

10 Best Practices of Working with EC Group

As you are getting ready to add your own Hosted Team, we wanted to share a few thoughts that will help you to maximize the productivity and effectiveness of this valuable new resource. Here are ten best practices that we have identified that will pay dividends for you.

1. It's all about Relationships

You are about to add some very talented team members that have deep expertise and unique experiences who have the potential to become very productive, long-term colleagues. Seeing them as highly valuable colleagues and investing in a relationship with them will create the foundation for the highly productive development team you are looking for. You will see that the rest of these best practices all relate very closely to this theme of building a strong relationship.

2. Communicate Daily

It is important to realize that your remote team is not a virtual team, but a real, physical team located remotely. These are people that come to work in an office every day to work together as a team. So, there is a deep need for a daily connection, even if it is brief. Ideally this would be scheduled at a specific time each day. For an agile shop this would be a scheduled daily standup meeting via voice call or at the very least a chat session. Daily, direct communication is a critical component of setting your team up for success.

3. Meet Regularly

Long meetings are horribly wasteful, and we certainly do not advocate for those. However, including them in important meetings not only boosts your team's morale, but it will also make them more effective. If you are an agile

shop, you should plan to have a sprint planning meeting to give them an overview before beginning the sprint and a retrospective meeting immediately following the sprint. These meetings are ideally suited for videoconferencing if the technology is available.

4. Plan to invest more time in communicating requirements

The fact that your team will be 100% dedicated to your team will help them to pick things up very quickly, and you should see their productivity increase over time. However, the fact of the matter is, they are still half way around the world, and they will be dependent on you to give them the information they need to be successful. If you are an agile shop, you will likely need to provide a few more details to the user stories than you would for an in-house developer. If you follow a traditional development methodology, you will need to spend more time creating more detailed specs to ensure that they clearly understand what is required.

5. Be proactive and responsive

Remember that your Hosted Team is largely dependent on the information, instructions and feedback that you will send them. Think about what you would want and need to be successful if you were working in a remote environment. And most importantly make it a top priority to respond to all questions from your team before the end of your work day. If their questions are not answered, it will impact their ability to be productive when they start work the next day.

6. Invest time in teaching them your business domain

The developers and testers that EC Group will hire for your team will have very strong technical skills; however, it is unlikely that they will have a deep understanding of your business and industry. In certain industries it might take them longer to get up to speed compared to a US-based employee because of cultural differences in India. During the onboarding process it is important to give them a thorough overview of the nature of your business, the kinds of end users of the product, the

architecture of the product and then give them opportunities to ask questions and fill in the gaps. Having a high level understanding of your business will give them the context and comfort level they will need to accelerate their productivity.

7. Prepare the development environment in advance

EC Group highly recommends setting up a virtual development environment that is under your control. This enables you to keep all of your IP on your systems and give you control over software licensing, etc. It would be a great idea to get your Hosted Team's virtual workspace ready for them before they come on board.

8. Clearly define your development practices

Each company has its own method of building software. It is important to give them an overview of how it works in your environment and then to provide them with very clear instructions for things like checking in code, reporting their time, providing status updates, etc. Written coding standards will also be a big help, so if you don't have written coding standards yet, this is a great time to do so.

9. Take a trip

It is by no means a requirement to travel to India to meet with your team. However, we have noticed that clients that have sent key managers to Chennai early on in the engagement have built very strong relationships and have gained mutual cultural understanding that helps to create a strong foundation.

10. Teamwork wins

Empower your Hosted Team to work as a team rather than as individuals. The local team leader will take the ownership to deliver all work as a team. This approach also reduces your overhead in micro-managing each individual and each individual task assignment. And most importantly find ways to make them feel a part of your team. One great way to do this is to celebrate successes together. This can be done through simple gestures via email, phone or chat or you could even throw a virtual party via video conference where everyone can take a few moments to celebrate an important accomplishment. These actions build strong, lasting relationships that will pay dividends.