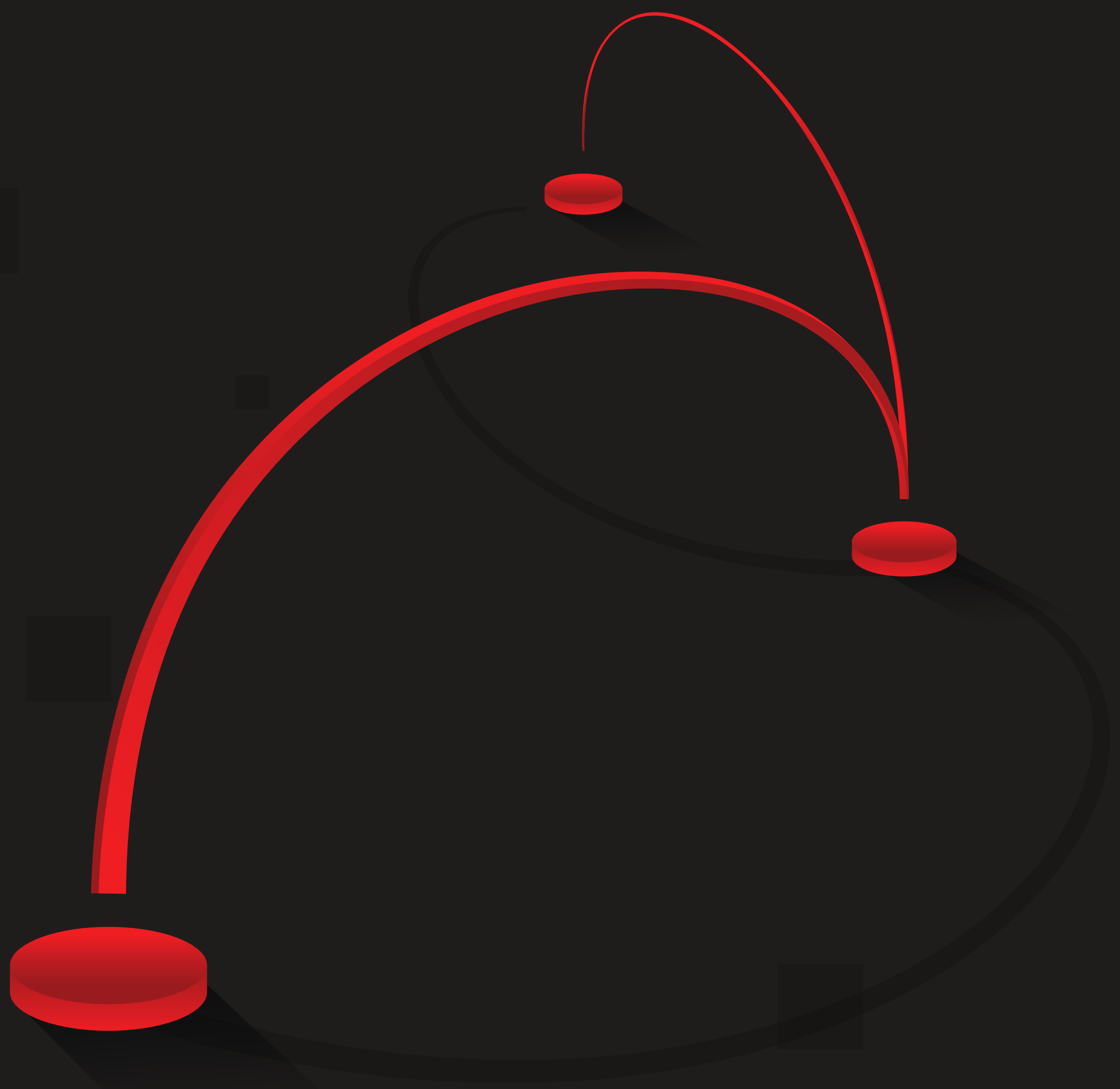**> scalac**

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

HOW TO MANAGE REMOTE EMPLOYEES

DO IT RIGHT FROM DAY ONE WITH THE HELP OF SCALAC'S EXPERIENCE

The role of remote work has grown rapidly in recent days. The global situation caused by the COVID-19 virus has forced companies to switch to working remotely. Scalac has worked using this model since we first appeared on the market - working with international clients (100% in our case) and 120+ employees from different countries and timezones. Why have we decided to share our experience and practices? Because we know that for some companies, especially at the beginning, it might not be the piece of cake you think it will be. We also know that properly implemented remote work can bring a lot of benefits to your business. The key to success is to create a company culture based on trust and openness, supported on a daily basis by practical work organization solutions. Yes - we do believe that working from home is more than just an option, we believe it's a kind of philosophy, a culture of work.

In this guide, you'll learn:

1. How remote work can create opportunities for your company

2. What managers can do to connect meaningfully with remote team members

3. Tips on how to help remote workers increase productivity

4. How to manage remote recruitment and onboarding

How remote work can create opportunities for your company.

