

2U

Raising the Bar for Remote Engineering

PRODUCT

Education technology leader that empowers great universities to offer high-quality online programs

**CHALLENGE**

Maintaining performance and productivity while shifting to 100% remote

**SOLUTION**

Implementing best practices to “raise the bar for what remote teams can deliver”

**RESULT**

Increased engineering productivity before and during the shift to all-remote

2U is an education technology leader that empowers great universities to offer high-quality online programs that positively transform the lives of students and lifelong learners. It’s not surprising that demand for the company’s support soared when colleges had to close campuses and deliver distance learning to all students as the COVID-19 crisis took hold. 2U has been working with Andela engineers since 2015, and when the pandemic forced 2U to work entirely remotely, the seven Andela engineers working with four 2U teams were ready to help.

THE CHALLENGE

Maintaining Performance and Productivity while Shifting to 100% Remote

When 2U went into all-remote mode, the company was in uncharted territory—along with most of the world. The 50 person engineering team, about half of which worked in 2U’s Brooklyn office had to reorganize without slowing down as new and existing customers needed more support.

“In this situation, everyone—leaders, staff, all of us were asking the same questions,” said 2U VP of Engineering Justin Johnson. “How do we do this? How do we run standups? How do we do pair programming? How do we do code reviews? And most importantly - how do we keep our team culture and rhythms?”

THE SOLUTION

Implementing Best Practices to “Raise the Bar for What Remote Teams Can Deliver”

Challenged to reorganize while continuing to deliver a stellar product, Justin found a valuable resource in his own distributed “back yard.” The Kenya-based Andela developers had worked with their 2U teams to develop best practices for documentation, collaboration, and communication that were quickly replicated throughout the organization.

“Working with Andela has raised the bar for what remote teams can deliver, and has helped us increase productivity

Because of our work with Andela engineers, we know how to do remote engineering. This knowledge enabled us to increase productivity during COVID because we had fewer communication barriers.

Nafisa Chowdhury
ENGINEERING DIRECTOR, 2U

The ability to say to Andela, we need two new developers in two weeks, and in two weeks they show up, they're onboarded, they're ready to go, and all we need to do is make sure that they have the right access, that's huge. There aren't very many outsourcing partners that can do that.

Justin Johnson
VP OF ENGINEERING, 2U

before and during the shift to all-remote work," said engineering director Nafisa Chowdhury. "We had playbooks that we could implement with teams that were new to all-remote work."

"The Andela engineers are not just great coders but are also remote-engineering team leaders," Justin said. "They and their 2U teams were confident enough to step up and say, 'We can help you figure this out.'"

Examples of performance-boosting best-practices from the Andela-2U teams included:

- **Documentation**—Andela had taken the lead in documenting key processes like new customer onboarding so that stakeholders knew their roles and responsibilities and were able to execute faster.
- **Collaboration**—at bi-weekly team meetings, 2U and the Andela engineers had established methodologies for remote teamwork, including everything from video meeting etiquette (screens on!) to code review.
- **Communication**—2U and Andela teams had created holistic communication norms—for work and code-related issues at stand-ups as well as for the human and cultural connections like a daily "tea time" to help teams bond under challenging circumstances.

THE RESULTS

Increased Engineering Productivity Before and During the Shift to All-Remote

The 2U team maintained pre-shutdown productivity and even gained ground in some areas by standardizing how to work side-by-side while remote.

"Because of our work with Andela engineers, we know how to do remote engineering," Nafisa said. "This knowledge enabled us to increase productivity during COVID because we had fewer communication barriers."

WORKING WITH ANDELA

Andela has provided hundreds of U.S. companies with thousands of top mid and senior engineers and has developed a robust support infrastructure to source, assess, and scale talent with partner businesses. All Andela engineers are fully trained in remote development and teamwork best practices and arrive at partner teams ready to deliver.



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