

Virtual Communication

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What are the challenges associated with communication in a virtual team?

Challenges associated with virtual communication can include misconceptions in messages due to not being able to read body language and facial cues. Priorities can be misconstrued because vocal tone cannot be heard, leaving something particularly important unresolved due to misunderstandings. Another challenge with virtual communication can be malfunctions in technology. While malfunctions are becoming less frequent in technology, they will always be present. This could mean a network connection outage during a critical meeting, or software bugs that have yet to be fixed (2021). To avoid these problems, teams must have a clear and consistent way to communicate that everyone involved uses properly. Goals and priorities must be understood by everyone. There must be a plan for technical issues such as a conference room that has working equipment if someone's home set-up malfunctions. These steps will ensure communication in a virtual environment is smooth.

Compare and contrast the differences in two-way communication between virtual employees and face-to-face employees.

In virtual communication, two-way communication is between text messaging, through emails, over video chat, and on the telephone. This could mean a question that would be solved right away if you are working together in an office, but would take an hour or even a day to be resolved between virtual coworkers. The rapport you build with your coworkers in an office can help you build strong relationships, which will help the projects succeed (Norwich University Online, 2020). In a virtual office, building rapport can be a bit more difficult. You must spend time getting to know each other by asking questions via virtual communication, whereas in an office you can witness the people day to day and learn things about them that way.

Offer suggestions on how one can build trust and maintain effective two-way communication in a virtual team.

To build trust in a virtual team, make sure you are meeting deadlines, and following through on your responsibilities. Being accessible by telephone is also another way to build trust. If your coworkers know they will get a response in a timely manner from you, that is building trust (2022). You must also respond appropriately and with helpful information, and if you do not know the answer to what they are asking, or do not have any advice, you should still respond and ensure them that you are looking for an answer and will get back to them in a reasonable amount of time.

Describe at least three (3) strategies for improving body language in a virtual environment.

When communicating in person, noticing facial cues, and reading body language is second nature, we do it naturally. During virtual communication, there are a few ways to improve your body language. Positioning your eyes at the same level as the camera, and looking into the camera, is like making eye contact. Do not look around, or read something as you are communicating in your video chat. Sitting back, so that your hands and upper body are showing in the camera, can make sure people are able to see your gestures. Lastly, when you are listening to someone speak, make sure you smile and nod, even more than you would in person-to-person communication (Yuan, 2020). This shows that they have your full attention.

What methods, tools, and practices are available to improve collaboration and help to minimize these challenges?

There are many tools to help improve collaboration virtually. Slack is a messaging service, where each department can create its own channel. This keeps things organized and helps

coworkers communicate quicker than traditional email. Zoom is a video conferencing app that helps people communicate through video. They are also able to screen share which can be helpful when someone wants to share information from their computer, but also wants to be directly involved in the describing and sharing of the information. It is important for virtual communication to develop a plan set in stone for communication, that everyone follows. These tools and practices are designed to help minimize common challenges (2022).

References

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