

Embrace the Remote Work Environment with Hanna Capell

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SPEAKERS

Hanna Capell, Halie Morris

H Halie Morris 00:12

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Everyday Business Solutions. My name is Halie Morris, I'm your podcast coordinator and host. Today with me I have an old friend. Her name is Hanna Capell and she's one of my old college buddies. But I've had the privilege recently of getting to see her start and absolutely flourish in her new career. So I thought I'd bring her on to talk about working remote because more employees than not have had to shift from working in person or what they thought would be in person to working remote. And it seems like she's doing a pretty good job. So, Hanna, I'm gonna let you tell us a little bit more about what you do and where you work.

H Hanna Capell 00:51

Everyone my name is Hanna and I am an Associate Account Executive at Amazon Web Services. I'm based out of Seattle, Washington, but as a lead said, I'm working remote right now. So kind of the world's my oyster. But right now I'm based out of Seattle, and I work with in sales at Amazon.

H Halie Morris 01:08

I would start off because you started fresh out of college into Seattle. How was it moving from Ohio, moving from the Toledo area all the way out to a big city like Seattle?

H Hanna Capell 01:21

Oh, gosh, totally crazy. So I would say here, this was kind of a you know, a principal moment in my life, I'd say is that big cross country move. I'd gone to school in Toledo. My I got my job offer in Seattle, and I decided to literally sell everything, take a couple boxes with me of like clothes and little mementos or whatever. And pack up and move to Seattle, I'd flown out there with three suitcases. And that's all I had. And just kind of started fresh out there. It's so much different as well. I remember being very young and

having all these, like, stereotypical or cliché dreams of like living in a city and living downtown. And it makes me feel very good to be able to do that now and living in Seattle, though it's much different than Toledo. Still not that far off.

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Halie Morris 02:05

I can say from following along with your journey, that I'm a little envious. And it's also I think I started to fall in love with Seattle through you, which is strange. I've never been there. But it's like New York. Yes, sir. To call me. They'd problem with two cities in very opposite directions calling you is like, where do you go next? No, you're just, it's very interesting. I get to see you evolve into a presidential role in our organization, and then go into a really cool role and move all the way out to Seattle, which is, you know, to be able to live a good life in Seattle, you have to work hard and make good money. It seems it's not like Toledo, where the housing is dirt cheap. And you know, there's little pockets for everybody. So and also you live over an underground city because I going back to my little history nerd. The old Seattle burned down and they still have it there. So, I mean, you got you got a city with history, and you've got an incredible job and an incredible future laid out. So I just wanted to talk a little bit about that first, because it's impressive. It's very impressive to see. Now, did you start remote when you started with your job? Or did you have any in person time?

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Hanna Capell 03:27

No, a great question. So I actually went into my job knowing that it was going to be remote. I think a big caveat to point out here though, is that we didn't know how long we be remote for so even though it wasn't necessary for me to move to Seattle right out of college, right? Like I started with a job and graduating December was starting in January. I knew that I was going to be remote, but I still wanted to have that you know rite of passage. You know, I'm graduating school, I'm ready to you know, move to my new city XYZ. And I'm so happy I did even though I work remote. And at the time we were supposed to go back into the office, I think right around maybe end of February, beginning of March. We're supposed to go back then. And then it got delayed till May and then I got delayed till July and October. Now we're delayed up until January of next year, but we're really waiting to see what that final decision will be. But I did go into the big move knowing that I would be remote, but still need

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Halie Morris 04:17

both. Okay, so you knew you needed a place to work at home? Oh, yes. When you first moved out and when you got started remote. What was that experience like coming from you know, being in college very lively, active environment. I mean, excluding most of the end of college, which was just weird. You're used to interacting with people I know you're very like social and engaging person, very fun person to interact with. And you were working alone from a home office. What was that experience like that first starting off all the way up until now?

