

Working from home presents business owners with unique challenges and scenarios that they don't usually face at the office. However, with the right tools and proper planning, even the most challenged team can excel.

It's a big change, but one that's perfectly manageable with the right expertise, experience and guidance.

FluentStream provides communications solutions that have allowed 1,000s of businesses to work remotely and connect with their customers from anywhere in the world.

Below are their Top 10 Tips that every business owner needs to successfully take their company remote.

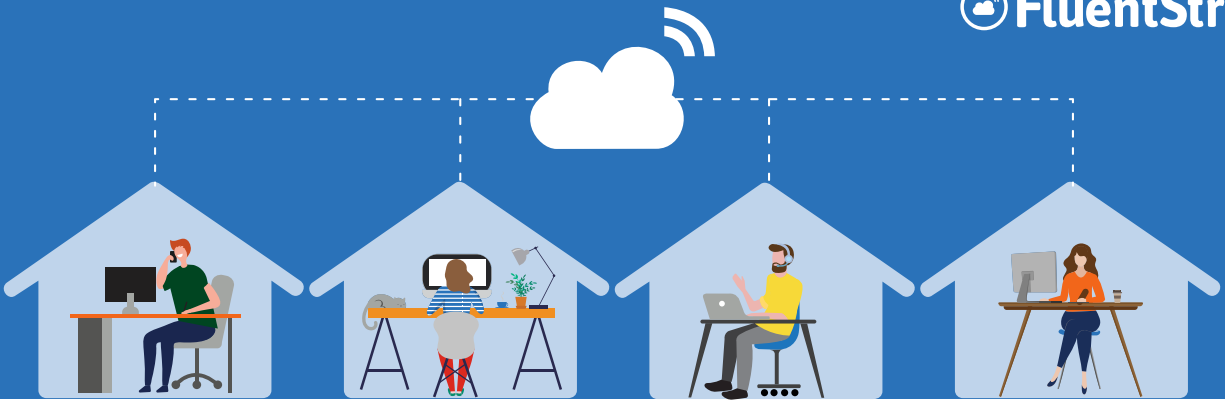


## 1. TAKE EVERYTHING HOME

No one will be coming back to the office for a while (if at all), so make sure nothing of value gets left behind during the transition. Remind people to take their laptops with them and also make sure they grab their chargers, keyboards, mice, and any other peripherals.

For those who prefer to use a physical device over a headset and computer application, FluentStream makes it easy to use desk phones at home.

Have the appropriate employees take physical files and records home just in case. "Just in case" is really the name of the game when it comes to packing up a business and transitioning to working from home. If there's even a chance that a team member might need something, don't leave it at the office.



## 2. SET REGULAR PERSONAL, TEAM, AND COMPANY GOALS

Working from home introduces numerous new distractions and friction points that teams didn't have to worry about at the office. It's reasonable to expect projects to slow down during the transition, but if left unchecked, those productivity speed bumps could become permanent roadblocks.

The best way to combat distractions is for business owners to set regular, reasonable goals for themselves and their companies while working from home. Before calling it a day, everyone should plan out what should get done tomorrow and throughout the rest of the week. Studies have shown that remote workers are much better at holding themselves accountable when they plan ahead instead of just attacking their whole workload every morning.

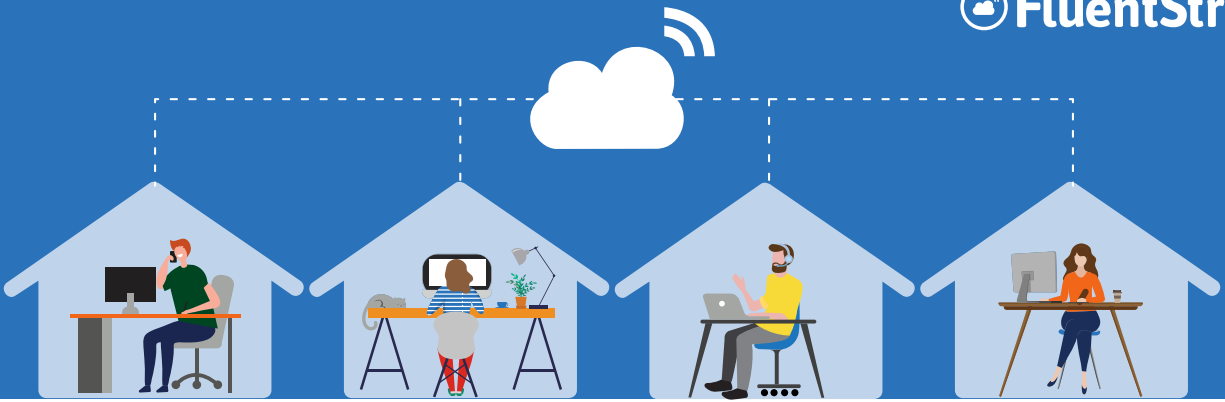
Once business owners have a process that works for them, they can pass it along to managers and employees so everyone is on the same page about what needs to get done, and when projects are expected to be finished.

