Jumpstart Your Team with Clear Operating Norms

Creating and Adopting Norms for Your Virtual Team – Quick List

Explicit norms are especially important for a virtual team. **Choose one or two as a start**, and allocate team time to create a few team norms for each. **Make sure to talk through with your team how to sustain each norm, and what the implications are if the norm is violated.** Caucus your team to find out where they feel norms are still needed, and set aside discussion time to create them as a team. **Periodically check in** as to whether norms are still valid or need tweaking.

- **Team communications:**
  - Team meetings
  - Use of asynchronous conference areas
  - Use of email, instant messaging, phone and texting
  - How and where documents will be created, distributed, accessed and shared

- **Work-life balance, scheduling time, being accessible, do not disturb time**
- **Decision-making**
- **Priority-setting**
- **Surfacing issues, navigating through conflict**

Virtual Meetings as a Starting Point

Since virtual meetings are the communications cornerstone of most virtual teams, start there. Here are a few best practices related to virtual meetings. **As a team, decide on 3-4 best practices that your team can adopt as shared norms.** Revisit these after your next few team meetings and adjust as needed. **Keep adding more norms to your list, branching out to all aspects of teamwork** where people feel norms are most needed.

Use the template on the other side to begin, and keep building!

**Virtual meeting best practices**

- **Insist on prework by all, as long as it’s reasonable**
- **Everyone off mute to encourage discussion**
- **Set aside time for check-in or check-out (create social capital at every interaction)**
- **Design for conversations (80%+ interactivity)**
- **Be on time — late comers catch up on own time**
- **Share responsibility for keeping to the agenda**
- **Take temperature checks when in doubt**
- **100% participation – no multitasking (Keep track of who is/is not participating)**
- **Share the air, balance participation**
- **Keep remote participants visible in our minds’ eye**
- **Rotate responsibilities: facilitator, timekeeper, scribe, host**
- **At close of meetings, ask participants for feedback on what went well/not well**
# Example for Virtual Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>How We’ll Sustain</th>
<th>Consequences if Broken</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Team Meetings</strong></td>
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| *Keep remote participants visible in our minds’ eye* | • Go around the room with remote members first  
• Print out a head shot of all team members and have by phone  
• Ask remote participants to take turns leading certain meetings  
• Ask remote team members for candid feedback | • Everyone participates remotely for next few meetings  
• Remote members set agenda for next few meetings | |
| **Design for conversations (80%+ interactivity)** | • Send out content that can be read and reflected on at least 3 days ahead of meeting  
• Minimize presentations or review of documents in all team meetings  
• Give everyone a few questions they’ll come ready to answer | • Participants will opt out, silently  
• Few people are likely to contribute | |

# What Virtual Meeting Best Practices Can Your Team Adopt as Norms?

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