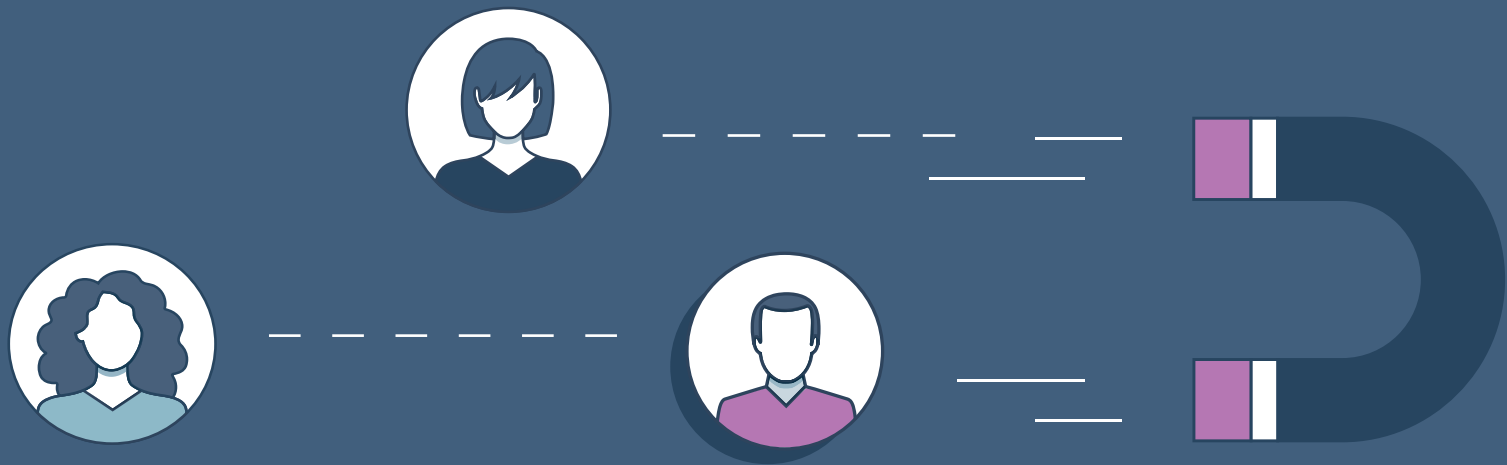




# The Engineer Retention Playbook

HOW TO RETAIN YOUR TEAM IN THE WORLD OF REMOTE WORK



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# About Terminal

**Terminal is the remote teams engine for fast-growing companies. We hire, house, develop, and retain engineering teams, so you can focus on building brilliant products.**

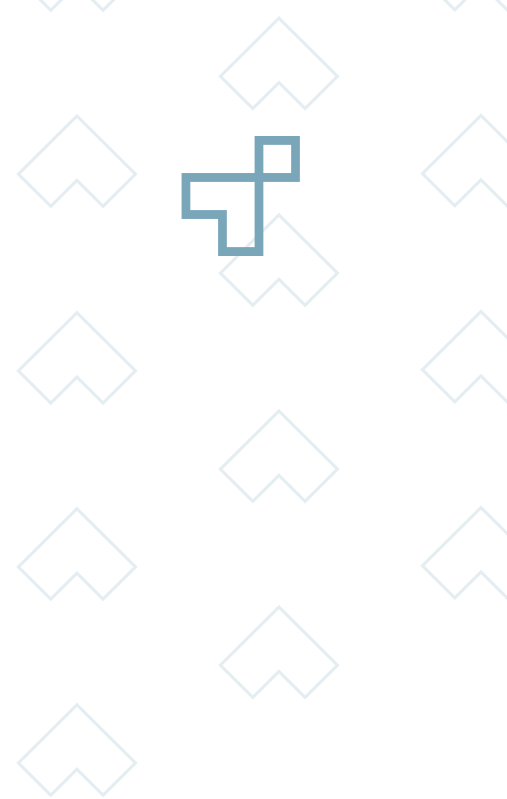
Our journey began in 2016 – Terminal came to life as part of Atomic, a startup studio and venture capital fund that was boldly pursuing an initiative to build five companies at the same time. The companies needed to quickly recruit engineers in order to validate product-market fit.

Terminal hired and launched an initial team of five engineers co-located in Kitchener-Waterloo – opening up a new talent pool for the Atomic businesses. The initial team of five quickly grew into a community of more than 40 engineers, and the five start-ups all received further financing.

Now, Terminal hires across Canada, the United States and Latin America, including Mexico, Colombia and Chile.

We've built 30+ remote teams and hired hundreds of engineers, supported by our unique model that blends recruiting, HR, ops, and community to drive growth.

And, we're just getting started – by empowering brilliant people to partner with bold companies, we want to work with you to solve tomorrow's most challenging problems.



# Introduction

**Of all of your employees, your engineers are the ones most likely to quit. Engineers have a turnover rate of nearly 22%, and they're constantly being tempted with other offers. According to LinkedIn, engineers receive more InMails per person than any other occupation in North America. Any company hoping to succeed in the long term will need to give retention clear and careful thought.**

Navigating retention for remote employees comes with its own challenges. Remote work requires intention -- in everything from communication to culture to work processes. Retention is no different: If you want to retain your remote employees, you need to intentionally put in processes and programs aimed at preventing churn.

