



Hiring a People Team for Remote Culture Success

How to build the People function that drives engagement, performance, and culture in distributed organizations

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Your Guide to Hybrid Success



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Alex Grande is a web developer with a passion for motivation and human behavior.

As the CEO of Recognize (RecognizeApp.com), Alex has spent over a decade engineering the "Human API", using technology to scale the fundamental psychological need for appreciation.





Webinar Focus, Audience, and Outcomes

Focus

Structuring and hiring the People team for remote/hybrid organizations

Audience

HR leaders, Talent executives, People Ops leaders, and hiring managers scaling distributed teams

What You'll Learn

- What roles to hire first
- What remote-ready role definitions look like
- How to avoid office-first hiring traps
- How to interview and assess for remote success

Why This Matters Now

Distributed Work Is Durable

In the U.S., **35.5 million people teleworked in Q1 2024**, or **22.9% of workers at work**, up from **19.6%** a year earlier.

Hybrid Is the Middle Ground

The share of teleworkers doing **all** hours at home fell while the share doing **some** hours rose — a strong signal that **hybrid is the durable middle ground**.

Flexibility Is Part of the Value Proposition

Stanford's Trip.com study found hybrid workers were **just as productive, just as likely to be promoted**, and **33% less likely to quit** than office-only peers.

Retention Economics Have Changed

WFH research finds workers value a two-day-a-week remote option at roughly **8% of wages**, which helps explain why flexibility changes attraction and retention economics.

People teams need to design for this reality, not patch around it.

What "Remote Culture Success" Actually Looks Like

Clear Goals and Decision Rights

Everyone knows what they own and how decisions get made — regardless of location or time zone.

Strong Manager Effectiveness

Gallup says managers account for **70% of the variance in team engagement**, which is why the People team has to design for manager excellence early.

High Belonging and Connection

Buffer found a majority of remote workers felt engaged, but many still reported remote career-growth friction because visibility is harder when people are not physically seen.

Fair Access to Growth and Visibility

Remote work creates upside and risk at the same time — structured visibility systems are essential.

Sustainable Performance

Not always-on burnout. Operating rhythms must protect boundaries, not just increase touchpoints.

The 5 Design Principles for a Remote-Ready People Team



Output Over Presence

Measure what people produce, not when or where they are visible.



Async-First, Sync-on-Purpose

Default to async; reserve synchronous time for what truly requires it.



Manager Enablement Before Programs

Build manager capability before layering on culture programs.



Connection by Design, Not by Accident

Microsoft's study of 61,182 employees found remote work made collaboration networks more static and siloed — structure is required.



Fairness Across Time Zones, Locations, and Work Styles

Equity must be intentional — it will not happen organically in distributed settings.

The Remote-Ready People Org Chart

People Partners / HRBP

Manager coaching, conflict resolution, change management at a distance

Talent Acquisition

Structured hiring, remote sourcing, writing-based assessment

People Ops + Systems

HRIS, compliance, process documentation, admin infrastructure

Total Rewards + Compliance

Geographic pay philosophy, benefits, stipends, mobility rules

Employee Experience + Internal Comms + Community

Onboarding journey, recognition systems, virtual + in-person connection design

People Analytics / L&D / Manager Enablement

Can be combined earlier and specialized later as the organization scales

Aon reports benefits communication is among the top internal strategies for multinationals, and Gallup shows managers drive engagement variance. Together, those findings justify a broader People org than "recruiters + generalists."

Suggested People Team at ~100 Employees

Core Roles



Head of People / People Ops Lead

Player-coach model — hands-on and strategic



Recruiter / TA Partner

Full-time or heavy contract support



People Ops Coordinator

Systems/admin support

Explicit Ownership For:

- Onboarding
- Manager basics
- Culture/community

Key Principle

Vendorize what is transactional; keep culture/manager design in-house

SHRM says the average HR-to-employee ratio is **1.7 per 100 employees**, with a broad "sweet spot" of **1.5 to 4.5 per 100**.

Navigating Team Dynamics

"It's really hard to innovate when everyone hates each other."

— Richard Hendricks, Silicon Valley

Proactive intervention and skilled mediation ensure that talent isn't stifled by internal strife, creating an environment where true innovation can flourish.