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Hanna Capell 04:54

I think I think a lot of grads can relate to this. Definitely very different than expected. But although I think in a way, I almost signed up for it right. So I moved in, I knew I didn't have to. I moved and I was just working from home. I'd say like the first week or so, was suddenly kind of odd. Like my parents had laughed, my parents had flown out with me to HSG, my new home and they had left and I started work and

definitely was quiet. I didn't know anybody. In Seattle, I had no friends in Seattle, I didn't know anybody my apartment. And I was just kind of meeting people at work via like our Slack channels, and like my co workers and whatnot. But we had never met in person before, because at the time, COVID was still pretty serious in Seattle. But with that being said, I definitely harness the power of social media, figuring out people that I've met throughout college, whether that be at, you know, business conferences, or through student orgs, or things like that, I had found some people that had lived in Seattle and had connected with them. So that was a really good opportunity for me to start to make some friends while I moved. But in terms of the work adjustment, definitely really odd, because that socialization is kind of very critical for a new job. So I kind of had to look outside the box in order to how to get that socialization during COVID. And working from home.

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Halie Morris 06:10

Food, what were some things that maybe like you did, or the your Boston or your company, did that helped you start to bridge those gaps with your own team members?

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Hanna Capell 06:25

That's a great question. And I think something important to point out as well as the team that I joined at Amazon, we were all fresh grads, so we were all in the same situation. We were all joining at the same time. So we all kind of had this like how do I need everybody? My manager and our organization did a really good job of making adjustment there, I'd say at just a team level. So at our management level, we had done weekly coffee chats, so we had done coffee chats, and we had done a happy hour every week. So we do a virtual Happy Hour on Thursdays. And then we would have our coffee chats that were like Friday afternoons. So just like something kind of fun to step away from work and do this would be anything from playing like some type of like online Pictionary as a team where we do some like online puzzle together, just something collaborative and like an activity instead of just like sitting and chatting like watercooler chat, we would actually do different like interactive activities online together.

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Halie Morris 07:15

Oh, important kind of going off of that because of I've seen a lot of people when they transition remote. They find not a lot of problems, say sometimes taking the work remote like those work conversations. But how important do you think it is? Organizing those virtual social, social Lauer's or virtual like games and things?

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Hanna Capell 07:39

Yeah, no great question. And this was something that I was faced as a challenge for the first probably six months at my job, was really like finding the value in setting aside that social time during work. So often, I would just, you know, sit there and I'd be I'd really be working all day. And it would be probably like, like, you know, nine hours later, I'm like, I've literally just been working nonstop. Because typically, we don't think of those short interactions in a in person workplace as being socialization, you know, like being able to like walk and go to the kitchen or walk to the cafe and get a copy. You don't really think of those like passing interactions as being social that you have no interaction with while you're remote. So I think it can

be kind of like cheesy at times, or like kind of cliché to do. It's, it's definitely critical in order to step back, turn off the work notifications for a second and just do something to entertain yourself and to socialize with your coworkers.

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Halie Morris 08:29

No, I think that's cool. I haven't heard as many people talk about non work socialization with their co workers. You know, it's something like you said, we do in person, we actually, for the hell of it today. We organized a potluck, and we're dressing up in costumes on Friday. So this would have been hilarious if this was Friday, because I would not skip out on costume day, I got third last year, and I need to need to take that first place. All those interactions, though, you don't think of them until you're separated. And so when we first went remote I had, my work had slowed down, I was working in recruitment, I was building out training guides, I had finished building out the training guides, and recruitment had slowed to the point where I wasn't even actively doing it anymore, because one person was enough. And suddenly, like I was trying to pick up bad projects, but it's hard to pick up out projects when you can't jump into somebody's office and touch base with them, see where they're at and offer help and assistance, which is what I do. So it was really, really weird, and I had just gone full time, too. So it was my first time like working fully eight hours a day usually more and I couldn't interact with people. While I get that point when I first we first first went remote I was still part time but I was finishing up school and doing everything else. And it was just like it felt like a different type of work for eight hours straight. So then we came back and I, I struggled with it for a long time, because for a while I was one of the first people back and there was nobody in this office. And it was very quiet. So now we have potlucks and everything else we have had a cornhole tournament. In, you know, you don't think of it when it comes to the remote team members. Because for a while, we had maybe three or four that were active, that were huge, you know, that weren't really kind of contracting out what they did, and preferred that, that were remote. So we didn't have to, besides bringing them in a couple times a year, there wasn't a lot of need to host virtual events. But I really liked the idea of doing more things like that. And making it intentional to say, oh, no, we need to pause work. We need to grab a little sentence something and sit down and just exactly. With that working with your team, this new experience and things like that, what are your tips and tricks are things that you do to stay on task and to engage yourself throughout the day when you're working remote when it's just kind of you in a room by yourself?

