

PC 2.0 Culture Book



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01

What this book is about



With a unique yet traditional approach to running a business, COVID-19 has given us at PromptCloud the opportunity to rethink our culture, reimagine our values, and rewire ways of working. That has essentially led to this book which is PromptCloud (PC) 2.0 in its new avatar. Here we discuss all cultural aspects of PC 2.0.

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Why PromptCloud Exists

When Prashant quit his job at Yahoo! in 2009, he was only looking to satiate his tech cravings to create something. He never really dreamed of running an organization with it nor did he think it'd go too far. But when that first customer expressed his desire to pay for such a solution, with almost zero capital investment, there was no looking back. And hence most of the growth happened organically, with every new customer demand and surfacing needs of new roles. The ever-expanding market size only supported the growth, and PromptCloud continues to remain customer-funded and profitable to date.



We strongly believe that data is the technological oil, and hence data is at the core of all our solutions. We are here to ensure our customers succeed, which in turns helps their customers succeed. We want to do this by staying relevant horizontally, even if we provide verticalized solutions, and reliably so.

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What we believe

We have strong core values that are evident in our interactions. These values are fundamental to our existence, and have been a part of us even pre-PC 2.0.

Stay obsessed with customers

We exist because of our customers, and it's in our DNA to help our customers succeed. It's normal for us to go beyond the call of duty to overdeliver, and we take immense pride and joy in doing that.

Be self-driven

We are a community of self-starters and self-driven individuals. We do not expect constant monitoring or supervision. We make judicious use of our resources to solve a problem or pursue an undertaking. We strive for high performance in everything we do, and approach every problem analytically.

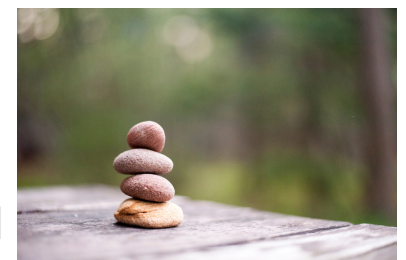


Grow Together

We function collaboratively, committed to a common goal of fueling success. We actively help, encourage and offer resources to unlock our potential, all the while being a better version of ourselves.

Keep it Simple

We take a straightforward approach in our interactions and problem solving. We do not complicate things in the name of fads and trends, and attack the low hanging fruits first.



Be the best version of your whole self

We strive to blend work and life goals in ways that bring out the best in ourselves - on all fronts. Life at PromptCloud means professional growth, without compromising on personal relationships, interests or passion.



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What we aspire

Vision

PromptCloud will be synonymous with data. We will be a role-model in the IT industry because,

- We'll be an end-to-end solution for most of the businesses around the world for their data acquisition, analysis and research
- We'll be an organization small in size, yet high on performance and profitability that people would yearn to be a part of
- We'll transform the lives we touch, of the companies by helping them succeed, and of the employees by inspiring them to lead holistic fulfilling lives

Remote and Dispersed

One of the biggest transformations we have gone through in PC 2.0 is becoming a 100% remote company. There were some collaborative exercises that helped us collectively arrive at this decision during COVID-19. Arpan had published a blog on how we set out on this journey and what it entailed. It's an interesting read which elicited a lot of reactions from the business community. [Do read it here.](#)

Supporting a productive work environment

In order to help set up a work environment at home, starting Sep'20, PromptCloud provides its employees with a one-time allowance of 15,000 INR (updated to 10,000 INR and a new joiner kit since Apr'22) for furnishing with a desk, chair, monitor, power backup, camera and any other equipment that supports a productive workspace. We also reimburse monthly internet bills capped at 1000 INR per month. Given a remote work environment, it's imperative that we show up in meetings with videos on to support an engaged and effective discussion.

Desired Behaviors that enable PC 2.0 culture

Play to win

We should play to win wherein we care for our peers and dare to challenge ourselves on performance and outcome.

