

PUBLIC

Remote-first playbook





Overview

As a remote-first company, it's important that we are aligned in terms of what remote means, how we work together and how we communicate as a team. That's why we have put together this playbook covering the principles that help us do great work remotely as well as the ways in which we collaborate and communicate.

Read the sections and pages below to gain a better understanding of what remote means at Ably and how we work as a distributed team 🙌

Table of contents

Remote-first at Ably	3
What does remote-first mean for us?	3
Remote-first principles	3
#1 Remote-first always comes first	3
#2 Communicate wisely: choose the right style, channels and tools	4
#3 Build intentional connections with other Ablyans	4
Our work culture	5
What enables us to do great work?	5
We focus on impactful outcomes	5
We empower people to innovate and iterate	5
We are transparent	5
Remote communications in practice	5
Asynchronous comms (or written-first) at Ably	6
Why does async comms matter?	6
How do we do async comms in the right way?	6
When do we choose meetings vs async comms?	6
The channels and tools that we use	6



Remote-first at Ably

What does remote-first mean for us?

It basically means that **we work, collaborate and set up processes assuming all Ablyans work, by default, from different locations and time-zones.**

During our day to day, we get to work from home (or wherever we prefer) as well as go to the hubs that we have in London  and Boston  , if needed.

Being remote-first is what makes the most sense for us, considering our [mission](#) and the goals that we want to achieve.

Remote-first has many perks, such as being able to hire diverse talent from all over the globe, as well as reaching more customers with our technology and product offering. But building a successful culture of remote-first work, also has its challenges. That's why we all work together as a team to create effective collaboration and meaningful connections

“Remote-first organizations optimize their workplaces for remote. They create documentation, policies, and workflows that work when assuming that 100% of the organization is remote, even if some continue to occasionally visit a company-owned office”.

Source: GitLab

“In a remote-first organization, the default is remote. While there may be a company headquarters, or even an array of satellite offices, everything from how meetings are handled to onboarding new hires is structured through a remote lens”.

Source: GitLab

Remote-first principles

#1 Remote-first always comes first

We should always design processes taking into account the fact that we are a remote-first company, whether it is when we are starting a new project, sharing outcomes or getting together as a team.

Here are a few tips:

- **Always set clear expectations first**
 - For example, what channel are we going to use to communicate? For what purpose each? When can we expect a response from each other? How are we going to track progress?



- **Be straightforward and concise when communicating** (whether via slack, documentation, or synchronously in meetings) as it helps us to move quickly and prevent unnecessary back and forth.
- **Use the RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed) framework when appropriate**
 - The [RACI framework](#) should be used to describe the participation by various individuals in completing tasks or deliverables so that we understand how each person contributes to the project.
 - When we use RACI we can easily understand if we're liaising with the right person to help resolve any issues.

#2 Communicate wisely: choose the right style, channels and tools

As a globally distributed team, **asynchronous communications is our most prominent way of communicating** as it allows us to function and work at a larger scale.

Asynchronous comms (or what we've been calling written-first) means that **we communicate in a way that does not require the recipient(s) to be available — or even awake — at the same time**, leaving a trail of decisions that other people can follow.

In doing so, we create fewer bottlenecks and information silos, empowering teams and individuals to find the information they need and collaborate efficiently. Also, it enables us to find the work balance that we need by fitting our work and communications around people's lives.

And **when you do work synchronously, that work is impactful**. We rely on sync comms such as meetings for brainstorming, sharing feedback, getting up to date, finalising a decision and getting to know one another.

Lastly, we should also be very mindful about when, where and how we communicate, in order to keep these channels as useful and effective tools.

#3 Build intentional connections with other Ablyans

As we grow and adapt our remote-first culture, it's more important than ever that we all make the effort and time to **get to know one another by generating team-bonding instances and being intentional about those interactions**. A major contributing factor in Ably's culture and what it is today has been enjoying one another's company, making time for fun and building lasting relationships with one another.



Our work culture

At Abyly we like to make sure that we work together efficiently, creating a healthy work culture that works for everyone, regardless of time zones and commitments. We want it to help us grow and develop professionally, as we scale as a global remote-first team.

That's why apart from following the remote principles we also deliver results by thinking about what enables us to do great work, the channels and tools that we use to communicate as well as how we collaborate to move projects forward.

Read more about these topics in this section



What enables us to do great work?

We focus on impactful outcomes

Each team and individual is accountable for making sure that we accomplish our goals and build the best solutions for our customers. This means that as Abylyans we take action, work on what's the most impactful, and become owners to deliver results.

We empower people to innovate and iterate

We want everyone at Abyly to be free to propose new ideas and improve the ways we do things. Following our value "Bold creativity wins", we know that when we think of innovative solutions for challenges and take necessary risks, we grow and learn the most.

Documenting, thinking through the 'why', defining clear objectives and desired outcomes and then opening this up for collaboration helps us develop our ideas; empowering people to bring ideas and see them through.

We are transparent

True to our "Open for all value", we are open about how we're doing as a team and as a company. We share progress regarding our goals, celebrate our achievements and openly discuss our shortcomings to learn from them and move forward as a team. When we're open, we're better collaborators, communicators and creators.



Remote communications in practice

As a remote-first company, communication is paramount. We need to **actively think and be intentional about the ways in which we collaborate and connect** with other people in order to make everyone feel part of the team and also so that we can do great work together.



Asynchronous comms (or written-first) at Ably

Per our remote-first principles, asynchronous communication is our most prominent way of communicating, which means that we communicate in a way that does not require the recipient(s) to be available at the same time.

Effectively scaling a company and working remotely don't "just happen" - they need to be deliberate to be done well. Companies in similar industries and with similar growth trajectories that are "successful" and have also adopted a remote-first work, share a key contributor to their success: an async-first approach (or as we've been calling it, written-first) to communication and decision-making.

Why does async comms matter?

How do we do async comms in the right way?

When do we choose meetings vs async comms?

The channels and tools that we use



This is just a glimpse of what our Remote-first Playbook looks like!

If you're interested in being part of a remote-first company such as Aply, you're in luck because we're hiring. Are you passionate about realtime technology and how it helps power live and collaborative experiences for online users everywhere? Have a look at our open roles (all remote-first) and come join us.

And, if you are a remote-first company, feel free to reach out and tell us what ways of communicating and connecting work for you!

