

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

How to build
sales culture for
scattered teams



If you're a sales leader dreaming about an all-hands return to the floor, you might want to hit the snooze button. "Normal" office life looks more and more like a dream.

For many, the chatter of the sales floor has already faded forever beneath the patter of company Slack channels. Just 9% of white-collar workers said they wanted to return to traditional office life. 64% said they would consider quitting if their boss made them come back.

Today's tech-enabled, pandemic-enlightened employees want the flexibility to work from home, at least sometimes –along with more autonomy, collaboration, better tools, and more rewards.

To keep scattered sales teams engaged, leaders will have to build cohesive, engaged, and productive cultures at a time when the usual go-to tactics may not apply. It won't be easy, but we're here to help.



**AND REST ASSURED,
THE ROI IS GOOD.**

48%

of CFOs say the loss of corporate culture is the top challenge of remote work, more than any other C-Suite respondent pool. There's a good reason for that: a healthy culture pays dividends.

1.5X

Companies with extremely healthy cultures were more likely to report average revenue growth of more than 15% for the past three years, according to a survey by Oxford Economics.

2.5X

Public companies with extremely healthy cultures were more likely to report significant stock price increases over the past year.

\$156 M

How much an S&P 500 company with a healthy culture saves in turnover costs every year.

—Source: Return on Culture study, Grant Thornton and Oxford Economics





HUSTLE CULTURE IS DEAD DEAD



Nearly 20 years ago, a new generation of Internet all-stars rejected the corporate ladder and struck out on their own. The first “startups” not only laid the groundwork for today’s economy, they also reshaped the working world. Instead of drab cubicles, we got open workspaces. Instead of three-piece suits, we got hoodies and denim.

And instead of the 9 to 5, we got “hustle culture,” a go-hard-or-go-home ethos that glorified overwork. “Grit” and “resilience” became commonplace as company values that emphasized the importance of outlasting your peers.

“In my opinion, the world was kind of messed up,” said Tom Slocum, a 15-year sales veteran who has run in-office and remote teams, and is now VP of Sales for sales training platform TrainYo. Executives who framed reach numbers as do-or-die created a star-player culture that divided sellers, discouraged middle performers, and forced teams to fight for recognition, he said.

**“THE AE’S FOUGHT WITH
THE SDR’S. THE SDR’S
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WAS A FUNCTION OF HIGH
NUMBERS, HIGH OUTPUT.”**

—Tom Slocum, VP of Sales, TrainYo

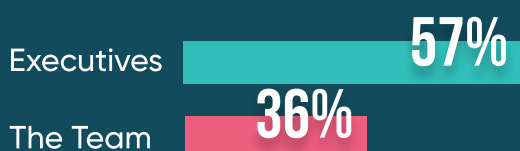
WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO OFFICE CULTURE? DESPITE WHAT EXECs THINK, IT'S NOT THE OFFICE.

When guessing how employees felt, executives overestimated the importance of:

ON-SITE AMENITIES



A PLEASING ENVIRONMENT



—Source: Return on Culture study, Grant Thornton and Oxford Economics

“WHAT WE FOUND MATTERS MOST ARE THE NATURE OF THE WORK AND THE PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH.”



Meanwhile, “fun” office perks like foosball tables, coffee bars, and catered lunches became commonplace. Furnishings became more stylish and comfy. Designers brought outdoor elements inside—natural light, bamboo accents, and green walls. Together they made for a more inviting workplace; one you didn’t need to leave.

And that was part of the point. The culture shaped the environment, which executives then confused for culture. Hustle-based culture was already dying in 2019 when the pandemic put a stake in its heart. But confusion over what does and doesn’t make a company culture persisted.

“A lot of times organizations do things because everybody else is doing them versus figuring out whether that’s important for their culture,” said Erica O’Malley, a partner and organizational strategy expert for consulting firm Grant Thornton, which authored a study on the ROI of workplace culture.

“What we found matters most to employees are the nature of the work and the people they work with,” O’Malley said. The office’s primary role in shaping culture is that it gives employees a place to come together, collaborate, and create community.

So how can leaders approach building a strong culture among employees who are here, there, and everywhere? The key is to focus on experiential—not environmental—elements of culture. Sales organizations and their leaders will have to adopt philosophies and practices that not only drive performance and productivity, but make their employees’ work experience fulfilling, inclusive, and rewarding.

“Nobody wants to fight anymore,” said Slocum. “They just wanna work together and kumbaya.”



HOW TO BUILD A GREAT SALES CULTURE WHEREVER YOU ARE



Culture is now experiential. Sales organizations and their leaders should craft culture that supports the key dimensions of a healthy workplace.

COMMUNICATION + COLLABORATION

A culture of individual achievement may power star sellers, but asking reps to collaborate on reaching team goals will motivate middle performers and inspire departments to work together.

To do that for scattered teams, you'll need to put some thought into how—and where—you communicate.