Responsible Flexibility

Working at PromptCloud should allow us flexibility in where we want to work from, when we want to work, and in choosing our own distraction or recreation. We should spend time with family, friends, hobbies and do what makes us feel good. We must practice responsible flexibility in order to organize ourselves so that all our goals are met personally and professionally. With responsibility comes a great sense of ownership, that helps us thrive.

Outcome-driven

We must commit to achieving the desired outcomes that we had set out for ourselves. We should not compensate for missing outcomes by putting more effort. We must retrospect often to see what could be coming in our way of desired results. Reliability is an integral part of our mission, and hence we must focus on the quality of the output that we achieve. We must strive to be the first one to be correct, in the right of achieving the best quality in our work- be it code, content or anything we create.

Build trust and create bonds

As a team that plays to win, we bond around our shared goals to excel. Since we are a remote company, it's even more important for us to bring our whole self to work, so as to connect at a human level rather than a set of disconnected people working remotely.

Share Learnings

The way we really grow is by sharing our learnings and gaining other perspectives. We also disperse our knowledge externally for the larger good.

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How we work

This section covers our operating norms in line with our vision and desired behaviors to achieve that vision.

Employer Value Proposition (EVP)

We have 3 key value props as an employer-

1. Great Culture
2. Great Colleagues
3. Learning and Growth

The above 3 features are a result of multiple surveys and listening sessions from our existing and exited employees.

Hiring

One of the most important aspects of our hiring process is cultural fitment. Being a remote company, we ensure that our prospective employees share our core values, and would be up and running in living those values without any training. In that context, we use a behavioral framework tool called The Predictive Index for evaluation during the interview and the selection process. We also prefer prior remote experience to support our hiring decisions.

Apart from the behavioral aspect, which is key, there could be multiple rounds of assessments for evaluating technical fitment based on the role we hire for. There could be a quick screening discussion, followed by a job-specific assignment, and then a few more interviews by a diverse panel. We follow a straightforward approach to hiring, and don't believe in adding delays to the process, unless there's a genuine reason to do so. In the best case scenario, application to offer turnaround time could be as low as 1 week.

If you are interested in working with us, please send an email to hiring@promptcloud.com with a brief of your profile and why you would be a good fit at PromptCloud.

Onboarding

We don't believe in delighting the new hires just during the onboarding process and later not being able to live up to the same expectations. While we definitely want them to like PromptCloud when they join, we want that feeling to last a lifetime. And that's why we follow a personalized training program for every new hire, using the data, insights and tools of The Predictive Index behavioral profiles to generate both self-awareness and understanding of each other. Being a relatively small team allows us this luxury of personalization. We expect the reporting manager to plan the details, including who all they talk to during the first week, how to prioritize training items based on their prior knowledge and experience, and so on. The role of a manager hence is extremely important at PromptCloud. The responsibility of a successful onboarding remains with the new hire (we are very serious about being self-driven), with full support from the reporting manager.

Some standard expectations of the new hire during onboarding are as follows-

1. Read the culture book and the employee handbook to get acquainted with our mission, vision, and values, and how we work
2. Meet and greet your team members and other members from across the teams and leadership group during the "Hi session."
3. Get access to all the internal & external tools we use (Email & email filters, Redmine, Mattermost, CrawlBoard, Predictive Index, OKR tool, etc.)
4. Complete your Predictive Index 6-minute behavioral assessment, if not already done, and explore the tools in the system that will help you understand the science behind this tool. Have get-to-know conversations with your manager and your colleagues using the profiles and relationship guides.
5. Talk to the leadership group during the first week to get a first account of our goals and OKRs for the quarter.
6. Converge on KRAs (key responsibility areas) with reporting manager.

