

Meghan M. Biro: [00:00](#) Here's a question for all of you out there, WorkTrends community. How many of you are listening to this episode on your daily commute? All right. Now really, here's the real question. How many of you wish you didn't have a commute at all? Remote work is a hot topic these days and many people dream of working from home. But truly successful remote workers takes a lot of effort and today we're going to break that all down. How to manage a remote team, how to lead a remote company and how to work remotely without losing productivity or the human connection. You know what I'm saying?

Meghan M. Biro: [00:44](#) Welcome to the WorkTrends podcast from TalentCulture. I'm your host, Meghan M. Biro. Every week we interview interesting people who are re-imagining work. And join us on Twitter every Wednesday, 1:30 PM Eastern using the hashtag WorkTrends. First, let's look at the headlines. I just read a great article in the New York times. It's called, Young People Are Going to Save Us All From Office Life.

Meghan M. Biro: [01:09](#) I swear to God, this is a real headline and I'm encouraging each of you to check this out. It speaks perfectly to the day and age we're living in. It breaks down just how those pesky millennial and Gen Z whippersnappers are making work better for all of us. Whether it's less stigma, about more time off, flexible hours, or our topic of the week, remote work, the world of work is truly changing. Let's dig deeper with today's guest.

Meghan M. Biro: [01:43](#) Our guest today is James Lloyd and he's calling in from, you know what? Who the heck cares? That's the whole reason he's here today. James is the Co-founder and CTO of Redox, a healthcare API company with 130 employees and get this, 25 states and they all work remotely. Welcome to WorkTrends, James. So tell me, are you wearing your pajamas right now or are you more of a pants kind of guy?

James Lloyd: [02:15](#) Yeah, you know, everybody has their own preference for how they work, but I actually do prefer to get dressed in the morning. Just to have a bit of a transition, but yeah.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:24](#) Oh, okay. Well I'm sorry to hear that. So where are you today? I'm sorry, I have to ask you that.

James Lloyd: [02:33](#) Yeah, I am currently in Denver, Colorado, and I actually just moved here. One of the benefits of working in a distributed team and the remote culture is that you can change your geography without needing to change your job. And so, many of

us have explored different parts of the country through our time here at Redox and excited to be here now in Colorado after spending about 10 years in Wisconsin.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:56](#) Sweet. Well listen James, you run a company of 130 people and every single employee works remotely. Why is remote work so important to you and your company's success?

James Lloyd: [03:08](#) It's a good question. So it really starts with the idea of investing in the people that you work with. Many of us have come from environments where your job is very geographically located and when things happen in your life that may mean you need to move, say you need to go take care of your parents or your spouse gets a job in a different city, things like that. Then that means you might have to change your job and that feels really like a low investment in the people that you work with. So it all starts for us with really forming longterm investments in our employees and our team members. So that's really where it starts from. And some of the benefits we see from that, is that, we can recruit anywhere. So, we can cruise across the US, it helps us get the best talent possible. The second benefit is that we now have a presence in most places. So as you mentioned, I think that we're actually up, maybe it's at 26 or 27 states at this point.

Meghan M. Biro: [04:03](#) Okay. Did that just happen like two hours ago?

James Lloyd: [04:06](#) Yeah, we're, we're growing pretty quickly at this point, but yeah. Yeah, and for any customer event or a meetup or a conference or anything like that, chances are we have somebody within a 30 or 45 minute drive of those kinds of locations. So we can get pretty quick access to, kind of boots on the ground type events. And then the third is, really kind of maybe harkens back a little bit to the investing in people, but really, we see a remarkable amount of retention that comes just from a broader theme of investing in people. But certainly, that aspect of not losing people when changes happen in their lives means that we do have probably a higher degree of retention than we would have otherwise.

Meghan M. Biro: [04:43](#) Yeah. I mean, I'm a little jaded over here just because I myself, have been a remote worker for like half my career at this point. I was an early adopter to virtual teams and have always been super fascinated by the whole idea of, we're social, we're collaborating, what does that mean for culture and all that jazz?

So now, looking back after five years running the company, how has remote work made your company better?

James Lloyd: [05:09](#) When I think about this question, I don't think we could have effectively started this company without being remote. So when we first got started, there were three co-founders. We happened to be in the same place, but then the next 15 employees, were all in different locations. So our first set of employees were Wisconsin, California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Washington, Oregon, and they were all people we had worked with in the past. And so we had a very high trust of working with those people, but they had all moved on to different locations. And our founding team is two of persons still at the company five years later. And those first set of 10 or 15 folks are all still here too. And that amount of investment and having that right group of people with high trust and each other to get started, was really a catalyst to our initial success.

James Lloyd: [05:52](#) And today, how it's made us better and how it's contributed to our current successes is some of the benefits I hit on before and it is just a great way to be able to bring together folks from different perspectives and different backgrounds and different cultures as well. Part of the reason why we're in healthcare is because we want to do something that has the ability to touch every person's life and being able to bring people from urban and rural and all different parts of the country together, really adds to a richness of perspective that we get within the company.