Additionally, if company-wide remote work is expected to be temporary, consider pushing some projects back until everyone has returned to the office. Staying productive is important, but so is keeping expectations realistic as a team adjusts to their new work-life balance.



## 3. OVER-COMMUNICATE

As annoying as it may sound in theory, one of the best practices for a company to adopt while working remotely is to over-communicate throughout the day.



At the office, it's easy to grab a few people and have a quick pow-wow. Walking over to someone's desk to ask them a quick question is a breeze. When everyone transitions to working from home, those simple but essential interactions disappear. Employees can start to feel frustrated if they're stuck on something and have no one they can quickly turn to.

To make sure all issues are being addressed quickly, organize morning check-ins for each department over chat or video conference so everyone is aware of what their coworkers are working on.

*Have a question?* Call for a quick answer instead of waiting for an email response. Need help? Ask over a public channel. With all communication being digital, it's easy for individual messages to be missed or for entire projects to be bottlenecked.

Communicate often and directly to make sure everyone is staying on-task and no one is getting left behind.



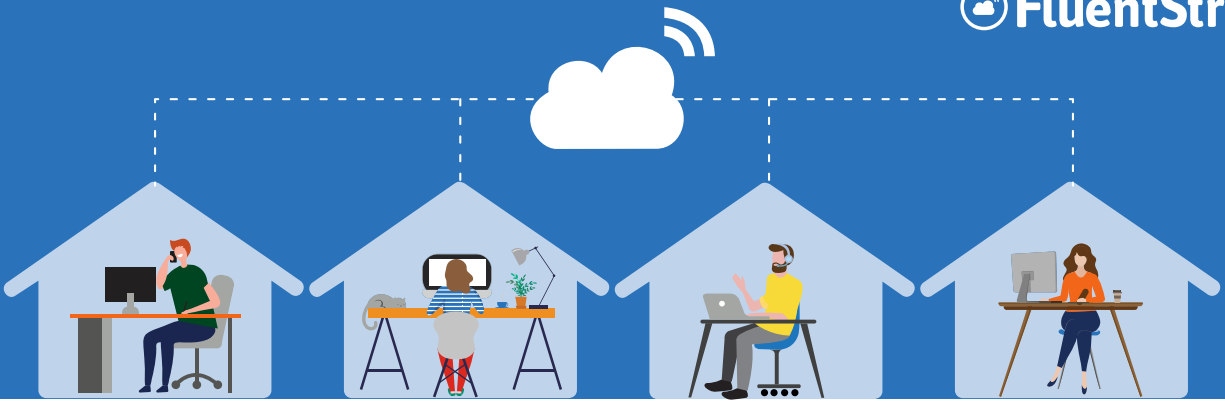
#### **4. INVEST IN THE NECESSARY HARDWARE**

Teams need to equip them with the right hardware to do their jobs effectively regardless of how long they'll be working from home.

Provide employees who normally use desktop computers with laptops so they can access their files and download remote communication apps.

Quality, noise-canceling headsets help employees ignore distractions while also guaranteeing they won't sound like they're in a fish tank.

Wireless mice and keyboards make work sessions more comfortable for employees who don't have a proper desk at home.



Don't go crazy and purchase standing desks and extra monitors for the whole team. But if employees are expected to be productive, it's only fair that they are given the proper hardware to make it happen.



## 5. DOWNLOAD A WEBPHONE

WebPhone is a browser-based software (also called a softphone) that allows remote employees to use their laptop as a work phone and answer calls right from their home office (or even the couch).

Since WebPhone uses an employee's regular extensions, no changes to phone routing need to be made and no personal numbers need to be used. It's just as easy to transfer calls or contact clients as it is at the office.

Rather than simply replacing a desk phone, the WebPhone allows the user to send texts, check their call history, manage their work contacts, and instantly open a video conference.

