comfort of their own home, which can be challenging but also has many benefits if done right. Here are three valuable tips to help you navigate starting your career as a remote employee.

1. **Set-up Your Workspace**

If you're starting your first day on the job remote you'll want to have an appropriate office set-up that will help you thrive and look professional to co-workers during video conferencing meetings. If you have the ability to dedicate an entire room in your home to your office, great! If not, simply carving out some extra room in the corner of the den, off the living room, or in the kitchen is absolutely acceptable. The most important aspects that your workspace should have are:

- Good lighting
- A non-distracting, clean background
- Peace and quiet

This isn't only for the sake of your coworkers, but for you as

well. First, good lighting will keep you alert and awake throughout your workday, which can help during an afternoon slump. Good lighting will also make you more visible and approachable in online meetings, signaling to others that you are engaged.

Second, your background won't make or break your office space but keep in mind it will be what your coworkers see during online meetings. Therefore, your workspace background should be set in an area with less traffic. For example, if you live with others make sure your background isn't set on a frequently used area of the house, so people aren't coming in and out or feel like they can't use that area when you're in a meeting.

Third, peace and quiet is a very necessary aspect of any workspace. It doesn't have to be completely silent as some people work better with a little background noise, but limited noise pollution will help you remain focused longer and be less disruptive during meetings.

2. **Make Your Workspace More Health Focused**

Following workspace set-up, helpful tools that support employee health are the second most important aspects of any workspace. Having all of the tools you need at the tips of your fingers will allow for minimal distractions throughout your day and help you stay focused on your daily tasks. You should have the general essentials like a water bottle to stay hydrated, a stress ball to help manage workplace anxiety, and headphones to block out surrounding noise at your workstation so you can reach them at a moment's notice—similar to if you were in the actual office.

Other health-specific tools will also help you stay focused as well as mentally and physically healthy while working from home. These health tools may include items like eyeglasses and a laptop riser. Eyeglasses may not seem like your top

workspace necessity, but with the increase in the use of technology for remote employees you will want to make sure your eyeglasses are up to date and close by to keep your eyes protected all day long. Updated prescription eyeglasses allow your eyes to focus on your computer screens better, which decreases your chance of experiencing eye strain or headaches due to blurred vision. Most eyeglasses also have anti-reflective lenses, which can further protect your eyes from strain when engaging with glaring screens helping you fight the effects of eye pain or burnout.

Similarly, a dedicated laptop riser can lift your laptop, which can improve the ergonomics of your workspace. If your laptop is lifted to align with your height you'll be able to look forward at your screen rather than straining your neck looking up or hunching down. Sitting up straight will also help you keep an appropriate distance from your screen as you won't be leaning forward, which can further help protect your eyes from the harmful aspects of working with computer screens. If possible, you might consider investing in an ergonomic office chair to accent your laptop riser for an even more ergonomically centric workspace. Proper posture and distancing from computer screens can help you maintain physical and mental health while working remotely.

3. **Make Sure You Communicate Well**

In a remote environment learning how to adapt and properly communicate with coworkers digitally is a very important function of your day-to-day, and possibly something you had not prioritized prior to the pandemic. As you get to know your new coworkers, ask them what their preferred method of communication is and the frequency they prefer. Some employees prefer face-to-face communication, while others prefer email, instant messaging, or phone calls. Also, many employees have set schedules or regular daily functions, so determine if they prefer to meet in the morning or the afternoon. This will allow you to communicate with coworkers more easily and shows

your flexibility to work cohesively with your new colleagues.

Keep in mind that you should revisit this conversation over time as well. Perhaps every quarter, reassess your coworkers' availability. Schedules often change and being aware of scheduling conflicts and best times for communication will help you function better in your position.

This is an often overlooked step when starting a remote position. Although you may have to compromise with many coworkers because schedules vary, knowing their preferred meeting times and methods ahead of time will save you both time in the future, especially when things get hectic as they often can when working remotely.

Keep in mind that you're entering a new environment when you start a new job. Each company functions differently and learning those functions remotely can have a learning curve. Cut yourself some slack and know that most employers are typically understanding, especially now. Take the first few months as an opportunity to ask as many questions about the company and your role as possible to make yourself feel more comfortable and confident working remotely.

