Managing disperse teams

Start

Module 1

Remote Management

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Remote Management

- Similar to leading a team in-person, a remote manager must set up effective technology, communication, and workflows for their remote employees.

- Many traits found in onsite managers are also found in managers of dispersed teams, though there are nuances to serving, leading, and guiding when managing teams that you do not see in-person each day.

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Traits of a great remote manager

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Traits of a great remote manager

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is critical for relationship building and trust, particularly in an all-remote setting. The reality is that people prefer to learn, and to be managed, differently.

Self-aware managers will be open on their learning and communication preferences, enabling those who report to them to interact without ambiguity.

Be highly sensitive to micromanaging. Particularly for new remote managers, you may be inclined to "check in" on projects with increased frequency given the inability to see someone working in the same physical space. This is a destructive practice. Instead, have an open discussion with a direct report on communication and work styles, and find a mechanism that suits all parties.

What a manager perceives as proactively working to keep a project on track can be received as toxic micromanagement by a direct report. Without an open channel to communicate preferences, this can quickly erode a working relationship.

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Traits of a great remote manager

Servant Leader

Working to have no ego, recognizing that people are not their work, will go a long way to building trust as a manager. The humility required to be a servant-leader is rare, and is of great importance in a remote setting.

People tend to feel more guilty about asking a manager for step-by-step guidance in a remote setting — e.g. "I'm bothering them in their home!" To proactively address this, be sure to reinforce that you (as a manager) are not bothered by sincere requests for assistance.

In sum, remote managers should operate from a standpoint of wanting others to succeed. In the event that critical feedback must be delivered, strive to surface issues constructively and do so in a 1-1 setting

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Traits of a great remote manager

Empathy

Empathy and kindness are core to being a great remote manager.

It can be challenging to use text communication and Zoom calls. In-person interactions allow for body language to be more easily read.

In a remote setting, managers must instead be proactive in *asking* direct questions such as how life is going and what their learning preferences are.

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Traits of a great remote manager

Delegating with Detailed Instructions

Managers are often stretched for time. A critical, though common, mistake is to assume that you can earn back time by not communicating in full to one's direct reports. Great remote managers will devote time to writing things down.

Transmitting expectations, updates, and feedback through text is highly respectful. It enables a direct report to ingest information at their own pace, and it removes margin for misinterpretation.

Written words are more easily questioned, thereby creating a more direct path to absolute truth and understanding

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Traits of a great remote manager

Build Trust

To be a successful leader of remote teams, one must develop a level of trust in each team. A trustworthy leader of remote teams consistently provides feedback to enable team members to feel included, valued, empowered, and respected.

A remote leader must be intuitive and able to adapt to the preferences of their team members. Some team members prefer more or less communication from their leader, some need consistent affirmation, others prefer autonomy. The ability to ask about and adapt to these preferences is crucial. Many of these elements are viewed as unspoken needs in other organizations, but great leaders seek to clarify and remove ambiguity. This is a key element of servant leadership.

Being a remote manager means building a support system for your team, while at the same time striking a balance to hold them accountable. Building trust and maintaining transparency, frequent and open communication, and ensuring a safe working environment are critical skills.

Use weekly 1-1 meetings to discuss business topics, challenges, and focus areas to build trust. Managers can supplement formal meetings with coffee chats where no business is discussed. Listening and sharing during these discussions can facilitate more open conversations. Consider structing team meetings with a social component where team members can share the personal side of themselves.

Module 2

Challenges of remote working

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Unplugging from work

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There's a common misconception that remote workers are slackers. But overworking is one of the biggest challenges of working remotely.

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Remote workers might feel guilty that their manager might think they are not working since they are on on-site, so they try to overcompensate by appearing busy

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Moreover, they face difficulties detaching from work and remain online and keep working

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As a manager you need to create an environment of trust between you and your team members

Promote communication, preferably at the beginning of the day, prioritizing with your team and setting tasks and deadlines.

Therefore, promote the feeling that it is the delivery of tasks within specified time limits are the Key Performance indicators on measurement of performance and not the long hours in front of a screen.

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Time Management

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Working remotely gives more freedom to employees which means that they can work from wherever they want, home, coffee shop or a friend's home. ....

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Thus, distractions increase. Whether it's the dishes, the laundry, cleaning the bedroom, or even taking care of their children. It can be a little too much sometimes, making it hard to focus.