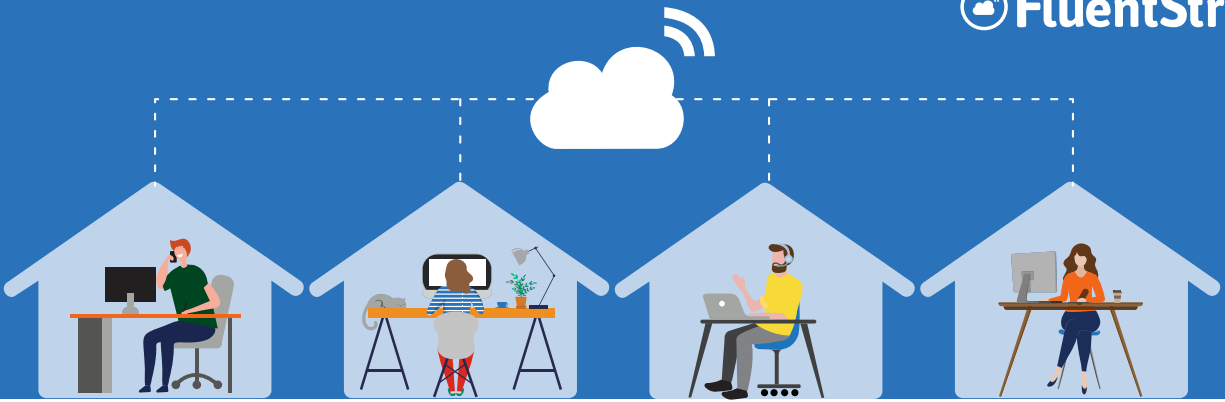


## 6. STAY CONNECTED WITH BUSINESS PHONE MOBILE APPS

While the current situation calls for everyone to stay in their homes as much as possible, many people still have obligations that require them to travel during the day. Equip employees with a business phone mobile app and make it easy for them to stay connected while on the go.



**BONUS TIP:** Some business phone mobile apps allow users to check their work voicemail and manage all of a company's text conversations right from their cell phone. If these are important features, find a company that provides that.



Equipped with Always On, Forward on Busy, and Follow Me forwarding settings, as well as multiple ways to make work calls from personal devices, Mobile apps allow employees to do what's best for themselves and their families without worrying about missing an important call or leaving their customers hanging.



## 7. FIND THE RIGHT PROJECT MANAGEMENT APP

The biggest fear business owners and managers have when taking a company remote is that their team will lose focus and give in to distractions. Project management apps are the perfect tools to put those fears to rest.

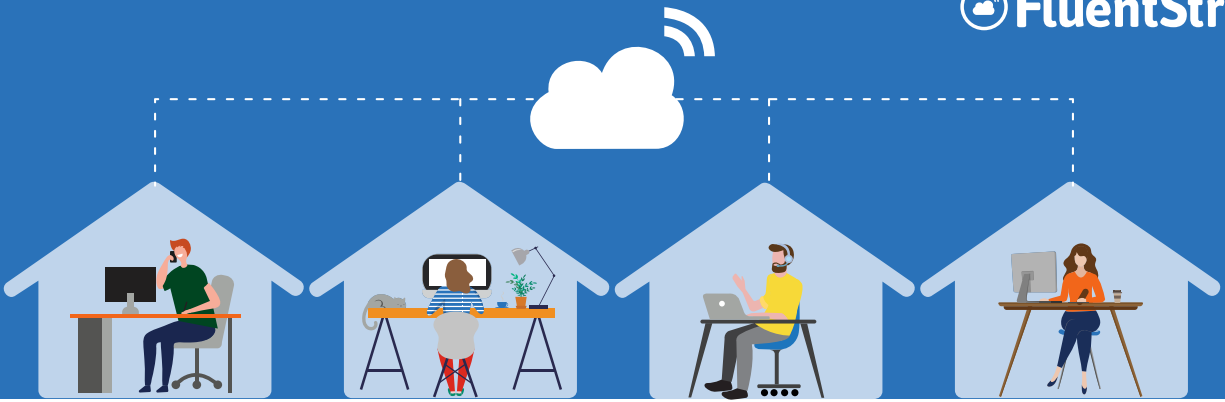
Project management apps allow team leaders to lay out all of their department's current and upcoming goals with deadlines, notes, and relevant documents attached. Projects can even be assigned to different team members so everyone knows who to contact if they have questions or need input.

