

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*

Lack of interaction can make a virtual team's mission, purpose, and goals less clear.

In response, team members often focus on what they can control - prioritizing their own **individual goals, rather than those of the team** as a whole.



Virtual teams typically **focus on tasks, rather than relationship building**.

This results in **reduced trust and cohesion** amongst the team, which can lower trust and productivity.



The **distance** virtual teams experience can lead to team differences.

This means members may have an additional layer of **complexity in communicating and coordinating projects** than a co-located team would.



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

