

# Remote Teams at Work

Communication in teams is a very important part of the success formula. We all know that.

When working remotely and mainly connecting only by virtual meeting spaces, communication is **vital**. We figuratively thrive or fail by our ability to communicate in a remote workplace. Remote communication can distort the normal pace of our conversations and the delay between our messages can often postpone or hide emotional reactions to our comments.

How many times have you written an email and immediately felt concerned about how it would be received after hitting send?

While we may have become used to these types of situations and emotions, they can still conflict with our normal rules for social interaction. When lacking an immediate response, we can become distracted, doubt ourselves, or even grow frustrated with our teams.



When remote teams communicate well and leverage their strengths, they can actually gain an advantage over co-located teams. Here are three key best practices to master: Brevity, norms, and encouragement.

## 1. Keep Messages Brief and Clear

In our efforts to be efficient, we sometimes use fewer words to communicate. However, such brevity can mean that the rest of the team wastes time trying to interpret your messages.

Assume that others understand your cues and shorthand. Spend the time to communicate with the intention of being as clear as possible, regardless of the medium. You can never be *too* clear, but it is extremely easy to be less clear than you should.

## 2. Use Communication Norms

Companies such as Merck have created acronyms for their digital communications like “Four Hour Response (4HR),” and “No Need to Respond (NNTR),” that bring predictability and certainty to virtual conversations. Norms can also exist on an individual level, such as people’s preferred response time, writing style, and tone. For example, some individuals

prefer short and quick messages, while others favor lengthy and detailed responses. People also differ in their preference and tolerance for humor and informality.

### **3. Encourage Your Team**

People are more willing to speak up and add their thoughts if they feel their peers welcome those thoughts. It is crucial to listen to each team member and hear what they have to say. That way, your company is cohesive, and everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves. You will also receive more constructive feedback that could potentially boost the company to new heights. Outward praise builds a culture that recognizes hard work and increases productivity.

Staying on top of the effectiveness of your remote team truly tests our abilities as managers and leaders. Not only will you be challenged, but your team will have their own as well. Remote workers can sometimes feel alone or disconnected, and those in the office or other cities may worry about them getting their work done on time.

The above methods are great strategies for how to increase collaboration between teams. There are plenty of other ways, too, so don't be afraid to try out more strategies for improving collaboration across teams. If you want to get started today, you'll make the biggest impact with a focus on clear communication.

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*As an experienced organizational development speaker, consultant, master facilitator, coach, and author - his focuses on delivering meaningful and measurable strategies for organizations to create insightful leaders and harness team potential. With over 20 years in the organizational development industry, Corey is well known for his ability to connect with any audience at any size. He has provided strategic learning, organizational consulting, professional speaking, coaching and training to organizations - of all sizes - across North America. Some of his clients include: Shell, Aviva, BMO, VIA, Tim Hortons, Miele, and government agencies at all levels. He has a results-based partnership approach to develop customized solutions that meet an organization's unique business needs and resolve their most significant issues, helping them to create a lasting competitive advantage.*