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Hanna Capell 11:14

Yes, so another great question. Um, I would say here, there's, there's, there's a couple of tips and tricks. The first of which being, I find that I'm not very productive, working remote, you know, it's very, very simple to wake up out of bed and go right into your home office and get right on line, right. But that's not how it works in in person work, you don't like just get up and go to work. And I find that I'm much more productive in order to have a little bit of a slower morning. So maybe that means I wake up, you know, an hour or two little earlier, but I find that I'm way more productive. If I set a time time for myself, you know, maybe that would be commuting time for a traditional in office setting. But just setting aside time, maybe I go to a cafe and I just sit and I have a coffee for a little bit. Maybe I read a book, maybe I go outside for a walk, do something like that. But setting aside that time is really helped me become more productive at work. I'd say another area is again, just making time for yourself, I really kind of beat myself up in the beginning of work of I need to stay here I need to be online, you need to be available to everybody all the time. But realistically, that's that's not how it works in the real world anyway, you need to be able to be okay with walking away with your computer for 1015 minutes, walk away from your computer for 30 minutes, do what you need to do in order to make yourself more productive as the longer you sit there just for eight hours engaged on just strictly on work. At least for me, I've become very unproductive that way.

So being able to break it up, like you know, maybe working from home, I take a break and I like wash the dishes or something for five minutes and go back to work or I go for a little walk or do something like that. That has definitely helped me stay more productive.

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Halie Morris 12:43

I didn't even think about the slower morning thing because my mornings are not slow. When you're very hectic, they usually involve my younger sister is getting ready for school and to talk to puppies, what I would use technically five, but she's a puppy. And all of them require attention. But then I also have to get myself ready in the same amount of time. So I don't have some mornings. But it is very interesting. Because, you know, thinking about if your day doesn't start with work, how much more productive would you be there be when you finally get to it, whether that's in a home office or in the building? You know, I think that's something that I like about like our generation. And our like, as we coming up into the workforce and gaining ground is that we're so much more conscious of mental health, and like our mental stamina that we're able to make decisions like that. I completely agree with you. They're completely agree. Yeah, I think we're the ones that said like we're done with the burnout, we're done with chuggin. Like, just, we want to be happy too. And I think it's made workplaces a lot more enjoyable. And it's a lot easier to collaborate when you're at a healthier frame of mind than when everybody's job is a chore. So yes. So I guess transitioning off that working. You're not only working remote, you're also like a very talented individual and a really good job. What are some of the things kind of coming in? You know, you recently went through the interview process, not too terribly long ago, but also you've started a new job, what are some things that are kind of your maker breaks that made this job? the right fit for you versus maybe a different one?

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Hanna Capell 14:31

Great question. I would say going into college I I should say probably going into graduation, I knew I wanted to go into tech sales, that was an area that's obviously very booming. Anything cloud based is very up and coming still to this day, even though it's been around for a little bit and I really want to be part of that change in that movement. I'd say a big thing for me, of course was going to be location so I knew I wanted to live in a big city and that was a big break for me. You know, I had a couple different offers Some of them were in a little bit smaller town, some of them were in more rural areas, or maybe not directly in the city itself. But I knew that my offer from Amazon I feel to live directly like downtown Seattle, which was exactly what I was looking for. I'd say besides that, as well, of course, a little cliché to say, but just a company of innovation, a company that's very much forward looking and curious as to what the future holds. I knew I didn't want to be in a workplace that was kind of set on old ways and set an old habits. And it's a really big, really big reoccurrence, you see, not only Amazon, but I am some web services to AWS is just always looking forward and always seeing how we can improve things, not only for our customers, but for our people in the workplace, too.

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Halie Morris 15:39

It made me very happy when you mentioned cloud based services, because this is a company that's, that's what we you know, all of our products and services are cloud based and can be accessed. And it almost seems silly to go without those kinds of things. Like he said, like it's been around for a while the technology is there, it's been very integrated into everything we do. But just being at the forefront is been one of the most secure types of jobs that you can have. Somewhere in that industry. So like our company, you know, we had our ups and downs, but we overall grew during a period of, you know, uncertainty. So

that's very interesting. No, and that's, I think, to your ability to prioritize your location and what you wanted above. saddling, you were able to get weight. And I've always, you know, I like I said, I've known you so I know you're a go getter. I know that when you're driven. I absolutely shocked if you don't get what you want. Like, yeah, I don't believe it happens, but whatever.