In the home office, we trust

Letting people work from the comfort of their own homes gives them the most valuable thing an employer can give - trust. And you can be sure that your team is going to not only feel but also act the same way, putting all of their trust in your decisions and supporting your leadership. But trust comes with a lot of engagement. People who work from home are more willing to take responsibility and ownership of their projects. These are things that we see everyday in our work and it's something we really appreciate. . Despite the fact that more and more people are seeing the benefits of having flexible working conditions, according to Owl Labs; "Around the world, 44% of companies don't allow remote work at all." This is surprising, knowing that - according to Buffer - 99%! of people want to work remotely at least some of the time.

99% ● Yes
1% ● No
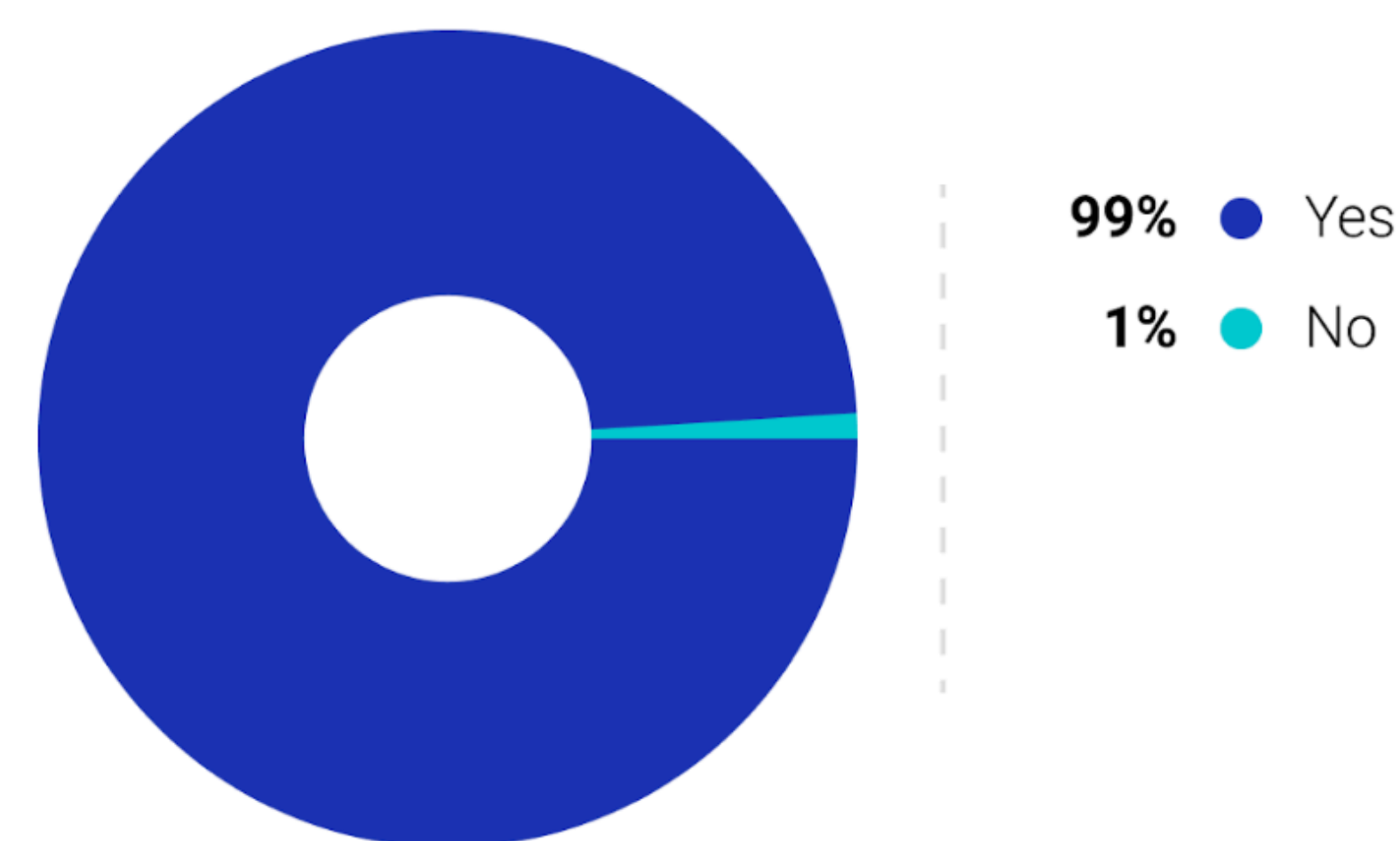
State of Remote Report / **2019**
buffer.com/state-of-remote-2019

What are some of the benefits of remote work?

1. More attractive job offerings - you stand out on the current employee-driven market,

2. Talent from all over the world - you can pick the best people for the position, not just the best in your location,

3. Clients from all over the world - Working remotely allows companies to attract customers and employees from different time zones.