As more companies adopt remote work, it'll be increasingly important to show your employees how your company does remote the best -- and demonstrate why they should stay. This guide will help you be intentional about retention and help you set up a remote company that your employees are excited to call home.



## Expert advice: The value of retention

*From Woody Anderson, CTO at Zumper*

When you're thinking about what to prioritize with your other executives, don't overlook making systemic investments in the things that will lead to better retention, because they'll pay for themselves.



## How poor retention hurts your company

- **Recruiting a replacement is expensive.** Replacing employees costs a lot of money. A company must spend significant time and financial resources to search for the best talent through advertising, recruitment agencies, screening, interviewing, and hiring. It costs as much as 33% of an employee's annual salary to replace them.
- **Low retention leads to decreased productivity.** The moment employees start to seriously consider their options for alternative employment, they are likely to become actively disengaged from their work. Gallup estimates that actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. between \$450 billion to \$550 billion each year in lost productivity.
- **Poor employee retention hurts morale.** A hole in your team is disruptive and hurts employees' ability to focus on their own work, especially when they're left picking up the slack for their newly departed co-worker. And even when you've found a replacement, team dynamics and morale may not recover if your team had a tight bond with the colleague they lost.
- **New employees won't start adding value right away.** Most employees won't join your organization and immediately jump into productive work. New employees get less work done because they're still figuring out how to get work done. It takes time to navigate company workflows and processes, and establish relationships with co-workers. Even with a great onboarding process in place, it can take anywhere from 6 months to one year for new hires to reach peak performance.
- **High turnover can affect your company's reputation.** A recent study estimates that about 53% of job seekers are checking employer review scores on websites like Glassdoor before accepting a role at a company. If turnover is a problem at your organization, potential candidates likely already know about it and might see joining your team as too big of a risk.



### Engineers want the option to work remotely

Don't be too quick to abandon remote work after the pandemic.

Offering remote work to your engineers can help you keep them around: 74% of employees say that remote options would make them less likely to leave their company. And companies that support remote work have 25% lower employee turnover than companies that don't.

# Retention starts on day one

Retention starts on your employee's first day. Putting the right support systems into place can set a tone for your employees. First impressions matter: **20% of employee turnover** happens in the first 90 days, and organizations with strong onboarding processes **improve new hire retention by 82%**. Put some time into creating systems that will help remote engineers feel supported from day one.

## Adopt a remote-first mindset.

Whether you're building out a global remote presence or simply offering continued work-from-home options for your local team, a remote-first mindset is crucial for the modern workplace. Infusing remote work into everything you do -- from hiring down to happy hours -- provides the flexibility that employees want, and it's a potent antidote to the isolation that remote employees often feel.

- **Master your workflows.** Putting strong workflows in place – for updates, project management, code reviews, and any other consistent task your team does – will future-proof your remote strategy and increase productivity of the team overall.
- **Keep processes simple.** Remote teams can sometimes default to sticking to established, complicated ways of doing things because changing them requires additional communication. Check in often to improve your team's approach and ensure that it's working, versus just carrying on with business as usual.
- **Embrace 'async.'** Concurrent collaboration is ideal when it can happen, but different time zones or working schedules may make this difficult. Establish a process for asynchronous communication so team members can respond when it works for them. Every async message should have context, a clear deadline, and next steps. If sharing a message broadly, be sure to @-mention stakeholders to keep them in the loop.

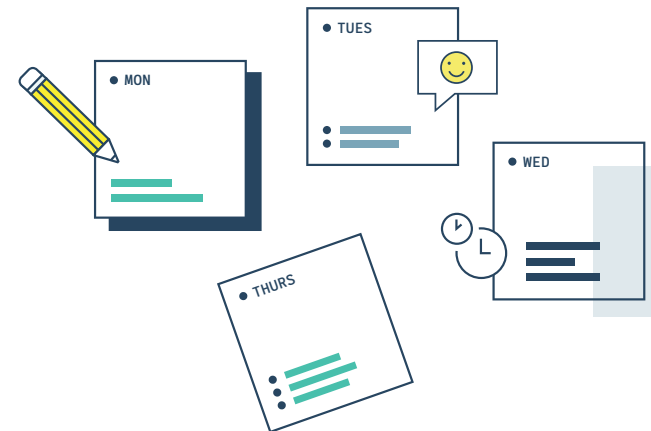


### Expert advice: Being intentional about remote work

*From Dave Mangot, Principal at Mangoteque Web Operations Consulting*

It doesn't come down to whether you use Jira or Slack. It's about how you approach the problems your teams face. How do your employees work together? How do they communicate? These are the things to optimize for regardless of where your team sits or the tools they use. You should be deliberate about these things either way. Remote work just makes you think about it more.

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## Curate an employee's first days with care.

