Successful Remote Engineering

Working in New York
Living in Michigan

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Agenda

Who are you, and where did you come from?

A little background...

Let's make some success!

Life as a remote engineer
Hi, I'm Av, and I work from home.
Hi, I’m Av!

• Working remotely since 2009

• Staff Operations Engineer @ Etsy

• I like cats

• ...and I like to tell stories
Why am I speaking to you?

• We’re not in Kansas any more!

• Hiring in tech hubs is difficult and expensive.

• Talent exists everywhere.

• Remote engineering bring new challenges.

• Let’s make remote engineering the default choice!
Remote engineering, Act 1:

Engineering a remote-happy culture
How many remote engineers are here?
Working at home is easy, amirite?
This is Aether, a remote engineer
New challenges with remote engineering

Remote engineering isn’t a panacea, and brings interesting problems of its own:

- Communication and collaboration
- Hiring and accountability
- Social pressures
- Work environments
Your life as a remote engineer

• Communication

• Discipline

• Balance
How important is communication?

Let’s play a game
Communicate as remote, by default.
11:56:57 frantz | it’s really just host/service state info for all the things
11:57:03 frantz | we don't need that in Elasticsearch
11:57:14 frantz | the alert events are more interesting
11:57:53 murphy | frantz: the state is also in the main nagios log
11:58:20 murphy | it’s just that some of our checks emit spurious | chars that shunt a bunch of data into perfdata
11:58:55 frantz | murphy: true dat. i was guilty of that up until the end of last week...
11:59:23 frantz | i had a recommended command in the long output that included a pipe.
12:00:19 murphy | yeah
12:00:37 murphy | nagios check output is surprisingly fussy
12:06:43 frantz | murphy: i've eliminated that log type from log01's lumberjack config
12:06:50 frantz | no more nagios_perf_log in <= 10min
12:06:54 murphy | ?? frantz my hero
12:06:54 irccat | One more plus for frantz! frantz now has 406 pluses!
12:22:25 frantz | gettin' some eats
12:31:23 avleen | also getting eats. back soon.
1:1's: Talk to your manager at least 2-3 times a week.
Discipline
Schedule when you're new

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Lounge around in PJs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>The Price Is Right!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30</td>
<td>Write some code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Play with cat</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30</td>
<td>Pile of laundry calls</td>
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Late start..
Working From Box
## Schedule like a pro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>9am</th>
<th>10am</th>
<th>11am</th>
<th>12pm</th>
<th>1pm</th>
<th>2pm</th>
<th>3pm</th>
<th>4pm</th>
<th>5pm</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 – 1:50p Tech time</td>
<td>10 – 11:30 Tech time</td>
<td>10:30 – OpsCave + 11:30 – MCR/Av</td>
<td>11:30 – Staff Ops</td>
<td>12p - 1p Weekly Ops Staff Meeting</td>
<td>3p – Av / Pete 1:1 3:30p – Av / Pnaf 1</td>
<td>4p – 1:1 Av/Tim</td>
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<td>1p – 1:50p Snr-eng</td>
<td>2p – 2:50p Lunch</td>
<td>3p – 3:50p OpsCave + IRC</td>
<td>4p – 1:1 Av/Jerem</td>
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Don’t be a black-box

You’re a person not a robot!

• Collaborate with other team members

• Lead projects

• Don’t accept work silently
Travel
Balance

Working and resting create a virtuous cycle when balanced correctly

• Set start / end time times for work

• Take vacation

• Get a hobby
Remote engineering, Act 2:
The things no-one tells you
You are your own tech support

Time to brush up on your systems administration skills!

• How well can you debug a broken laptop?
• Take your own backups
• Keyboard broken? Amazon is your friend!
Conflict resolution

• 25% of a manager’s time

• Many factors contribute to conflict impact

• Especially critical for remote engineers
What your manager needs to do
Step 1: Get a cat
Managers are people too

...and they need to help foster a remote-friendly culture

- Regular 1:1's, over-communicate
- Encourage “Remote by default”
- Do: Encourage. Don’t: Micro-manage
- Set availability expectations (eg, 11am-4pm)
Managers influence the business

There are some things managers should do improve business practices

• Hire communicators and doers
• Find budget for travel and good equipment
• Pair people in different regions on projects
• Doubles development!
Managers influence people

• Find out how your engineers are feeling

• Do they need help?

• You impact families more - support them
Managing meetings

• Invest in a good A/V solution

• Advocate for remotes who aren’t present

• Moderate meetings - remotes need a voice!
Don't have just one remote engineer!
Cabin fever is a real thing.
So get outside!

https://twitter.com/ripienaar/status/598406043090157568
Benefits of remote engineering

There are so many!

• US national savings over $700bn per year

• Better for the environment

• Significantly larger work pool

• Employees with more varied backgrounds

http://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics
Catch 22
Not enough experience points
Moving to remote engineering

There are two main avenues:

• Find a company willing to take a chance

• Convert your existing position to remote
Questions? (not about the photo!)
Etsy

@avleen