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Hanna Capell 16:47

Maybe not all the time even not all.

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Halie Morris 16:50

So she says, but But seriously, I think, yeah, you know, it's, I think what I noticed your conversation, it's the fit, it's what you want and need, and what our priorities for you, and then what the company can offer. I think, you know, some companies, you're going to find really, really great applicants, but you're just not the company that's going to be able to give them what they want to career and that's fine. It's more important to find those people who can be happy where they're at with you and grow with you and be happy then to find employees that you know are probably only going to stick it out of yours so just because the forced to fit prematurely or you're forced to fit that wasn't wasn't going to work. Like having Hanna Capell in Toledo, Ohio, just wasn't gonna work. We're not quite that big for, for growing. But we're not that big.

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Hanna Capell 17:45

Yet, but growing, but growing is like growing the critical heart out of

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Halie Morris 17:49

Seattle, though, was Seattle, the city that you thought you would end up with? Or were you kind of just shooting for one of the bigger cities?

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Hanna Capell 17:56

A great question. Well, not at all where I thought I was gonna end up and funny. You mentioned it too. So I don't know if I really been told many people this my freshman year of college, I actually did an internship in early childhood education. And I lived in Washington Island, it's called Whidbey Island. And I lived out there for about four months. So I did that I like was stuck on this island. And long story short is like stuck on silent without a car. I was like Washington, I'm never going to be back here like, XYZ terrible for me to have that like, preconceived notion of Washington in general, or categorize it as that, but it's like, I'm never gonna be back here. And of course, I'd gone along throughout college, and I had lived in Dallas and whatnot. And I grew up in Metro Detroit. So I knew like what the big city seemed looks like. And I was really set on actually moving to Austin, Texas. I was like, I love Austin, really want to see myself down there. I love the weather. I love the culture. I love just the people down there. But it ended up turning out that my offer from Amazon from AWS was in Seattle, and I sat there and consider I was like, Okay, I need to I need to reconsider what it happens like before. Like, it's not like the whole state is bad. And of course, would be islands beautiful. But you know, this time I can have a car and I can have freedom and whatnot.

Also not 18 anymore. So that's probably going to change perspective on quite a bit. But it just felt right. So I wouldn't say that I was aiming for Seattle, but I think it's kind of funny how full circle it happens of, you know, freshman year college, I was living out toward there. And after grad, I ended up in the same place. So kind of funny how the universe works sometimes.

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Halie Morris 19:28

And it's, I've learned that I've only been to a couple of big, big cities and events. Chicago is one of them. And it's like looking at Chicago. And then actually putting in perspective that's part of Illinois is always goofy because they're Illinois and they're Chicago. Yeah. And they're not the same thing.

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Hanna Capell 19:49

Oh, not at all. Not Not at all. Not at all. Yeah, it's

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Halie Morris 19:51

like New York state New York City, not the same thing. And you know, I never thought of I never thought of One, Washington has been like as gorgeous as it is. But I think what who, one of our friends, Seth has been out there for a while, and his pictures make me drool every time I see them. It's gorgeous. But to like I never thought Washington have been like this gorgeous state as far as its nature, but also like I never realized, like how alive Seattle is. It's a kind of thought that city that's tucked up in the corner of the country is forgotten a little bit. But I've learned from your pictures and other people who've traveled there and things like that. It is a very thriving city is gorgeous. And it definitely suits your personality, from what I can tell. So

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Hanna Capell 20:44

no, I appreciate I appreciate that. And I think one of the big things that I learned to really appreciate about Seattle is the mix of city life and the city of recreation. And if that makes sense. But your ability to you know, live downtown being a major city be like in this booming tech industry, and within 20 minutes, you can, you know, be on a boat, you can be kayaking, hiking mountain, just the amount of recreational activity to be done in Seattle is insane. And unlike any other city, I'd say probably closest would be maybe like Denver, or maybe like Phoenix or something like that. But I didn't really appreciate that about Seattle, too, is just the ability to have