Organizations with a strong onboarding process improve **productivity by over 70%**. That's why your new employee's first weeks on the job are arguably their most important. It's when they get their first impression of your company, their role within it, and the support they'll get to perform their responsibilities. In their first few days, be sure to set your employees up for success:

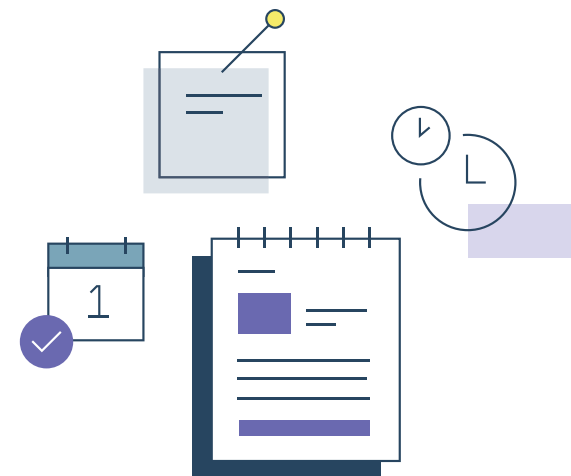
- **Promptly send materials.** Onboarding starts in the weeks leading up to your new hire's start date. Contracts, physical equipment like laptops and monitors, and software access should be squared away before their first day. And a little bit of company swag can build team pride before day one, too.
- **Schedule a 1:1 on day one.** Make sure that hiring managers block off time on a new employee's first day to welcome them. Schedules can fill up fast, and it can seem all too easy for busy managers to push back an initial 1:1 a day or two, but it's important to discourage this as much as possible. You don't want your new employees to feel like an afterthought to their new boss.
- **Onboarding milestones.** Give your new hires a **list of milestones** you expect them to hit to help them advance through their onboarding. Milestones might include reviewing internal materials, meeting with their onboarding buddy, and logging into company portals.
- **Work hours.** Be sure to outline how you expect them to approach work as a remote employee. Do you expect them to maintain a set schedule and be online during certain hours of the day? Or is quality of work more important than time logged? Whatever it is, be sure to relay that information to help new hires succeed.
- **Maintain a company handbook.** A company handbook is a great way to document everything about your company and its work processes. And we mean everything -- organizational structure, stand-up schedules, code review processes, even company holidays. A handbook should be a living, breathing organism, so we recommend giving edit access to the entire company.



### Expert advice: Onboarding remote employees

*From Denise Chen, Head of Talent & People, Snapcommerce*

To make the onboarding process seamless on a virtual platform, we make sure to give new employees access to the onboarding sessions and documents to continue to reference after their onboarding is complete. We also schedule more frequent check-ins than we would for employees at headquarters. We want to be sure the new employee has the context, understanding, and home office equipment they need to do their best work.



## Set expectations.

An important part of any remote employee's success is setting clear, appropriate expectations. And yet, when surveyed, **40 percent of employees** said they weren't clear on what was expected of them. If employees don't feel like they know how to succeed in their roles, they'll have a harder time navigating the company, and they'll be more likely to leave. Make sure that your managers are being transparent about the following:

- **Business goals.** Show engineers how their tasks will apply to overarching OKRs. Employees want to see that what they do matters. Clearly communicate goals company-wide on a regular basis to establish a shared team vision. Knowing how daily tasks tie into larger goals will help engineers understand why their work matters and will help them navigate their career at your company.
- **Communication channels.** Be clear about which communication channels should be used and for what. When should engineers use email? When should they use a messaging program like Slack? How should they use functionality within your async tools? If there's a critical coding issue or a bug they can't fix, how should they reach out for help? Put together a written guide so employees will have something they can use as a reference.
- **Day-to-day expectations.** Make sure engineers know things like working hours and weekly project deliverables. Engineers are far more likely to be engaged when they have a clear understanding of what's expected of them. It will also help engineers be more autonomous and creative in their roles, which leads to higher job satisfaction.





## Develop a stellar learning & development program.

Fifty-eight percent of engineers cite **learning and development** as one of their top criteria when considering a new role. Without a robust learning and development program, you risk losing your engineers to companies that can give them what your own company might be lacking. The key is to adapt your L&D benefits to remote work.

- **Help employees learn from each other.** Just because L&D is happening online, doesn't mean you can't create cohorts of employees to keep each other accountable. Incorporate social learning, give employees deadlines and encourage collaboration.
- **Use remote to your advantage.** If you were restricted to in-person L&D, you'd need to rely on in-person facilitators. But in a remote environment, you can use facilitators located in any place in the world, and offer a wider variety of formats and programs.
- **Offer guidance.** Being remote, some employees are likely to find it difficult to engage in self-learning and stay motivated through lengthy programs. Follow up with employees on their learning and make it sticky by creating assignments that will make them practice what they have learned.
- **Tailor your offering.** Avoid the one-size-fits all approach. Assess and understand your employee's learning styles and preferences to make sure they are offered appropriate opportunities. With so many choices available, you should be able to find a solution that will fit your needs. And choices will only continue to grow: The overall market for online education is projected to reach **\$350 billion by 2025**.



### Expert advice: The 70-20-10 rule

*From Karine Roy, Head of Learning and Development, [Terminal.io](https://terminal.io)*

For L&D to be impactful and effective, you need a blended approach. Individuals learn 70% of their knowledge from challenging experiences and assignments, 20% from developmental relationships, and 10% from coursework and training. So although you can acquire a lot of knowledge online, you still need your organization to offer proper support for the learning (and impact) to happen.