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There are also other time wasters at work: social media, checking websites, watching TV, etc

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There are ways to promote productivity!

1. Work with goals. Setup weekly achievable goals

2. Employ software that monitor the time spent on different apps such as the Time Doctor app which monitors time spent in various apps and captures screen shots. Monitor the reports and provide feedback accordingly. It should be noted that your team should be aware that this app is or will be installed on their PCs.

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Team Communication

COMMUNICATION

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This is also one of the main challenges of managing remote employees. Since your team is not physically in the office with your colleagues, you will miss impromptu lunches, coffees, or spontaneous talks.

It makes it harder to create more profound and meaningful connections with your co-workers and to feel integrated into the team.

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There are a lot of tools to manage remote employees that will help you to address communication gaps. companies use platforms like Skype, Teams, or Slack, where everyone, remote and in-office, can chat about anything.

Regular video calls with your team and manager are also an excellent way to bond with everyone. Having good relationships with your colleagues is extremely important for their well-being at work.

Productivity and Organization
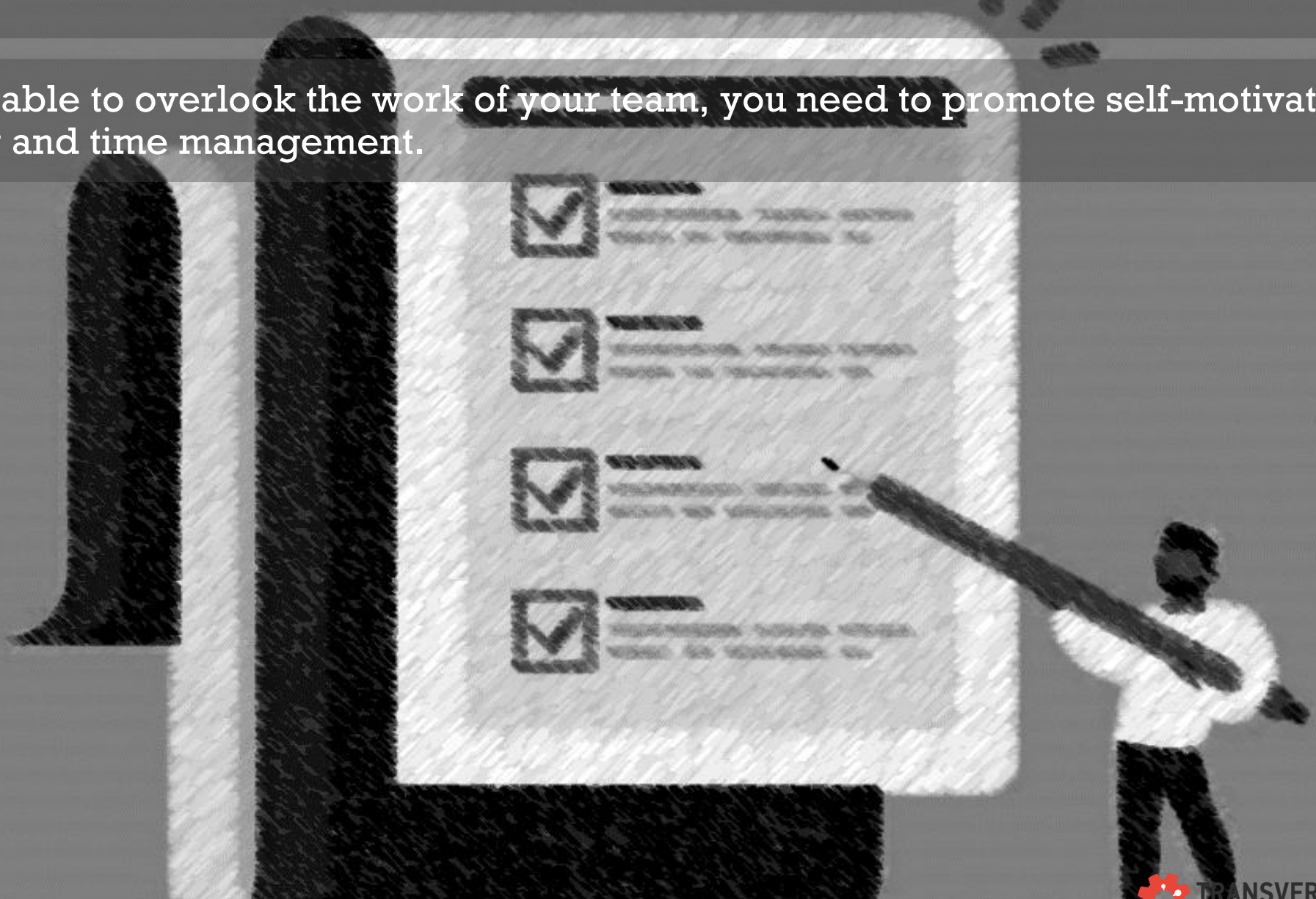
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It's difficult to stick to a schedule and get all the tasks done. But this gets even harder for remote workers.

