Sendoso

35

Meaningful Ways
to Engage Your
Remote Workforce

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Trends in Remote Work

The modern office looks a lot different than that of *The Office*, the hit television series that chronicles the fictional day-to-day lives of Dunder Mifflin Paper Company employees. Despite airing its first episode 15 years ago, technological advances and rising employee demands have rapidly shifted what today's Dunder Mifflin offices would look like.

The typical Dunder Mifflin office shenanigans would likely take place virtually today as more of the workforce is distributed. Since 2010, there has been a **159% increase** in remote work, encompassing 4.7 million permanent work-from-home employees.

Many modern workers can access the tools they need to perform their duties anywhere with an Internet connection—whether they're signing on from their home office, a coffee shop, or even across the globe.

Not only has technological innovation led to the rise of a remote workforce, but employees' expectations have evolved, too. More people want to work for a company that encourages work-life balance. According to **Gallup**:

51% of workers say they would switch to a job that allows them flextime.

53% of employees say greater work-life balance and personal wellbeing are "very important" to them when considering whether to take a new job.

37% of respondents said they would switch to a job that allows them to work off-site at least part of the time.

But Gallup also found that your most talented yet unengaged workers are the most likely to leave. Why? Skilled employees are more likely to have higher employer expectations and greater ability to find a new job easily.

As more employers include remote work in their value proposition to attract top talent, it's critical for them to create employee engagement programs that boost morale, employee happiness, and productivity.

> **As more employers include remote work in their value proposition to attract top talent, it's critical for them to create employee engagement programs that boost morale, employee happiness, and productivity.**

Gallup projects U.S. employers lose an estimated $483 billion to $605 billion each year in lost productivity due to actively unengaged employees. And while engaged employees are happier, more productive, and less likely to be on the lookout for new job opportunities, only 33% of workers surveyed were deemed engaged.

The workspace has changed, and our employee engagement strategies should too. Here are 35 ways to engage with remote employees in the digital age.

Establish Effective Digital Communication Channels

Have you ever heard the saying, "Knowledge is power"? In the workplace, this is especially true. When your employees are armed with the who, what, why, and where of your organization, they're empowered to be more efficient in their roles.

But in a remote workplace, it can be difficult to effectively disseminate the right information at the right times.

What's more, not every employee you hire will have experience in a distributed work environment. And even the most experienced remote employees won't thrive without access to digital communication channels.

Ensure that every employee has the tools they need to remain productive and engaged while working in a distributed work environment. You can create effective lines of communication for a distributed workforce by…

Launching the right digital tools: We're all accustomed to communicating via email and phone. But employees need other effective ways to talk with one another. Digital communication channels like Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and GoToMeeting make remote communications quick and easy.

Keeping communication channels active: After communication channels have been set up, you'll want to ensure employees actually use them. Encourage usage by hosting daily challenges like company trivia in your company-wide chat software. Send the first five

respondents eGift cards or a package of gourmet cookies for their participation.

Advocating connectivity and team unity: Encourage department leaders to schedule weekly 1:1s and daily team stand up meetings to discuss project statuses and team-wide goals.

