



# Our startup guide to staying social while remote

# What's in this guide

Avochato transitioned to a remote-first company last year. This wasn't a change that we had planned for, and like many other companies we're still figuring it out as we go.

We know that maintaining strong interpersonal relationships is crucial – especially while remote, and especially at our size (currently 25 employees and growing). However, we don't have a ton of resources to devote towards event planning and activities.

Given that, we wanted to share some of our learnings as the TOAST (Totally Official Avochato Social Team). We've experimented with a variety of activities, keeping a mind towards budget while also trying to find a mix of casual, low-maintenance, and high engagement events. We have also loved partnering with our clients whenever possible, and wanted to share some of the specific vendors that we've found.



# Key learnings from our team

**Text:** we have heavily used [our own product](#) (text messaging software) to communicate updates to the team. We sent GIF-laden messages promoting upcoming events or general info. Having a dedicated social channel was a nice way to build excitement while centralizing communications.

**Mail:** people LOVE receiving things in the mail. In the monotony of working from home, an unexpected package was an easy way to spark delight.

**Plan:** a note to the lesson above - shipping takes time. Not just the physical delivery, but the gathering of addresses and entering of information. Spread out the load, or just bake this into a team member's duties appropriately.

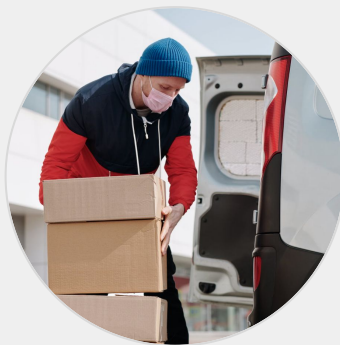
**Adapt:** recurring unstructured events might work for a smaller team, but quickly become very challenging at any larger cross-departmental scale. They require structure or agenda, otherwise attendance can drop off very quickly.

# Three different types of events

for all team and budget sizes.



**Hosted events**



**Supplied events**



**No-spend events**



# Hosted events

Events that need a budget, but require far less planning for the internal organizer.



# Maker Wine Tasting



**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



[Maker Wine](#) has a very compelling story: it's run by two women who partner with wineries to provide high quality wines in an approachable format (cans!) They guided us through each of the three different varietals, and we were provided helpful back-story about the wine industry and the individual wine makers who had created each blend. The wine itself was great, and the cans made for an easier tasting experience so that you didn't have to open several bottles on your own. As a bonus, we had an extra can of each blend to drink at a later date. It requires coordination for shipping, but the event was very well received by the team.



# Guided Yoga with Betta

**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



Betta did a great job taking the team through a [30-minute yoga class](#) that was accessible to all levels. It's an easy event to set up - she was great to work with and super responsive - and a great way to break up the week.



# Hey! Coffee Tasting



Budget



Time investment



Lead time



We love [Hey! Coffee's](#) approach to community involvement, and overall attitude towards coffee. It's important to coordinate ahead of time given that the coffee needs to be shipped, but it's a nice alternative to evening or drinking events. Greg and Tommy were really easy to work with and coordinate, and the "still learning" pack is a cool concept for incorporating different roasts into the final blend.

A close-up photograph of a desk lamp with a white, oval-shaped shade and a black base. The lamp is turned on, casting a warm glow. In the foreground, there are some papers and a pen, slightly out of focus.

# Murder Mystery

**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



At the end of the day, we felt that running our own murder mystery required more planning and coordination than the team was prepared to take on. For a highly-facilitated experience, we went with [Team Building](#). From the beginning, it was very smooth and painless. We did need to select a date about a month out, though the team has been flexible and accommodating.