As you won't be able to overlook the work of your team, you need to promote self-motivation, problem solving and time management.

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Start every day with a 10 minute video call. Discuss with your team any issues that may need to be resolved in order to work on their tasks unobstructed.

Use tools such as Trello or Asana to assign and monitor tasks

Promote among the team members self-management, awarding members for achieving their goals .

Use game based techniques to make it playful.

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Loneliness

This is one of the biggest challenges of working remotely for employees and managers.

Many people deal with loneliness in and out of the remote work context, especially after the pandemic. Regardless of what origins it is, loneliness can have a super strong influence on your health and life.

Besides the personal impact it has on people, loneliness also significantly damages companies and businesses. If your workers feel lonely, they'll feel less engaged, less productive, and less motivated. According to Buffer, 24% of remote employees struggle with feelings of loneliness.

Working in an office is full of spontaneous moments that allow you to interact with others. Remotely is not that easy.

There are no hallway conversations or having coffee with colleagues. Remote workers need to be more proactive and often look outside work for their social interaction.

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As a manager, it's imperative to create space for your workers to connect and create relations. Here are a few tips on how to help:

Have a Team Engagement Manager or someone who actively checks on people and creates surveys to see how engaged everyone is.

Bring your team together or create groups where people can discuss current challenges and share their successes.

Make regular quick calls with your workers to talk about non-work topics like TV shows, pets, books, etc.
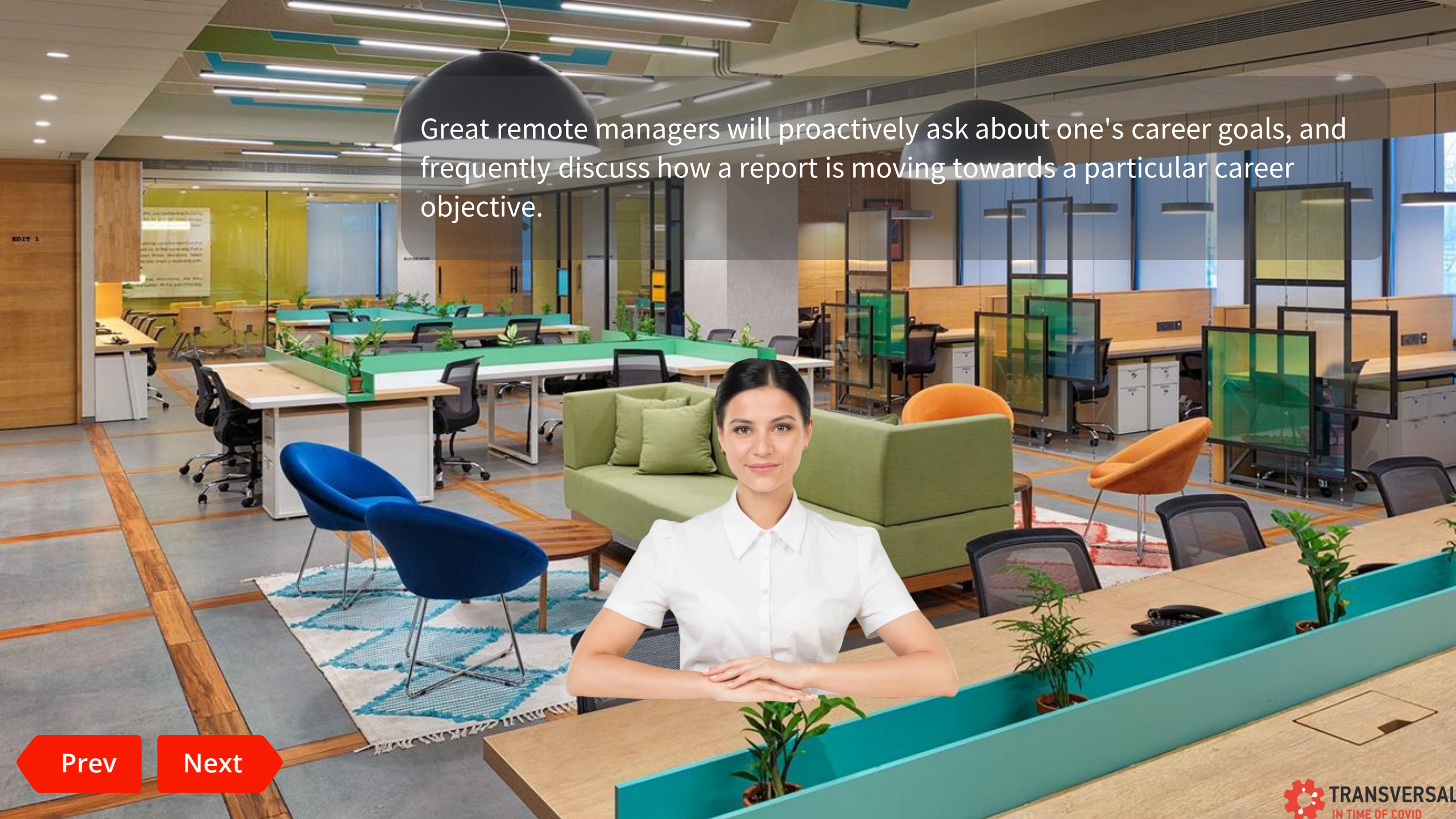
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Career growth