Suggested People Team at ~500 Employees

01

VP/Director of People

Strategic leadership across all People functions

02

TA Lead + Recruiters

Structured hiring at scale, remote sourcing capability

03

2+ People Partners / HRBPs

Manager coaching and change management across business units

04

People Ops / Systems Lead

HRIS, compliance, documentation infrastructure

05

Total Rewards / Benefits / Comp Owner

Geographic pay, benefits design, stipends

06

Employee Experience / Internal Comms / Community Owner

Microsoft's onboarding research found new hires remain less connected than tenured employees during a 24-week onboarding period — this role becomes essential at this stage

07

L&D / Manager Enablement Lead + Emerging People Analytics

HBS found well-designed virtual watercoolers with senior-manager involvement improved newcomer performance and career outcomes

Suggested People Team at ~1000+ Employees

Executive Leadership

Chief People Officer

HRBP team aligned to functions/regions

Centers of Excellence (COEs)

- Talent Acquisition
- Total Rewards
- L&D / Manager Enablement
- People Analytics
- Employee Relations / Compliance
- Employee Experience / Internal Comms

Dedicated Program Ownership

Onboarding, offsites, listening, and community — all require named owners at enterprise scale

Role Scorecard: People Ops / People Partner / HRBP

Mission

Make managers effective at a distance

Must-Have Skills

- Strong writing and documentation
- Manager coaching
- Change management
- Conflict handling without proximity
- Comfort with systems and metrics

Watch-Outs ⚠

- Equates culture with events
- Manages by activity/attendance
- Weak written communication

The remote People Partner needs stronger coaching, documentation, and systems instincts than the office-first version of the role.

Role Scorecard: Talent Acquisition for Remote-Friendly Hiring

Mission

Hire for output, judgment, async collaboration, and self-management

Must-Have Skills

- Structured interviewing
- Remote sourcing
- Remote candidate experience
- Writing-based assessment
- Location/pay transparency

Watch-Outs ⚠️

- Over-indexing on charisma
 - Local-bias recruiting
 - "Culture fit" used as shorthand for sameness
-

Role Scorecard: Employee Experience / Internal Comms / Community

Mission

Create belonging, rhythm, and information flow

Core Responsibilities

- Onboarding journey design
- Internal communications
- Recognition systems
- Virtual + in-person connection design
- Community rituals and manager forums

Watch-Outs ⚠

- "Events only" profile
 - No measurement
 - Weak stakeholder influence
-

Role Scorecard: Total Rewards / Compliance / People Analytics

Mission

Make distributed work fair, understandable, and compliant

Core Responsibilities

- Geographic pay philosophy
- Benefits choice and communication
- Stipends / home-office support
- Leave and mobility rules
- Reporting on equity, retention, and program health

Watch-Outs ⚠️

- Unclear location-pay logic
- Benefits nobody understands
- No analytics beyond headcount

43%

No Location-Based Pay Cut

Buffer found 43% of remote workers said pay was not tied to location

70%

Not Paid Less Remotely

70% of remote workers said they were not paid less for working remotely

\$42

Daily Office Premium

Owl Labs found hybrid workers spend an average of \$42 more per day when working from the office — making commute/travel policy part of total rewards

Office-First Hiring Traps to Avoid

🚫 Hiring "Culture" People Who Are Really Event Planners

Culture in distributed orgs requires systems design.

🚫 Promoting Office-Successful HR Leaders Without Testing Remote Systems Skills

Office success does not automatically transfer to distributed execution.

🚫 Using Attendance as a Proxy for Performance

Presence \neq output. Remote-ready People teams measure results, not hours online.

🚫 Over-Relying on Zoom for Every Problem

Stanford research shows in-person teams generated **15–20% more ideas** than virtual teams on creative tasks.

🚫 Treating Onboarding as Paperwork Instead of Culture and Network Building

Onboarding is the first and most critical moment to build connection and context.

🚫 Assuming Fairness and Visibility Will Happen Organically

They won't. Structure is required for equity in distributed environments.

Hiring Process Design for Remote People Roles



Define 5–7 Remote-Critical Competencies

Async writing, stakeholder influence, manager coaching, systems thinking, inclusion, judgment, change management



Use Structured Interviews and Scorecards

Consistent questions, standardized scoring, trained interviewers



Add a Short Async Writing Task

GitLab's async guidance reinforces why a writing task matters: documentation and async clarity are core performance traits, not "nice to have" extras



Add a Job-Relevant Work Sample for Finalists

High content validity, relates strongly to performance, perceived as fair by applicants



Use a Cross-Functional Panel

Multiple perspectives reduce bias and improve signal quality



Debrief on Evidence, Not Vibe

Structured debrief against the scorecard — not gut feel or cultural affinity

Interview Questions to Ask for Remote Success

“

"Tell me about a time you replaced a meeting with documentation. What did you write?"

“

"How do you decide what must be synchronous vs. asynchronous?"

“

"Describe a remote manager problem you diagnosed and fixed."

“

"How have you built belonging for employees you rarely see in person?"

“

"How do you make remote employees visible for stretch work and promotion?"