There are plenty of quality options on the market depending on a company's budget and specific needs, but a few recommendations are listed below.

**Trello:** Trello's boards, lists, and cards enable businesses to organize and prioritize their projects in a fun, flexible, and rewarding way. Plus, it's free!

**Monday:** Monday helps businesses hit the ground running with ready-made templates and drag-and-drop boards that lay out all of their projects, workflows, and everyday work.

**Wrike:** Wrike helps project managers work smarter by setting priorities, aligning goals, and managing resources across their organization.



## 8. DOWNLOAD WEB-BASED PERFORMANCE TRACKING TOOLS

Just like how Project Management Apps help keep teams focused long-term, performance tracking tools allow managers to track employee performance throughout the day.

Live management tools give admins one convenient dashboard to track and participate in all the real-time conversations happening across their entire phone system. For instance, if a support agent needs help with an angry client, or a salesperson asks for backup closing a deal, live management tools make it easy for an admin to jump right into that call or transfer it to their own extension.

Additionally, downloading an interaction tracking tool is crucial for managers who need to keep track of call statistics and totals at a glance, or want to make sure each team or individual employee is doing well despite going remote.

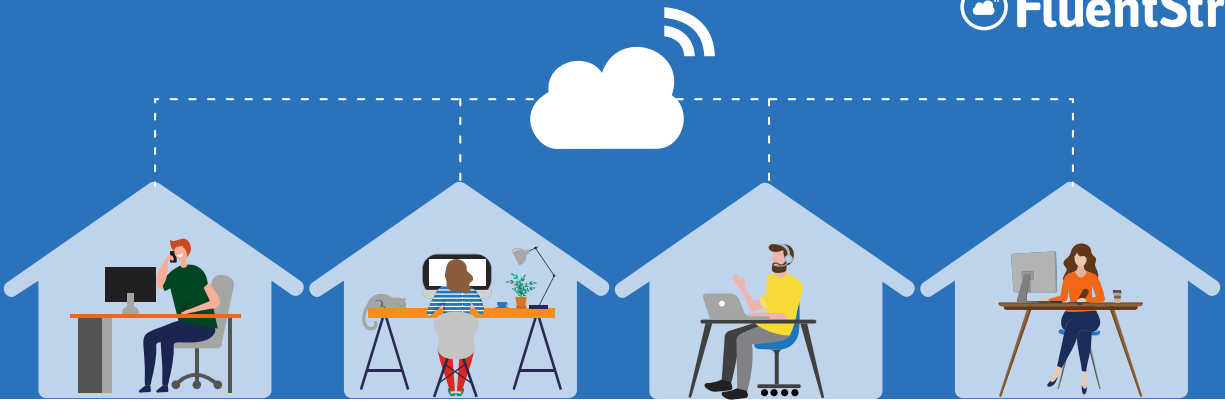
Whether a business works remotely for a day or the foreseeable future, having the right management tool is critical for keeping up to speed on each team's performance.



## 9. MAKE EVERY CONFERENCE A VIDEO CONFERENCE

When everyone's working from home for an extended period, it's easy for people to get cabin fever or feel disconnected from their coworkers. After all, 93% of communication is nonverbal.

Implement a video conferencing tool like FluentStream's Meetings so employees can follow social distancing guidelines while also keeping business as "in-person" as possible.



Routine video conferences help a team keep faces and voices to all the emails, chats, and voicemails asking them to do things. Working remotely can be frustrating. It can make even the most introverted employees feel isolated. Having regular face-to-face conversations helps remind everyone that they're all in this together.

Another under appreciated benefit of video conferences is that they give everyone an event to plan ahead and be professional for. When working from home for long stretches, there's the danger of becoming too comfortable, too casual. Knowing they will have to look presentable and show off all the work they've been doing helps keep everyone's professionalism sharp.



## 10. PLAN TEAM-BUILDING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Working remotely doesn't mean a company needs to lose its sense of community. Between chat services, video conferences, and even good ol' email chains, there are plenty of ways for people to share their creativity and make remote work fun.

FluentStream employees implemented an aptly-named "Remote Work-Outs" chat channel where coworkers can post their favorite videos and tips for staying in shape even when forced to stay at home. There are also weekly video conference lunches where employees can show off their culinary creations and homemade arts and crafts contests.

Sometimes coworkers can drive each other crazy. But at times like this, they're also the people who can help keep each other sane.