

Remote Working: Lessons Learned

Felix Panozzo

<https://fepa.se>

Me

- Full-stack developer
- Python & JavaScript (Ruby)
- Stockholm, Sweden
→ Berlin, Germany

Different setups

- Companies with offices across the globe
- Same city but not same office
- Partially → Fully distributed

ZAGENO

- Bio-tech marketplace
- 10 million products
- US & Germany

A definition of Remote Working

A situation in which an employee works from home or another location away from the company workplace and communicates with the company via e-mail, telephone or other tools.

Purpose

- Ideas
- Experiences
- Improve your current setup
 - or introduce remote work

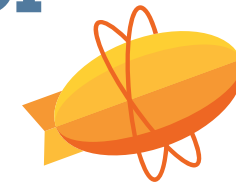
Breakdown

- Tools
- Transparency – Why and how
- One absolute *game-changer*
- Hand-overs across the world
- Continuous improvement
- Importance of culture and its key factors
- My wishes for the future

Tools – Where to start?

- Gather past experiences
 - What have they used before?
 - A tool or process that worked well in particular?
- Cover your bases
 - Group chat, video calls, issue tracking, code review
 - Compare integrations

Tools



Tools

- Experiment
- Reflect regularly

Tools

- Code review & technical discussions
- Release notifications
- War rooms
- Exception reporting
- Upcoming holidays and vacations
- Location specific channels
- Banter channel!

Tools

- Archive what you don't use
- Lower the fatigue
- Keep a balance

Dashboard as a tool

- A graph with production errors over time
- Number of open pull requests
- Status of QA-environments
- Upcoming national holidays

Transparency

- Key factor in building a highly motivated team
- Share the progress of your work
- Praise accomplishments

Transparency

- Examples (phrase it as a goal!)
 - *Today I'm planning on finishing a fix for the bug about XYZ I found yesterday*
 - *Today I'm starting to implement the new design of the homepage. The first step is to build the new menu widget.*
- Follow-up
 - *I finished the bugfix and opened a pull request for it here: <https://...>*
 - *The menu widget is almost done, I still have some issues in Internet Explorer to iron out before I can open a PR*

Transparency

- Lower the threshold to help each other out
- Less “knowledge-silos”
- Manage expectations

Hand-overs across the world

- Avidity
 - Sweden
 - Brazil
- Teams working together with little time overlap



Hand-overs across the world

- Brazil east coast → Sweden
 - 31st of March to 27th of October → 5 hours
 - 09:00 Brazil → 14:00 Sweden
 - 28th of October to 30th of March → 4 hours
 - 09:00 Brazil → 13:00 Sweden

Hand-overs across the world

- Explain what you are achieving and how far you've come
- Other context (e.g. third-party documentation)
- Push your branch

Hand-overs across the world

- Brazil → Sweden
 - No “live” hand-over available
- Written communication becomes much more important

Hand-overs across the world

- Summarize relevant context
- Limit the scope
- Reproducible steps for bugs
- git push

Pairing remotely

- The missing component: Whiteboard
- Share screen and video chat
- Experiment

The game-changer

Meeting in person

- Human communication is complex
- Try to meet regularly

Continuous improvement

- Continuously improve the way you work
- Experiment & reflect
- Factors subject to change
 - Team members
 - Workload
 - Self-development

Continuous improvement

- Experiment on a small scale
 - Easier to adapt faster with fewer people

An experiment

Introducing remote days

An experiment

- Morning check-in → Detail a goal
- Communication becomes more asynchronous
- Escaping the distractions worked!

Building culture

- Engage the team members
- Experiment and iterate the process
- Keep the praise flowing
 - Recognize successful outcomes
- Avoid being “always on”

Building culture

- Beliefs
- Thought processes
- Attitudes
- Ideologies and principles

Wishlist

- Remote-capable whiteboard
- Best practices
- More remote working opportunities

Why?

- Employees:
 - Travel more
 - Vary your surroundings and get inspired
 - Find that deep focus

Why?

- Employers:
 - Global recruitment pool
 - More attractive
 - Expanding to other regions becomes easier

Summary

- Tools are just tools, use them wisely
- Transparency: Trust and expectation management
- Experiment and iterate the work process
- Build a strong culture with remote working in mind
- Avoid fatigue: work smarter not harder
- Remember to meet in person
- Embrace timezone differences

Thanks!

- <https://fepa.se>
- felix@itbyfepa.com