4. Cost savings - maintenance costs for offices have killed off a great number of new companies. When your employees work from home, you can invest more in their development and the development of the whole company.

5. Fewer sick days - home office mode lets people work when they're feeling just a little bit unwell. Due to Coronavirus, we're starting to be very aware that - no matter whether people have an option to work remotely from time to time or they are fully remote - if they stay at home when they feel bad they're protecting their co-workers from also getting sick.

How to manage remote recruitment and onboarding?

Start from the very beginning

Implement a remote culture from the first contact with a future employee. Remember that in the case of remote contact, there will usually be more questions than during a standard recruitment process, e.g. "How will work be organized in different time zones?", "Can I be sure the company will pay me on time?" In short, will I feel safe?

How to build a sense of security and trust

First of all, be open to organizing online recruitment meetings. Do this in a professional manner. Technology is your friend in this process.

At Scalac, we use tools such as **Zoom** and **Google Hangouts** to organize calls and **Calendly** to book recruitment meetings.

Make sure you inform the candidate how to prepare for the interview (equipment, Internet connection). Recommend that candidates test out all this stuff before the meeting. It is also crucial that both the candidate and the recruiter have their cams turned on during the meeting, as this will give the meeting a "human" touch. This is also the first step in building trust (because I know who I'm talking to).

Signing a contract remotely

Don't be afraid to sign contracts remotely. How can you do that? Here at Scalac, we start by sending document templates by email. The candidate then has the chance to read them carefully and ask any necessary questions. When all the documents have been filled in and signed, our HR specialist sends them to the candidate for approval (also via email). The agreement once approved by the employee is printed and forwarded to the CEO/CFO for signatures. You can use **postal services, delivery companies**. You can also try an online service such as **DocuSign**, at Scalac we usually send documents this way But remember - some employees will ask for a paper version anyway. In these cases we use previously mentioned postal services.

As you can see, there's actually no hassle to do all of this remotely. The only thing worth mentioning is that you should double check if you need to send the printed version. Better safe than sorry!

Nice to e-meet you!

In my opinion, many companies often forget about a crucial time in a new employee's lifecycle. I mean the time between the recruitment period and the first official day at the company. We've all been there - you've got a new job, but you're not working there yet. All kinds of questions come to mind when people are preparing themselves for a change of environment. That's why at Scalac, Talent Heroes try to be available at any time to allay any doubts people may have.

We always have a Talent Team/HR Team representative - a dedicated person, who makes sure that the onboarding process goes well. This Talent Hero begins the onboarding process by sending a welcoming email, which gives the first pieces of important information. This will include:

- How to create an account on the company communicator **(we use Slack)**,

- Logging into company emails **(we use G Suite)**,

- Where to find the **Scalac Handbook** - our online guidelines of how we work **(we use xWiki)**. It's good to have an up-to-date version of the company structure in this kind of document when you share it with new employees.

- The Talent Hero also introduces a mentor (more about that in a minute) and representatives from Finance, HR, Project Managers, and the Business Development teams. There are a few words about what the main areas of their responsibilities will be, so the new person knows where to direct certain questions or needs.

Everybody needs a buddy

At Scalac, the mentor's role is to be like a good friend for the first few months at the company (at least 3). This person provides mentoring talks and is there to answer any questions. The mentoring period depends on the individual needs of the new employee. We try to be flexible in this matter. The mentor is also responsible for introductions and encouraging welcoming words on Slack such as "Hi Folks, meet our new Scalac Teammate", inviting new team members to say "Hello" to the rest of the team. This is how they can officially become part of the ship and the crew. It's always a great feeling for someone new to get this first little sign that they're welcome and that there's a community - or as we call it a family - that they can turn to.

Finally, on the first day, the mentor organizes an online meeting with the new team member to share any crucial information about "how we work" and answer any questions. The mentor shares all of the important contact people, pointing them to Slack and learns as much as possible about his or her new teammate to support them properly in the future.

First day at the home office: here's to a good start!

Remember that the first day of work should be productive. People want to feel that their work makes sense from day one. That is why it is so important that they have all the necessary tools they need. Make sure you deliver a laptop in advance and, if necessary, any other equipment such as an additional monitor or microphone etc. Our team has a dedicated person who is responsible for purchasing and shipping. We let her know about any new employee's needs at the stage of signing the contract. New equipment is very often shipped with the contract.

As part of the onboarding process, a new employee installs any necessary programs and applications on their laptop. He/she is supported by a Project Manager - the second (after the Mentor) most important person during the onboarding process.

Kick off with a Project Manager and a Talent Hero

While onboarding, we organize meetings with a Project Manager and a representative of the HR team. We've created a common onboarding list. This is editable so every new employee can check if he/she has got all of the important information and has done all of the onboarding steps. The Scalac Handbook, which I have already mentioned, is very helpful in this process. And anyone can alway go back to it whenever he/she needs it.