- It's particularly challenging to have any career advancement when you work from home as the team members less visible.

- The truth is that most managers lack experience managing people who work remotely.

- Also, many executives still don't love the idea of remote working, claiming that people work less at home than at the office. This is one of the reasons why some managers don't like remote working

Great remote managers will proactively ask about one's career goals, and frequently discuss how a report is moving towards a particular career objective.

Research from Headlamp shows that 82% of workers said they would be more engaged in their work if their managers regularly discussed their career aspirations but only 16% of employees reported having those conversations on a regular basis.

Favor more frequent conversations on this topic — even during routine 1-1 conversations — as opposed to waiting until an annual review cycle.

By having regular conversations about career advancement with your remote team, you can build a more connected and engaged workforce.

Technical Problems

- We're sure this has happened to you more than once. Even though technical problems can occur both at the office and at home, at least you know that your IT team will be able to help you if you're at the office.

- If you're not tech-savvy, make sure that when you request your company's technical team to check your system frequently to avoid inevitable technical challenges.

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Working from different locations or time zones

- With remote working, many companies have the opportunity to hire people from all around the world, which is excellent for business. But it's not always easy to manage.

- With people working in different time zones, it's harder to have the team in sync.

- Time zone differences make real-time collaboration and communication difficult or even impossible. Also, it can easily lead to overworking if you're not careful.

- When you work remotely, it's not uncommon to be waking up as a teammate is signing off.

- This doesn't have to be a problem! If you're a manager and your team is in this position, make sure you create a few guidelines for everyone to follow.

- Flexibility is critical in this type of situation. Make sure your team members who don't work during the usual company hours have regular schedules and always work at the same time.

- This way, everyone knows exactly when they'll be available, making communication a lot easier. Default to asynchronous communication as it's the best way to collaborate across time zones. If everyone knows not to expect an answer immediately, it reduces the pressure to be "on-call" 24/7.

- Also, try to create an employee handbook. It'll give remote employees a source to work from and not need as much help.

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Dealing with cultural differences

- Besides the time zone, working with people from around the world can have many other challenges. You'll also have various languages and cultural backgrounds coming together on projects.

- Also, workplace expectations can be widely different between countries. For instance, you're expected to work long hours in some countries, while others can be more relaxed.

- However, some cultural differences can be very delicate, such as differences in religious beliefs. These must be respected, including religious holidays that may require time off or participation, such as Ramadan.

- To avoid potential issues, encourage open dialogue in your team about culture, religion, politics, etc. Promote tolerance and understanding across all topics to ensure everyone feels comfortable.

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How do you motivate remote workers?

Prioritize results over hours worked

Don't require people to have consistent set working hours or say when they're working

Don't encourage or celebrate working long hours or on weekends

Encourage teamwork

Say thank you often

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Thank you!