Company all hands meetings should happen more frequently in a distributed work environment. We suggest scheduling company-wide meetings to keep organizational goals and initiatives top of mind. Because every company is unique, you'll need to determine a cadence that will work best for you: once a week, once every other week, or once a month.
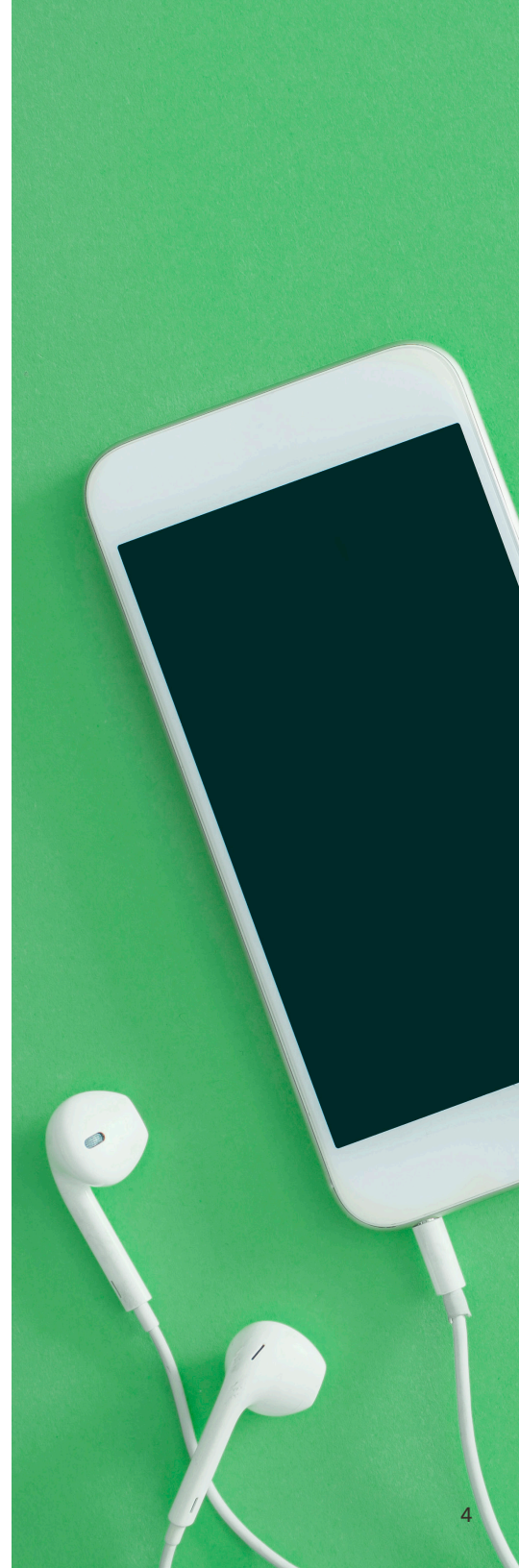
Getting employees hungry for training:
Training programs are extremely valuable to employee's growth and development. However, it can be challenging for workers to find the time to show up to a session.

Encourage attendance by sending your staff Uber eGift cards prior to virtual lunch and learns. For training scheduled outside lunch hours, send cookies or cupcakes they can nibble on while they learn.

Keeping boredom at bay: Keep team culture thriving by hosting meetings over lunch or coffee. eGift cards to popular restaurants or coffee shops can help keep employees engaged and emulate that "water cooler" environment. You can even send them a mug warmer to keep their beverage toasty during longer meetings.

"Remote workers need to be assimilated into every aspect of your company's culture. On top of providing them with tools like Zoom and Slack, you'll want to make sure everyone on your team is unified in your company's mission and rewarded in meaningful ways, no matter where they log in from."

Jennie Knowles
Head of human resources at Sendoso

Build a Productive Work Environment

In an ideal world, every employee would have a home office. Help your team create a working environment that will boost their productivity by providing them with office essentials, bundles, and treats. Here's how:

Work from home bundles: Send remote employees a work from home bundle including everything they need for their role: a laptop, monitor, keyboard, mouse, headphones, notepads, pens, and mini whiteboards.

Keep company spirit strong: Every employee, even those who work from home, wants to represent your brand. Be sure to keep your employee spirit alive with your remote workforce. Send company swag bundles with clothing, laptop accessories, branded notebooks, pens and water bottles.

Survival kits: For many, working from home is a dream come true. For others, it can be more of a nightmare. Send remote workers survival kits including a variety of items to make working from home as easy as a walk in the park. One of our customers recently found success by sending a paper titled, "10 Tips for Working From Home," a packet of snacks, a coffee mug, and a door hanger that reads "Do Not Disturb—Genius at Work."

