

Managing someone you never see

Remote management is not harder, it is just less forgiving of things you were getting away with in an office.

About 6 minutes to read

In an office, unclear priorities get resolved by proximity. Someone overhears, someone asks. Remotely, an unclear priority becomes a week of the wrong work. Almost all remote management advice is really about closing that gap.

Four habits that do most of the work

- A short daily written check-in from them: what I did, what I am doing, what is blocking me. Three lines, not a report.
- One scheduled call a week with camera on. Not a status update, a conversation.
- Priorities written down and visible. If it is only in your head, it does not exist.
- Feedback within a day. Saved-up feedback lands as a complaint rather than a correction.

Do not install monitoring software

Screenshot and keystroke tracking is common in this industry and it is a mistake. It tells you nothing about output, it insults someone you are asking to exercise judgement, and the best candidates decline roles that use it. Manage the work instead. You can see whether the invoices got chased.

Time zones

Manila is AEST minus two hours, US Eastern plus twelve or thirteen, UK plus seven or eight. Most of our candidates will work either your morning or your overnight, and many prefer the shift. Decide which you actually need before you interview. 'flexible' is how you end up with someone permanently working at 2am and quietly resenting it.

Pay, holidays and the things that cause friction

- Pay on time, every time. This is the single biggest predictor of retention and it is entirely within your control.
- The Philippines has more public holidays than you expect, and 13th month pay is a legal entitlement for employees. Know which apply to your arrangement.

- Agree leave in advance and stick to it. Cancelling agreed leave is how you lose someone good.
- Be explicit about response-time expectations outside their working hours. The default assumption will be that you expect an immediate reply.

Monthly management review

- ☐ Are they clear on this month's priorities?
- ☐ Has anything been sitting in their blocked list for more than a week?
- ☐ Have I given any feedback at all this month, positive or otherwise?
- ☐ Is the workload still matched to the hours we agreed?
- ☐ Is there anything they have asked for twice that I have not actioned?
- ☐ Would I be surprised if they resigned tomorrow?