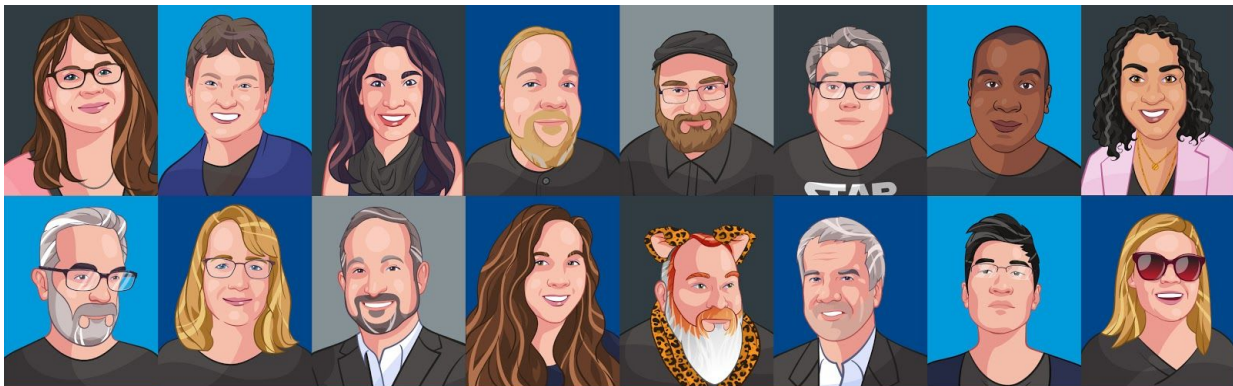


## 8 Tips for Making Remote Work Less Lonely and More Productive

No one can predict how long the impact of COVID-19 will last, but it's likely going to be measured in months not weeks, and your team will need to adjust to working virtually for the foreseeable future. So, right after you've sorted out the logistics of remote work, you'll want to invest in a culture of virtual teamwork. If you are deliberate about this transition, your team will come out feeling stronger and working better than ever before. If not, your team could become disconnected and dysfunctional over time, and as a result, their productivity and performance could suffer. To help you avoid those pitfalls and set your team up for success, Ultronauts is sharing the following 8 tips for making remote work less lonely and more productive.

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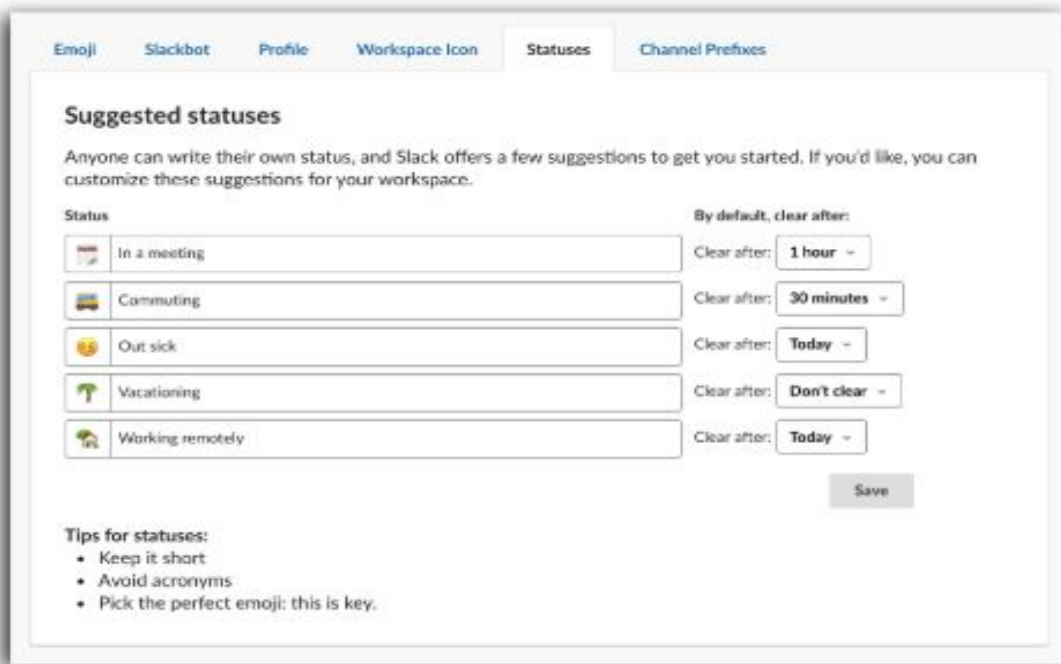


