
MICRO-WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS: MODIFYING CULTURE

Key Highlights

When considering the culture of your remote team:

- Remember the three types of Virtual Distance: Physical, Operational, and Affinity.
- Increased Affinity Distance results in team members: feeling increasingly isolated and disengaged from the team, lacking in trust, unable to focus on unit goals, and declining in individual productivity.
- To decrease Affinity Distance, focus on improving your team's collaborative culture: build trust, create shared context, promote a culture of learning, recognize and reward efforts, develop a culture of openness, and focus on diversity and inclusion (*see the micro-workshop handout for detailed information*).

Your Questions

How do I give my team an opportunity to connect, socialize, and build a collaborative network while still staying on topic? We are all so busy and I want to be respectful of time.

- Although having time to socialize online does take away from work time, if you do not set a specific period for it, it will creep in throughout your interactions with your team. Setting expectations for when social talk is welcome is a good first step to creating a collaborative, yet focused, environment.
- One UA supervisor suggested starting and closing each staff meeting in this way. Open with a “Reflection” in which you ask each team member to reflect on and share something they are grateful for today. Then close each meeting by explicitly asking everyone about their “Needs”. What do they need to be happier, more productive, or more effective? These bookends to meetings can be very effective at improving morale and a sense of teamwork, and keep the team focused on work between these designated times.
- Intentionally pair people who may not work together often in order to facilitate their getting to know one another's personalities, strengths, and perspectives more strongly.
- Don't hesitate to ask team members to take a conversation offline when it needs more discussion than a particular meeting can accommodate. This will keep your meeting focused, the group engaged, and give the employees who need to have the discussion a chance to speak more in depth to one another.

How do I navigate the line between creating close Affinity and straying too far into personal topics and relationships? It seems that having 'close affinity' can cause a situation in which people always seem available for a question, or are bringing too many of their personal issues into a group setting.

- While getting to know someone as a person helps to close Affinity Distance, in a professional capacity the intention is to get to know someone's work style, conflict style, point of view, and preferred methods of processing information and communicating. This leads to a much stronger environment of trust, reliability, and collaboration.
- Having close affinity in the workplace does not mean teams are best friends, available to contact 24/7, or obligated to hear personal issues. As a leader, working with your team to set the right expectations around communication. For example, decide when it is ok to reach out and by what method, and then stick to that. We know that being unable to disconnect from work leads to increased stress and fatigue, and decreased focus, thinking, and problem-solving. Enforcing meaningful boundaries is crucial to success.

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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