# LEADING FROM A DISTANCE: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Communicating with your team in a remote environment involves different techniques than communicating in-person. Here are some challenges you may face as a leader and strategies to best address them.

## Challenges Virtual Teams Face*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of interaction</th>
<th>Virtual teams typically focus on tasks, rather than relationship building.</th>
<th>The distance virtual teams experience can lead to team differences.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can make a virtual team's mission, purpose, and goals less clear.</td>
<td>This results in reduced trust and cohesion amongst the team, which can lower trust and productivity.</td>
<td>This means members may have an additional layer of complexity in communicating and coordinating projects than a co-located team would.</td>
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## Strategies to Address these Challenges*

### Assume Nothing and Spell Out Everything
- Articulate and discuss Team/Unit Goals
- Ensure every team member has the information they need to achieve the unit's revised goals - don't assume
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities, especially if they have been modified recently
- Identify what success for team members and projects looks like
- Define Team Norms *(Professional Commitments/ Rules of Engagement)*

### Build Trust by Increasing Social Interaction
- Be intentional about checking in with team members to encourage engagement
- Include time for small talk, introducing pets and kids, and fun social interactions
- Create virtual “water-cooler” and chat rooms
- Spend five minutes at the beginning or end of meetings for non-work conversation

### Establish Communication Protocols and then (Over)Communicate
- There's a difference between “over-communication” and “overwhelming-communication”
- Be intentional about the clarity and channels of your communication
- Use a 'video first' communication culture (Zoom, etc.), rather than relying on audio only
- Make sure there is balanced participation between team members who prefer introversion and extroversion

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