

Collaboration from a Distance

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Remote team environments are more common in today's workplace than ever, but the recent COVID-19 pandemic has left many without the option to be physically present. The resulting incline in virtual office time has forced some employees into a new way of collaborating with their teams that can oftentimes feel overwhelming. So how do coworkers maintain productivity and effective teamwork from their individual locations? We've put together a few tips to pave the way to positive, productive collaboration for remote work.

Focus on results

When teams are separated, whether by unprecedented events like the COVID-19 pandemic or by standard inconveniences like time zones, it can be challenging to track exactly what your team is working on and when. Remote workers require a heightened level of trust and responsibility with the understanding that tasks will be completed according to the goals set in place. Giving remote workers the ability to determine the schedule that works most effectively for their situation and location promotes personal productivity and can increase morale during what could be an otherwise stressful experience. It's this [flexibility](#) that makes working from home operate smoothly without overwhelming employees or managers – allowing for greater focus on performance resulting in a more positive payoff.

Communicate clearly

When teams aren't physically in the same location, it can be challenging to align on goals,

bounce ideas off one another and delegate tasks. [Krisp](#) details a list of remote collaboration best practices that explain clear, simple communication and short term goals are ideal for teams separated by time and space. This blog specifically emphasizes clarity. When sending email, take a moment to organize your content into easy-to-read blocks, and use bullet points to detail lists and key points. The extra time spent making these small adjustments could save your coworkers confusion and additional questions later.

Clear communication isn't limited to tasks and deliverables. Human needs have to be communicated clearly, as well. Working apart from a team or manager can make it more difficult [to build personal connections](#) and to explain challenges and misunderstandings. When working remotely, it's even more necessary to make known any problems or questions so they can be resolved quickly and in a positive way. Scheduling regular meetings with coworkers and team members is a great solution to catching any setbacks early and working through them in a collaborative setting.

Make use of collaborative technology

Using the tools available for remote teams can remove many of the barriers created by distance. [Steelcase](#) recommends developing a shared project board that allows team members to share the status of their tasks, update goals and share documents. Many of these platforms, like [Asana](#), [Basecamp](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#), allow coworkers to chat with one another directly to provide real-time communication and contact.

Another great way to stay in touch is through video conferencing. Popular video conferencing apps include [Zoom](#), [Skype](#), [Webex](#) and [GoToMeeting](#). It's easy to let your mind wander in a conference call or use that time to write emails when no one can see you. Virtual face-to-face conversations allow individuals to connect more intimately and stay focused on the conversation. Facial expressions, body language and gestures are sometimes just as important in conversation as our words. These crucial factors get lost in email and other text communication, creating a sense of distance and disconnect. Video calls are a vital part of the remote worker's connection to their team members and tasks while maintaining the element of human interaction essential to productive work life.

Use analog tools to keep you organized

Keeping yourself organized is one of the keys to a productive day. Using analog tools like notepads, sticky notes and [personal whiteboards](#) improves retention, mood and engages the brain much differently than digital tools. The physical act of using a pen and paper or marker and whiteboard engages networks in our brain to filter information and direct focus. Start each day by prioritizing the projects or goals you need to accomplish that day and circle back at the end of the day to see how far you've come. Marking items off a to-do list can feel gratifying, bringing a sense of achievement and fulfillment. These analog tools are also a great point of reference in conference calls and virtual meetings to keep yourself on track, noting what has been completed and what tasks require further discussion.



Working remotely can be both rewarding and challenging, and collaborative teams suddenly working from home will face a learning curve when navigating the distance and technology involved. By employing these tactics, remote individuals can be more successful at home and teams can work together more effectively with a healthy, engaged mindset.