

# Building Trust, Fostering Relationships and Knowing How To Communicate

## Building Trust

The distance between your leader and your colleagues may change, but your responsibilities as an employee do not.

Trust is the foundation of every relationship. Although you have likely already established trust and credibility with your leader and your colleagues, when the composition of your team environment changes, it is important to invest time up front in re-establishing or building trust.

### **If you can't see them, how do you know they're working?**

If you haven't experienced working in a virtual team, working from home may raise some initial concerns; how can you be sure your colleagues are working and not doing the laundry or will be there when you need support? The truth is you can't.

We all need to focus on our deliverables, not the appearance of work; if employees are achieving their results and are there to support and collaborate with each other and their business partners and customers, does it matter if they aren't answering an email or a phone right away?

### **Guidelines are key to trust**

Establishing clear guidelines and norms that provide standard expectations about performance and communication will enable you to succeed in a working from team. The first step is to work with your leader and your colleagues in establishing your team norms.

### **Collaborative trusting relationships**

Shifting from a face-to-face to virtual or remote relationship can have a dramatic impact on your relationships and can lead to feelings of isolation if you don't continue to build and nurture those relationships in your new environment.

If you have established a basis of trust and respect with your fellow team members, you can continue to build upon that in a virtual environment. You may just need to be more deliberate in your efforts.

### **Tips for building relationships**

- Schedule a virtual coffee; make sure to personalize the conversation
- Actively participate (don't multi-task) in team meetings
- Use collaboration tools to stay in touch with others
- Take the initiative to reach out to your leader and colleagues when you need support or feel isolated
- Take time to assist others when they reach out to you
- Add some time to the beginning of each team meeting for personal discussions/chatting

### **Building rapport creates trust**

An important component of rapport is having something in common between you and others, such as:

- Being committed to the same goals
- Having similar skills/talents
- Sharing the same interests
- Understanding the same language or terminology
- Having a similar personality or sense of humour
- Having shared values or taking a similar outlook on life
- Setting aside time to speak to others about personal/non-work related topics.

## **Communicating**

### **Maintaining communication and rapport**

When interaction moves from in person to virtual, you no longer have the same opportunity to engage in spontaneous interaction and will need to practice deliberate communication.

This means taking the initiative to pick up the phone or send an instant message or email to keep your colleagues and leader in the loop.

### **What is your personal communication style?**

Perhaps you prefer instant messaging or email, or maybe you like talking over the phone. It is important that you assess and discuss your preferences with your leader and team when you create your team norms.

Once your team's norms are established, continue to review them and let your leader know of any concerns or challenges. Your team may need to make changes to your norms.

## Collaboration tools provide a variety of effective communication vehicles

Take advantage of the collaboration tools available to make communication more effective. Review the tools available and educate yourself on which tool to use and when.

### Considerations when communicating your message

<p><b>Know when to pick up the phone</b></p>	<p>Distance communication promotes increased frequency of email and instant communication, which can provide challenges to ensuring your message is understood the way you intended. Body language and the ability to instantly clarify what is being said provide significant context and understanding.</p> <p>Use the phone when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You have an important message to deliver and you want to ensure it is understood;</li> <li>▪ You need support or have a difficult situation you need to verbalize;</li> <li>▪ You have already sent several emails and the message hasn't been understood, you need clarity, or the situation isn't being resolved; and</li> <li>▪ Your focus is on building rapport and a relationship with the other person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeting etiquette</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware of the different time zones your colleagues are in. Avoid scheduling local meetings during shared time zone hours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeting etiquette, cont'd</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Start on time, and let others know if you'll be late. Meeting chairs should set up the bridge or desktop sharing link before the call starts. Attendees should always accept, reject or identify that they are tentative for a meeting.</li> <li>▪ Avoid multi-tasking during calls. (And show up on time!)</li> <li>▪ If you can't make it, cancel or decline with as much notice as possible</li> </ul>
<p><b>Make meetings effective</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use meetings rather than long emails to discuss complex issues.</li> <li>▪ Share the context and goals.</li> <li>▪ Share a presentation deck, a graphic or something visual to enhance your point.</li> <li>▪ Send minutes promptly. After every meeting, send minutes documenting all decisions, action items and primes.</li> <li>▪ Record and share meetings and information sessions that can help others</li> </ul>
<p><b>Make email work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be clear &amp; precise. It's easy to misinterpret email; re-read emails before sending.</li> <li>▪ Set up inclusive distribution lists. Having all stakeholders on the appropriate distribution lists is the easiest way to keep everyone who needs to be informed, informed (let others see who is on the distribution list).</li> </ul>