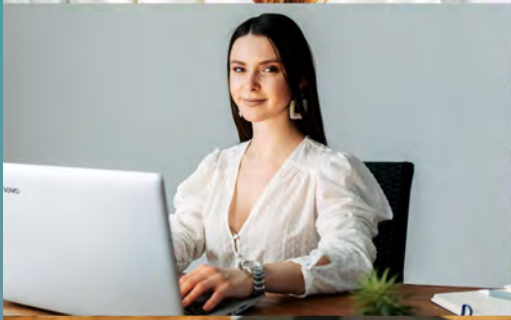
Communicate consistently: Daily stand-up meetings on the floor aren't an option if part of your team is distributed. Instead, reach out regularly at the same time of day using a video platform or messaging channels. Doing so includes the whole team, and you won't disrupt your team's workflow because they'll expect you at the same time in the same channel.

Write your unwritten communication rules: To promote healthy communication among distributed teams, you'll have to outline your team's established norms. IBM's work from home pledge outlined boundaries around remote communication like honoring "not camera-ready" hours and respecting family time.

Ask your team: What channel is best for team communication? How quickly should we expect a response during, and outside of, office hours? And which guidelines will promote respect and trust?

Assign ownership to individuals and teams: Invite cross-team communication by asking the people closest to a project to give updates. Remember to include remote workers when shining the spotlight.

NEW WORK MODELS AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR SALES TEAMS



ALL-IN, EVERY DAY

Pros: Sellers are in the office establishing relationships, helping teammates, solving problems, and celebrating wins together.

Cons: Few people want to be there, and it's easy to fall back into old habits that make remote work look more attractive.

DESIGNATED IN-OFFICE DAYS OR WEEKS

Pros: Workers know when their team is expected to be in the office and can schedule accordingly: WFH days for deep focus work, in-office days for brainstorming, reviewing call logs with their managers, and department meetings.

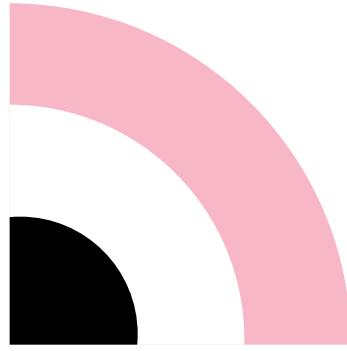
Cons: You're paying 100% of the monthly rent for 50% of the days used, when that revenue could be put toward seller compensation.

TOTALLY REMOTE

Pros: Employees can work around family responsibilities, enjoy more autonomy, and less social friction with unpleasant coworkers.

Cons: Teammates may feel disconnected; requires vetting and investing in tech platforms to improve communication, engagement, and collaboration.

**“TRUST,
RESPECT,
AND
COMRADERY.**



When you put those three things together, they'll go to war with you at any time."

—Tom Slocum,
TrainYo

AUTONOMY ACCOUNTABILITY

Sales leaders have a vested interest in their reps sticking to processes that build pipeline. But they've become accustomed to doing so in a way that works for them. Giving them the freedom to put their own spin on it builds trust, as long as it also delivers results.

Clearly state expectations: Set goals, establish timelines, and set deadlines with input from the people who will be shouldering the work, then ensure those expectations are shared in common channels. Emphasize the importance of transparency by keeping everyone up to date with easy-to-understand, visualized KPIs on a metrics dashboard that updates progress in real-time.

Understand individual needs: Work from home has given people unprecedented flexibility to integrate work into their larger lives, but that doesn't look the same for everyone. A remote working parent might regularly need an hour mid-day to pick up their child from school, while an in-office team member is willing to grind hard, but wants an occasional mental health day to stay balanced. Trust your team to get their work done and adjust as needed.




Tom Slocum,
VP of Sales,
TrainYo

COMMUNITY + PURPOSE




Lisa Conn,
Co-founder,
Gatheround

In a healthy workplace community, team members are willing to collaborate, share new ideas, and work together toward a shared purpose. Managers will have to work harder to build the esprit de corps that evolves naturally when everyone is on-site.



Don't just say 'we're getting together for fun.'



Make connection a ritual: Pssst... No one likes Zoom happy hour.


Trade pointless "forced fun" for regular, purposeful team connections, said Lisa Conn, co-founder of team engagement platform Gatheround. Instead, find a topic the team can bond around, and make sure each team member has a voice when discussing something that is important and engaging for your team.

Communicate your shared purpose: Company values are about how you get your work done. Purpose is why you do it. Ask your team what they think they do well, how they help the company, and how that makes the world a better place. All work ladders up to a larger purpose, and when that purpose is clear, all work matters.

Poll your team: This isn't your Dad's sales team. Sure, 87.5% of sales managers are white and 69% are male, but their teams are more diverse than ever. Remote work has lowered the barrier to entry for working parents, disabled workers, and the neurodiverse, and allowed people of color and LGBTQ+ workers to step away from office politics. Formerly no-brainer decisions—golf outing anyone?—may now fall flat. To stay aligned with your team, ask them their preferences on small things like lunch orders and contest rewards as well as major policy decisions like working hours and communication policies.


MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS

Employees who experience high levels of belonging showed a whopping




56%

increase in job performance



50%

drop in turnover risk

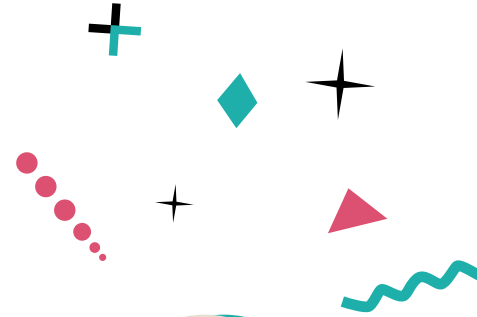


75%

reduction in sick days

Resulting in an **annual savings of \$52 million** for a 10,000-person company

—Harvard Business Review



ONBOARDING MENTORSHIP



*Charlotte Japp,
Founder,
Cirkel*

Onboarding a distributed team is tough. While in-office employees have immediate access, managers can't be there to answer questions as they arise for remote sellers. Likewise, mentorship between senior sellers and newbies are unlikely to develop spontaneously and will need a gentle push from leadership.

Encourage junior sellers to work on-site: While Gen Z was raised with the very platforms that facilitate remote work, there's unquestionable value in the office experience for younger workers. "There's a lot of offhand mentorships that come from natural conversation, and being able to ask stupid questions in an environment where it doesn't feel scary," said Charlotte Japp, founder of intergenerational mentorship platform, Cirkel. To fill that in, make sure junior workers are in the office at the same time as senior sellers, so they develop relationships and build trust.

Create incoming classes: Slocum groups new hires together to build camaraderie and build trust. "When you're coming onto an established team, it's hard to jump in there," Slocum said. "But if you're assigned a buddy, you have somebody to relate to." Having that peer group improves a feeling of belonging, which reduces turnover. "I've heard from so many people, the reason they stayed at their job was their hiring buddy."

Mentorship shouldn't be mandatory: If on-site mentorship isn't an option, pairing vets and new hires can work—with a caveat. "Mentorship only really works when both people commit to it," said Japp. So, no conscripting senior sellers into service. Both parties should come to the relationship with discrete goals and be willing to learn from each other. While established pros confer their experience, younger workers can keep older teammates abreast of new technologies, trends, and culture. Japp said: "It's always going to be a two-way street."



"Mentorship only really works when both people commit to it."

REWARDS + RECOGNITION

The number one reward for a job well done is money, especially in sales. In fact, 63% of workers who quit their jobs in 2021 said low pay was one driving force, according to Pew Research. But “cha-ching” isn’t enough. 57% of workers said they felt disrespected at work, a hallmark of a toxic culture. For social animals like sellers, leaders must ensure there are social rewards too. And they can’t be limited to in-office workers.

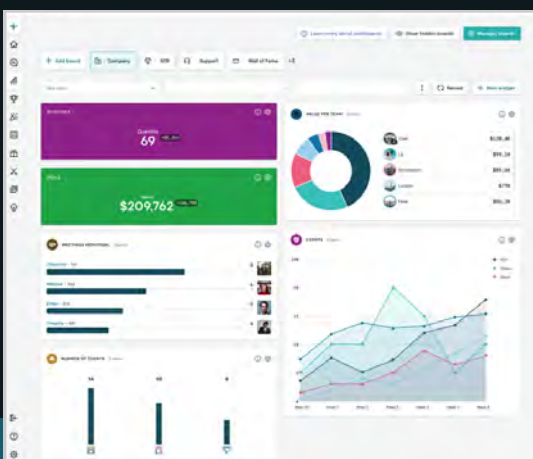
Pair intrinsic and extrinsic rewards: Some people feel compelled to buckle down and complete hard tasks because they have some internal—or intrinsic—motivation. Managers can nurture intrinsic motivation by building a culture of mutual respect, common purpose, and collaboration. Extrinsic motivators, however, provide that extra dopamine infusion that makes achieving goals so sweet. These can include SPIFFs, small prizes, digital currency, or even electronic badges.

Keep them winning: Meeting monthly and quarterly goals is vital, but to keep your reps engaged, set up varied competitions that give sellers at all levels a chance to win. Instead of limiting leaderboards to in-office screens, ensure remote and hybrid reps stay up to date by sharing stats regularly on team chats or a gamification platform like SalesScreen.

Encourage positive chatter: “Competitions can get very tough with a lot of red lines,” said TrainYo’s Slocum. But playful chatter and clear expectations for civility and respect encourage cheerleading instead of trash talking. Include distributed sellers by communicating via dedicated contest channels, where they can celebrate each other’s wins, shout out helpful coworkers and share GIFs and stickers that express their personalities.



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ABOUT SALESSCREEN

SalesScreen combines visualization and gamification, giving sellers unprecedented access to their KPIs which increases engagement and boosts productivity. Gamification elements turbocharge performance, improve morale, and motivate sellers to go above and beyond benchmarks.

