

# Communication Tips for Virtual Teams

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Remote team communication can be a challenge, but these tips can make the process seamless and keep dispersed teams connected no matter the distance!



# 1

## Choose the right tools

Communication platforms are the heart of the online office. Good tools make remote collaboration much easier and faster and make work from home employees feel closer and more connected.

Here are some qualities to look for in a platform:

- Works well for both asynchronous and real-time communication
- Allows for group and individual messaging Integrates with other programs so that you can easily share information
- Scales as the team grows
- Has features like search and pin that help workers keep information organized

# 2

## Organize your information

Having a remote communication platform with no organization is like being in a room full of people where everyone is talking at once. Providing lots of unorganized information that employees have trouble sorting and searching is not helpful.

Organization tips to set your remote teams up for success:

- Label files with clear names
- Sort assets into folders, boards, messaging channels, etc (also, star or pin important files or messages for easy finding!)
- Archive outdated and irrelevant information
- Create a central knowledge base/directory with links to individual documents
- Ensure the right team members have viewing or editing permissions
- Leverage shared drives/folders and have multiple file owners so that you never lose important info when an employee leaves the company

# 3

## Share expectations

Set the standards for communication in your organization early and often – ideally during orientation and onboarding.

Whenever we welcome new employees to [teambuilding.com](https://teambuilding.com), here are tips we tell new hires:

- Use Slack as the primary method of internal communication
- Anything that may be relevant to colleagues, post in public vs direct messages
- Post in the designated channels for topics or departments
- Tag specific team members for action or attention
- Acknowledge posts with emojis vs replies when possible to avoid cluttering channels

Create remote communication etiquette that best serves your industry or organization. Make sure every employee knows and follows these best practices.

# 4

## Set an example as a leader

Like culture, communication style trickles from the top down. Employees will look to you for cues on how to talk to each other.

Good behaviors to model for your teams:

- Respond to messages in a timely manner
- Praise and compliment coworkers
- Use inclusive language (for example, displaying pronouns)
- Engage in non-work banter and have get-to-know you conversations
- Give clear feedback
- Show failure as a learning opportunity
- Practice active listening during virtual meetings

## 5

## Provide information upfront

While it is important for remote coworkers to respond quickly to questions, it is more ideal for work from home employees to have resources so that they might not have to ask those questions and wait for teammates to reply.

Give remote teams access to abundant information, so no matter what hours they work, they can find out what they need to know exactly when they need to know it.

Here are some highly useful tools:

- Wiki
- Dropbox
- Google Drive
- Airtable
- Notion



## 6

## Normalize out of office and after hours messages

Remote communication  $\neq$  available at any time.

Make sure work from home employees know they are not expected to be reachable at all hours and feel comfortable communicating this fact to colleagues.

One tip is to update statuses to not available or responding slowly, ideally with a return date.

You can provide staff with a disclaimer they can add to their email signatures like,

"I'm sending you this email at a convenient time for me. You should not feel obligated to respond to my email if it arrives in your inbox after your office hours, on a weekend, during your personal time off, or on a public holiday, or if you are heads down working."

Also, encourage team members to mute non-urgent notifications.

# 7

## Encourage non-work banter

When working entirely online, coworkers cannot run into each other in the hallway or break room, and forming work friendships or bonds can be more nuanced.

Remote work communication should be about more than how to convey important business information.

Casual conversation is important in online offices too. Virtual teammates should have ways to connect socially with coworkers and get to know each other as human beings.

Some of the benefits of “team building talk” in virtual offices:

- Boosts belonging Improves collaboration
- Develops company culture
- Raises employee retention
- Ups long-term productivity
- Makes work fun and enjoyable
- Refines teams communication skills

Since remote workers have almost no chance for random run-ins, it is your job as a leader to intentionally create spaces and opportunities for these conversations to occur.

For example, start video calls with a casual chat while you wait for all participants, hold virtual socials, and create a virtual water cooler chat.