Founded by two MIT engineers in 2013, Ultronauts is an onshore quality engineering firm powered by an exceptional neurodiverse team. Named a Fast Company World Changing Idea, MIT SOLVE Challenge Winner and Interbrand Breakthrough Brand, Ultronauts has been growing at over 50% annually while maintaining a 100% Net Promoter Score. We've built the world's first fully remote workplace for neurodiverse talent, with teammates working in 20 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the autism spectrum, and created an environment where fewer than 15% of employees feel lonely at work compared to 40% of the American workforce. Along the way, we've reimaged every aspect of the modern workplace and have spent the past 7 years experimenting with new practices and tools to empower a fully distributed and incredibly diverse team which we're excited to share with you. <http://ultranauts.co/>

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**1. Establish clear ground rules for work.** Issue: It can be challenging to set clear boundaries when “being in the office” or “being at your desk” is no longer a signal for being ready to work and/or talk. Potential solutions: set clear expectations for all team members vis-a-vis availability during business hours and communications after hours; define proper etiquette for using real-time collaboration tools (Slack, Teams, Skype, etc).

**Pro-tip:** utilize your collaboration tool’s online “status” to signal availability or lack there-of and set up custom codes with a shared understanding of their meaning (e.g. “In a meeting” for not being available for an hour, “Heads-down working” for preferring to not join calls or respond to messages until further notice, “Out of office” for being offline for the rest of the day).

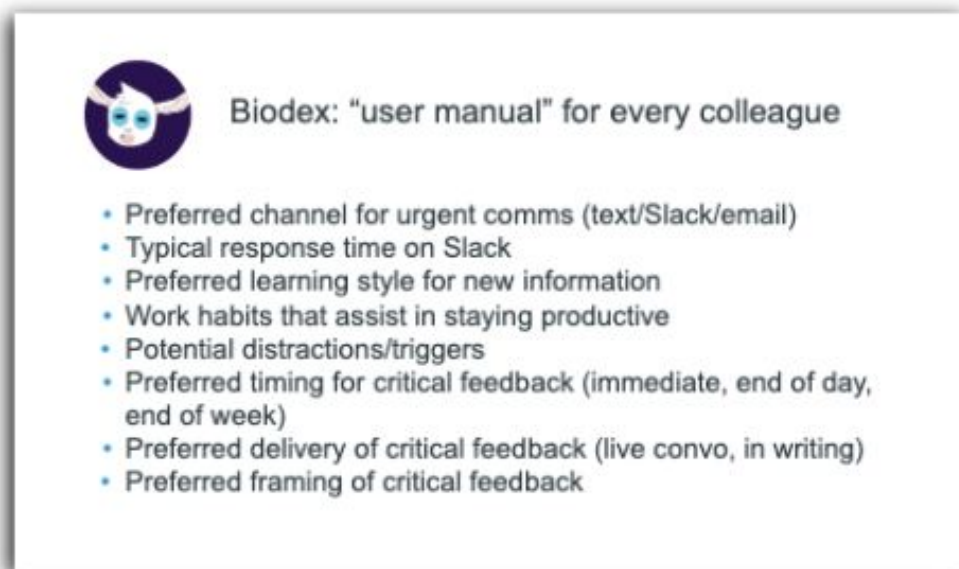


Resource: Ultronauts Slack Rules, guidelines for using Slack that are intended to define etiquette for ensuring effective interactions on a distributed and diverse team - coming soon.

**2. Understand each other’s work habits.** Issue: Not being able to “read” a team member’s reaction or walk over to their desk to get a response can result in friction and delays and can lead to misunderstandings. Potential solutions: don’t

assume everyone has the same preferences as you do, instead share your preferences and ask your colleagues for theirs.


**Pro-tip:** have each team member create a “user manual” with a common set of fields related to individual work preferences that colleagues should be aware of - e.g. typical response time by communication channel, preferred channel for time sensitive messages, preferred learning style for new information, preferred timing and framing for receiving critical feedback).



Resource: Ultronauts Biodex, a self-authored user manual for every team member, to help remote team members get to know each other and work more effectively together. See an overview and example of the Biodex [here](#).

**3. Monitor team well being frequently.** Issue: Not sitting next to each other means not seeing when a team member isn't doing well or might need help. Potential solutions: poll team members as frequently as possible with questions / statements constructed based on what's most important to the team as a whole.

