

LEADING FROM A DISTANCE: MODIFYING CULTURE

The Virtual Distance Model

Having a great culture empowers teams, fosters collaboration, and enhances employee engagement. The Virtual Distance model will help translate your existing culture into one that thrives online.*

Virtual Distance is the perceived isolation and disconnection of members on a team that rely on electronic communications—a sense of emotional and psychological detachment that builds up over time when people become over-reliant on technology to mediate their relationships.

There are three categories of Virtual Distance that impact teams from least to most:

How Virtual Distance Affects Remote Teams

Physical Distance

Geographic separation of team members. This is usually the smallest challenge for teams facing Virtual Distance, but can still lead to barriers in communication and collaboration.



Operational Distance

How do the processes your team uses contribute to your operational success? Do logistical and technical mechanisms help you collaborate, or create friction? How do you use these tools as a way to create team context and agility?



Affinity Distance

This factor ties most strongly to the culture of a team. It is the real difference between great teams and those that don't work as well. Affinity is the connection you feel towards your teammates - whether you know each other as people, trust each other, and feel like part of the same team with shared common goals.

Strategies for addressing Physical and Operational Distances fall under setting expectations for your team and communicating effectively. Please see resources for those two topics at olod.arizona.edu/content/lfad

What Does Increased Affinity Distance Look Like?

- Increased feelings of isolation
- Lack of engagement and productivity
- Up to a 90% drop in innovation effectiveness; 80% plunge in trust, 80% in satisfaction, and a 60% decline in finishing projects on time.
- Decrease in role and goal clarity, morale, and work satisfaction levels
- Increased conflict or tension
- Loss of trust
- Inability to maintain a collaborative environment
- Differences in workstyles are not leveraged
- People become 'virtual objects'; compassion and human connection are lost

**Adapted from the work of Karen Sobel Lojeski, Ph.D., Virtual Distance International (VDI)*