Karine suggests a number of ways to do this:

- Make learning a part of overall strategy and culture
- Carve out time for people to engage in learning activities and experiences
- Offer resources and programs (either homegrown or through vendor subscriptions)
- Have leaders co-create L&D plans for their employees and leading by example
- Build communities of practice
- Invest in learning technologies to stimulate knowledge sharing
- Encourage networking and peer learning
- Put a stronger focus on coaching from managers
- Build mentorship programs

# Help your engineers love the work

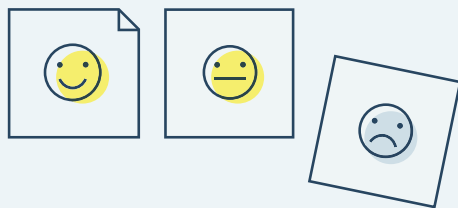
What your employees do every day will impact whether or not they want to stick around your company. And what they're doing every day is, well, working. Make sure you're doing everything you can to create a work environment that engineers are happy to take part in. Do engineers have good work-life balance? Does their manager empower them? Do they feel recognized for their achievements? The answers to these questions can affect whether employees stick around.

## Empowered employees are loyal employees

Companies that give their employees power and influence get longer tenures out of their workers. After three years, there's a 60% chance of an employee sticking with them, compared to 48% at a company seen as less empowering.

## Check in on employee satisfaction

More than 25% of employees are in a high-retention-risk category. How do you know who's at risk of attrition? It's easy: You need to ask. It might seem simple, but asking your employees how they're doing is a great way to make sure they're happy. Try to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on employee happiness -- after all, it's easier to adjust for retention if you have data and information on how employees feel and why they might consider leaving.



- **Encourage candid, empathetic conversations.** Ask your managers how they're doing, and have them do the same in kind with the people they manage. What's going on in their lives? How can you help them navigate their workloads? What can leadership be doing better to help teams be more successful? Keeping an open dialogue with your teams can provide priceless insights into their collective engagement and the engagement levels of individual members.
- **Get an eNPS score.** Put simply, eNPS is the difference between your happiest and least happy employees. eNPS uses surveys of employees to measure how loyal your workforce is on the whole, putting a number to your employee happiness that you can use as a benchmark both for gauging how employees feel about your company over time and for comparing your company with your peers.
- **Offboard your employees.** Examining and investing in your offboarding process can help you learn from your organization's mistakes and improve the employee experience in the future. Your HR team should have a process in place for asking departing employees why they are leaving. It can help you get a clear understanding of the employee experience before parting ways.

## Don't micromanage

It can be tempting to track what teams are up to since they aren't in the office. After all, at many companies, working from home has traditionally been equated with playing hooky. But micromanaging is a surefire way to frustrate employees and send them running. **Try these strategies** to get yourself to trust your managers to run their teams as they see fit.

- **Ask managers how they want to be managed.** Confident leaders will seek input from their managers on how they would like to keep their boss up to date. Simply by asking, "How often would you like me to check in?" or "How would you like me to hold you accountable?" will help to establish trust and autonomy, and it will help you learn how to more effectively work with your managers.
- **Adopt a fail-forward attitude.** Leaders like yourself tend to be high achievers, and that often comes with a perfectionist streak. In fact, perfectionism is often what compels leaders to micromanage in the first place. Allow your team to learn through failure and openly discuss lessons learned.
- **Be a facilitator, not a task master.** If you manage expectations instead of tasks, then your managers will know what they need to deliver without being given a laundry list of chores. Let your team know they can come to you with problems or questions and keep your inquiries to a minimum.
- **Trust your team.** Sometimes micromanagement is born of trust issues. If you're prone to micromanagement, try giving your teams more responsibility than you're comfortable with. Chances are, you'll be surprised and delighted by how well your teams execute on goals and deliver.
- **Get your managers to do the same.** Encourage your managers to trust their engineers and give them the autonomy to thrive. Management style can have a huge impact on retention, so give your managers the training and tools they need to empower their engineers.

### How managers influence retention

People don't quit their jobs, they quit their managers: 56% of employees would turn down a 10% pay raise to stay with a great boss.

## Recognize achievements

Everyone wants to feel appreciated at their job. It feels great, and it sends a signal that they're succeeding in their role. The converse is also true: when employees feel undervalued or unappreciated by their company, they may take it as a sign that it's not the right place for them and seek greener pastures as a result. Recognizing your employees is one of the easiest ways to build morale and boost retention.

- **Give public shout-outs.** Recognize great work on Slack or via email and consider building an online recognition wall. It's one of the simplest ways to make your employees feel appreciated.
- **Give employees a way to recognize each other's achievements.** For example, make space for employees to recognize each other at company-wide meetings. You could have an award that employees can give to each other, or give employees a way to send each other handwritten notes.
- **Reward employees.** Send your employees a gift as a thank you for a particularly good quarter, or make time to celebrate together. And these rewards don't have to be particularly costly. A voucher to a restaurant or a bottle of wine can go a long way. Like they say, it's the thought that counts.
- **Be consistent.** Positive reinforcement should be delivered fairly to keep employees engaged and motivated. Playing favorites can breed resentment, so be sure to recognize everyone for their good work, not just your superstars.