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Halie Morris 21:20

kind of everything. Yeah. Are you ready to Seattle? Seattle, people don't stay to the city. They they spread out and embrace the that's kind of cool. Oh, yes. I just think of like, when I was growing up. People talk about kids in New York have never seen cows. Yeah. And I'm like, practically there's cows on our land, you know, like, we have cows, or we have horses and stuff. And I grew up around cornfields. So I grew up where I didn't see mountains until middle school. And there's a smaller part of the Smokies, yeah, yeah, me too. Me too. But then again, I've never seen the west coast and I've never been out west and about the change that so fresh times for everything. But no, it's it's really cool. It's amazing learning about your

perspective, right now, in a remote work environment, evolving tech industry, like you said, but also just as, like you're a good employee to have, you're the kind of employee a lot of employers are going to look for. So to see what you like, and what makes your job enjoyable for you, that's going to help people really understand where they kind of need to get their ducks in a row to create the kind of climate that attracts applicants like you. So yeah. Is there anything that you would leave our listeners with in regards to if they're job hunting? Or if they're even attracting applicants? If they're going the employer side? And they want to draw in new applicants? Is there anything that you would leave them with?

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Hanna Capell 22:54

Oh, is it a great question again, and a pretty common conversation I've been having with some individuals recently. But really looking at people that are, I'd say, actually, this is probably more geared toward individuals that would be hiring, really look at that target audience of what is a priority to them. And I think when I say that, what I mean is, for our generation, working remote is something that's very easy. For a lot of us, I may not be preferred by everybody. But I see like, by majority of people within like, my organization, a lot of people enjoy working remote, and we have a very firm grasp on the ability to you know, use the technology and use Zoom and use WebEx and whatever. But I also see in a lot of places that the individuals that make the decisions of you know, working remote, and how that's going to look aren't necessarily intergeneration. So I think, you know, leading with empathy and leading with understanding of what, like your target audience, if you're looking to hire mostly people out of college grads and decisions you create, in order to attract those individuals are going to have to align with their wants. I'd say that would be a big thing from a recruiting perspective, from an individual perspective of somebody looking for a job right now. Really make that make that list of what's a priority to you make that list of you know, is it your location, is that the most important is it? No, the salaries and the ability to work remote? Is it flexibility, flexibility in hours, figure out what those like top three are going to be and then go into that job search I that made things a lot easier for me when making my final decisions as to what company would best align with my values and very happy where I'm at right now.

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Halie Morris 24:27

I have one last question. This might be a hard one, I don't know. But from an employer perspective, something I've noticed is there's some hard and fast requirements that employers look for such as number of years of experience, or things like that. What is What are your thoughts on an employer who's not just prioritizing, be able to meet the needs of their target audience, but the requirements that they actually set forward or how strict they are on those requirements to attract the right people in the audience.

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Hanna Capell 25:00

I think I think this is almost an easy question, you know, those preferred qualifications, that's, that's going to be key, I think one thing we really overlook is hiring based on, you know, your ability to fit into the group and your ability to fit into the culture. You could have somebody that has, you know, exact experience that you need, but they can be complete non culture fit. And I think that's overlooked in a lot of organizations. I think one, one good thing to point out to, specifically within AWS, in my own experience, is we put a really big, really big emphasis on hiring based on our leadership principles as an organization. So we work on 12 leadership principles, and as long as your experience and your stories are aligning to those stories, then then it makes sense, you know, so of course, you're going to have those individuals that have that exact

experience. But I think you can miss out on a lot of talent by having required, let's say, required requirements, but required qualifications. You miss out on a lot of talent there if you overlooked Yeah, that's

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Halie Morris 25:59

hard, fast. Like the the hard stops, I think are what get, especially because they, they put them in indeed. And it's like you have to have this many years of sales or marketing or law experience. And then you might have somebody who has five years of experience versus somebody who has one in the one person's learn more in their one year. And that person who's just kind of coasted for five years, you never know. Hanna, did you have any questions for us before I let you go?

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Hanna Capell 26:27

No questions as of right now, besides just a big acknowledgement and a big thank you for having me really appreciate it. I've been looking forward to this for a while and curious to see all who listen and be happy to share advice or any insight that I can provide there too.

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Halie Morris 26:44

Well, thank you, Hanna. I really appreciate you coming on. I've always kind of looked up to you. And so now to get to share that with our audience is very exciting. So thank you for coming on. And then thank you everyone for tuning in to this month's episode, all the blog posts ready with what we just talked about, as well as a full transcript that you can catch over on our website. In the meantime, follow us on socials and we'll also link out Hanna's LinkedIn and things like that so you can reach out to her if you'd like to connect. Thank you