Meghan M. Biro: [06:20](#) So, healthcare API company, can you talk to our audience here about what that is? How do we define that right now?

James Lloyd: [06:28](#) Yeah, absolutely. So we are a data platform for exchanging information between the places where care occurs, so hospitals, clinics, physical therapy offices, things like that and the types of software vendors and software tools that are in use there. So let's say, you are a diabetic patient, so you may go into the doctor's office, they may collect lab results, they may store all that in your medical record, but then there is a separate diabetes management tool that you use for your insulin management at home and things like that. And those two data sets, the lab results and the things that are happening at the clinic and the digital tools you're using at home, they need to talk to each other. And so our platform provides a really easy and scalable way to do that.

Meghan M. Biro: [07:13](#) So running a fully remote company, to a lot of people out there is something new. What were some of the early challenges of having a remote team? Because I know it's not always perfect obviously, and there are challenges and there will continue to be challenges just because we're all human, right?

James Lloyd: [07:31](#) Absolutely. Absolutely. So there is a lot that we learned along the way, for sure. We definitely want remote to not mean isolating. And so some of what we learned early on was that we still need to get together and finding that right frequency and the right dynamics for doing that, has evolved over time. So when we were eight people, we got together every six weeks as we continued to grow, that was a little too frequent. And so we moved to every three months and now we're at every six months.

James Lloyd: [08:01](#) So twice a year we get the whole company together in one location for about three or four days. And it's really important for just getting to know each other and meeting people who aren't normally on your teams. And we typically use that time to align around our goals and our strategy and really kind of build up from, starting with the mission and the vision of the company and then working with our teams to craft those goals.

James Lloyd: [08:23](#) Some of the things we learned were, we're not really in a place to hire people that haven't had a real professional job before. We're not in the manage by walking around type environment. And so our employees have a lot of freedom, a lot of flexibility to work the way that they feel most productive and best. But if it's your first job straight out of college, sometimes you need a little bit of mentoring on just some of those mechanics of being a good employee.

James Lloyd: [08:49](#) And so we realized that that wasn't necessarily the group that we were going to be most productive with and didn't really have the tools to be able to support them well. So that's kind of shaded a little bit of our recruiting process and maybe we'll talk a little bit more about that later, but that's definitely been one area of learning.

James Lloyd: [09:03](#) And then, probably another area of learning is, just around employee happiness and wellbeing in and outside of work. For many people who have a lot of experience in an office setting, they may find a lot of their friend groups and social circles being formed with coworkers because you have that proximity and you have that social network already being formed. If you move

then from that setting to a place where you may be the only person in the state that works at Redox, that can really shift the dynamics for how you form your social circles.

James Lloyd: [09:33](#) And so being able to support people who are in that setting is really important. And so we have kind of virtual, social and fun groups that get formed within the company. But then we also help support by helping people know that, find other meetups or other volunteer programs and things like that within their cities so that they can have other ways of maintaining those social circles.

Meghan M. Biro: [09:53](#) On the topic of recruiting talent, what's your minimum threshold for people having experience in a quote, unquote, well, real office, so to speak? How many years do you really look for of people being along in their career?

James Lloyd: [10:08](#) It's really more about having some sort of demonstration in the past that you can maintain a high paced set of requirements and really operate fairly autonomously. So we don't really have a set, it's not two years or one year or anything like that. It's more we look for examples of that kind of performance in your past. So it may not even be necessarily a work setting, but if there is a set of internships or volunteer programs or other things you've done kind of extra curricularly, that could also be a good indicator. We look for those sorts of things rather than any sort of years of experience or anything like that.

Meghan M. Biro: [10:44](#) So what about teams where some people are physically together and some people work remotely because we see a lot of that right now. How do you make remote employees feel like they're part of the team?

James Lloyd: [10:55](#) Absolutely. So we have a few kind of ground rules for any meeting or any settings that we're in where there may be some people together and some people remote. And that is, we use Zoom, a video conferencing tool for pretty much all of our internal meetings. And we have sort of a requirement that everybody is on the Zoom. So, even if there are three people in a conference room and one person in a different state, all four people have their webcams on and it really helps to prevent alienating the person who is not in the same room.

James Lloyd: [11:25](#) The other thing that we do is, we do a lot of writing as a company and that helps pull people together and give everybody the same voice. And we do a lot of prep work in

writing and then use our meeting time to really review and make decisions on the writing that's been done ahead of time. So, this is particularly important if you have people in different time zones. If you're making real time decisions, and it's 5:00 PM in Oregon, you know, the person who's working from the East coast, it's 8:00 PM their time and they might be wanting to have dinner with their family and they need to keep checking in on what's going on.

James Lloyd: [12:00](#) So we've found that really writing and then using a fairly disciplined approach to decision making around those kinds of design documents and that kind of writing really helps bring everybody together and have everybody feel like they can make an equal contribution independent of their location or time zone or or setting or anything like that.

Meghan M. Biro: [12:16](#) 130 people, same voice, talk to us. What do you mean by that? Are you talking about from a marketing standpoint, an employee brand standpoint, employer brand? How does that shape up for your company and your culture?