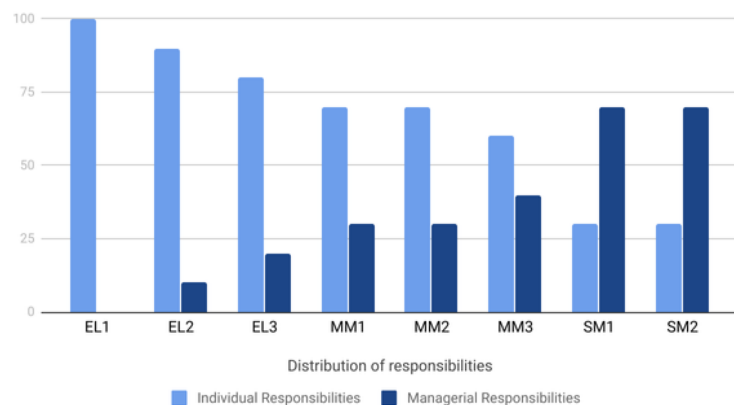
Training and career growth

We follow the 70:20:10 learning rule. Post the initial onboarding into our roles, most of the training happens on the job with some more structured training sessions sprinkled across our career paths to ensure constant learning and growth. We primarily use Talent LMS, our internal LMS, where the career paths are designed and all the necessary resources required for training or upskilling are uploaded. Our LMS is a constant WIP so it's important to keep updated with it and use it during career growth discussions with the reporting manager.

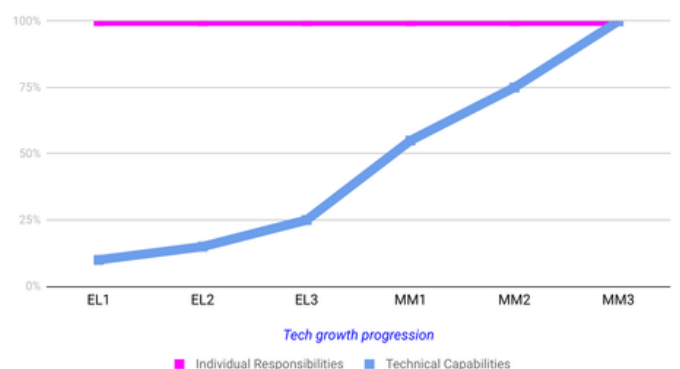
We have two tracks for career development—one that takes us to becoming a leader eventually, and the other that evolves the technical expert within us. The former is the more natural track that most of us might relate to. As we progress through this track, the amount of managerial responsibilities increases. We have a guidebook for Manager 2.0 that helps in transitioning into becoming a great manager. While we have some baseline for moving to the next level, our growth truly depends on how well we fit into the PromptCloud culture and to the extent we use the opportunities and challenges we are presented with.

There are so many development tools in The Predictive Index system to help us build both self-awareness and understanding and connection with others.

Leadership Track

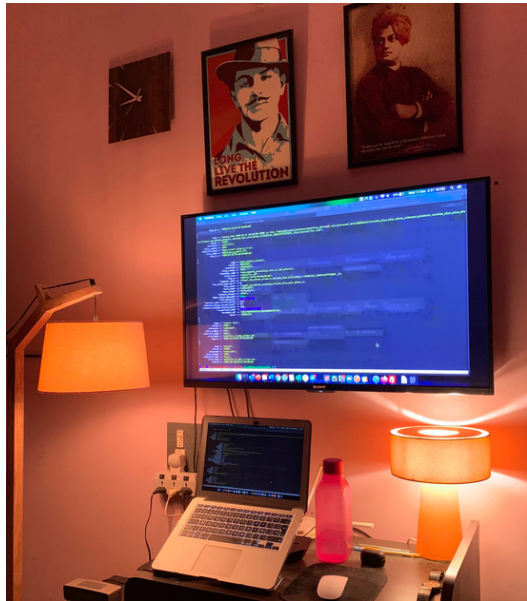


IC track



Planning

What gets planned gets done



Picture credits- Abhinaba Chakraborty's Workspace

Clutter is the only hurdle between calm and us. Organizing helps bring the focus in. We spend quality time each week planning for the upcoming week, based on the product/task backlog and our retrospection of the week gone.