Mental and Physical Wellbeing for Our Leaders

Image Source: Unsplash

As a leader, you carry a world on your shoulders. Whether you're managing a large company, a small team, or a community organization, your role comes with immense pressure to excel — mentally and physically. But you're human, which means you can't always operate at your peak. You need time to breathe, recharge, and take care of your well-being.

In this article, we'll explain the importance of caring for your mental and physical health, then dive into four ways you can improve your health.

Why Do I Need to be Mentally and Physically Fit?

When you're aware of your own mental and physical health struggles, you can actually become a better leader. You'll be able to bring your best where your skills are most needed. Instead of exhausting yourself mentally and physically by going all-in throughout your workday, you'll be able to create

a balance that works for you.

Plus, you can bring more empathy to the workplace. With a more realistic understanding of your team members' needs, you can help them thrive in the workplace, too. Your openness about your struggles can also encourage your followers to communicate their own needs and better integrate into your team culture.

Let's dive into how you can unlock these benefits.

Improve Your Daily Habits

Reflecting on your daily habits is a great way to start identifying what's taking a toll on your mental and physical health. To do so, first consider how you're spending your time in your leadership role. For example, think about the number of breaks you take and how much time you're spending on your own tasks versus helping others. Also consider what you're feeling throughout your day, whether it's mental stress, back pain, or something else.

When you understand what's deteriorating your mental and physical health, you can start implementing better habits to counter your stressors. If you're struggling mentally, you may need to take short, frequent breaks to recharge. You can also hold office hours for team members instead of offering endless support and energy.

Feeling physically tired or struggling with common injuries like neck pain, back pain, or migraines? You can prioritize your physical health by:

- Investing in a standing desk or ergonomic chair
- Taking walks and avoiding digital screens during your breaks
- Consuming healthy snacks and water instead of eating junk food, coffee, and alcohol

Small changes in your habits can lead to major improvements in your mental and physical health.

Work With an Executive Coach

We're not always honest with ourselves. And even when we believe we're telling ourselves the truth, our reflections may still include overly hopeful excuses or negative self-talk. Working with an executive coach can give you a third-party perspective on your situation and what you need to do to achieve your goals.

For example, if you're struggling with brain fog, your coach can work with you to identify if you're missing a good night's sleep or if you need to increase your aerobic activities.

Your executive coach can also keep you accountable. Even if you correctly identify what you're struggling with, it can be hard to change your lifestyle for your health. A hired coach will not only routinely check in on you and motivate you, but they'll also track your progress toward your goals.

Seek Professional Health Services

While your daily habits are the primary factors for determining your mental and physical health, it's crucial not to fully rely on a DIY approach — especially if your struggles are still getting the best of you. Health issues can stem from invisible causes and conditions that only professionals can treat.

When practicing time management, prioritize your health appointments, whether you're getting preventative check-ups or ongoing treatment like chiropractic adjustments. Be willing to say no to your team's requests when it will prevent you from getting the help you need. And don't be afraid to take time off when your mental or physical health demands it.

If you don't want to take time off from your leadership role, the good news is that many health appointments no longer require travel. Telehealth allows you to access virtual appointments, prescriptions, and much more from the comfort of your home, car, or private office. Whether you're seeking cognitive behavioral therapy, vision care, or other health services, telemedicine may be able to help you reduce wasted time.

Manage Your Health Wisely

A leader's physical and mental health is directly tied to their team's well-being. When you take care of yourself, you can give your team the support and attention they need. Plus, you may improve your performance by removing health stressors from your life.

You'll also be leading by example. When you prioritize your well-being, team members will feel more comfortable expressing their own needs and taking care of themselves, too. As a result, your whole team may be happier, healthier, and more productive.

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Leadership Skills Every CTO Needs to Have

Image Source: Pexels

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has reshaped technology leadership, particularly when it comes to the chief technology officer (CTO) role. Today, CTOs are expected to drive businesses' tech strategies and R&D and understand cybersecurity, coding, and other topics relating to the digital world.

In addition, companies increasingly want agile and kinetic technology leaders, according to a recent Deloitte survey. And, CTOs who possess the skills necessary to quickly adapt to tech challenges and foster digital transformation are well-equipped to succeed.

Now, let's look at four essential skills you need to have as a CTO in today's always-on, hyper-connected global marketplace.