### A note on equal treatment of remote employees

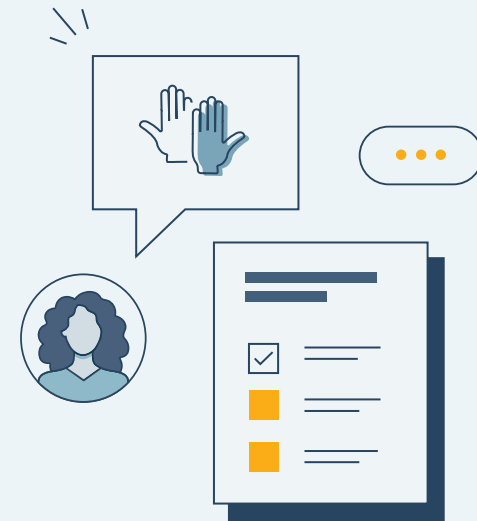
A common hazard of managing remote teams -- especially if your primary team works out of a large HQ -- is treating your remote employees differently from in-office employees. Remote employees are far away, they may work in a different time zone, and your direct interactions may be limited. But your remote employees are a part of the team just like anyone else. Always keep in the back of your mind how your company's work practices are perceived by remote workers. Are they fair? Do they penalize remote workers? Staying in tune with these questions will help with retention long term and boost the overall happiness of team members who work farther away.



### Expert advice: Career advancement for remote engineers

*From Ryan Fox, Director of Engineering, [Snapcommerce](#)*

Make sure there are sufficient growth opportunities for remote employees. Create concrete, achievable plans for how an engineer can grow from one level to the next, and follow up on these items at least quarterly. A performance evaluation framework focused on growth is important, along with frequent 1:1s and a L&D budget. Leveraging external coaches can help, too.



# Promote healthy work-life balance

Burnout is one of the biggest threats to employees who work remotely. **62% of remote tech workers** experience symptoms of burnout, and the risk for burnout is **higher** for remote employees compared to their in-office counterparts. **Despite this, only 21% of remote work strategies** address employee burnout. Companies that build a culture around work-life balance will give their employees plenty of reasons to stay, but perhaps more importantly, few reasons to leave.

- **Establish solid ground rules.** **22% of remote workers** say that their biggest struggle is unplugging when their workday is done. An additional 7% say their biggest challenge is taking vacation time. Start by setting guidelines for email or Slack, and only send messages after hours in extraordinary situations. Ditto for vacation time: when someone's on vacation, they should be able to unplug completely.
- **Lead by example.** When management works after hours, your employees will feel obligated to do so as well. Similarly, if managers rarely take vacations, your employees may fear that taking time off will reflect on their work ethic. When you set guidelines for working hours, stick to them yourself. It benefits your employees, and hey, it benefits you too!



## Expert advice: Make remote employees feel seen

*From Woody Anderson, CTO at Zumper*

Remote workers know they're not at HQ if you have an HQ. It does go a long way, however, to give them something that's special to show them they're not forgotten.



- **Learn the signs of burnout.** One of the biggest indicators of burnout is a change in employee behavior. The signs of burnout can be subtle, but once you learn to recognize them, they're undeniable. Inability to concentrate, recurring sickness, and lack of motivation are some of the most common.
- **Check in regularly.** For employees, broaching the topic of burnout with a manager can be daunting. Many employees simply avoid bringing it up as a result. So be proactive, be direct, and be consistent. In 1:1 meetings, start by asking about the softer side of work. How are they feeling? Are they motivated? Do they dread certain aspects of their job? And remember, employees will likely be slow to admit they're overworked, so phrasing is everything.
- **Set aside some time to socialize.** Giving employees a chance to socialize in meetings can act as a pressure-release valve. It can also help with feelings of isolation and boost camaraderie among your teams.

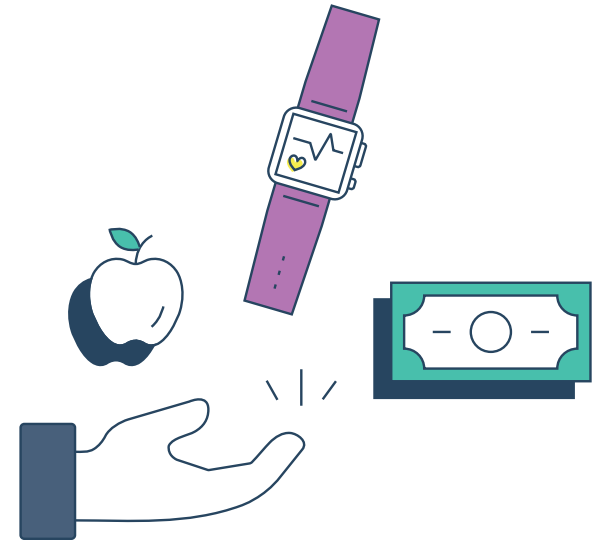
# Make your culture too good to leave

There are overarching policies and programs that will impact everyone at your company, regardless of what team they're on. Pay attention to benefits, compensation, and other areas that can make an employee's life easier and help keep them satisfied. Mental health programs, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and social connection can go a long way to making your company the sort of place people want to stick around.

## Make compensation competitive.

Searching for talent in the global market can help you outmaneuver skyrocketing salaries near HQ, but it's best to maintain perspective. At its core, going remote is not about cutting costs; it's about finding the best talent in the world. To keep your talent around for the long haul, you'll have to offer competitive pay and benefits with respect to the locales you're recruiting in. Remote engineers in Canada and Mexico **list pay and benefits** as the top two things that are important to them in a role.

