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While some companies have some remote employees, other fully-virtual organizations, such as ours, run around the clock. With team members all over the world, there is someone online nearly every hour of the day -- which is great for our customers (who live abroad). But managing a group spread out through all the time zones is a whole other story! Here is how we have learned to manage the 'organization that never sleeps'.

## **Related: 5 Ways to Effectively Lead Remote Teams**

### **1. Set schedules – and stick to them.**

Working for a remote company is often thought of as the ultimate job for flexible work hours but allowing your team to work ‘whenever they work best’ (whether it’s 5am or 11pm) often leads to chaos, lack of production and managerial frustration.

Structured flexible hours means you take into account the schedules people want to work, but also consider the entire team’s schedule and make adjustments as necessary to ensure maximum productivity.

If your team is all around the world, one of your greatest challenges is that few team members are online at the same time due to varying time zones.

Communication is KEY in virtual organizations and while email is incredibly helpful, there is no substitute for quick chats and calls between team members collaborating on a project. It is imperative that you create some overlap in working hours for team members in the same department.

Set your team’s schedules and hold them accountable for those hours.

## **Related: How to Create a Formalized Flexible Work Program for Your Company**

### **2. Get off email.**

We rely heavily on written communication with our varied schedules. As I said above, email is incredibly helpful, but for virtual organizations, it can also be a detriment. When using email, inboxes fill up quickly, important communications get lost and team members get overwhelmed.

Instead, choose a project management system, such as Podio, that allows you to keep all communications about a project within a project thread. The system notifies you when you have been mentioned in a post or assigned a task, and you view all your notifications in one place (online). This has been a lifesaver for us, efficiently tracking of our projects, comments and tasks without being buried in email.

**Related: [The 80/20 Rule of Time Management: Stop Wasting Your Time](#)**

### 3. Curtail round-the-clock emailing.

If you do choose to rely on email for primary communication, consider an embargo on sending emails during off-working hours. Meaning, you can work as late or early as you want, but you can't actually *send* emails during those hours. This prevents the dreaded inbox overload for team members coming online after your day is complete. Use a service such as Boomerang (a Gmail app) to delay sending so your message arrives during the recipient's normal work day.

Of course there are exceptions to this rule (ie emergencies, major project deadlines, etc) but adhering to this 90% of the time will greatly improve productivity (and sanity!).

**Related: [5 Bad Email Habits That Waste Your Time](#)**

### 4. Be sensitive to meeting times.

Team meetings are very important but coordinating these takes some serious juggling. Working across time zones, it's impossible to schedule meetings at a time that is convenient for everyone. Someone always suffers. So be fair and rotate the suffering. If you consistently schedule important meetings at 6am your time because you work best then, remember that other team members may be on that

call at 9pm and that isn't when *they* work best.

Be respectful of the time zone challenge and ensure the same team members aren't getting the 'short end of the stick' with your regular meetings. Use a tool such as the World Clock Meeting Planner from Timeanddate.com. With their International Meeting Planner, you to plug in a date and the different locations of meeting attendees and it shows you a grid of time options, color-coded by working hours, non-working hours and weekends.

**Related: [To Make Meetings Count, Don't Count Past One \(Per Week\)](#)**

## 5. Get in the same room.

No matter how effectively your team communicates and works together, there truly is no substitute for in-person meetings. And not necessarily to brainstorm a new marketing campaign or solve customer service issues. The greatest value in the face-to-face is really getting to know one another and bonding on a personal level. Working remotely can be isolating and gathering the team together for a few days outside of their homes can do wonders for your team's morale. Not to mention you get better acquainted with the people who you trust with the success of your company!

We had our first in-person retreat last year and while the meetings weren't as productive as we had anticipated, the time we spent getting to know each other was well-worth the investment.

You don't have to work 24/7 to manage your virtual team. You simply need a solid plan that keeps everyone happy, productive and feeling valued. This allows you to sleep soundly at night (while half your team is working away to ensure your company's success).