1. Communication

Corporate recruiters often cite communication and

interpersonal skills as the top talents employers seek in job candidates, regardless of role. This is because a strong communicator can consistently disseminate the right information to the right audience at the right time. The result: this individual can help their employer avoid missed communications that otherwise lead to costly, time-intensive mistakes.

For CTOs who want to improve their communication skills, it helps to leverage all of the tools at their disposal. For instance, you can learn the ins and outs of Slack, Yammer, and other collaboration platforms so you can keep the lines of communication open with your teams. You can also leverage Bitrix24, Wrike, or other task and project management platforms to ensure miscommunications do not prevent work from getting done on time and on budget.

Don't forget to host regular webinars, group brainstorming sessions, and 1-on-1 meetings across your teams, too. Because the more you communicate with your team, the less likely miscommunications crop up to hamper your business' productivity and efficiency.

2. Listening

Along with communication skills, effective listening can make a world of difference for CTOs. This form of listening goes beyond hearing; it involves listening to what others have to say with your ears, eyes, and the rest of your body.

As an effective listener, you can look beyond the words coming out of a person's mouth and consider them in relation to their body language and tone. This allows you to listen to what a person is saying and understand the meaning behind it. Then, you can respond appropriately.

To become an effective listener, keep an open mind any time you enter a conversation. It helps to give anyone you're

speaking with sufficient time to speak and avoid interrupting him or her. You should maintain eye contact throughout the conversation and use nods, hand gestures, and other non-verbal cues to show the other person you're interested in what he or she has to say.

3. Time Management

How you manage your time can have far-flung effects on your success as a CTO. If you let deadlines loom until the last possible moment or constantly fall behind on work tasks, you and your team may suffer the consequences. In the worst-case scenarios, poor time management can lead to brand reputation damage, revenue losses, and other long-lasting business problems.

Planning offers a great starting point for CTOs who want to manage their time as best as they can. You can use time management apps like RescueTime or Focus Keeper or a planner to map out your daily, weekly, and monthly schedules. Moreover, you can use the "Eat the Frog" technique to identify the most important task in a given day and devote your full attention to completing it.

Tech problems like excessive downtime and high energy costs can also put big dents in your schedule. Monitor the technology used across your business; if you find some tech problems continue to crop up, it could be time to make some upgrades.

Automation can be beneficial relative to time management as well. You can automate appointment scheduling, reporting, and other tasks, so you can focus exclusively on high-value activities.

4. Customer Service

The customer experience (CX) plays a key part in consumers' buying decisions. Research shows 74% of consumers are at least "somewhat likely" to make purchases from a business based solely on the experience. Meanwhile, a successful CTO keeps customer service top of mind, understands a company's target markets, and crafts IT initiatives to support positive customer experiences.

To build exceptional customer service skills, a CTO must first define exceptional customer service. To do so, consider the customer's perspective. You can then determine what people expect from you and your business and hone your customer service skill set accordingly.

Typically, customer-first CTOs are empathetic toward others and are willing to commit the time, energy, and resources necessary to learn from them. They share information in a clear, concise manner and are open to positive and negative feedback. As such, these CTOs know what it takes to engage with others and ensure all parties can work together to achieve the optimal results.

Tips to Enhance Your CTO Skill Set

Leadership development is paramount, particularly for current or aspiring CTOs. Those who have the right skills can lay the groundwork for a successful career as a CTO. They can also provide outstanding support and help their teams maximize their potential.

It helps to continuously explore ways to bolster your CTO skill set, too. Here are three tips to help you hone your CTO skills now and in the future:

- Build your presence. Passion, confidence, and enthusiasm can be contagious; display them in your daily work, and

> your team will likely do the same.
>
> - Learn from leadership experts. Read leadership books and blogs to foster a diverse CTO skill set.
> - Stay the course. Remain diligent, and remember, there is always room for improvement as a CTO.

Use the aforementioned tips to develop and improve your CTO skill set. That way, you can put yourself in a terrific position to become a successful CTO.

Ethical leaders can have a positive impact not only on their businesses but also on the wider community. By following the key tenets of a morally solid business — transparency, diversity, and authenticity among them — entrepreneurs can ensure that all stakeholders can connect to the company and its leadership in a way that engenders trust and mutual respect. After all, ethical businesses are what consumers deserve, and business owners can in turn reap the immense potential benefits.

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