Communication and Collaboration

Resources and best practices related to communication and collaboration within and across teams while navigating a flexible work environment.

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What's Included in this Section?

1   **Guidance on How to Work in a Hybrid Environment**
Considerations and advice for how teams should work in a flexible or hybrid format

2   **Tips and Tricks for Effectively Working Together**
Guidance on how team members can communicate and collaborate in order to foster an open, efficient, and creative work environment

How to Work Effectively in an On-Site Environment

If any portion of your work arrangement includes on-site work, consider prioritizing the following tasks.

Creativity	Communication	Collaboration	Critical Thinking	Celebration
One of the values of a blended hybrid model is the unplanned encounters between coworkers that inspire big ideas.	Though most conversations can be just as effective virtually, in-person chats may be necessary under some circumstances.	Virtual and blended teams can be highly efficient and connected, but bringing everyone together in person can help to get the job done.	Some types of work are best done in person.	In-person celebrations and parties are a great way to bond and network.

Creativity

Examples:
- Conversations in the elevator or in shared meeting spaces
- Spontaneous lunches or coffee check-ins with coworkers
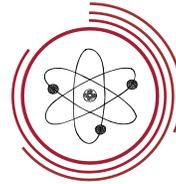- Brainstorm or design sessions

Communication

Examples:
- Disciplinary performance reviews or discussions about productivity, conduct, or growth areas
- Difficult conversations about well-being, mental health, or accessibility

Collaboration

Examples:
- Team-building or strategic workshops
- Site walk-throughs or on-site demos
- Onboarding of new team members

Critical Thinking

Examples:
- Hands-on training
- Problem-solving sessions
- In-person technology troubleshooting or replacement
- Equipment maintenance

Celebration

Examples:
- Employee birthdays
- Holidays
- Announcements for expectant parents
- Promotions or other career and development milestones
- Award ceremonies

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How to Work Effectively in a Remote Environment

If any portion of your work arrangement will include a virtual environment, consider the following remote work best practices.

Designate a Workspace

If you designate a specific area in your home to get work done, it is easier to stay focused. That could be a home office, spare bedroom, or some other dedicated area that offers privacy. If you will be making video calls while working remotely, make sure you have a background that you won't mind if others see.

Keep a Routine

Set a work schedule for yourself and stick to it. Try to wake up at the same time every day and treat weekdays just as you did before. For most people, the morning is the time to get serious work done, so try to complete any difficult tasks as early in the day as you can.

Stay Connected

Online tools like Slack not only help with workflow but can also serve as social outlets. It's even better to actually speak to another human being, so make some phone calls to check in with people. Video conferences add another sensory element to your interactions.

Communicate Often

Because you are not in an office where people can see you, communication is more critical when working remotely. Communicate frequently and know what's expected of you. Ensure that although you are "out of sight," you are not "out of mind."

Balance Personal Life

Ensure you have a sustainable approach to balancing your personal and professional responsibilities. Set boundaries with work and give your family signals as to when to leave you be. Make time for physical exercise and get outside to enjoy fresh air when you can.

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Communicate Consistently

In times of uncertainty, the more communication the better. You are responsible for consistently and openly communicating with your colleagues.

Share Your Work Arrangement

Regardless of your work arrangements, **sharing your work situation** (e.g., location, hours) within your team and across other groups is critical to maintain effective work.

Problem Solve within Your Team

If any issues arise due to flexible (or simply new) work arrangements, **communicate openly** with your colleagues to solve the issue before escalating to leadership. Be patient, as working in a post-COVID world will be new for everyone.

Speak Up about Burnout

If you ever feel that your hours are increasing, becoming unmanageable, and pushing you towards burnout – be prompt and **raise with your manager** for proactive problem-solving and a return to healthy work-life balance.

Ask for Feedback and Iterate

Be open to new work arrangements and ideas for ways of working. Ask those you work with for feedback and **recognize that this is an iterative process**.

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Engage Intentionally

Regardless of your work arrangement, it is important that you continue to collaborate with your team – consider the following tips for creative ways to do so.

Create a Slack Teams Channel

Use platforms like Slack to communicate and collaborate quickly – for example, as an alternative to email alternative – as you work. You can also use Slack to share fun pictures and encouragement with the team.

Schedule Optional Team Co-Working Times

Create time for team members who are hybrid or fully remote to connect informally. The time is meant to mirror the experience of working together in an office. No agenda needed, it's just an opportunity to work with cameras on or to chat with team members while you work.

Review Feedback Together as a Team

Instead of emailing feedback back and forth, consider creating time to review feedback for big work products as a team, whether virtually or in-person. Use the "share my screen" and "raise hand" feature for these reviews.

Schedule Regular Coffee-Chats

Schedule 30-minute coffee chats to check in with your team members on work activities or non-work activities. Use this time to create opportunities to connect outside of regularly scheduled all-hands meetings.

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