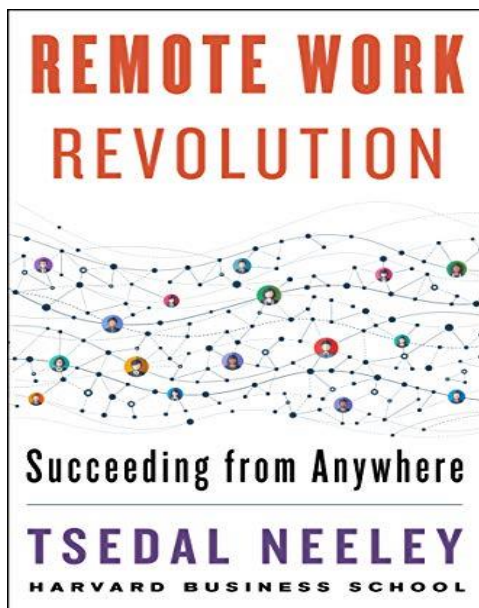




Book Review



Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding from Anywhere

Tsedal Neeley
Harper Business, 2021
240 pages, Hardcover, \$29.99

Reviewed by: Queenie Vo (MS-HCA Graduate Student)
California State University, East Bay

When Covid-19 rapidly spread worldwide affecting millions of people, nearly all companies and businesses were required to suddenly transition to virtual work within a few weeks' time. Employers rushed to provide employees the necessary tools they needed to work from home. As employees became situated in their home offices, they experienced the many benefits of remote work including decreased company expenses, great access to global applicants, and nonexistent commute times. However, remote work does come with its challenges when employees started to feel lost and isolated within their confined workspace away from their colleagues. Tsedal Neeley brings together her knowledge through research and personal advice to guide readers on a journey towards leading virtually in her book *Remote Work Revolution*. With each of the 8 chapters addressing a common question relating to remote work, Neeley explains in detail how leaders can build trust within distributed teams, use the right communication digital tools to engage employees, and provide guidance on how to virtually lead a global team.

Trust is the foundation of any working relationship. Leaders and managers often feel a lack of trust in their employees when working in a remote environment because they are unable to directly “see” what their employees are doing. Employees can also lose trust in their employers due to reduced transparency and communication that comes with doing remote work. Neeley’s discussion about trust provides her response to the question we all face when working remotely: How do we trust coworkers who we rarely or never see in person? She explains that we build conventional trust in a work place through daily interactions such as casual conversations with colleagues who work in different teams or getting coffee from the nearest coffee machine. Collocated workers are able to build trust through repetitive interaction over time and shared context, which would be difficult to have in remote teams because they typically have little to no in-person interactions. However, passable trust is a unique feature of remote work and as Neeley states is “the minimum threshold of trust required to communicate with and to work with others” (2021, p. 28). Neely explains that people are able to have a certain level of confidence in others based on their words and actions. Trust is both fragile and complex and not a one size-fits- all concept.

Remote workers often need to decide how to use communication digital tools to allow them to accomplish their work efficiently as well as enhance their working relationships with colleagues. One example provided in Neeley’s book reveals that employees commonly try to recreate their office environments in their virtual workspaces. For instance, some people will schedule videoconference meetings back to back without sufficient time in between calls to process information or even take breaks. This habit of scheduling leads to tech exhaustion, which is when people treat virtual communication in the same way as the physical world without constraints (Neeley, 2021). In her opinion, all communication tools such as email, phone, video conferencing and instant messaging are important when they are used appropriately for the right occasion. Therefore, it is important for us to understand how to choose and use the right digital tools to effectively thrive for team productivity.

Lastly, Neeley explains her approach to working with global teams that have cultural differences and provides guidance on how to lead them virtually. She states, “Communication is critical for the functioning team” (2021, p. 105). Today, English is the common language used in global communication, however there are degrees of English fluency among team members especially if the language is not their first. Neeley suggests native English speakers working on global teams should speak slowly and clearly and refrain from using slang or idioms because it reduces the team’s effectiveness. Native speakers might mistake a nonnative’s silence as being reluctant to speak or having nothing to contribute to the discussion (Neeley, 2021). Those who are nonnative English speakers should step out of their comfort zone by speaking up and participating in conversation because this helps build confidence and communication skills. Global team members who share a native language should avoid switching languages when in virtual group meetings because this causes alienation amongst the team.

Remote Work Revolution provides Neeley’s personal answers to common questions related to leading remote teams and discusses the various tools and methods required to enhance productivity. Tsedal Neeley is a Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School and an award-winning scholar with twenty years of research experience in global work and digital tools. This leadership guide, both thorough and practical provides a clear blueprint

so that readers learn how to lead remote teams, build and maintain trust within teams, and enhance team communications. Remote work will remain a necessity for many companies in the future; therefore Neeley's book is an excellent read for leaders who struggle with the challenges of leading virtually.