Tips to help remote workers increase productivity

Kick off with a Project Manager and a Talent Hero

Communication is the key to organizing remote work. But this is also a big challenge for everyone on the team. Misunderstandings can escalate very quickly and destroy team relationships. Every member of the team should care about this and feel responsible for it. However, being the leader, you should always continue to highlight the importance of communication and give people the possibility to speak their minds. At Scalac we work in different

time zones, when one team takes over, the other says goodbye. So, the key thing is to find time to exchange information, set new tasks and confirm priorities.

Choose tools that are most convenient for the team. At Scalac, every team can choose their own optimal solution. The most common are:

Slack - to communicate effectively,

Email - to communicate, exchange documents and newsletters,

Jira - to manage tasks and handle communication around specific tasks and projects,

Zoom - to handle calls, especially those with a larger number of participants

Google Hangouts Meet - again handling calls, the easiest way for those who own Gmail accounts and GSuite like we do.

Confluence - to exchange knowledge, procedures, experience and store project requirements (Wiki-like platform)

Start by defining clear communication rules and work tools. When do we use chats? Why do we write emails? At what point do we pick up the phone? These answers should be a joint effort and one that is reflective of the team's efforts as opposed to that of one person.

Give people space and let them carry out their tasks. This is a good first step. Our example shows that they will keep to the deadlines themselves.

Kick off with a Project Manager and a Talent Hero

To communicate on a daily basis we use Slack and we definitely recommend it to all. How can you use it effectively for remote communication?

> *"Try to keep the "Slack office" as clean as possible. Even though Slack is a great communication tool, it can also become a distraction.*

Channel management is necessary. This means that you should be careful to organize channels and remove those which are unnecessary.

Organize your company's work via dedicated channels. Match these to your company's needs and processes. We will share some of ours to inspire you:

#general important and/or strategic announcements, people coming/leaving, etc.

#random different posts - from gossip, events to employee issues

#improvements "company culture" and related stuff

#recruitment communication between Scalac recruiters, recruitment discussions

#scala/#frontend/#qa "technical" channels if you want to broaden your knowledge and/or share your thoughts and ideas

#[client] channels discussing projects

#programming Discuss, ask questions and learn

#sanfrancisco/#nyc/#tricity/#rzeszow/#warsaw/#cracow and others to communicate across locations

#holidays reporting days off

#mems funny photos and graphics, because we all need to share some fun as a team

#kudos giving kudos for being a great teammate and doing a great job

Become a guide and coach. Remember that remote work requires a much bigger commitment to building relationships in a team, taking care of employee involvement. You should be a guide on this journey, especially at the beginning . People will need you. Find time for people. For example, you could try the daily standup method (15 minute meeting per day) or weekly summaries.

"Take care of your teamwork hygiene"

We recommend **you don't check Slack constantly**. Messages can interrupt work. People should know that you don't expect them to reply to every message within a few seconds. If you want them to be able to focus properly, you have to show them trust.

Let them know about **using statuses like "I'm busy", "away"** to let people know.

There's also a very useful option to set reminders, for example, to remember to reply to a message when you have the time.

Want to get an answer on the channel?

Using @here and @channel might lead to people muting/ignoring those channels, so we recommend you mention specific people.

Sometimes it might be a bit annoying to respond to never-ending questions from employees, but remember, in the case of remote work, it's better to over-communicate than to lack communication.

Have a backup plan also, in case Slack is down - a good manager always has a plan B.

Create a guidebook on how to work from home like a boss

Set rules for everyone - about tools and channels of communication which are appropriate for every situation.

**You can use some of our rules as guidelines -
you can find them in our _"How to work from home like a boss"_ article.**