Fuel work from home: Remote employees won't have access to the same company-provided pick-me-ups as workers in the office.

Send coffee lovers a coffee maker to give new life to their work from home efforts. You could also send on-the-go remote employees, like sales reps, eGift cards to Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Caribou Coffee, or Panera Bread Cafe.

Sweets and eats packages: While in the office, your employees likely have access to an array of treats and snacks. Gift remote employees the same perk by sending them grocery or food delivery service eGifts they can use to order snacks they'll enjoy.

Help them decorate their work environment: A work space with an extra bit of pizazz can get the creative juices flowing. Succulents, calendars, and terrariums make great gifts for employees building their home offices.

Reward successes: Positive feedback on a job well done builds confidence and reinforces top-notch performance. When an employee reaches an important milestone, send them a "treat yourself" bundle complete with a foam seat cushion, fuzzy socks, and a warm blanket. You could even send them a party in a box containing a piñata filled with candy and a pizza gift certificate.

Prioritize Mental and Physical Health

In recent years, organizations have been taking more stock in their team members' mental and physical health. Many believe holistic employee health initiatives should be a company-wide priority.

But separating home and work life can be challenging for remote employees.

In fact, in a study conducted by **Buffer**, 22% of remote employees cited unplugging from their work as their biggest struggle, while 19% cited loneliness.

Give your remote employees resources that they can take advantage of to boost their mental and physical health by…

Offering online benefits: Many providers administer online doctor and therapy appointments, giving employees the freedom to access their healthcare provider from the comfort of their home.

Hosting virtual team workouts:
Remote employees find it difficult to incorporate exercise breaks into their daily routine. Make it easier by hosting regular virtual team workouts! Companies like ClassPass even offer online classes your team can take advantage of.

Giving the gift of self care: Send employees spa and wellness gift cards to remind them to indulge once and awhile. Some other ideas include: adult coloring books to promote mindfulness; and iTunes eGift cards that can be used to purchase apps like Calm, Headspace, and cooking apps.
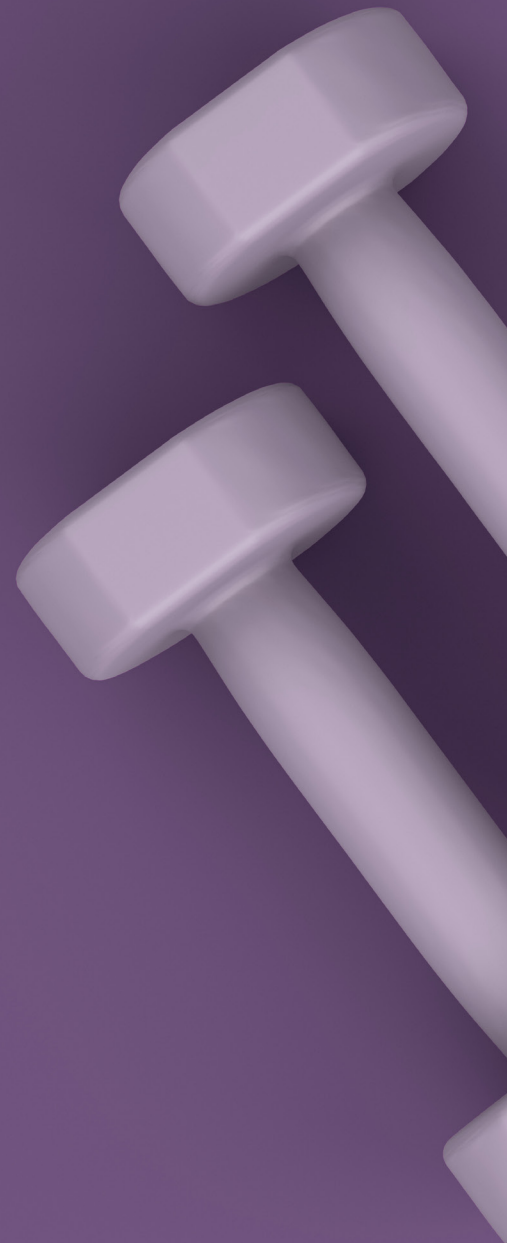
Boost Remote Workplace Culture

When you have a distributed workforce, encouraging team camaraderie can be difficult. Virtual work poses a unique challenge as normal workplace interactions that facilitate team bonding like in-person meetings, watercooler banter, and spontaneous coffee runs can't occur the way they would in an office environment.

