



AUTOMATTIC

Success Story: Automattic



Interview on the Benefits of Teleworking – April, 2017 with Michael Tieso, Partnership and Development Advocate for Automattic

Automattic uses ‘extreme teleworking’ or having most of the employees working from a remote location. What’s the impact on employees?

Teleworking has had a positive impact on employees, maximizing flexibility in scheduling and allowing employees to focus on the quality of their work. Employees enjoy more time at home with their families rather than wasting time in traffic.

What are the biggest advantages to having your company set up this way?

I think one of the biggest advantages is that we get to hire some of the most talented people from all over the world because they can live anywhere and work for Automattic.

What are the biggest challenges?

We don't have the ability to walk over to someone's desk to tell them something. Still, we aim for continuous communication and transparency of our work. Everything that everyone is working on is ‘logged’ in some way and can be seen from anyone in the company. This helps keep everyone on the same page and know what we're all working on.

Do employees miss having an office? How do you manage that?

Not everyone has space or comfort to work from home. Automattic provides home office supplies, but that may not be enough if you live somewhere that doesn't have room or where there are too many distractions. Some employees opt to work from a co-working space, which provides an office setup away from home. Coffee shops, libraries, and other working spaces are often visited by employees as well.

Do you have a formalized program with written policies for teleworking? How about handling IT needs?

Automattic has a strict security policy for all computers used for work. Our remote access is secure and available on our laptops. Employees are offered new laptops and those laptops are often replaced so everyone has the latest technology to get their work done effectively.

We have an internal website called Field Guide to which the entire company has access, so employees can add and edit content. The resource includes policies, guides, pay & benefits, and training. It's our go-to guide to everything Automattic.

What advice can you share for other companies considering a similar form of ‘extreme teleworking?’

Limiting your hiring to only those within commuting distance means you may be limiting yourself to a small pool. By expanding your workforce to anywhere, you can focus on the quality of someone's work.

Company Profile:

Automattic is a web development corporation known for its popular free blogging service Wordpress.com. Automattic has a distributed workforce with 554 employees in 54 countries speaking 77 different languages. Employees work from wherever they feel comfortable, which means most of them are teleworkers.

While all employees have email addresses, it is not their primary means of communication. ‘Slack’ is Automattic's go-to internal instant messaging tool. They also communicate via video conference calls and use private group blogs to keep up with various projects and the entire company.