Questionnaire for Individuals: Are You Ready to Work Remotely?

Working remotely requires "tenacity, trustworthiness, empathy, and adaptability. Thankfully, these are traits anyone can strengthen with commitment and a little effort."

—Kristi DePaul, Remote.co, "7 Tips for Getting Ready to Work Remotely," Remote.co, 4 October 2016

When it comes to what makes for an ideal remote worker, the consensus is clear: remote working is not for everyone. Some crave the working-together energy of being around teammates, as well as the sense of connection. Some need the structure and nose-to-the-grindstone work environment of an office. Some find a predetermined schedule helps them stay on track. Some need a bit extra guidance. And some just need more social interaction than what they get through a day's worth of video calls. So whether you're planning to ask your boss to offer the remote option or you're hoping to be some company's newest remote hire, you'll want to find out in advance just how prepared—and suited—you are to being a great teammate from afar. Then, once you know where you currently stand, you'll know what to focus on to become even more prepared—or if you should stick to the on-site option for now.

INSTRUCTIONS: There are a few ways you might go about completing this questionnaire. For Section 1, if you prefer to work on paper, you could simply print it out.

Section 1

MOTIVATION

- Are you clear on all the reasons you're thinking of working remotely? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you feel you have a clear sense of the potential drawbacks of working remotely? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If yes, do you think your motivation to succeed in working remotely can make up for whatever drawbacks you may experience? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

TECH EQUIPPED

- Do you have more than one reliable means of being reached? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have access to a quiet space for audio calls? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have a fast, well-functioning computer (desktop or laptop)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If you have a desktop but not a laptop, can you imagine needing a laptop in addition? ☐YES ☐NOT FOR NOW

- Do you have fast, reliable internet access? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Will you need a secure internet connection for your work? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have webcam capability (built in to most modern laptops and monitors)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have a headset? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have access to a professional-looking setup for video calls? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Might you need to work while traveling? ☐YES ☐NOT FOR NOW

Note: depending on your situation, additional supplies you might need include an extension cord, external keyboard, mobile router, additional monitor, mouse, power adaptor, or power strip.

TECH SAVVY

- Do you consider yourself tech savvy in using your phone? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have access to tech support for your phone if you need it? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you consider yourself tech savvy in using your computer(s)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have access to tech support for your computer(s) if you need it? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you comfortable sending texts? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you comfortable sending instant messages (IM)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you comfortable with video conferencing? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you comfortable working with online calendars and the like (Outlook, Mac Mail, Google Calendar, etc)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- According to a Remote.co survey updated in early 2018, the most commonly used apps among scores of remote-friendly companies are: Basecamp, Google Chat, HipChat, Pivotal Tracker, Slack, Skype, Trello, and Yammer. ("17 Non-Tech Fully Remote Jobs," Remote.co, 6 February 2018.) Are you comfortable working with these? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

EXCELLENT COMMUNICATOR

- Are you an excellent communicator via the phone? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you an excellent communicator in writing? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you an excellent communicator via video? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- What is your normal response time to phone calls? _____

- What is your normal response time to emails? _____

- What is your normal response time to texts (SMS)? _____

- Are you comfortable communicating asynchronously in groups? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Would you be working in a different time zone from your team members or boss? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If yes, how many hours of overlap will there be? _____

- Are you in the practice of being aware of coworkers' time zone(s)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

GOOD WORK HABITS

- Do you consider yourself to be organized? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you consider yourself to be disciplined? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you consider yourself to be focused/not easily distracted? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you skilled in prioritizing/time-management strategies? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Have you worked with any project/task management tools (for yourself, not re: working with others)? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have any trouble staying motivated? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If yes, do you have any preferred tricks to staying motivated? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

PROBLEM-SOLVING/TROUBLESHOOTING SKILLS

- Do you consider yourself resourceful in solving problems that come up in your work? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If not yet, do you have thoughts on how you could develop that resourcefulness? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Can you describe a time you demonstrated excellent problem-solving/troubleshooting skills? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WORKING REMOTELY (OR USING REMOTE-FRIENDLY SKILLS)

- Do you have experience working remotely in any capacity? (That experience could include working while on a business trip or occasionally working from home, such as when sick or waiting for the plumber, etc.) ☐YES ☐NOT YET

For those with no previous experience:

- Do you have experience working with a remote team member or (short-term) contractor? (Meaning, you work on-site, but the other person doesn't.) ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Have you worked with other colocated team members where you communicated with some by phone or email much more often than face-to-face? (This applies especially to large campuses or offices with multiple floors.) ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If you don't have any remote working experience, do you have any ideas of where you could get some experience? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

For those with previous experience:

- Do you have a sense of what are your favorite and least favorite things about working remotely? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have a sense of what's meaningful to you about working remotely? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

PROACTIVE/SELF-MOTIVATED

- Do you consider yourself a self-starter? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you consider yourself a proactive communicator? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you consider yourself a curious person? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Have you pursued some personal development in the last twelve months? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have interests separate from work? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have any long-term pursuits? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Does your work history reflect upward movement within or across companies? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Have you ever been rehired by a former boss? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Can you demonstrate any examples of being resilient in response to setbacks or hardship? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

