

What's Formstack's secret to managing remote teams while maintaining a strong culture?

Background

Formstack is a workplace productivity platform built to transform the way people collect information and put it to work. With its powerful data collection and process automation products, Formstack reduces data chaos and solves important business problems. Founded in Indiana in 2006, Formstack is now a remote-first company with 200 employees who live and work all over the world. While most users are mid-size companies in the healthcare, higher education, human resources, and nonprofit industries, Formstack has clients as large as the NHL, Twitter, and Netflix.

Business Opportunity

We've all experienced a misinterpreted email or text message. In a remote-based company like Formstack, the possibility of this happening is even more likely.

"We've experienced communication challenges broadly on teams due to the remote aspect of our culture.," said Miranda Nicholson, Formstack's VP of HR.

Formstack's rapidly growing workforce also presented some challenges. Nicholson began using The Predictive Index™ as a hiring tool in 2013. Since then, the company has grown from 25 to over 200 people. This growth meant shifting team structures and new manager-employee relationships—tricky situations to navigate in a typical work environment, let alone a remote one.

"Often, when you're a brand-new manager, you manage people how you want to be managed and trust has to be earned," said Nicholson. "You go in like a bull in a China shop and try to micromanage the hell out of people. And that doesn't work for every person." And as the company grew by leaps and bounds, Nicholson knew she had to also preserve the heart of Formstack's culture: "Results matter just as much as relationships."

Solution

Nicholson recognized the opportunity for PI to be more than just a hiring tool. "At Formstack we believe in individualized management, so a person should not take a one-size fits-all-approach to managing a team," said Nicholson. "[The PI Behavioral Assessment™] lends itself really well to the next phase, which is how do you manage a person?"

Nicholson began by administering the PI Behavioral Assessment to each new employee – both organic hires and those gained through M&A. Then she shared Reference Profiles with their managers to gain an understanding of exactly how each employee was wired to think and act at work.

Next, using the PI Relationship Guide and the Management Strategy Guide, Nicholson developed positive relationships between managers and employees.

“I’m educating managers on the type of people that they’re gaining on their team,” said Nicholson. “[It’s] been super helpful to make [new employees] feel welcome and like a part of the team, and to make them feel like their manager does care about them in a really thoughtful way.”

Results

Since using PI to “take the guesswork out of building relationships,” Formstack created more productive teams that communicate better—no matter how many miles separate them.

“

Conflict resolution is a huge time suck. So we’ll use The Predictive Index as a way for people to approach a tough conversation from the same playing field.

Miranda Nicholson
VP of HR, Formstack

As for the culture Nicholson was so keen on preserving? PI’s Relationship Guide and Team Work Styles report spell out how to communicate effectively, which gave teams the confidence to address issues before they become full-blown conflicts. “You spend a lot of time with the people you work with. Why wouldn’t you want an organization that gives you tools to improve those relationships?” Nicholson said. “[The] Predictive Index has definitely helped with that. I think anybody in this organization would say the number one thing they love about our culture is the people.”

A more unexpected—but nonetheless welcome—benefit of using PI? More time to spend on what matters.

“PI first and foremost makes conflict resolution a non-issue,” said Nicholson. “Conflict resolution is a huge time suck. So we’ll use The Predictive Index as a way for people to approach a tough conversation from the same playing field.”

With PI’s help, Formstack put the right people in the right positions, armed with the right insights. The results speak for themselves - better engagement, productivity, communication, and a culture that’s strong as ever.