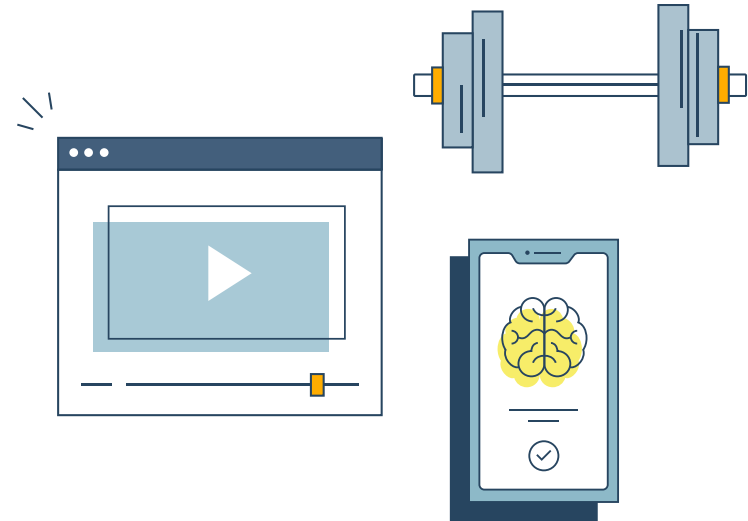
- **Being competitive means being generous.** Just because you're operating in a global market that may not offer robust compensation packages the same way as your local market, it doesn't mean you should skimp on salaries or benefits. It will pay off in the long run to err on the side of more rather than less when it comes to pay and benefits.
- **Salary isn't everything.** 60% of people **report** that benefits and perks are a major factor in staying at a job, and a whopping 80% say they would choose additional benefits over a pay raise. After health insurance, employees **place the highest value** on benefits that are relatively low-cost to employers, such as flexible hours, more paid vacation time, and work-from-home options.
- **Stay on top of payroll.** This one might seem obvious, but paying remote employees takes extra time and effort. International payroll systems sometimes have lag times, and cross-border tax issues sometimes creep up, so be sure to anticipate these issues and head them off at the pass.



## Provide benefits that suit remote work.

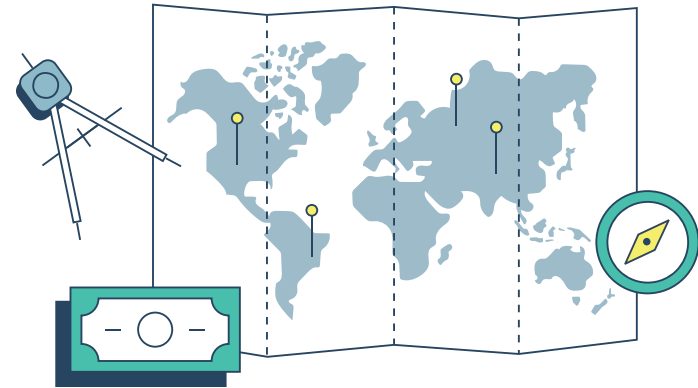
Remote work is paving the way for companies to form meaningful bonds with employees by providing remote benefit packages that can make a true difference in a team member's quality of life. And yet **nearly 29%** of surveyed leaders lack a plan for replacing traditional in-office benefits or perks for remote employees. Though remote benefits are a new concept, it's an area loaded with opportunities to provide value to employees, and in doing so, boost retention. Here are some remote benefits your company might want to offer:

- **Health and wellness.** Health and wellness benefits rank among the most important for employees and a company should assess multiple benefits options that support mental and physical health. Consider offering virtual mental health counseling packages, home gym equipment delivery, or an online gym subscription.
- **Home office, technology, productivity tools.** Give engineers an annual budget for setting up a productivity-enhancing home office. It will show your employees you care about their work happiness and ability to focus, and that you're willing to put your money where your mouth is. Give employees a stipend for ergonomic furniture, office supplies, noise-cancelling headphones, high speed internet, and more.
- **Home services, rent, and childcare.** Many tech employees who previously commuted into large campuses are used to perks like daily lunches or even in-office childcare. Tailor benefits to keep employees focused during "office hours." Consider covering a portion of employee rent or mortgage, providing a daycare stipend, or sponsoring lunch delivery.



## Approach salary adjustments with caution.

As your company becomes more remote and current employees consider moving away from headquarters, you might decide to rethink how you approach compensation. But tread carefully here -- you don't want to push your best employees away by giving them a pay cut. As Jennifer Farris, Terminal's Chief People Officer puts it, "Are you really going to dock your best engineer's salary just because they're moving?" But if you want to adjust your compensation strategy to reflect your changing workforce, there are a few different approaches you can take.