Management, task delivery, working hours, holidays

Management

Avoid micromanagement. Concentrate on supporting the team with planning and prioritizing instead of controlling them. **Choose appropriate tools.** At Scalac, we use several. Thanks to Jira, Confluence, Trello or ASANA we can manage tasks and projects, share knowledge about our projects.
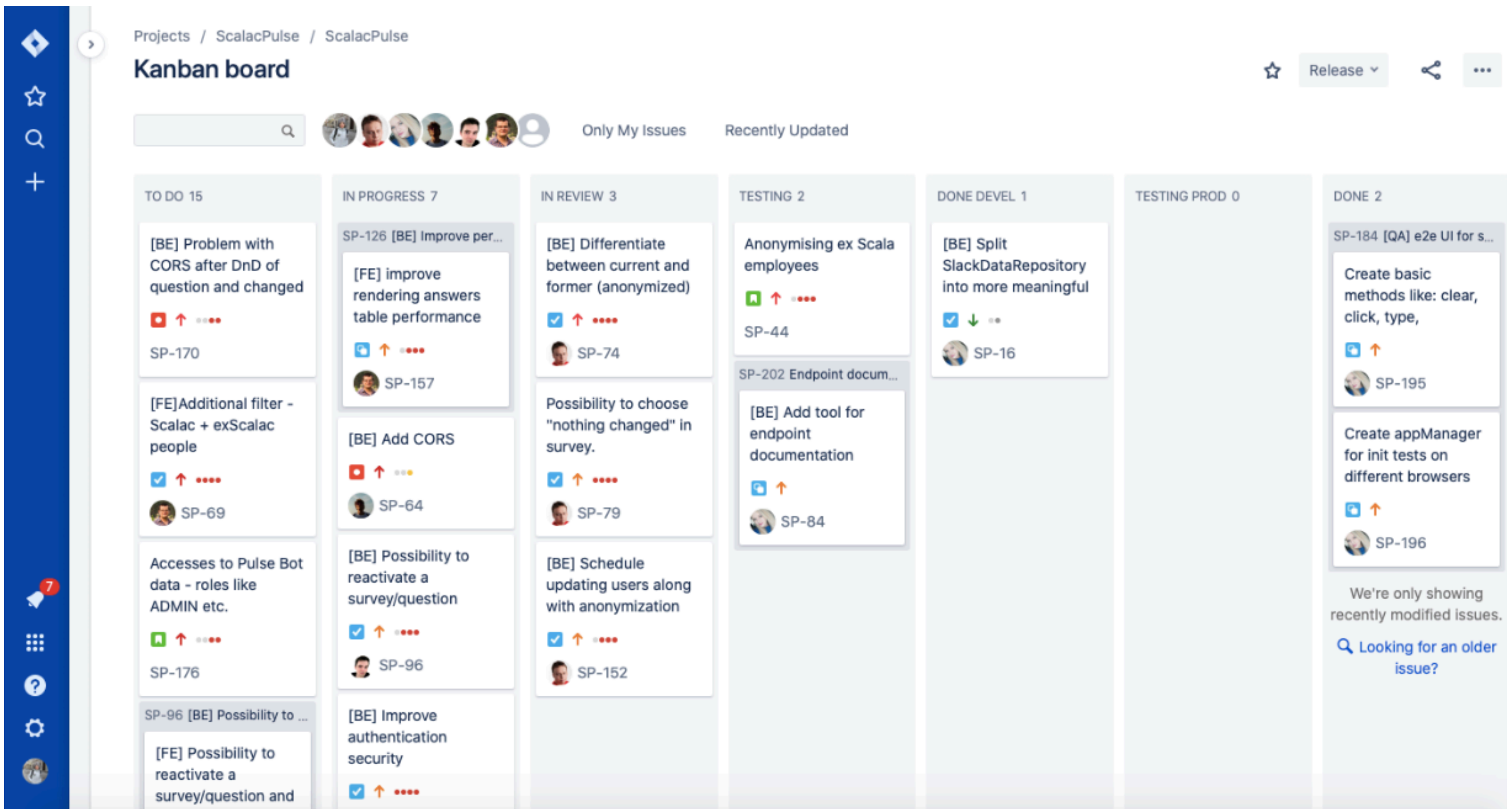
Working remotely: when and where?

Let people work from where they want (either home office or a co-working space if they need it) and choose the best working hours (eg. regarding their day clock preferences). We routinely ask our team to put their preferences on a Slack profile such as early bird, flex, night owl).

Tell your team that you respect individual preferences but expect them to be transparent. This means mostly lots of communication and participation in meetings.