James Lloyd: [12:36](#) Yeah, absolutely. So a good example, a meeting I just came from before this, was a review of a potential partnership where we're interested in forming and the person who is working on it most closely wrote a document kind of describing the situation and the background and his recommendation for what we thought we should do. We all read it ahead of time and then the meeting was really to review the comments that were made in the document.

James Lloyd: [12:59](#) And so we all had time to process that information in the time that was right for us. Rather than saying, "We're going to put a meeting on the books to actually make the decision where we're going to gather all the input." And so really, it's about kind of allowing that input to decision making to happen asynchronously, even if the decision happens within a meeting so that everybody's perspective can get understood and really allow a lot of time for that to come in independent of where they're at.

Meghan M. Biro: [13:25](#) James, you must be a very patient person. That's all I have to say. Kudos to you because that is not an easy thing that you're doing over there trying to get everybody unified and all that jazz. I mean there's a part of me, if I want to play devil's advocate, that goes, do we really need everybody's same voice, but maybe that's another podcast, right?

- James Lloyd: [13:48](#) Yeah, absolutely.
- Meghan M. Biro: [13:48](#) You and I can go back and forth with the pros and cons, right? Because that can go in a lot of different directions when you start geeking out on the nuance of culture.
- James Lloyd: [13:57](#) Absolutely. And we are subscribers of the rapid framework or where we do have a decision maker for each of these situations and it's really about that kind of input perspective, getting as many voices as possible in that and to make sure we're making well informed decisions.
- Meghan M. Biro: [14:15](#) So I hear a lot from people in the WorkTrends community who are trying to give their employees more flexible ways to work. How do you feel about the idea of part-time remote work? Say, work from home on Fridays?
- James Lloyd: [14:28](#) Yeah, absolutely. My take on a part-time remote work or work from home on Fridays is, it's a modern version of the casual wear Friday or Hawaiian shirt Friday or something like that, that it's a bit of a ritual.
- Meghan M. Biro: [14:41](#) Whatever happened at that by the way? Right James? It's like, I feel like that died, was it seven years ago, or six or seven years ago? We said bye to that somewhere?
- James Lloyd: [14:51](#) So to me, with being rooted in the idea that remote work comes from an investment in your employees and allowing them to, in a balance and have a good harmony of life and work. To say that that only applies in 20% of the days, feels a bit disingenuous in some ways. So to me it's an all or nothing kind thing and Monday through Thursday, your team still has to figure out, what are they going to do about daycare? Or how are they going to get their kids to school? Or all these other things that people have to manage in their life and other responsibilities. So for me it's really an all or nothing kind of thing.
- Meghan M. Biro: [15:24](#) I hear you and feel the same way except when we start looking at highly scalable organizations with say more than, oh, I don't know, 800 employees, what happens then? You know? I think there's a balance here.
- James Lloyd: [15:38](#) Yeah. So there are definitely other companies that have achieved that scale being fully distributed. So Zoom and Zapier and a handful of others are kind of up in those numbers and yeah, I think I can see an element to using part-time remote as a

transition to full-time remote. If you're in a setting where you're completely in person today and looking to kind of pilot what the experience might be like for sure, that could be interesting. But if you're just getting started, I would say, you really don't reap the full benefits of it unless you go kind of all in.

Meghan M. Biro: [16:16](#)

You got to go all in. It's a culture exercise and it's really, it's a way of being and everything then gets baked into the culture. So, very cool. All right, well we've reached that point. We made it to crystal ball time. So what do you predict will change about the way we work in the next five years?

James Lloyd: [16:33](#)

Yeah, so I love this question. I'm a hardcore future optimist and so I love thinking about like how the world will be better in the next few years. So for me, I love the direction that a lot of companies are going. I love that this is becoming more mainstream. And for folks who are kind of early adopters of this model, there are definitely some limitations in some of the office tools, productivity tools, things like that. So today there's not really a great substitute for getting together in front of a whiteboard if you're doing some really heady design type type stuff. But there are some emerging tools that are making this better. And so, I think just that collaborative kind of tactile thinking and design and brainstorming, I think that is a space that will emerge from a productivity tool standpoint.

James Lloyd: [17:19](#)

And I think also, it's just going to continue to make all of the companies that do this and all the products we use on a daily basis better because we're going to be able to bring in a broader set of perspectives as remote culture tends to continue to grow. And the more different perspectives we have, we're working on product design and things like that, the better those products will be for us as consumers. So those are the things I get excited about for the future of remote work and increasing utilization of it.

Meghan M. Biro: [17:48](#)

James Lloyd, keep on, keeping on. Thanks for stopping by today. Let's keep that conversation moving and grooving. Yeah, join us for our WorkTrends Twitter chat. We are going to be on the Twitters with James Lloyd on Wednesday, October 9th at 1:30 PM Eastern, 10:30 AM Pacific. Join us to talk about ways you can make remote work well, work for you and your team. If you'd like to get our Twitter chat questions in advance, sign up for our newsletter@talentculture.com.

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Meghan M. Biro:

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