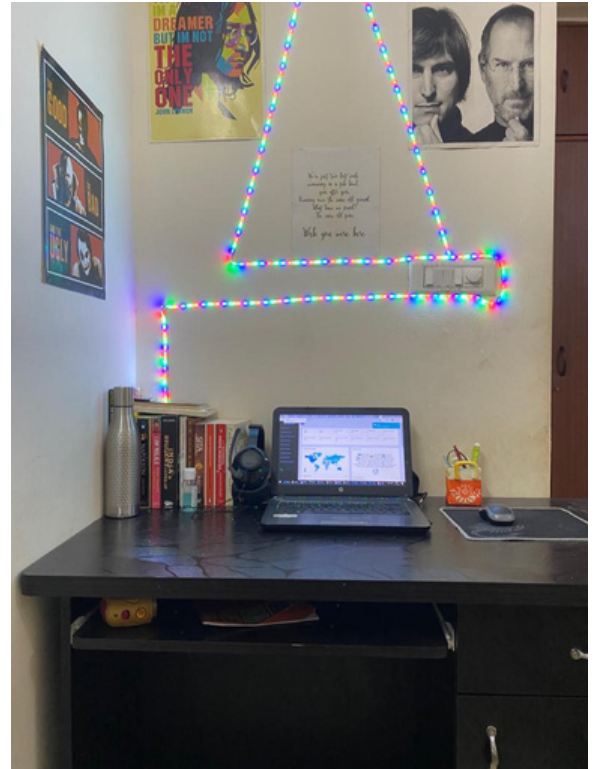
The remote and dispersed model has forced us to bring in the right amount of processes, facilitated by tools, to support our plans and ensure we are progressing. Planning is also an integral part of effective communication at PromptCloud because it reduces the need for unscheduled meetings and synchronous communication in day to day operations, except in cases of firefighting.

We do 3 layers of planning, and consequent tracking:

- 1. OKR planning meetings**- We plan team-level OKRs for an entire quarter, aligned to the company OKRs that are set forth by the leadership team. This sets the direction we are moving towards. All our sprint/weekly plans are inherently aligned to these larger OKRs. On a monthly basis, we discuss progress made on the team OKRs.
- 2. Weekly/Fortnightly sprint planning meetings**- Depending on the team you belong to, you must be planning your sprints at the end of a cycle. We pick the most important tasks that will help us move closer to our larger goals, prioritize, estimate and assign among ourselves.
- 3. Daily standup meetings**- these meetings help us come together on the same page for our team level priorities on a daily basis.
- 4. Retrospective Meetings**- We also have retrospective meetings, in order to learn from previous planning cycles, and perform better in the next plan. Goal is to achieve a level of process maturity that suits the team so that there's less chaos and 100% clarity in terms of who does what, where things are, and how much time something would take. More so, if whatever we are doing is helping us progress towards the objectives we have set for ourselves. While this might initially look like a lot of meetings, these are the only meetings we have on a regular basis as a team. We feel these meetings also help us share our learnings and bond together as a member of the PromptCloud community.