WORK-LIFE CONCERNS

- Do you have trouble switching off of work mode? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you skilled in maintaining a healthy work-life balance in general? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have any preferred practices for ensuring a healthy work-life balance? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Is loneliness a potential concern for you? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If so, do you have ready solutions to loneliness already in place—as in regular access to friends and family, or established sports, group activities, or hobbies? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- If you don't already have a "diversified social portfolio" as noted in the previous question, can you imagine developing one? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

TEAM-FOCUSED WORK ETHICS

- Do you have experience working on a team? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you know if you prefer to work on your own or on a team? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you willing to keep team members apprised of what you're currently working on? (Note this is also known as make your work visible to others or "working out loud.") ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you willing to keep team members apprised of how to reach you during established work hours? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have experience working out loud? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you have a preferred means of letting others know what you're working on? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you practiced in keeping your status updated for others to see? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you familiar with the idea of using different means of communication for different kinds of information? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

GOOD TEAM PLAYER/INTERPERSONAL GOOD FIT

- Do you maintain a positive tone when writing email, texts, or instant messages? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Would you consider yourself pleasant to interact with? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Would you say that you have a collaborative, supportive nature? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you open to making constructive use of feedback? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Are you able to keep your temper in check? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Have you had a heated disagreement with a team member? ☐YES ☐NOT FOR NOW

- Would you be able to describe the last misunderstanding you had with a coworker—and how you handled it? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

OVERALL

- Are you willing to do what it takes to be an excellent remote worker? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

- Do you think you could demonstrate to a potential employer that you'd be a great hire? ☐YES ☐NOT YET

Section 2

Now, let's tease out your replies a bit. First: for each question where you answered YES, write a sentence that describes or demonstrates that particular qualification. (Instructions for completing this section digitally vs. on-paper follow this paragraph.) For example: "I am willing to respond quickly to all communication to ensure our project continues smoothly." (If you're wondering why you should do this, that's explained later on.) Second: disregard any NOT FOR NOW answers, since those don't apply to your current situation. Third: for each question where you answered NOT YET, write a sentence describing what it would take to make your honest reply a YES. This might be as simple as "I will as soon as I buy a new headset, which I'm doing tomorrow." Or, "I don't have ideal space at home right now, but I'll be looking into the pricing at a coworking space later this week." Or your reply could be more complicated, such as, "I'm not always great about responding immediately to emails, but this is something I'm willing to work on." Most important, be honest. If your answer is, "I'm not willing to let everyone on my team know where I am or what I'm working on all the time," then you should say so rather than pretend otherwise. The goal here is to identify what will work for you, as well as what you're willing to work for.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SECTION 2: With this part of the exercise we'll want to finish with each answer as its own separate entity, whether that's a physical square of paper or index card, or a digital "card" you can move around on your screen.

- If you like the tangibility of paper, you could: write on index cards; or write longhand on paper or type your answers and then print them. (For the two paper options, divide a piece of letter paper into halves or thirds [make two or three columns if you want to type], write or type your answers, and then cut the answers into separate pieces.)

- If you prefer the digital realm, consider using a board-style task manager such as Trello. (To go this route, create an ANSWERS list, and then answer each question as a separate card in that list; you'll end with a very long list.) An app like OneNote could also work; the idea is just to make it easy for you to move an answer to a different spot in your workspace.

Section 3

Once you've completed Section 2 and have provided fuller answers to each question in Section 1, identify two "camps" on your digital workspace or physical table: one for YES and one for NOT YET. (For a task board like Trello, create two new lists to the right of your Answers list: YES and NOT YET.) Next, review your answers one at a time, and move them to either the YES camp or the NOT YET camp. (Some might even want a third camp, for "Not going to happen!" Again, we're being honest here.)

Once you've completed that, take a look at where you stand. Based on how big each camp is, you'll have a sense of just how ready you are to work remotely. If you decide to pursue the remote option, you've also just created your to-do list, since every NOT YET reply spells out exactly what you need to do to pursue that item. (This is another reason to try out Trello, since it's designed to help you visualize a project from start to finish.)

Thus ends the at-the-moment part of this exercise; what follows will take however long it takes. Start working on your NOT YET items. Once each is done, move it to the YES camp by writing an updated sentence about it (on the back of your paper square or index card if you're employing the tangible method). This time, describe your new proficiency in the item, as in: "I have a local dial-a-tech lined up should I ever need technical support."

So now we come to the elaboration promised earlier. Just why should you write out proficiency statements for your YES replies? Because they make for great interview answers or cover letter inclusions, or could be used in your pitch to your boss, as in: "My preferred means of letting others know what I'm working on is to post a short update in Slack at the end of each day—in part because it helps me identify what to start on first thing the next day." As it happens, the vast majority of traits that employers seek in a remote worker have been addressed in this exercise, so your ready answer to their future burning questions will demonstrate your ample qualification for the position.

Here's to fruitful progress!