The physical separation of virtual teams can also lead to siloed work, causing confusion and misalignment on priorities. Allow moments for your team to get comfortable around each other outside of traditional, work-related virtual gatherings to keep them motivated, inspired, and most importantly, in sync.

Here are some suggestions that will make employees look forward to work events!

Host video happy hours: Host a weekly virtual happy hour where team members can sip wine, beer, or spirits, and spend quality time together. Don't forget to spice them up! Each week, pick a different theme like "Pajama Happy Hour" or "80s Happy Hour", and see who can sport the best outfit. The best dressed can win an extra $25 Uber gift card.

Get a virtual trivia night going: Set up a themed monthly trivia night where teams can compete for Visa eGifts as prizes. Send along a ½ dozen variety pack of donuts to each attendee for fuel as they compete!

Start a movie club: Pick a movie to watch as a team in a group Zoom chat room where everyone can post a review. Or, allow team members to watch the flick over the weekend, and schedule a recap call on Monday afternoon to discuss favorite moments! (Hint: Since not everyone subscribes to streaming services, make sure anyone who'd like to participate can by offering $25 eGifts to Hulu, Amazon Prime, or Sling TV.)

Donate to charity: Have each team member pick a charity and send them a **CharityChoice** eGift for donation (they'll be able to choose from thousands of charities). Then, designate a "volunteer day" where your team members can go separately in person to the selected charity in their city and spend a couple of hours giving back. The next day, host a virtual debriefing session where everyone can share what volunteering they did.

Virtual paint nights: Send materials like small canvases, brushes, and paints to your employees for a "paint and sip" night where everyone can wind down and relax together. Get their creative

juices really flowing by sending a four bottle pack of wine ahead of the event. The more hilarious the picture they choose to paint, the better!

Do company karaoke: Schedule a team karaoke night where participants can choose a song and belt their heart out. Karaoke can be BYOB, and all they'll need is a household object to use as a microphone!

Schedule virtual lunch or coffee breaks: Help remote teams integrate social interaction with their coworkers. Set up digital "coffee chats" or "virtual lunch tables" on your conferencing software that employees can access at any time for quick catch ups. They can come and go as they please, just as they would in a normal office setting!

Set up pet playdates! If any of your employees have pets, allow them to show off their furry friends over a video call. Team members can take turns introducing their pets on the camera; we guarantee this will make for an amazing photo-op. Pet costumes encouraged!

Host a virtual children's story hour: Are any of your employees parents? If so, there's no doubt they could use an hour during the day to focus solely on their work. Recruit a rotating list of staff volunteers to donate an hour of their time each week to read children's books aloud and keep kids occupied. Your employees will certainly thank you for it!

Organize a virtual event planning committee: Don't leave all the virtual event ideas up to your HR team! Let your employees bring their suggestions to the table and set up a virtual planning committee where employees can take turns coming up with fresh ideas to implement year-round.

Create Employee Growth Programs

Employee growth and development should always be a priority, even among remote teams. Disengaged workers can be detrimental to your business since engagement is more than just teams being happy at work. Employee satisfaction directly correlates to company success, and research shows that companies with engaged employees outperform those without by **202%**. Employee satisfaction can be equally as important as employee qualifications when it comes to effective performance.

Training is a powerful way to engage workers of all levels because it helps them get better at their jobs. Remember, your team is only as strong as its weakest member, so prioritizing professional development programs like these is not only for the benefit of the employee, but for the entire company.

