

Success Story #4

with Sibylle Greindl, Head of Acquisition at Accountable

Maddie Duke 00:04

You're listening to *The State Of Work*, the podcast by Lano. *The State Of Work* is about finding your place in the changing world of work as an individual or an organization. In each episode, we dive into some of the benefits and limitations we face when it comes to remote and flexible work. We'll discuss how we work, how we hire and manage people, and how we live in this increasingly global workplace. I'm your host, Maddie Duke. And in this week's success story, I'm speaking to Sibylle Greindl, Head of Acquisition at Accountable. Accountable is a tax and bookkeeping app specifically for freelancers. By automating admin processes, Accountable enables freelancers to focus on what really matters to them, and to take the stress out of managing taxes. I spoke to Sibylle about her experiences of working with Accountable's distributed team.

Hi, Sibylle. Welcome to *The State of Work*.

Sibylle Greindl 01:07

Hi, Maddie. Nice to be with you.

Maddie Duke 01:09

Whereabouts are you joining from today?

Sibylle Greindl 01:11

I'm joining from Brussels, Belgium.

Maddie Duke 01:13

Awesome. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and where you're working?

Sibylle Greindl 01:18

So I work for Accountable. We're a solution, a tax solution, for the self-employed in Europe... in Germany. So we first offer the self-employed the opportunity to get control and visibility over the taxes from the phone and just say goodbye to paperwork for real. We are a solution for people who are not interested in taxes, but like to understand them and get control over them. And

what I do in the company, I was one of the first, one of the first employees and one of the first non-dev employees. I am now in charge of the entire acquisition for the German market, the Belgium market and every other initiative we might take. So initially, we were just out to build a solution to build a product. So there were devs that were coding the solution. And then one person in charge of sales and I would be in charge of acquisitions, including blog, ads, content, PR, all these things.

Maddie Duke 02:22

Yeah, under a huge umbrella, okay.

Sibylle Greindl 02:24

Yeah.

Maddie Duke 02:25

Is it officially a remote position?

Sibylle Greindl 02:30

Um no, location is not the most important thing. Like we should be able to see the colleagues from time to time, but we could work from basically anywhere, we have colleagues that are based anywhere in Europe and joint working with us. But yeah, I tried to be in Berlin, quite often, Covid permitting, so that we can discuss and really get a feel of the market, which you can't do from your own laptop at home.

Maddie Duke 02:59

And so are there two offices, one in Brussels and one in Berlin, or..

Sibylle Greindl 03:04

Yes, there are two offices, one in Brussels, one in Berlin. I think on a daily basis, more employees are presenting in Berlin than in Brussels.

Maddie Duke 03:14

Okay, yep. And is there a remote or hybrid work policy in place?

Sibylle Greindl 03:19

Yeah. So things changed with Covid. So before Covid, I would say that Wednesday was the day where anyone could choose whether they would want to work from home or work in the office. And when the lockdown started, I wanted to work from home, but we already had all the tools in place, which made it really easy to transition to a full remote setup. I know we are still kind of in this half lockdown mode. So the ones who are able to come to the office would come to the office and the others still work remotely. But obviously, it might impact your recruiting. So if you need someone who can code this person can be anywhere in the world, can be a developer, no matter what cultural background - it is the same approach when you do different jobs, probably.

Maddie Duke 04:13

You mentioned that you kind of already set up to be able to have people working from home or working remotely. What does that set up look like? Are you using any particular tools or software to manage everyday work?

Sibylle Greindl 04:26

So we have a chat solution that is, well, I would say well organized in my perception. We have conversation groups. We have informal conversations. And we discuss absolutely everything there. But we don't waste too much time either because you know not to look at conversations that are not relevant for you at that very moment. So that's an important thing. Otherwise, we have another tool that is like Google Drive but better I would say where we take notes and get our like knowledge of the company. We use Airtable a lot as well to plan projects and in groups. I will say that there is no information that I use that is locked on my own laptop, in my own laptop. Everything is in one of the clouds that the team has access to. Yeah, I mean, it might seem obvious, but I don't know if it's the case in every company.

Maddie Duke 05:22

True. Yeah, it might not be.

Sibylle Greindl 05:25

Yeah, so yeah we've always worked like this.

Maddie Duke 05:29

Okay, I say that then you are already set up to shift, yeah, officially to something more remote. What do you think one of the biggest advantages of working remotely has been for you personally, and then maybe also for the company?

Sibylle Greindl 05:44

I think for company, our company, or any company, it changes a bit the rules for recruiting, it can recruit for an entire role, so for specific profiles, it can make it easier, I think, for the profiles, it's very important to, to be in touch with the market itself and to understand it, so to speak the language and potentially have affinities with the recruiters. But for the profiles, it's not a requirement, it's a plus, to have access to the entire job market, I would say, that that could be a change for our company or any company. Another change, and I could not say this is the case for every company is, once you work remotely and communicate in written, you're obliged to communicate to over communicate about everything. Otherwise, there could be misunderstandings, where you're ready to kind of get this does that make sense to me. We agree on this project, and you will do this and this and you have this in written otherwise you would have discussed this, you know, just over your laptop from your desk. So yeah, you need to over communicate. I guess this could be the two main challenges. And then it could also be if you're a company that is well organized for remote working, I think it could be perceived by candidates as a plus as well.

