



REMOTE & ASYNC WORK — 8 MIN

Remote team management styles explained: which is right for your business?

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Management styles that work for in-house teams may not be best remote teams. The key to success is shifting your management style to align with company values while also adapting to the needs of remote teams.

In this article, we'll explore several management styles so you can choose the best one for leading your [distributed team](#).

What is remote team management?

Remote team management is a strategy for overseeing a team of virtual employees or contractors. Remote work expands your talent pool beyond your local area, letting you hire across the country and even internationally.

Remote work also means the best candidates can afford to be picky with who they work for. Your management style can be a reason why top talent stays with your company. This is why it's important to hone your management style for remote teams. Check out our additional [tips](#) on how to manage a remote team effectively.

What are the different remote team management styles?

Many types of leadership exist, and nearly all of them can work in different situations. Here are some of the top management styles for remote teams.

1. Authoritarian leadership

Authoritarian or autocratic leadership involves the leader making most or all crucial decisions with little input from or collaboration among team members. An authoritarian leader supervises their team more directly.

Team members can still give feedback to an authoritarian leader. However, that feedback may be limited to problems that employees are facing, rather than ideas on the big picture. As a result, authoritarian leaders generally do not incorporate employee feedback into their decision-making.

There is also less collaboration among team members with the authoritarian leadership style. Employees work together when necessary but mostly follow the leader's directives.

Pros

- Allows for quick decisions
- Can increase cohesion

Cons

- Can reduce creativity
- Can make the team feel stifled

2. Coaching leadership

Coaching leadership focuses on developing individual team members. The objective is to support growth in team members to build an effective organization.

The leader recognizes each person's strengths and weaknesses, then tries to play to the former while finding ways for the employee to work on the latter. This may include meeting with employees, discussing their goals, and creating professional development plans to help them chart their course.

Pros

- Encourages a culture of constructive feedback, learning, and development opportunities
- Can be highly effective when individual growth and organizational goals are aligned

Cons

- Can be time-intensive
- Requires strong interpersonal skills and patience

3. Democratic leadership

Democratic leadership, also called participative leadership, treats employees as equals. It encourages team participation in decision-making.

Democratic teams have regular meetings to make decisions, and use group communication channels to discuss ideas. Team members interact frequently with their colleagues to make decisions and collaborate.

Democratic leaders still provide guidance and make sure things stay on track. However, motivated employees lead a successful democratic arrangement, while leaders step in less often.

Pros

- Team satisfaction and commitment
- Creative solutions and team participation

Cons

- Can make processes slower due to consultation and consensus-building
- Team members may not be satisfied if they're in the minority opinion on an issue

4. Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leadership, also called delegative leadership, offers team members full or almost full autonomy over how they manage and complete their work. It's similar to democratic leadership, but a bit more hierarchical.

The leader is still involved, but not as a directive force. Instead, they serve as a central resource for their employees. Leaders answer questions, provide information or resources team members need, and offer guidance.

Pros

- Higher levels of job satisfaction/innovation among self-driven team members
- Leader saves time to focus on other matters

Cons

- Risk of lack of direction
- Varying productivity if team members are not self-motivated

5. Paternalistic leadership

Paternalistic leadership is a family-like approach. The leader is seen as a paternal figure who guides and protects the team as they complete their work.

This leadership style has some of the same aspects as authoritarian leadership, but the leader is more involved while making sure the team is doing its best work. They emphasize their employees' personal and professional well-being.

The leader still makes decisions, believing they know what is best for everyone on the team.

Pros:

- Can enhance team cohesion and employee loyalty

- Can increase employee motivation

Cons:

- Less autonomy and collaboration between employees
- Risk of favoritism

6. Servant leadership

Servant leadership prioritizes the needs and professional development of the team and individual members. Servant leaders lead by example, demonstrating ethical and compassionate behavior as they help their team do their best work.

Servant leaders still make the ultimate decisions about company objectives. They just ensure their employees have the optimal environment to work toward those objectives.

Pros:

- Positive team culture and long-term engagement
- Encourages growth/development

Cons:

- May require more time to make decisions as the leader seeks to address the needs of all team members
- May be seen as too lenient

How do you choose the remote team management style that best suits your company?

The best management style for your team depends on several factors.

- The type of work your company does
- Your team size and composition
- Team members' skill levels
- Your company's [remote work culture](#) and goals

For example, agile, and creative teams tend to thrive under democratic and laissez-faire leadership. This is because agile teams tend to collaborate more and find solutions independently. Servant leadership can also work since the leader provides an environment where creatives can produce their best work.

Remote teams tend to thrive under these leadership models for similar reasons. For example, many employees of remote startups are eager to realize a company's mission. Giving everyone autonomy and a say can help team members realize their objectives.

Remote team management best practices

Here are our tips on how to [manage your remote team](#) and create a healthy remote work environment.

Establish clear communication channels

One of the [biggest mistakes](#) remote leaders can make is not providing the right tools for different types of communications. Managers might also fail to set clear policies for different channels, causing problems in [remote work communications](#).

Share clear communication policies when using collaboration tools. For example, you can limit virtual meetings through instant messaging tools like Slack, so employees do not feel pressured to respond right away.

Hold regular employee check-ins

Regular feedback can boost morale, and your team's productivity. Check-ins are a way to make sure projects are on track without [micromanaging](#) your team members. Regular check-ins also keep the team on the same page and strengthen camaraderie.

Don't neglect one-on-ones with each employee to check on their well-being. See how they're feeling about their job and how they're doing on their projects. This is also a good time to address any personal issues, like burnout or isolation.

Prioritize work-life balance

Encourage remote employees to log off and stay away from their computers and [home offices](#) outside of business hours. Try not to contact them during these times, either, or they likely won't take your encouragement seriously.

Gently encourage your employees to take vacation time if they haven't done so in a while. Make it "okay" to take time off for rest and relaxation.

Many employees may not be used to flexible hours, either. They might feel guilty for working a less conventional schedule to fit other responsibilities. Once again, reassure your team members that it's alright to work [asynchronously](#) as long as they're on track with their projects.

Focus on results

Flexible hours and schedules are not super helpful to employees if you're focusing on the amount of time they spend working. Instead, shift your focus to whether they're achieving results in their work.

Manage your team with Remote

With [13%](#) of full-time employees working remotely and [28%](#) working in a hybrid settings, leaders need to know how to manage a remote team.

More democratic forms of leadership tend to work better for remote teams since it's harder to manage employees closely when they aren't in one place. Remember to be adoptable, as different situations call for shifts in leadership styles.

[HR Management](#) platforms like Remote help you consolidate tasks to manage remote teams — including HR, payroll, and even hiring. [Chat](#) with Remote today to see how we can help you manage your remote workforce effectively.