Host virtual "lunch and learns": Give people a chance to show off their skills with virtual "lunch and learn" sessions. Topics can include presentations by a particular department, a tutorial of a new program in your tech stack, or a lesson in photography. No matter the topic, as long as it's informative and relaxed, your employees will appreciate the opportunity to learn something new. Distribute Grubhub or Uber eGift cards to boost attendance!

Sponsor an online course: Help your team members sharpen their skills by sponsoring an online professional course. Work with managers to determine an appropriate amount of credit for the course, and once an employee's coursework is complete, encourage them to share what they've learned with their team in a presentation.

Start a virtual book club: Choose a book and start a monthly meeting where team members can review it together. Provide eGift cards to Barnes & Noble to purchase the book, and tell club members to come prepared to chat about the plot, characters, and themes.

Host executive office hours: Make it easy for employees of all levels to interact with each other. Ask department leaders to dedicate an hour of their time each week for "office hours" where team members can hop on to their Zoom link or send them a Slack message with inquiries about their professional journey or career advice. Executives are free to ask questions to team members too!

Offer Rosetta Stone: Offer employees a three-month subscription to Rosetta Stone for language learning, and ask for them to recite a sentence or two when their subscription is up!

"Upgrade Your Game" Gift: Find out what equipment your team is already working with, and at the end of the quarter, send one new tool for them to add to their work-from-home toolkit. This send could be a new set of ballpoint pens, or a Visa eGift of $25 to go towards a new monitor.

"We believe in prioritizing growth initiatives and infusing continuous development into our culture. Effective growth programs start the first day someone joins your company and are continuously evolving as your business grows. A leader's top priority should be ensuring each and every team member has access to the tools and programs they need to be more efficient in their role and grow personally and professionally."

Braydan Young
Co-founder of Sendoso

Use The Power of Virtual Networking

Even though your company is remote, you can still create valuable opportunities for team members to connect with other industry professionals. There are plenty of ways to create meaningful relationships within and across fields through virtual networking events. Use employees as brand ambassadors during these events to spread the word about new project launches, get constructive industry feedback, and even source new candidates for open roles!

Host virtual company mixers: Each month, team up with a new partner company and create interested groups by role or theme to boost conversations. Create conversation starters prior to the event to encourage open dialogue.

Create an industry-specific Slack group: Share ideas and network with others in a Slack group dedicated to discussing industry trends. Group members can use the chat to bounce fresh ideas off one another. Invite industry leaders to join the channel and each week post a new topic or pose a new question in the group to keep the conversation going.

Organize a virtual career fair: Get prospective employees talking about your company by hosting a virtual career fair where hopefuls can message and live chat with recruiters, current employees, and hiring managers about available roles.

Make networking fun! Present these online networking initiatives as a fun challenge for your team by encouraging them to make 25 new contacts each month. If they reach their goal contact number the first month, treat your team to delicious chocolate "pretzel pizzas" and brand new business cards to celebrate a job well done!

Quick Tips and Tricks

1

Employee growth = company growth

The bottom line is this—high employee engagement not only benefits your team members, but benefits your company too. Companies with highly engaged employees achieve **59% less turnover**, and produce 22% more profit for their businesses. Use the creative ways outlined in this eBook to keep engagement levels on high at all times, and workers will remain passionate about your mission, and loyal to your brand.

2

Get address confirmation

Remote workers have the flexibility to travel far more frequently than workers who report to an office building everyday, so you want to ensure that anything you send reaches them wherever they are in the world. Sendoso makes it easy to secure an accurate delivery location every time with our Address Confirmation feature. The feature secures your recipient's location before an item is shipped, and allows for the recipient to privately input their desired address within our sending system only, so they'll receive gifts without sharing their home or current address. Never send your precious company resources to an empty desk!

3

Want more tips on how to engage your employees? Ask them!

