Working From Home - Tips for Team Collaboration

Working from home often means long periods of time without face-to-face contact with your team. This means you will need to get creative with your team work, using collaboration software, video conferencing tools, and more forms of communication than you're probably used to utilizing. The rules for attending meetings will be drastically different - you will need to find a way to focus on the person speaking and keep everyone else engaged. Being apart can increase feelings of loneliness. While you can't avoid the feeling of isolation completely, you can take steps to lessen the impact. To help you make the transition, we've provided some helpful tips for working collaboratively from home.

If you're interested in learning more, at the end of this tip sheet you'll find a curated list of articles, videos, and other learning resources. Stay tuned for additional remote working content in AcadaMe and the PeopleFirst Development Group on Workplace!

HELPFUL TIPS FOR IMPROVING TEAM COLLABORATION

Tip # 1: Keep Communication Clear and Straight-to-the-Point

- Don't bombard your team with messages
- Best practice is to ensure you send your whole message, then wait for a response, rather than waiting for feedback on point 1 before you share point 2, which could potentially stretch out conversations over days.
- No matter how small a decision or short a conversation, try to summarize important project updates or meeting notes and share them with the rest of the team.
- Make sure you have specific norms around the way you communicate, including the following:
  - o Which communication channels your team members should use and when, e.g. email, messenger, phone, company apps, etc.
  - o When team meetings are held
  - o Time-line for when responses should be received from team members

Tip # 2: Lessen the Feeling of Isolation

- Since remote workers are spread out across multiple locations, that normal feeling of closeness is usually absent. Employees can begin to feel isolated and distant from the group.

- Check in with your colleagues periodically and give them updates on recent events

- Offer support to your blended team. Ask teammates how they are feeling in their work and if they are having any problems

- When possible, try to arrange conference calls or video chats to talk to one another

- Recognize and share your accomplishments with your coworkers.

Tip # 3: Learn How to Maximize Your Virtual Meeting Effectiveness

- Make multitasking difficult! Keep participants occupied by asking questions and soliciting feedback. Remove distractions from your desk and try not to read emails during a meeting.

- Mute your microphone when you're not talking.

- Keep in mind that when you connect to audio using your PC mic, other participants can hear you typing, which could be distracting. A possible solution is to use a headset or headphone.

- Don't be shy! Use your video camera, if your video conferencing software allows it.

- Don't be afraid to speak loudly during a virtual meeting. Your team will appreciate being able to hear you.

- Text-based communication places less importance on interpersonal skills and physical appearance, offering an effective way to share power and decision-making. Research shows that introverted individuals are less inhibited in online versus offline interactions.

Tip # 4: Choose the Right Tools

- On a blended team, software is crucial for communication and collaboration.

- Pick your software tools early and ensure everyone knows where to find support and learning resources on their proper use and procedures.

- Microsoft Teams is a great tool to utilize to stay on track with your blended team. AcadaMe offers a variety of Microsoft Teams training resources.

- Know Your Team: In the end, only you will know what works best for your team. Use the software you have and learn by trial and error. Make adjustments as necessary, and don't forget to communicate throughout the process!

- For more information on NFP's collaboration tools, see the Working From Home - Technology Toolkit!

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

See this list to learn more about best practices for collaboration. Don't forget to visit AcadaMe! Make sure to follow the PeopleFirst Development page on Workplace for additional content! **Note**: Contractors can access the same content on AcadaMe Connect.

- **Collaboration for Hybrid Teams (Article)**
- **The Explainer: How to Collaborate Effectively If Your Team is Remote (Video)**
- **6 Steps to Jump-start Collaboration in a Hybrid Workplace (Article)**

Questions?

Contact the Talent Development team at learning@nfp.com.