“

"Describe a time-zone or cross-functional conflict you solved without relying on authority."

“

"What metrics tell you remote culture is actually working?"

”

Take-Home Challenges / Work Samples

1

Option 1

Rewrite an office-first policy into a remote-first policy

2

Option 2

Design a 90-day onboarding plan for a remote manager

3

Option 3

Create a loneliness/belonging intervention for a 300-person hybrid company

4

Option 4

Draft a location-pay philosophy memo + FAQ

Scoring Rubric

- Clarity
- Judgment
- Prioritization
- Inclusiveness
- Measurable outcomes

Guardrails

- 60–90 minutes maximum
- Clear prompt provided
- Rubric shared with candidates
- Pay for bigger asks

Onboarding the New People Hire: First 90 Days + Operating Rhythm



Days 1–30

- Listening tour
- Manager map
- Policy audit
- Onboarding audit

Days 31–60

- Quick wins in clarity
- Comms improvements
- Manager toolkits

Days 61–90

Launch one durable system:

- Manager forum
- Onboarding redesign
- Community ritual
- People dashboard

Standing Rhythms

Async Weekly Update

Keeps distributed teams informed without adding meetings

Monthly Manager Roundtable

Buffer found many remote workers struggle to unplug — rhythms should protect boundaries

Quarterly Cohort / Community Touchpoints

Structured connection moments across the distributed organization

The KPI Dashboard for Remote Culture Success

Remote culture should be managed like any other business system: with **leading indicators, not anecdotes**. Gallup's engagement research links engagement to turnover and productivity outcomes. Don't stop at eNPS; include fairness, manager quality, and new-hire connection.



Hiring

- Time-to-fill
- Candidate drop-off
- Quality-of-hire



Onboarding

- 30/60/90 clarity
- Belonging score
- Time-to-productivity



Manager Effectiveness

- Feedback cadence
- Manager score
- Escalation patterns



Culture / Community

- Engagement
- Belonging & loneliness
- Recognition & meeting load



Equity

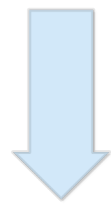
- Promotion parity
- Performance parity
- Location/pay understanding



Retention

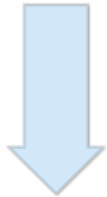
- Regrettable attrition
- New-hire attrition
- Manager attrition

Final Roadmap / Close



Step 1: Define Your Remote Operating Model

Establish the principles and structure before hiring



Step 2: Identify Missing People Capabilities

Audit current team against the remote-ready org chart



Step 3: Rewrite Role Scorecards for Distributed Execution

Replace office-first definitions with remote-critical competencies



Step 4: Standardize Interview Kits + One Work Sample

Structured interviews, writing tasks, and job-relevant assessments



Step 5: Fix Onboarding, Community, and Metrics Before Adding More Programs

Build the foundation before layering on complexity

Remote culture success is built, not inherited.

Q & A Time with Recognize



LIVE DEMO

Register here for *Make Recognition Visible Across Your Team* - our live demo shows you how to recognition!

LIVE DEMO

Make Recognition Visible Across Your Team

Tuesday, April 28th
 12 PM ET | 9 AM PT

Jess Vigorito
MC

David Jones
Recognition Partner

JOIN US

Recognize
RecognizeApp.com →

Tuesday, April 28 - 12 PM ET | 9 AM PT

In this 45-minute live session, you'll see exactly how modern organizations are making recognition visible, consistent, and impactful across remote, hybrid, and field-based teams.

Bonus:

- Live Q&A
- \$100 gift card raffle
- 🎁 \$1,000 in rewards credit for new customers

👉 If improving engagement and retention is on your radar, this will be a high-value 45 minutes for you!

Register here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/RcFUEclzShmGkutHtbS8WQ>

NEXT WEBINAR



GAMIFICATION ENGAGEMENT MODEL - DESIGNING CULTURE PEOPLE ACTUALLY PARTICIPATE IN



THURSDAY, 16 APRIL

01:00 PM ET



Live Webinar



David Jones

Sr. Account Executive
@Recognize

Powered by:



Thursday, April 16 - 1 PM ET | 10 AM PT

Key Takeaways:

- **The participation problem (solved):** Why most culture programs stall—and the engagement loops that fix it.
- **Gamification that doesn't feel gimmicky:** Points, challenges, and streaks that reinforce real behaviors and values.
- **Manager-friendly execution:** Low-lift prompts and routines that drive weekly participation across teams.
- **Proof + measurement:** How to track adoption and impact (engagement, retention, productivity) without guesswork.

REGISTER HERE:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/2417753166013/WN_RRKXEbPOSX20zXEIxpuzYg#/registration