
MICRO-WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Key Highlights

Challenges and Strategies:

- Lack of interaction can lead to a breakdown in team cohesion; team members start to focus on individual tasks rather than team goals. --> Assume nothing and spell out everything. Taking the time to communicate frequently and make sure team members understand revised team goals is critical right now.
- Virtual teams typically focus on tasks rather than relationship building, leading to a decline in trust, cohesion, and productivity. --> Rebuild that trust by increasing non-work social interaction.
- A feeling of distance on remote teams can add an additional layer of complexity in communicating and coordinating projects. --> Establish communication protocols and use them frequently. Be intentional about the channels of communication you use and 'overcommunicate' your message to ensure clarity.

Your Questions

Communication is taking A LOT more time now. Between all the Zoom meetings, extra emails, and checking in with my team, I don't have time to do any real work. What can I do?

- Zoom exhaustion is taking its toll. Try to schedule meetings to end at 10 minutes until the hour to give folks the chance to follow up on action items or take a quick break.
- Reset expectations about when you are or are not available to interact with others. This can be accomplished by blocking time on your schedule, updating your status in skype or other chat tools, and advertising open 'office hours' or an optional 30-minute meeting when you are available for questions, brainstorming, checking in, etc. Setting these boundaries are critical for long-term sustainability.
- Create a work report for yourself each week to help you determine which tasks are taking your time. If these are different than the tasks that should be a priority, it may be time to revisit your team's scope, goals, and procedures.
- With furlough coming, time to communicate with teams will be reduced. Developing a plan for how to keep your entire team informed and on the same page is crucial for productivity, engagement, and success. What resources can you use to keep the lines of communication open with less time? Consider asynchronous or staggered methods.

How can I keep my team engaged and informed without overwhelming them?

- An influx of emails makes it difficult to track down information when a decision is needed. Consider utilizing different channels of communication for different types of information (email for lengthier discussions, agendas or chat programs for action items, links to a communal document embedded in emails/invites, etc).
- Designate specific times for brainstorming and throwing around ideas, rather than having this information be shared via a string of emails. Often called 'green-light thinking', this encourages participation by everyone, collects important information in one place, and prevents email/chat overwhelm.
- Solicit information from your team as to what is or is not working for them in terms of communication. Maybe they need to hear messages more frequently? Maybe they need less. Determine what their level of 'overwhelm' is and agree to team expectation regarding communication types and frequency.
- Communicate with team members about their work load (especially with furlough coming). This may be an opportunity to assess core functions, deadlines, and re-task or reassign team members to other work as stretch assignments. This can produce higher levels of efficiency and engagement on the team as you re-prioritize.

Contact Us

Leading From A Distance Webpage: Find recordings of sessions, micro-workshop handouts, and curated content to guide you through each week's topic. (olod.arizona.edu/content/lfad)

Resources for Managing Remote Teams: General resources on how to manage your team in a remote environment (olod.arizona.edu/content/resources-managing-remote-teams)

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