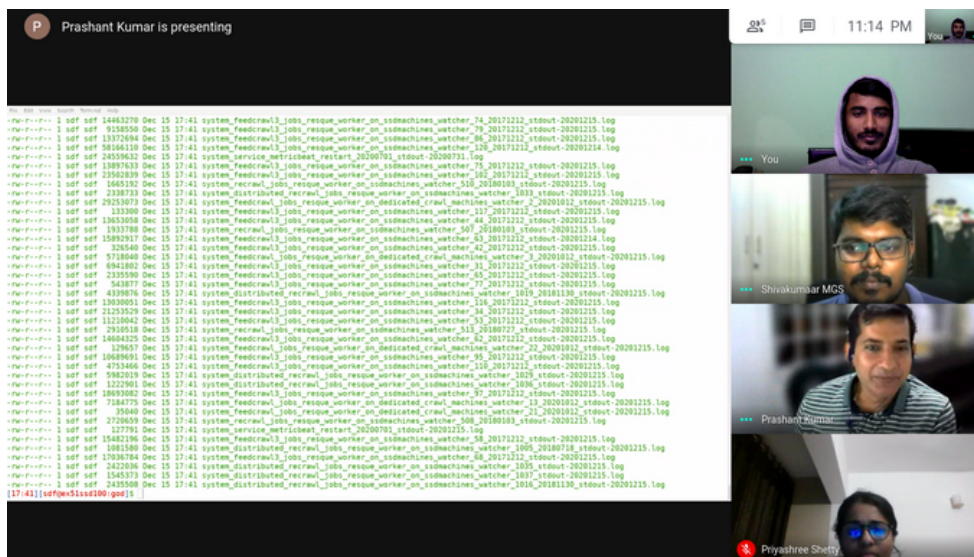
Availability

Responsible flexibility is key to achieving our PC 2.0 vision. We want to have holistic fulfilling lives, without compromising on the business goals we have set out for ourselves. As responsible individuals, we pick our own working hours that helps us achieve such a work-life blend. And yet in a way that no one is blocking on us for any input or discussion. It could be a traditional workday of 9 continuous hours with few breaks, or it could be staggered work hours, where in between we choose to work out, pick up our kids from school, or any other recreational activity we desire. However, we are conscious of the need to collaborate with our team members, and hence we publish our availability in advance to add predictability into our flexible timings. We also plan our workday to have maximum overlap with the teams we work with.



Picture credits- Abhinav Raj's Workspace

Asynchronous vs Synchronous Communication



Pic- One of the firefighting sessions

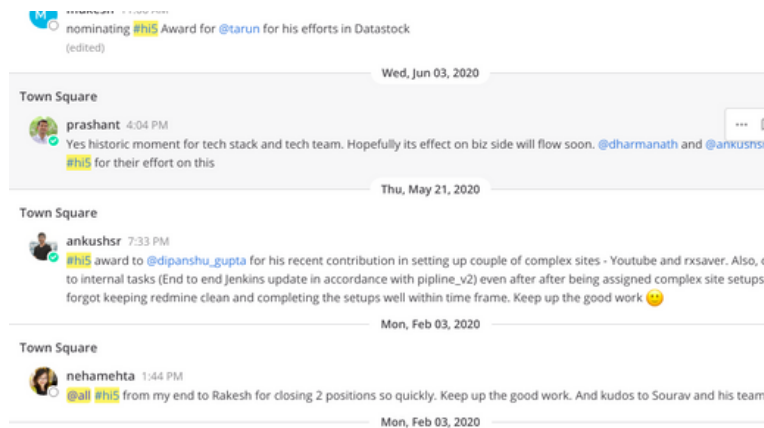
We prefer asynchronous communication for most unplanned tasks. Yet we understand that some critical tasks demand communicating in real-time. There's a key difference between unplanned and critical. Unplanned tasks are things that come up in the way as a small blocker, which could wait. Critical tasks are business critical, in the sense that we might end up disappointing the customer experience we strive for if we don't get this out of way right away. Critical tasks are rare, they might occur once or twice a year. In those "not normal" instances, we usually end up in virtual war rooms, overwriting other work norms, and being available to solve the problem at hand. Unplanned tasks, however, could come in much frequently, and can be dealt with by exploring on your own using resources available to you.

Recognition

We are serious about honest and genuine feedback, and doing so on a regular basis. We don't shy away from recognizing our peers whenever they have moved the needle. We recognize at 5 levels:

The *Hi5* Award

for going that extra mile and pushing things through; peer-driven; no set frequency and no set limits on how many such recognitions can be awarded in a month



Pic- Snapshot of Hi5 awarded on Town Square

The *Best Team* Award

The trophy team of the quarter, that drives results and bonds together towards their goals. These teams inspire others to be their best selves, and are mini-versions of the company as a whole- taking their own decisions, executing on their plans in a timely manner, and living by the core values and desired behaviors.