In general, we don't use employee monitoring. The time reporting process is connected with reports for our clients. To do this effectively, we have implemented Clockify. If you are just starting to work remotely with your team and you want to have a preview of the detailed schedule of your employees, you can also try Toggl.
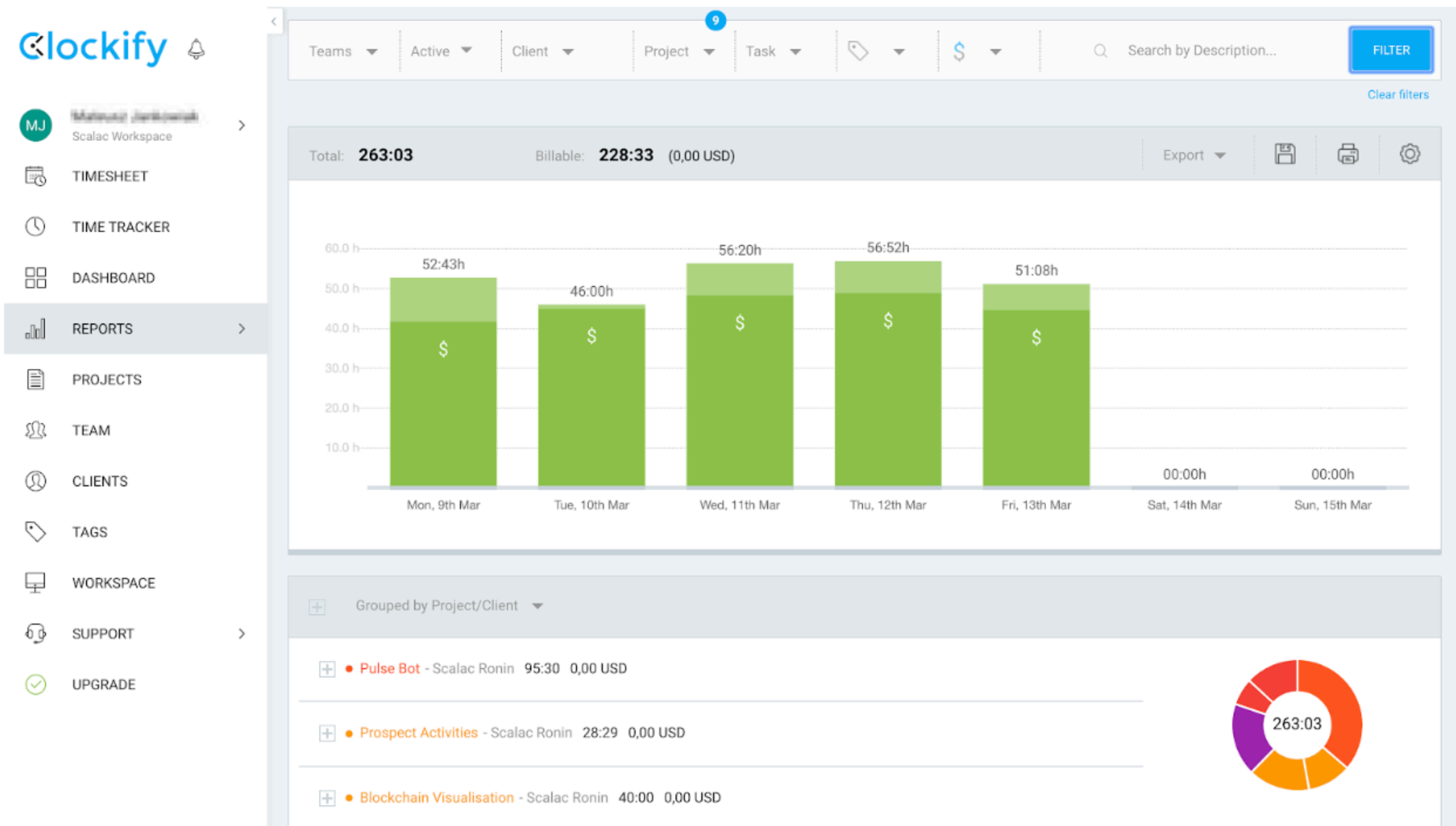
Holidays

How do we organize holidays? We have a #holidays channel on Slack. Anyone planning a day off publishes this information on this channel. Before this happens, the vacation time must be accepted by both the client and the Project Manager. After placing the information, one of the so-called Slack bots reminds you to place the vacation information in the "Holidays" file developed in Google Sheets. This file counts holidays, development days, and sick days automatically. On this basis, human resources team specialists can prepare their necessary reports.

Online Meetings

How do we organize holidays? We have a #holidays channel on Slack. Anyone planning a day off publishes this information on this channel. Before this happens, the vacation time must be accepted by both the client and the Project Manager. After placing the information, one of the so-called Slack bots reminds you to place the vacation informEffective organization of meetings is a challenge, not only for remote teams. Poorly organized meetings can be a nightmare regardless of industry or specialization. Here are some tips that our team has found helpful when organizing online meetings:

Take part in all important meetings.

Always start with the agenda (you can put it in the meeting time slot description) and to focus, keep notes during the meeting .

Be on time on the other side of the screen.

Do a short summary just after the meeting to highlight any key points. You can also create mind maps to understand the subject of the meeting better.

During calls, turn on your video. It's good to see friends and, of course, having visual contact is helpful (you should ask your colleagues if they feel comfortable with that though). Be flexible and turn off the video in the case of a poor internet connection (to save bandwidth).

When you organize meetings of several participants it is worth remembering that all participants should join from their laptops. This really helps with the audio quality. And of course, a good microphone is always a nice solution.

You can recommend that your team mute themselves initially and switch themselves on when it is their turn to talk. This may sound strange, but more than once I have encountered a situation where a participant thought he had been heard by the rest of his colleagues but then had to repeat his words. You can also remind your team members to use a headset with a separate microphone.

Use threads to organize the discussion.

Be ready to hop on a quick online call during your working day.

At Scalac, we have different types of meetings, such as daily standups, retrospectives, weekly summary meetings, kick-off meetings with customers and onsite meetings with customers.

Remember to respect all participants in these kinds of meetings. Especially when you have 'mixed' participants - some in the office and some working remotely.

ation in the "Holidays" file developed in Google Sheets. This file counts holidays, development days, and sick days automatically. On this basis, human resources team specialists can prepare their necessary reports.

Be sure that your team members have the necessary equipment

It's important to check if your remote employees have comfortable conditions for remote work, starting with a **good internet connection**. You can recommend a wired connection because radio connections are unstable. We also recommend phones as a backup. There will be situations when without any backup you'll be lost.

