



BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES FOR
DUKE UNIVERSITY AND HEALTH SYSTEM LEADERS

Leading Virtual Teams



Duke
HUMAN RESOURCES

LEARNING & ORGANIZATION
DEVELOPMENT

LEADING VIRTUAL TEAMS



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About this Guide

Over the next pages of this guide, you will find resources that will help you prepare to lead a virtual team. You will also find resources via Degreed to accelerate your skill readiness when leading a virtual team.

LEADING VIRTUAL TEAMS



Tool 1: How to Lead Remote Team Members

Establish Team Norms

If you and your team are now working remotely, the first step is to establish “team norms.” These norms are a set of practices that you agree to carry out while everyone is offsite. Consider the following questions:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we meet more frequently as a team and one-to-one? When? How long?• Does everyone know how to use the Zoom platform for virtual meetings?• Does everyone know how to turn on their video camera?• How do we ensure people are present and not multitasking? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the recommended response time to a text or email? Should we use the phone more?• How will we share sensitive information?• How frequent will the team will meet as a group and in a one-to-one format?• What are the resources my team will need to be able to productively work virtually? |
|--|--|

There are many more questions to ask, but it’s best to set up a conversation with the team to establish all team norm questions that need to be surfaced and answered.

Tip to Consider – Encourage your team members to learn about Zoom:

Help your team learn how to use Zoom. Click [here](#) to access video tutorials about Zoom:

- Joining a meeting, click [here](#)
- Co-Host controls in a meeting, click [here](#)
- Schedule Zoom meetings, click [here](#)

LEADING VIRTUAL TEAMS



Hold Virtual Office Hours

- As a leader, employees need access to you. They need you to lead, not disappear. On top of your regular staff and one-on-one meetings, consider holding office hours on a conference call line or video-sharing from Zoom. Keep in mind: No agenda. No formalities. No hierarchy.
- Consider an open forum for questions to be asked, ideas to be shared, and if needed, fears calmed. Make the forum accessible not just to your team, but however many are under your direction. (Sometimes called skip-level reports.)

Conduct Morning Huddles

- Imagine an employee who has commuted to work for several years. The routine has been consistent. Every morning started the same way. (Their initial conversations with the security guard, the front desk assistant, even the coffee conversations at the break rooms are now gone.)
- To ameliorate any feelings of loneliness, a daily virtual huddle of 10 minutes is recommended. Now that employees are no longer commuting into work, here are some ideas:

THE DAILY VIRTUAL HUDDLE

Practice this:

- Start the day 10 minutes early with a 10-minute pep talk.
- Be open.
- Discuss what you're up to for the day with your meetings, tasks, projects, and so on.
- Publicly recognize someone.
- Provide updates on other organizational projects or changes.
- Share a personal story. It's a perfect opportunity to be human in the face of uncertainty.

Frequent Check-ins

- More than ever, your team members need to feel that you care. The easiest gift you can give is to care.
- You are equipped with a mobile phone, or laptop. Use it.
- Send out-of-the-blue texts, emails and messages to team members asking how they are doing. Maybe use it as an opportunity to thank them or recognize something you've noticed that day or week.

Consider this Tip! You could send them an article, a hilarious meme, or a TED Talk. Receiving unexpected messages from “the boss” ends up becoming an excellent shot of adrenaline for employees. Please don't overdo it, but don't ignore this tactic either.



During the Meeting

Connect people.

- People perform better when they are comfortable with each other, which affords a greater degree of candor and mutual interest. Your job as a leader, particularly when people may not know each other, is to make them feel connected so you can have a productive meeting.
- Do a personal-professional check-in at the beginning of each meeting. Have team members take one minute and go around to talk about what's going on in their lives personally and professionally.
- Remind everyone to respect each other by not interrupting and to only say what they're comfortable sharing with the group.

Encourage collaborative problem solving.

- A collaborative problem-solving session replaces the standard "report-outs" that can weigh meetings down. It's when the leader raises a topic for group discussion and the team works together – and sees each other as sources of advice – to unearth information and viewpoints, and to generate fresh ideas in response to business challenges.

Give each person time on the agenda.

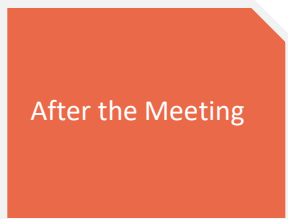
- Along with collaborative problem solving, giving each person time on the agenda fosters greater collaboration and helps get input from all the team members.
- In advance of the session, have team members write up an issue they've been struggling with and bring it to the table, one at a time.
- Each team member then gets five minutes on the agenda to discuss his or her issue.
- The group then goes around the meeting, so everyone gets a chance to either ask a question about it or pass. After the team member answers everyone's questions, people then get an opportunity to offer advice in the "I might suggest" format, or pass. Then, you move on to the next issue. It's a very effective use of a collaboration technique that could easily be managed in a virtual environment.

Kill mute.

- In-person meetings follow social norms. For example, you don't get up and walk around the room, not paying attention.
- Virtual meetings are no different. You don't go on mute and leave the room to get something. In a virtual meeting, you shouldn't press mute and respond to your emails, killing any potential for lively discussion, shared laughter and creativity.

Ban multitasking.

- Multitasking was once thought of as a way to get many things done at once, but it's now understood as a way to do many things poorly.
- Managers should set a firm policy that multitasking is unacceptable, as it's important for everyone to be mentally present.
- Use video to eliminate multitasking, because your colleagues can see you.
- Have the meeting leader call on people to share their thoughts. Since no one likes to be caught off-guard, they'll be more apt to pay attention.
- Give people different tasks in the meeting, rotated regularly.



Formalize the water cooler.

- Have you ever been in a meeting, and just when it ends, everybody walks out and vents their frustrations next to the water cooler?
- Make the water cooler conversation the formal ending of the virtual meeting, instead. Five to 10 minutes before the meeting ends, do what everybody would've done after the physical meeting – but do it in the meeting and make sure it's transparent and conscious, processing people's real feelings.
- Have everyone go around and say what they would've done differently in the meeting. This is the time when you say what you disagreed with, what you're challenged with, what you're concerned about, what you didn't like, etc.
- All of the water-cooler-type conversation happens right now, or it never happens again. And if it does happen later, you're violating the ethics of the team.

Most importantly in virtual meetings, civility and respect must be the norm.

- There have to be inalienable, ethical rules that you follow before, during and after a virtual meeting for it to be truly successful. And that means adhering to two fundamental principles: Be respectful of others' time and be present.
- Failing to do so steals precious hours from the team that can never be recovered.
- Co-located teams have enough problems building candor and trust; teams separated by distance really need to have great meetings to build these connections.



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How can you generate teamwork in cyberspace? Click [here](#)

The experts recommend building connection, communication, culture and mutual accountability.