ESOP- We also provide ESOP options every year to our people who have excelled in their works while contributing to top line or bottom line of the business.



The *Footprint* Award

for having created an impact either on a customer or on the internal systems and having left footprints in Promptcloud history; jury-driven, bi-annual

The *CULT* Award

for being the brand ambassador of PC 2.0 culture depicting the core values and desired behaviors that will push us towards our vision quicker than we think

The *Emerging Leader* Award

for being a true leader, at whatever level you operate. Nurturing others, realizing their potential, and paving way for them to give their best. Essentially being the Manager 2.0, even if you don't already have reportees. This award too goes out bi-annually.

Connect and Bond

We interact at various levels and cadences, to overcompensate for the remote setup. We are driven by our values in the way we interact. The essence of all of our interactions is to connect and bond.



Pic- PC Annual Meet Jul'23 in Lonavala

Annual Meetup and Mini Meetups

Every year post pandemic, the entire company gathers together at a spot that's most conducive to organic connections. It's the highlight of the year where we are physically together and put faces to new names. We go through engaging sessions, connection exercises, celebrate our wins and align ourselves towards the next goals while we enjoy the cultural experience that PC brings about when all of us come together.

Besides this great annual affair, we encourage teams to get together as they deem fit throughout the year, supporting them with a small amount to enable these mini meetups of sorts.

Connect and Bond contd..

All-hands

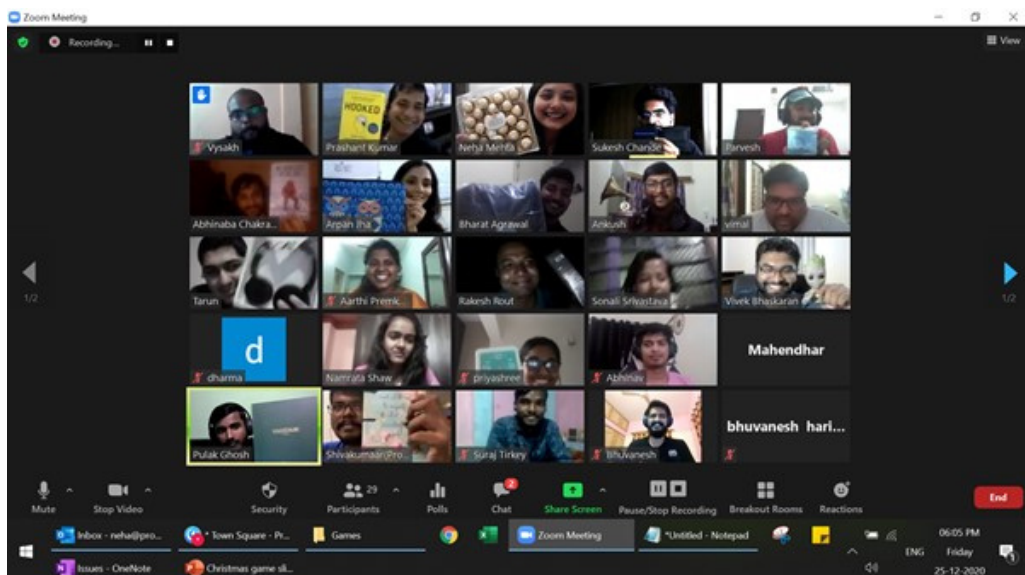
We've created multiple opportunities for the entire organization to come together to receive and share the same version of how we are doing as a company top-down and bottom-up. We hence have "Over a Quarter" sessions towards the end of each quarter led by the leadership group wherein we share progress on each department's goals and what's coming next. Additionally, every six months, we organize an "All hands and RnR" session led by our CEO and facilitated by cultural activators.

