

CoreNet Chapter Meeting 8/20/20

CoreNet NorCal held an exciting chapter meeting Thurs August 20th entitled: Remote Work Programs: A Spectrum of Experts for COVID and Beyond. The program featured Kate Lister, President, Global Workplace Analytics, a recognized authority on the future of work, as moderator and a panel of corporate real estate executives currently spearheading remote work for their companies including:

- Darren Murph, Head of Remote, GitLab Remote
Resources: <https://learn.gitlab.com/corenet>
- Lara Owen, Director of Global Workplace, GitHub
- Sameer Pangrekar, Director, Global Design, Construction & Strategic Projects, Twitter

Lister: How did you decide on your approach?

Murph

- Gitlab is 100% remote
- Began with 3 people in three different countries / remote by default
- Unique as decided to be office-less from very beginning
- Scaled to 1,300 people in 65 countries
- In person engagements are very very important / have to intentional about leaning into in person events
- Holds Gitlab Contribute once a year / entire company in person (was virtual in 2020)
 - Week-long experience
 - Opening and closing keynotes
 - Team bonding / excursions
- Planning in person Contribute event for 2021

Owen

- Founded 11 years ago with idea that talent is everywhere
- Has had hybrid model with 2/3rds remote from the beginning
- Also recognize value of having offices
 - Build communities with in person connections
- COVID hasn't had too much impact
- Merely expedited focus on building virtual tools / community
- Before COVID did in person Summits with whole company together / Mini Summits with smaller teams
 - Big conference with learning tracks / bonding / volunteer work
- Onboarding pre-COVID brought all new hires into SF / shifted to fully virtual
- Silver lining to COVID – rethinking all of it

Lister: How do you creating the connection to culture?

Murph

- Acknowledge that culture looks different during a pandemic
- Culture right now is less about company rah rah / more about making sure people can be vulnerable with each other / have a shoulder to lean on
- Going forward its vital to recognize In remote setting your values are the bedrock of your culture
 - Write down culture and publish on website / outline specifically how they treat each other
 - Has Slack channel / thank each other for living out those values
 - Tie discretionary bonuses and promotions to values
- All remote strategies are on website / all are open sources

Owen

- Renamed Real Estate and Facilities to Workplace Experience a few years ago
- Looking at what they want the culture to look like in 2022
- Doubling down on flexibility / autonomy
- Leadership has been enacting culture by taking vacations / showing it's OK to be flexible
- Brought in a psychologist specializing in PTSD and effects of long term stress
- Training managers to look for signs of burn out
- Launched more fun Slack channels to support the community
- Still sees value in offices / will continue to be hybrid model after COVID
- COVID caused them to have a new definition of the office
 - Now more about bringing people together for special stylized moments
 - Designing for 2022 with several real estate projects going on
 - All offices have one third to one fourth event space configurable for different sized groups
 - Doubled down on introverted space
 - Higher than average number of phone booths, libraries and nap nook
 - Focusing on inclusion
 - More robust mother's room
 - Gender inclusive restrooms now standard

Lister: What is this going to do to the future of office space?

Owen

- Short view – need more space for social distancing
- Long view thinks people will preference for flexibility
- Companies have to make decision about what they want to be
 - Have to invest now in tools, amenities and change management
 - Thinks there will be more outdoor space, sustainability and wellness certifications

- Pre-COVID had mixture of assigned and unassigned desks
 - Sees psychological value in continuing to have some assigned desks
 - Looking at hotdesking software / likes that it gives employees flexibility and sense of control

Lister: What do companies need to do companies need to worry about when running a remote model?

Murph

- Fundamentally different running hybrid vs 100% remote
- Gitlab has one employee experience
- Hybrid companies have to answer everything twice
 - For example, what is the equitable remote equivalent of on-site childcare?
- Everything is connected and impacts the culture
- Need to take a wholistic view of what your culture really is
- Remote impacts every part of your business / becomes fabric of who you are
- COVID has democratized remote
 - Now anyone can walk into interview and ask about your stance on workplace flexibility
 - Used to be taboo to bring it up
 - Now companies will have to articulate their stance on it