# AirBnb Donut Making Lesson

**Budget**



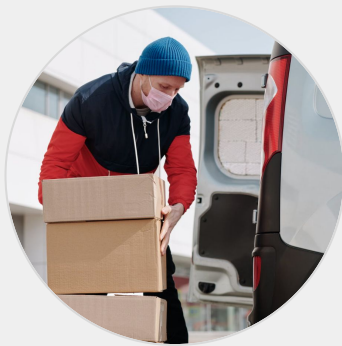
**Time investment**



**Lead time**

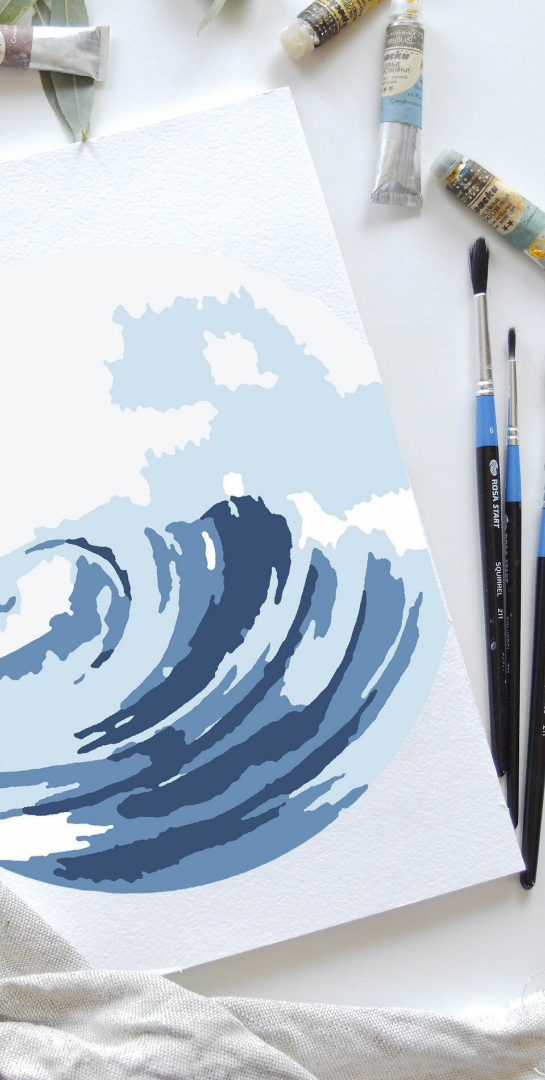


This was a [fun and highly interactive event](#) that walked through the steps to make our own donuts at home. It also helped to send out [donut pans](#) from Amazon ahead of time, which did require some coordination, but no other special cooking supplies were needed. As an alternative to drinking-focused events, this was also a good way for employees with kids to include them in the activities.



# Supplied events

A more budget-friendly option: send supplies to the team and host the event yourself.



# Paint and Sip

**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



We love a good paint night, though generally think a lot of the ones out there are a little tacky. We were really excited to find [Cate Paper Co.'s](#) kits, which actually look like something we would not be embarrassed to have on the wall. Because we were assembling the packages at home, we also bought some [cheap easels](#) from Amazon.



# DIY Cocktail Making

**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



For our holiday party, one member of the team volunteered to guide the company through making a few different cocktails. As a fun bonus, we [sent bitters](#) out to all of the team members. To make it even easier, you can also consider sending out Drizly gift cards, or just make it entirely DIY.



# Secret Santa

**Budget**



**Time investment**



**Lead time**



Also for our holiday party, we orchestrated a Secret Santa gift exchange. The easiest way to do it is to get gift cards and ask each individual to place the orders for their assigned person. It's also good to keep in mind that shipping around the holidays can be challenging and take a bit longer, so make sure you plan ahead.



# No-spend events

More casual events, general social opportunities.

# Trivia

Time investment



Lead time



We've tried two different strategies for trivia: first, we've used Jackbox's [party pack](#) which required some initial set-up but generally worked well. The other approach was to attempt to DIY trivia. This was a bit more challenging, though definitely felt more personal and interactive with the team. It requires a willing and committed host, however.



# Name That Tune (humming edition)

**Time investment**



**Lead time**



You could either include this as a round within trivia, or have it as a standalone event. We had a lot of success with a “humming” guessing game, where we secretly provided one team member with a song over Slack, and instructed them to hum that song while the rest of the (muted) attendees tried to guess. This worked much better than trying to share audio and was highly entertaining. It also requires minimal coordination ahead of time, since all you really need is a list of identifiable songs that you think most of your team would know.



# Hot Seat (This or That)

**Time investment**



**Lead time**



This is great for new hires, or just as a fun rotating activity. We ask the person on the hot seat a series of “this or that” questions. We used a [silly deck](#) that I created to run through the questions, though it could easily be adapted for more specific and timely options within the company.



# BYO Joke

**Time investment**



**Lead time**



By far the easiest happy hour to coordinate, this was a great way to add the tiniest bit of structure to an otherwise generic happy hour. The premise was to have each person tell a joke. It was very loosely enforced, and easily allowed for the rest of the happy hour conversation flow as needed. Whenever there was a pause or a break, the host would call upon someone at random to tell a joke. Pro tip: take advantage of Zoom's spotlight feature while each joke is being told, which adds a little bit of flair to the event.

# Photo Surveys

Time investment



Lead time



As part of using [our texting product](#) to coordinate events, we also have a lot of fun asking employees various survey questions. For example, around Halloween, we asked everyone to send in a picture of themselves in costume. We put those in a deck and then asked each person to explain themselves or otherwise elaborate on the picture. Collecting the info is a lot of fun, and generally an easy way to grow excitement and encourage attendance for the actual event. Plus, people just love to see photos of each other – it's definitely a lot more engaging and helps them to open up.



# Fun Facts

**Time investment**



**Lead time**

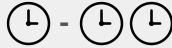


When left to their own devices, fun fact circles can spiral into a LOT of time. As with photo surveys, collecting the information ahead of the event and putting it in a deck helps keep the train moving and allows for more structure and less waiting and thinking. If done well, it's also another great tool for get-to-know-you events.



# Self-Sourced Cooking Classes

**Time investment**



**Lead time**



Around Thanksgiving, one of our team members led us in a pumpkin pie making class. This required a small amount of coordination to just ensure that everyone had the ingredient list ahead of time. It worked well for a recipe that was timely and didn't require too many obscure ingredients, had a reasonable number of steps, and required no special equipment. After the success of the guided donut making, we definitely had a good model for our own self-hosted activities.



Want to learn more about how to use  
SMS to coordinate team activities?

Text us at **(415) 214-8977**.