At Scalac, we take care of the work equipment by providing a laptop and other necessary equipment from the very beginning. Our employees also have the possibility to get additional equipment if they need it. For this purpose, any interested person may place his/her needs in a dedicated Excel file. The link to this database is located in the appropriate chapters of the Scalac Handbook and we additionally inform new employees about this onboarding process. Every cost should be checked with the Talent Team and, of course, we have to adapt all purchases to the company's capabilities. At the same time, we try to make sure that none of the requests remain unaddressed.

What managers can do to connect meaningfully with remote team members?

Team building, sharing knowledge and being together

Build a community. Create conditions for making friends. Make every employee feel a part of a team. Let people get to know each other. This can be done in many ways.

At Scalac, we have implemented online meetings called "Pizza Days' '. The goal is to share knowledge, exchange experiences, but also simply to get to know each other. The meetings have the formula of short presentations and workshops carried out by team members for other team members. Attending meetings is not obligatory. The topics of the meetings are not imposed. There are presentations on programming languages as well as hobbies. Recently we had a presentation on ant breeding by @mishashu. Of course, the meetings have a remote formula. We use a tool called **Zoom** for their organization. **We record meetings** so that people who cannot participate can watch videos at a convenient time.

What more?

We try different things to keep in touch and build people's engagement. One of these is **gamification**. For example, we once organized a birthday contest using the **Kahoot app** (alternatively you can also use **Mentimeter**).

Besides remote work, we also believe in face-to face-time. That is why we have **offices** in Gdansk, Warsaw, Rzeszow, and San Francisco and support some co-working spaces in other places. Finally, **we also organize company retreats** twice a year; after all, the fact that we work remotely doesn't mean we don't need to see each other face-to-face at all. We encourage employees to visit our headquarters from time to time and say hi. We often meet at various IT conferences, workshops, and hackathons.

Slack channels

In addition, we organize themed slack channels, which are a slightly different way of exchanging gossip at the coffee machine. We have various channels such as #music, #boardgamegeeks, #active (for fitness lovers), #mems, #football, #fifa, #pancakes and more! We've also created a dedicated #kudos channel, where team members can thank each other for important things. This is absolutely crucial to enable people to appreciate each other. Thanks to the inspiration of another company, we are opening a dedicated **Slack channel called #open-space** with video chat available. If you are working on something that does not require concentration and you want to talk, you can join the conversation.

Keep people informed

It doesn't matter if a company is growing or is already large, employees must know the principles of cooperation. At Scalac, this is the role of the Scalac Handbook, where we have put together all of the most important rules. We write a new chapter, based on new experiences, every day.

We believe in transparent communication. That's why our CEO meets regularly with the team during our so-called Ask Me Anything sessions (AMA). Each employee can put questions in a dedicated Excel document. During the AMA, answers are provided by the CEO with the support of other core team members responsible for areas such as Finance, HR, Business Development, Project Management, and Marketing. This is a good time to dispel any doubts, get answers to problems. This open formula teaches us to take a transparent approach to communication. During these meetings, various questions are asked. From casual ones

through to those about the company's strategy and financial condition. If your CEO isn't able to take part in this kind of meeting, you can engage the HR department / Project managers etc. Find your own way.

We also regularly issue an online internal newsletter called the "Scalac Times". Every team prepares content related to its area, and thanks to this our employees can receive comprehensive updates every month.

Check how it's going
The Scalac way: Puls Bot Health check

When it comes to remote work, it is very important to care about team motivation and job satisfaction levels. We would love to be in constant contact with everyone every day, but we all know that a growing number of employees doesn't make it any easier. Still, it's extremely important to know how every employee feels and what their level of happiness at work is.

