

Distributed Software Development: Benefits and Hidden Obstacles in Building Your Dream Team

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Anyone who googles a question is using distributed computing. Distributed software development — like what supports search engines — can successfully integrate work and private lives alike and has potential in the near future. Presently, a growing number of startups have taken advantage of these developments, launching new ventures with limited resources or operating in niche markets. The availability of the right development resources is a critical component to the success of any product, especially when development teams are distributed. Although the development process may appear simple from the outside, it is quite often the case that dedicated developers are required over several months without being able to charge a fixed price for their work. In my experience building teams, I've found that to support productivity and positive

results, development leaders should understand how distributed development team structures work and the best practices for supporting this type of structure.

Productivity Slowdown or Blessing?

The pandemic boosted the switch to distributed teams, as teams could no longer meet in person and were required to work from home. The good news? You're seeing more and more companies embrace distributed teams as a way to work around the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 and bring on top talent without worrying about geographic restrictions. Another nice bonus is real estate rental costs. According to Global Workplace Analytics, for each remote worker employed, [the average organization saves over \\$10,000 per year](#) on rent alone.

In the past, remote work was a strategic advantage that provided companies with flexibility and cost savings. In today's world, distributed teams have become a norm rather than a temporary measure. This year Zapier conducted a report and found that the next generation wants to work remotely — [64% of survey respondents agree that remote work has made them more productive.](#)

The third edition of McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey shows that [58% of people surveyed already have the opportunity to work from home at least one day a week](#) while 35% of respondents report having the option to work from home five days a week.

How Does Setting up a Distributed Software Development Team Work?

Let me provide an overview of some strategies available for distributed teams.

When hiring for distributed teams, you should use the same interview process for all candidates. Regardless of where they are located, each candidate should go through the same rigorous interview process so that you can make sure you're hiring a peer who fits well with your team network. Remember: they're not just an employee — they're also a peer in your person-to-person network of teams. So, make sure that everyone is getting the same treatment and avoid using words like "outsourced" or "offshore" — all this will likely do is sow division and make some teams feel like outsiders.

Once the process begins, companies will have to decide how they want to manage the development of their software product. The best way to ensure this is by developing a clear business plan outlining the product you want to build, how it

will be marketed, how much it will cost and precisely what you expect from your team. Probably, for the first time, you might just have one Program Manager who reports to the COO directly and is independent of engineering. This manager makes sure the release is going smoothly, checks on dates and objectives, and quickly raises red flags when necessary. Start with establishing processes for unit, functional, regression and security testing, as well as for code reviews. Furthermore, strive to fully automate testing within a CI/CD pipeline.

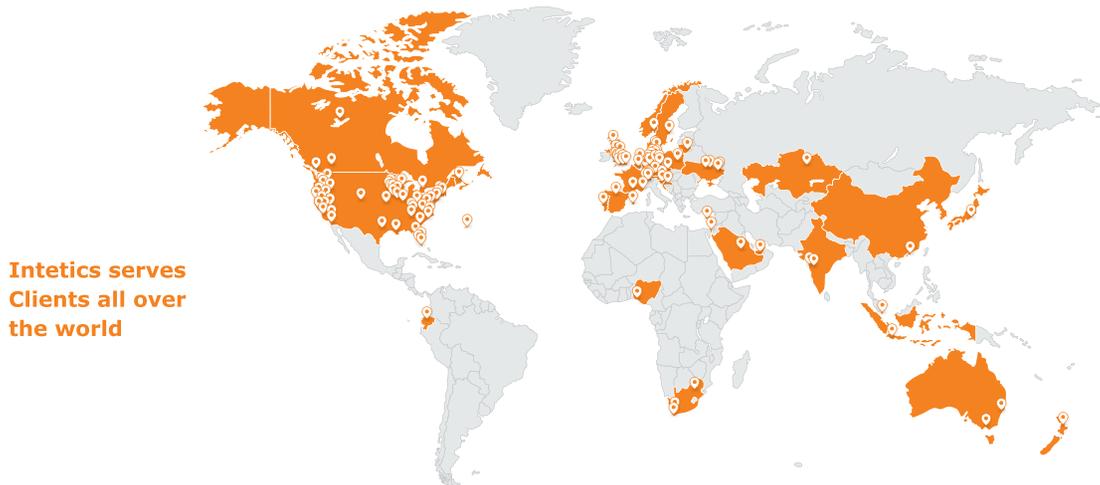
Top Tips for Working with Distributed Development Teams

1. Consider time differences and schedule regular meetings with a clear agenda — backlog refinement, daily standup, sprint planning and review, retrospective, etc. This helps keep everybody on the same page regarding risks, hurdles and work progress.
2. Give regular honest feedback on team and individual performance, as well as feedback on deliverables. Address what could be improved but don't forget to specify what is good in the code and functionality. Don't forget to set up multiple performance measurement metrics.
3. Be consistent in how you describe tasks: good requirements should be feasible, correct, prioritized, necessary, verifiable and unambiguous. Run collaborative estimation sessions in which everybody involved in development participates. Otherwise, you might find that estimation accuracy will fluctuate significantly.
4. Create a product backlog within your task-tracking tools and make sure all team members have access. Sort the items by priority, with the highest-priority tasks at the top.

Last, but not least, spend time researching nearshore or offshore software development firms. This type of solution is sought out due to its cost savings. The goal is to have a remote team of experts seamlessly integrate with the client's in-house staff, giving clients higher delivered value and flexibility.

Developers and product-building teams are vital resources for your business, no matter where you find them. Whether you are in the early stages of launching your startup or building a service, your tech product needs to have the proper support to evolve alongside your business. As I've emphasized before, members of distributed teams need to feel like they are part of the same company. Regularly schedule all-hands meetings, share business news, welcome new employees and celebrate wins together. This is what I laid out when building my business model for remote in-sourcing. From my perspective and more than 25 years of experience, it works well.

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