

Rules and goal setting in virtual teams

LEADING AND WORKING IN VIRTUAL TEAMS – A TOOLKIT



It's important in a virtual team to establish a common purpose or vision, while also framing the work you're attempting to undertake in relation to team members' individual needs and ambitions. Here are a few tips on establishing the rules for a strong virtual team and setting individual goals within them.



Don't be afraid to set ground rules

Research shows that rules reduce uncertainty and enhance trust in social groups, thereby improving productivity. Agree on things like how quickly team members should respond to queries and requests from one another, and outline follow-up steps if someone is slow to act. Virtual teammates often find themselves saying, "I thought it was obvious that..." or "I didn't think I needed to spell that out." So also insist that requests be specific. Instead of saying "Circle back to me," state whether you want to give final input on a decision or simply be informed after the decision is made. If you have a conference call about project details, follow up with an email to minimise misunderstandings.



Keep your head in the game

Stop Multitasking when you're on team calls, come on, we've all done it. According to a recent study, 82% of people admit to doing other things – from surfing the web to using the bathroom – during team calls. But virtual collaboration requires that everyone be mentally present and engaged. Explain your policy, and when the group has a virtual meeting, regularly call on people to share their thoughts. Better yet, switch to video, which can essentially eliminate multitasking.



Reach out

Encourage team members to share updates, successes and call outs for support on your collaboration tool. Reiterate that they're working as a team – where someone's struggling to source something or nail a certain goal, another member could have the exact piece of the puzzle they need.



Agree and share goals with the team

Agree when you're all together what it means for the team to be achieving as a whole – how does your work together contribute to the purpose you outlined earlier? Once you've agreed team goals and objectives, take that down to individual level in separate conversations and outline what actions and metrics will contribute to that success. Then bring it back to the group, whether that's in a meeting or via a virtual space. Everyone should be aware of the projects and actions others are involved in, avoiding areas of duplication and opening up avenues of collaboration.

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