Get feedback straight from the source on how your company can continue to engage, excite, and inspire. Set up surveys twice a year on what your employees like/dislike about your company's engagement initiatives, and gather suggestions on any events or requests they'd like to see put in place in the future.

About Sendoso

Sendoso specializes in meaningful engagement—not just with your employees, but with your prospects, customers, partners and more!
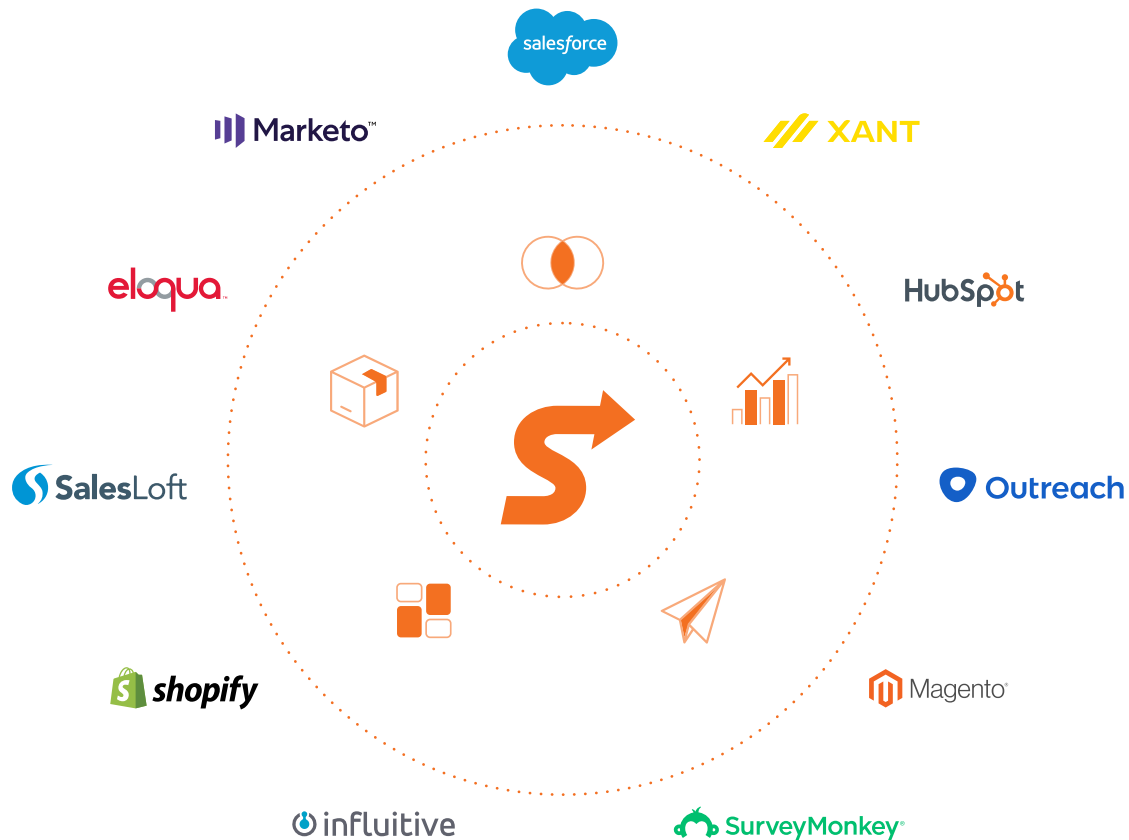
Sendoso is a SaaS solution that integrates with your existing tech stack so your sales, marketing, and post-sales teams can **deliver Physical Impressions™** at strategic points throughout the customer lifecycle and **measure the ROI**. The power behind Sendoso comes from the fully managed fulfillment and logistics service that assures quality, on-time delivery.

Everything you need to make your sales and marketing outreach more personal—all in one platform.

Limitless sending possibilities

Seamless integrations

Worldwide fulfillment and inventory management

Meaningful tracking and measurement

Scalable across teams and budgets