

How do you establish a communication protocol for collaborating virtually?

- ✓ Discuss the tools available in addition to the phone, (e.g., Instant Messenger/Jabber, WebEx, email) and the benefits and limitations of each.
- ✓ Establish a team agreement that includes communication and work style preferences (e.g. email, Jabber, daily huddles, 1:1s, etc.)
- ✓ Discuss how to approach complex discussions or potential misinterpretations (i.e., have a phone conversation).

- ✓ Put everything important in writing, since virtual employees may not be part of every conversation that takes place in the office.
- ✓ Take a few minutes at the start or close of a virtual meeting for small talk – just as you would when you gather in a physical conference room.
- ✓ Use webcams even when it's just a 1:1 conversation. The visual connection makes a big difference.
- ✓ Find creative ways to include virtual employees in projects, team meetings, decisions, celebrations and other opportunities to stay in the loop.

How do you make sure virtual employees feel included?

What 'virtual' shadow are you casting around communication?

- ✓ Make a habit of responding to staff emails or instant messages in a timely manner – remote staff cannot walk to your desk with questions.
- ✓ If you're in a meeting or not available, clearly mark that status in Jabber so staff do not expect immediate responses.

Engaging Virtual Employees

- ✓ Connect with virtual employees each day with a quick call or a greeting via chat.
- ✓ Touch base with your virtual staff often to discuss their work environment, any challenges they are facing, and how they are adjusting.
- ✓ Schedule formal 1:1s more frequently and on a recurring basis.

How often do you check in with a virtual employee?

How do you handle team building, volunteer activities, and special projects?

- ✓ Recognize achievements and be inclusive of your virtual staff in team building and volunteer activities – this may take creativity on your part.
- ✓ Be mindful of not planning activities that are exclusively site-based.
- ✓ Consider your virtual staff for special projects, so they have the same opportunities to contribute and grow their skills as the in-office staff.

- ✓ Periodically invite comments from virtual employees to draw them into the discussion and ensure they can share their perspective.
- ✓ Virtual employees at times can feel that they are missing information discussed in the office, so send out meeting minutes and other business information so all can review it.
- ✓ If there are virtual attendees in the meeting, considering skipping the conference room and have everyone attend via WebEx. This puts everyone on equal footing.
- ✓ Encourage the use of webcams! It can be uncomfortable at first for some, but the benefits of seeing non-verbal cues can be significant.
- ✓ Use the [How to Facilitate a Great Meeting eBook](#) and [Planning Virtual Meetings](#).

What is the best way to run virtual team meetings?

Engaging Virtual Employees

How do you coach and provide feedback virtually?

- ✓ Recognize that the need for regular coaching check-ins and feedback are the same as they are for all employees.
- ✓ Provide feedback and coaching in a timely manner, preferably via phone or webcam to ensure complete understanding and allow for a robust dialogue.
- ✓ For difficult conversations, if practical, ask the employee to come to the office. Always provide a brief explanation of the reason; don't bring them in without an explanation.
- ✓ If an office visit is not practical, set aside a quiet, dedicated time to have a thorough telephone conversation.
- ✓ Always follow up the conversation with a brief email.

- ✓ When a virtual employee has earned your trust in working in a telecommuting role, rely on that trust. Don't attempt to micromanage or wonder if they are being productive.
- ✓ When considering individual situations involving a virtual employee, a best practice is to ask yourself what your decision/guidance would be if the employee was located in the office – and strive for consistent managing whenever possible.

How do I ensure that my leadership shadow is consistent regardless of the employee's location?



For additional resources to help you lead or succeed in a virtual team, check out the [Succeeding in a Virtual Team](#) learning pathway.