For some time we looked for an idea to effectively communicate with the team in this regard. As a result, we implemented the so-called "Pulse Bot" - an app connected with Slack - which regularly asks each employee five short questions about work satisfaction both in the company and in a given project. As a software house, Scalac must measure these two areas at the same time, because the team is in constant contact with both the company and the client's team. This tool allows a quick response in the case of lower or worrying results.
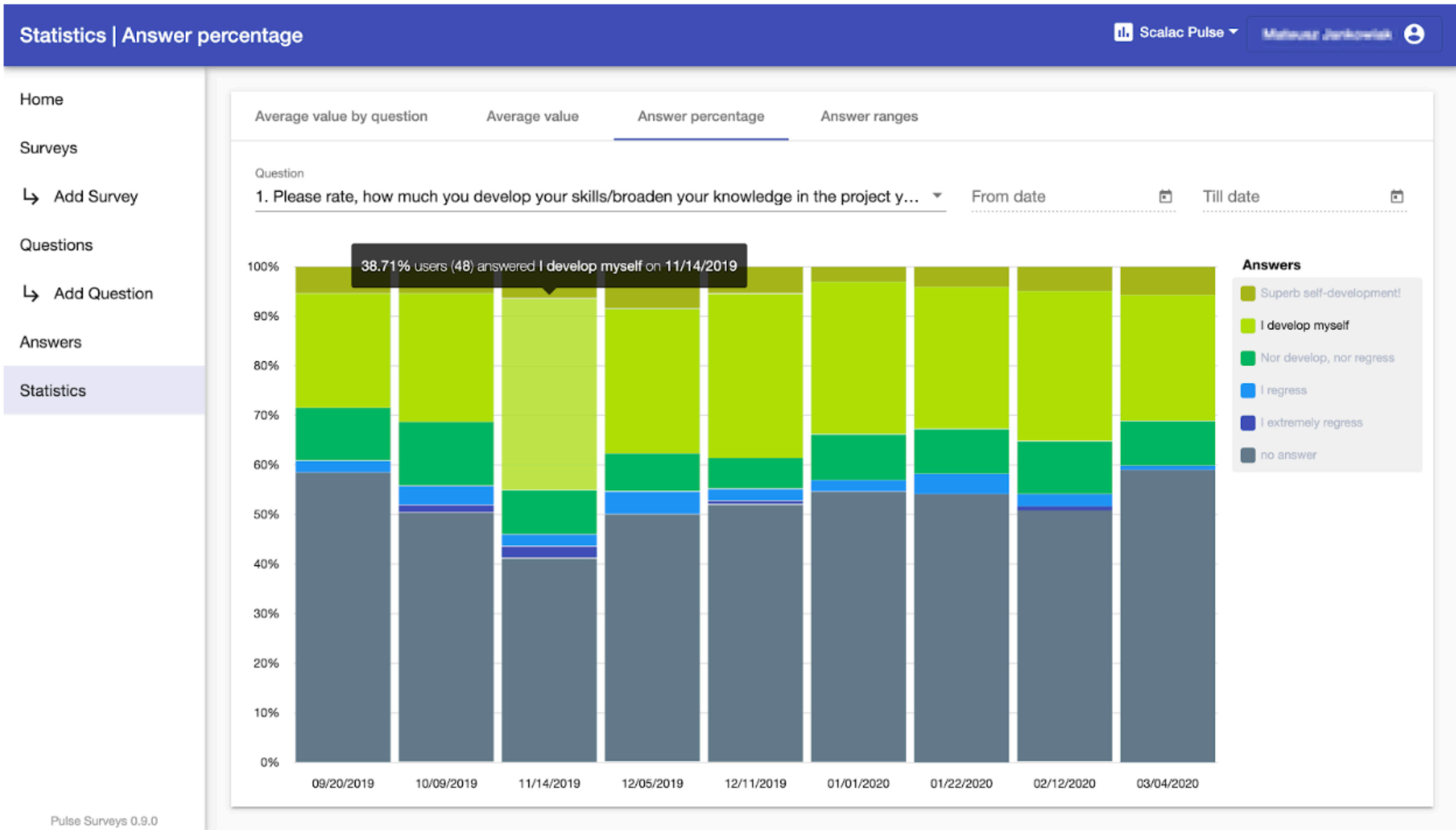
But Pulse Bot only collects information. If the answers show that the employee is unhappy, someone from the HR team or the PM reaches out to figure out what's going one and what we can do about it. Technology is only a tool. In the end, there always has to be a human.

Feedback

Build an open company and a culture of feedback. Show employees that you not only openly give feedback but you are also open to their comments and recommendations for improvements. Show them the changes that you have implemented thanks to them. Encourage employees to give each other feedback and to base their feedback on examples of real behavior and situations. At Scalac, we try to regularly give each other feedback - from employees to company and from team to employee.

We collect feedback from team members who are working closest to the employee over a certain period of time. To do this, we use Survey Monkey. Before the feedback talk, people receive feedback in the form of a graphical report on what their colleagues have assessed as their pluses and what the things worth changing are.

During an online conversation with the employee, we discuss feedback and pass our observations to the Mentor / HR team member or Project Manager, depending on the situation. We gather complex feedback after the first month, then after three months and then every six months, but in general, we're always up to date with Project Managers and teams on this matter.

Development

People need direction. That is why we try to make every employee define their professional goals in any given year. Once a year, we organize a **"Performance challenge"** - this sums up the goals we've set in the last year and gives an opportunity to define the goals for the following year.

We try to support our teams in different ways. Everybody has a **dedicated development budget** to spend during the year. However, there is one important condition. Development costs should correspond to employee development goals. Every team member has to only report it in a dedicated Excel file and confirm the cost with the Talent Team. We also have a virtual library and an unlimited book budget.

Care about people's work-life balance

Last - but definitely not least - when working remotely, it can be hard to separate work from personal life. Especially when your team is taking its first steps in this area, you need to support them in setting boundaries. Remember to give a clear signal that you do not expect 24/7 work. React when you see someone working too much, for example when he/she is online and working late at night (taking into consideration the time zone). There are further suggestions regarding this topic as mentioned before, discussing the guidebook.

Care about people's health. Motivate them to exercise regularly: gym, running, yoga, whatever. This will help them to keep in both good psychological and physical shape. We share our sport achievements on the #active Slack channel and take part in marathons.

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6	89	122	26	32+
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