Knowledge sharing sessions, My 2 cents, et al

We strive towards learning and sharing, and hence we have formal knowledge sharing sessions on a specific topic that could be related to hardware (what we do) or the software (how we do). We usually set cadences for each such theme, and sessions are driven democratically. We have ongoing sessions for managers called Manager 2.0, "Lunch and learn" sessions within teams and so on. We also realize that each of us has a passion that others could be inspired from. So we keep experimenting with sessions like "My 2 cents" that could be on any random topic of interest ranging from How I climbed Mount Everest to The Zen Philosophy. We keep exploring new ways of achieving this goal of unlearning and learning, and hence new initiatives might be called on and off.

Fun Fridays and Celebrations

We experiment with cross-team and diverse groups coming together to play fun games on alternate Fridays. The diversity in Indian culture provides us with numerous opportunities to celebrate various occasions like Diwali, Christmas, Independence day and such. We also don't miss out on our milestones in life- be it birthdays, work anniversaries, or when embarking on parenthood.



Pic- Playing secret santa

Special Task Forces

In our quest to bring out our best versions, we find ourselves initiating new projects that could help improve one of the 3 pillars- people, business or revenue. These are usually triggered from employee surveys or take shape from brainstorming sessions held within the leadership group or other listening sessions. For each such initiative, we employ a task force, which is usually a diverse group. These task forces have specific project plans, exit criteria and are bound by timelines. This also provides us an opportunity to try our hands with something new each time which is above and beyond our usual job responsibilities.

Besides, we have a constant task force called the Culture Activators. Their sole aim is to activate culture by virtue of different initiatives from time to time. The people in this group rotate, but the task force itself is constant in our PC 2.0 journey.

Tools we use

We are supported by various tools to achieve our aspirations.



Mattermost- Daily communication, chat, asynchronous discussions and brainstorming



Redmine- Task-level planning, Issue tracking, Client communications



Culture Easy- Goal setting and tracking



The Predictive Index- Understanding self and others



Google Meet/ Zoom- Video meetings and calls



Talent LMS- Initial onboarding, learning and development

Apart from the above tools that we use org-wide, different teams might use various other tools for their own specific purposes.

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Role of a Manager in PC 2.0

PC 2.0 has been about transformation, and hence the role of a manager in PC 2.0 i.e. Manager 2.0, is crucial for business success. PromptCloud, in its remote and dispersed form, relies on great management to keep us together in a community, and to keep our teams and individuals productive. Apart from individual responsibilities, Manager 2.0 plays to win- with the right amount of care- building solid relationships that last, and dare- encouraging risks that help our teams grow holistically. Manager 2.0 lives the PC 2.0 vision- a vision that is high on outcome AND on being an employer others want to work for, where there is a sense of well-being and opportunity for personal development. We hence have a detailed guidebook to being great managers at PromptCloud, that is introduced to all new managers, and is a foundation for being better coaches for life.

Our managers are seldom about administration. We expect our managers to be a secure-base, who we can go back to recalibrate and learn from after having worked towards our goals. They are the first ones we discuss with or look upon when in doubt. They are also integral to establishing a level of process maturity that works for our strength and scale.

To help us develop both self-awareness and the awareness of individual differences in each other and in our reportees, we have invested in the Predictive Index tool which gives managers fantastic resources for every management task. Specific uses of this tool are covered in the Employee Handbook and referenced in the guide for managers.

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Final Note

Our internal task force, designed specifically for PC 2.0, has been instrumental in conducting listening sessions, and proposing new ways of working.

While transitioning into remote, we have been deeply inspired by Basecamp and Gitlab, both of whom have always operated as a remote company. Both these companies have been a guiding star in questioning our traditional belief systems.

And lastly but most importantly, Katherine Armstrong, our coach, who sowed the seeds of transformation and enlightened us with numerous insights to sail through.

Acknowledgements

This is a living document. This version of the culture book has multiple references to COVID-19, and rightly so, since it has deeply impacted in reshaping ourselves. These references will be removed as we move and adapt to newer challenges. If anyone has a suggestion for an additional section or clarifications about any content on this book, please reach out to Arpan Jha.



Picture credits- Sukesh Chande's Workspace