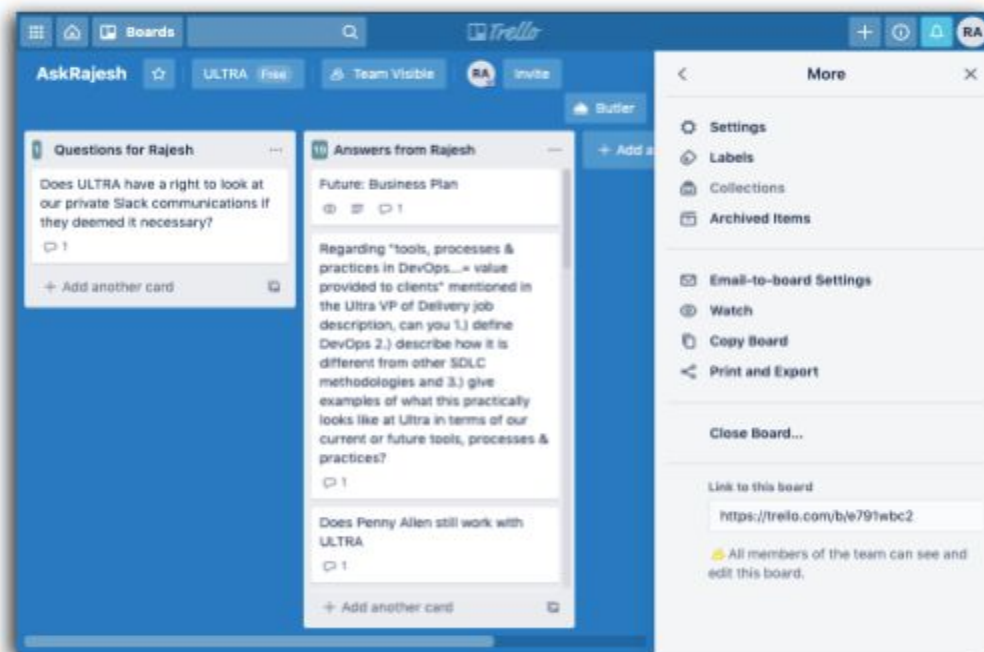
**Pro-tip:** poll team members daily, with 1 question/statement each day, and a library of 10+ questions to rotate through.

 **Polly.ai** Smilecorp: daily poll measuring inclusion and wellbeing

<i>Enabling environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My unique strengths are understood and valued at Ultranauts.</li> <li>• I have access to the resources &amp; tools I need to develop my skills &amp; grow professionally.</li> <li>• I have access to the resources &amp; tools I need to address my personal work challenges.</li> <li>• I do not feel lonely at work.</li> </ul>
<i>Effective management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My supervisors communicate clearly about deadlines, priorities &amp; expected outcomes.</li> <li>• I feel comfortable sharing my needs and questions with my supervisors.</li> <li>• I receive regular feedback from my supervisors on my job performance.</li> <li>• I have a good understanding of whether or not I am meeting the expectations of my job.</li> </ul>
<i>Effective operations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand how decisions are made at the company, especially those that affect my job.</li> <li>• My projects consistently follow the company's processes.</li> <li>• I receive sufficient advance notice of upcoming work and schedule changes.</li> <li>• I'm satisfied with the amount of work I'm receiving.</li> </ul>

Resource: polly.ai, a bot that integrates with Slack, Teams and Hangouts that makes daily polling easy. More info at <https://www.polly.ai/>

**4. Provide multiple channels for feedback.** Issue: Being remote makes it harder to express challenges and frustrations, which if unknown can fester into real problems. Potential Solutions: Provide multiple means for sharing questions and concerns on a regular basis such as an open Q&A forum at company meetings and an always on forum where questions can be shared anonymously and responses are shared publicly (e.g. a AskTheCEO Trello board where anyone can anonymously email in their questions).



**5. Encourage colleagues to help each other.** Issue: Without the subtle belonging cues that create psychological safety, team mates can feel more anxious about how they're doing/how things are going. Potential Solutions: encourage positive feedback one-on-one and in public forums (e.g. a #kudos channel in Slack, with the caveat that its best to first find out if a team member is comfortable with public praise), and regularly call out helpful behavior (e.g. a "did a team member do something amazing this week" question in a weekly survey).

**6. Create spaces for real-time collaboration** Issue: group interactions of remote teams are often limited to calls while creative collaboration and problem solving often happen outside scheduled meetings. Potential solution: set up a virtual space for "Working Meetings" (e.g. a Google Hangout) that's always on, where everyone on the team is welcome to come and go as they please, which can be invaluable when someone gets stuck or wants to bounce an idea off a teammate.

**7. Create opportunities for casual interactions** Issue: Casual interactions in communal spaces disappear when everyone is remote, but are essential to building relationships/strengthening bonds. Potential solution: set up a virtual hangout spaces that encourage ad hoc gatherings (e.g. a #cafeteria channel on Slack)

**8. Host social gatherings and contests.** Issue: Social events help strengthen bonds between team members and allow for interactions across teams, but don't readily translate to a remote workplace. Potential solutions: host employee contests virtually on a regular basis (the first one can encourage team members to come up with contest ideas) and consider hosting a virtual office "party" with pre-defined contests and games replacing unstructured socializing.



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From one day to the next, you moved your entire team out of the office and now you're all working from home. For many teammates, this will be an entirely new world of virtual collaboration, communication and connection. As a fully remote company from day one, Ultronauts has learned how to nurture remote teams that are connected and engaged, and we hope the tips we've shared will help make working remotely less lonely and more productive for your team. <http://ultranauts.co/>