Maddie Duke 07:08

Yeah, it's definitely more attractive and people expect it.

Sibylle Greindl 07:14

And as a person. Yeah, it's, it's mixed. I sometimes miss the energy of being in the office with my colleagues, that gives me a lot of energy. But on the other hand, working from home allows me for longer, like longer stretches of concentration, not being interrupted, not being distracted. So it's super valuable, as well. Also having a bit of both is ideal. And I think that work life balances obviously is a win... less commute. Just after the first lockdown the beginning of the year, no, at the end of last year, we had a baby - I already forget when.. And when you start a family, then it's much easier to be able to work remotely from time to time because you like every minute that you can save is valuable. So that's a general personal level. I guess I'm not the only one that appreciates that.

Maddie Duke 08:14

Did remote work and work from home at Accountable also come with an element of flexibility in terms of time? Like, are you able to start a bit earlier and finish earlier? Or are you still kind of working between the regular nine to five?

Sibylle Greindl 08:31

Yeah, we have always been a rather a company that would focus on results more on than on time. So I don't think it changed anything. I think it's really okay to say, I could totally tell my team that at six, okay, I need a break. And it's... I need to rush to daycare to pick up the baby. And I'll be like eight. And it's really no problem. You know, I need a break for like 30 minutes, but I'll be back later and I will do this in the office as well. I would go for a walk for like 15 minutes or 30 minutes very openly not pretend that I'm taking the call somewhere else. So I don't think it really changed anything because we have always been pretty open about that.

Maddie Duke 09:08

So valuing, like trust and results rather than that sort of what focusing really intensely on the detail of the input, maybe.,

Sibylle Greindl 09:20

Yeah this may be one thing about remote. Some of us pay attention, especially the one's work a lot in teams to let the others know when they take a break or when they're having lunch or when they're in a meeting. So you don't expect a quick answer and that sometimes it's useful when you work remotely because you have no idea whether you can count on your colleague at that very moment or you have to wait for ten minutes.

Maddie Duke 09:43

So yeah, that's a really good point. Does Accountable work with any freelancers?

Sibylle Greindl 09:49

Yes, we work for freelancers, but we also work with freelancers a lot. It's especially interesting for us to work with freelancers who can at least at the part of the company that I know best, we appreciate freelancers who can create content, because they bring their own point of view of... okay, this is my brain, this is how I see things. So it's very valuable not to produce necessarily all content, all videos or ads in ours, but also their opinions. And their best I would say, yeah, in Germany, but not necessarily in Berlin.

Maddie Duke 10:25

That's quite a unique advantage, I would say where freelancers can help you to create content, and they're also your target audience that you're trying to appeal to. So that's such, like, they can bring a really valuable perspective. Yeah, yeah, definitely. I guess for any self employed people listening that are based in Germany or Belgium, check out Accountable.

Sibylle Greindl 10:51

I guess so. I can only recommend it. Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Maddie Duke 10:58

Do you have any kind of rituals around celebrations or completing projects when people are based in different places?

Sibylle Greindl 11:07

Yeah. Every Friday, we close the week with a meeting with absolutely everyone taking part in the company. And I think it's kind of a yeah, it's a bit of a celebration, discussing the achievements....discussing company projects.

Maddie Duke 11:22

Yep, awesome. I guess that kind of covers most of the topics I wanted to ask about. Was there anything else you wanted to add about maybe your favorite part about working from home?

Sibylle Greindl 11:34

When you come to the office, and you've lost the habit of coming to the office every day in the office is like a party day? Usually, you know, commuting is like, I have to, you know, take the train and then have to talk to my colleagues who sometimes don't even want to talk to them. But this never happens in our team, because every time we see each other, it's like, oh, you're in the office today.

Maddie Duke 11:54

That's really exciting to see people.

Sibylle Greindl 11:57

Yeah. So I guess in that sense, we maybe have the same experience as many self-employed professionals who work from home most of the time. And for me, having a colleague feels sometimes a bit out of the ordinary.

Maddie Duke 12:08

Yeah. Actually, do the two offices have a chance to all come together?

Sibylle Greindl 12:14

Yes, it's yeah, it's actually two offices, like it feels more like a team in two different locations. And we travel between locations, so we really know each other quite well in that sense.

Maddie Duke 12:27

That's awesome. Well, yeah, that's pretty much it for me. So thanks very much Sibylle for joining us on *The State Of Work* and talking about your personal insights into your experience. So thank you very much.

Sibylle Greindl 12:41

Thanks. Thanks for having me.

Maddie Duke 12:50

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