- **Geography is king.** The value of a dollar in the San Francisco Bay Area is not equivalent to the value of a dollar in Kansas, and one approach to remote salary is to let geography be the main factor in how you compensate. But if this approach appeals to you, you should probably look at salary on a case-by-case basis. Another idea would be to tell an engineer who has moved to a less competitive region that their salary will remain the same, but they'll be ineligible for a raise for one year after moving.
- **Geography meets lifestyle.** This hybrid approach to salary is, in our opinion, the best one to take. Employees would be given the whole value of their compensation package, including benefits, in the form of credits based on their location and those credits could be used as the employee saw fit. Perhaps, for example, a young and healthy engineer with no family would rather forgo the premium healthcare plan and take home more salary. The flexibility of this approach would make your benefits attractive and customizable regardless of where an employee lives.
- **The digital nomad.** Perhaps some of your employees will choose to use remote work as an opportunity to hit the road and reside in lots of different places. You should encourage them to do so: Some of the best remote engineers are digital nomads, since their lifestyle is so dependent on being good at remote work. But it can be hard to set a salary for someone who might live in three different regions over the course of a year. One solution is to have an open enrollment period for salary, in the same way that you would for benefits. The digital nomad would have to prove where they live once a year, and you would have an opportunity to adjust their salary accordingly.
- **One-size-fits-all.** This approach involves the nationalizing of salary data. Employees get paid the same no matter where they live. The theory behind is that employees can choose where they live and they don't need to be paid more or less purely based on location. It simplifies pay equity across your company, but it can be limiting for an employee who is forced to live in a more expensive region to be near, for example, their partner's job, their child's school, their ailing parents, or their family's community. It can ultimately put your company at a disadvantage at retaining talent in certain higher cost markets.



## Prioritize mental health.

We're living through one of the most stressful times in generations. By simply expecting employees to push through the stress, you may be setting yourself up for a rude awakening as employees begin to falter and look for new jobs. As an employer, you're uniquely positioned to help your employees through this era of strife by providing resources and emotional support.

- **Promote mental health awareness in the workplace.** Building a culture of support starts by openly discussing mental health. After all, many people may not be familiar with the signs of the most common mental health issues, so it's important to be proactive. If members of your management team aren't discussing mental health, or if they think of it as personal weakness, take it upon yourself to lead the conversation.
- **Stop celebrating stress.** Many leaders actually celebrate stress without even knowing it. By promoting a "nose to the grindstone" culture, you may be encouraging burnout while discouraging rest and recuperation, and creating a toxic work environment that will make employees flee. Instead, be supportive, be kind, and be generous with time off.
- **Create a regular forum for discussion.** Ask managers to set aside time for regular discussions with employees about mental health. And keep in mind that employees may have a hard time raising their hands when they're experiencing stress, so encourage managers to be proactive. Outreach can create an ongoing conversation that will help the company resolve issues before they become larger problems.
- **Assess your mental health benefits.** Does your company health plan cover psychoanalysis, therapy, counseling, or substance abuse services? If not, it might be time to adjust your health insurance plan to make sure employees can get the care they need. After all, mental health is health, and it should be covered accordingly.



### Expert advice: Assessing your company's mental health policies

*With insights from [Spring Health](#)*

Promoting mental health takes a great deal of planning and foresight. To assess where you stand today, ask yourself [these questions](#) about your company:

- What is your company's current policy toward mental health?
- Do you offer employees access to diagnostic tools, such as self-assessment tests or referrals to counseling?
- Does your organization or company currently offer seminars about mental health?
- What specific measures to help employees with their mental fitness are included in your current health care plan?

If you can't answer all of these questions in detail, it's probably time to sit down with your executive team and re-evaluate your mental health priorities.

 [spring health](#)

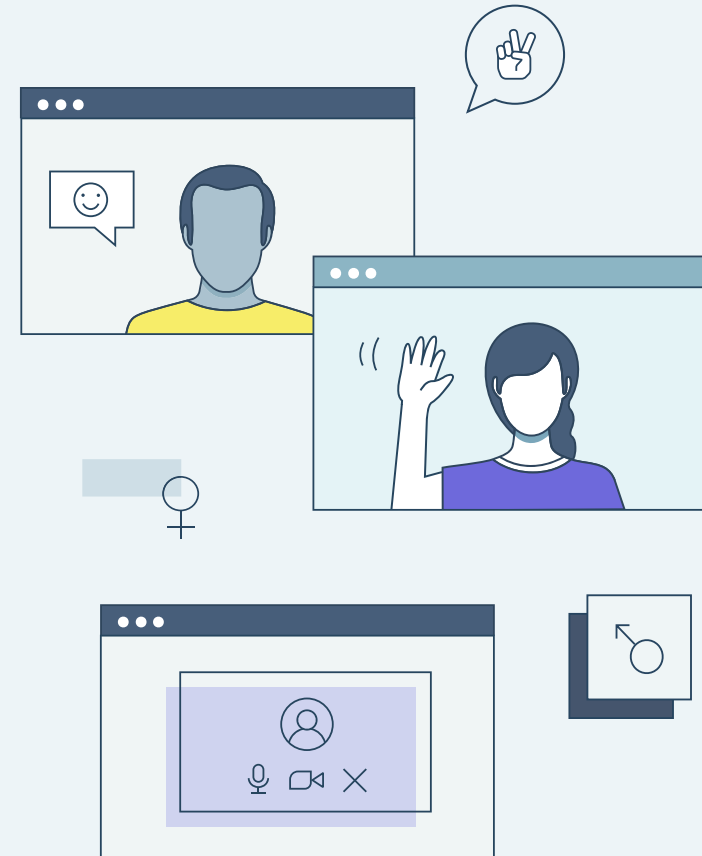
## Expert advice: How diversity and inclusion impacts retention

*From Paolo Gaudiano, the founder and CEO of [Aleria](#)*

If you pick virtually any large tech company, you'll find that a lot of their D+I efforts are about increasing recruitment of women, people of color, people with disabilities, and so on. In their minds, they're thinking that they need to increase diversity, so they'll do it through recruiting.

But creating an inclusive culture is far more important. If the organization is not inclusive, that new hire will immediately know it. They'll see that their manager does not know how to manage them, that their leadership doesn't look anything like them, and, worst of all, that their interpersonal relations within the company are frictional. And when that happens, they're going to leave.

Gaudiano says that those departures will hurt the company significantly. Your company will start to have a negative reputation and send the signal that it's not a great place for marginalized groups. And your company will have to go rehire and onboard those roles, which is time-consuming and costly.



## Create a diverse, inclusive workplace.

There are a lot of benefits to having a diverse workplace: Companies with diverse employees are **more creative** and **more profitable** -- particularly when diversity extends to the upper levels of management. Diverse workplaces are also more likely to retain employees, particularly when companies put as much work into creating an inclusive workplace as they do into creating a diverse one.

- **Educate your managers.** Don't assume that your managers will know how to build an inclusive team. Have managers at every level undergo unconscious bias training and have your HR team look at areas where managers are making decisions to ensure that those decisions are being made appropriately. Don't be afraid to hold managers accountable: That means structuring meetings, allocating resources and using language that advances inclusion.
- **Create an inclusion council.** Get a group of high-ranking leaders together to roll up their sleeves and do the work to make sure your company is inclusive. The group should be diverse -- try to represent different teams, job functions, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. But the most important thing here is making sure the council is joined by several executives: The onus for inclusiveness should not fall on lower-ranking members of your workforce, nor should it be put on under-represented groups to lead the way.
- **Celebrate employee differences.** Show employees that you respect their backgrounds and traditions by inviting them to share them in the workplace. If you have an office, set aside a room for meditation or prayer. Encourage remote engineers lead online cooking classes to showcase their regional cuisines. And before you host a happy hour, keep in mind that not everyone comes from a culture that celebrates alcohol.
- **Measure progress. Conduct a full audit** of your people processes — from recruiting and hiring to developing and retaining employees. Couple the data with engagement and other workforce survey data to gain a full measure of your climate. From there, you can identify any shortcomings and measurable discrepancies around inclusiveness in your organization, put together a data-driven plan, and measure results.



### Expert advice: Measuring inclusivity

*From Rokham Fard, Founder and CEO of PsychologyCompass*

The best way to measure the success of D&I initiatives is to look at retention rate. You don't necessarily have an inclusive culture just because you've hired a diverse workforce. Look at the tenure of your employees. It's a metric that can indicate whether you've created a culture of psychology safety.

 Psychology Compass

### Respect the cultures of remote employees

If you have a multinational workforce, be sure to get to know employee traditions so you'll be able to interact with your remote employees appropriately and recognize important days/holidays in their national calendar.

## Combat loneliness.

**20% of remote employees** struggle with loneliness, yet only **32% of executives** have a strategy for addressing it. Managers who expect their employees to simply accept isolation as part of remote work will have a rude awakening when employees begin to lose steam.

- **Foster human connections.** An easy way to help confront isolation is by building rapport with every member of your team. A few minutes of small talk at the start of each meeting is an excellent way to make your employees feel like they're part of a team, not simply talking to a screen in their home office all day.
- **Hold regular offsites.** Virtual offsites are a great way to establish face-to-face interactions and build relationships. Keep in mind that eye contact and body language are key parts of communication. Little things like 'grid view' in Zoom and one-on-one breakout sessions can go a long way in breaking down technology-related barriers.
- **Adopt OKRs around team connection.** Like any part of your business, what isn't measured isn't properly managed. Embrace KPIs around socializing -- like the number of social meetings, eNPS scores, and the frequency of happy hours -- and stick to them.
- **Have a budget.** These types of activities cost money! When you give managers a budget, you empower them to be creative. Some of our favorites: sending every team member art supplies and having a painting night; getting everyone a meal prep kit and having a cooking class; or sending everyone a sampler of snacks and having a tasting -- the more creative you get, the more fun your team will have.
- **Consider a remote office.** Paying for a coworking space for your remote employees can help with feelings of isolation and boost collaboration. It can also be helpful in drawing a boundary between work and life.



### Expert advice: Get on the phone with remote employees

*From Demian Entrekın, Founder and CTO, Bluescape*

With remote engineering, there needs to be a more explicit focus on calling people to talk one-on-one. Call people without an agenda, just to check in and listen. Push your team out of email and chat wars and into a call. Remote work is an opportunity for leaders and managers to put more focus on active listening techniques.

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## Conclusion

As more and more companies embrace remote work, there will be companies that do it well -- and companies that don't. The organizations that can create a great remote work environment will find themselves better able to keep their employees, and use their stellar remote work structure as a competitive advantage. After all, your workforce is your greatest resource. Invest in the happiness, engagement, and empowerment of your engineer, and do so by meeting the particular needs of remote workers.

Want to learn more about leading a remote team? Join our community of engineering leaders over at [terminal.io](https://terminal.io) – we're always sharing content, education, events and other opportunities for you to grow your remote management skills.