

Leading from Anywhere (Virtual Teams)



What is a Virtual Team?

Comprised of a group of people who work together to achieve defined goals, with some or all team members **separated by physical distance**.

Virtual Teams may also be separated by language, culture, time-zones and competing local priorities.

How to create a virtual team

1. Start with the right people

The best way to get the right people in your virtual team is to create the team from scratch. You can identify suitable candidates using behavioral interviewing techniques and personality tests.

Some of the qualities to look for in virtual team members include:

- Resilience (adaptable & flexible), Empathy, Emotional intelligence, Strong communication skills
- Autonomy in their work & Sensitivity to other cultures

If you take over a team, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the members. Then, design a training program to address any gaps.

2. Get the size right

Small teams of around three to five people are generally more efficient. They are also easier to manage, so if you have a large team, consider dividing it into smaller sub-teams.

3. Clarify the roles and responsibilities

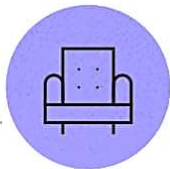
Make sure your virtual team members are aware of their roles and responsibilities, as well as those of their teammates.

Pros and cons of virtual teams

Benefits



Flexibility



Comfortability



No commuting



More free time

Challenges



Isolation



Added distractions



Difficulty unplugging



Collaboration issues

Benefits of working remote

- 52%** Flexible scheduling
- 38%** Lack of commute
- 35%** Cost savings
- 34%** Able to care for family, pets, aging/sick relatives, etc.
- 32%** Reduced anxiety/stress
- 26%** improved health (mental, physical, spiritual, etc.)
- 22%** Freedom to travel/relocate
- 20%** Able to live where you want to live
- 18%** Reduced office politics



Benefits of Virtual Teams

1. Remote workers value their lack of commute, saving money, and the ability to take better care of their families as the top benefits of virtual teams.
2. Virtual employees also report reduced stress and anxiety and improved mental and physical health. This is all essential for virtual team effectiveness.
3. People also perceive the ability to travel, work or move as a benefit of working in a virtual team, as well as reduced office politics.
4. Plus, remote work provides opportunities for people with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

Top 6 Challenges of Working From Home

Harder to collaborate with co-workers

33%

Interruptions

27%

Harder to stick to a routine

26%

More difficult to stop working at end of day

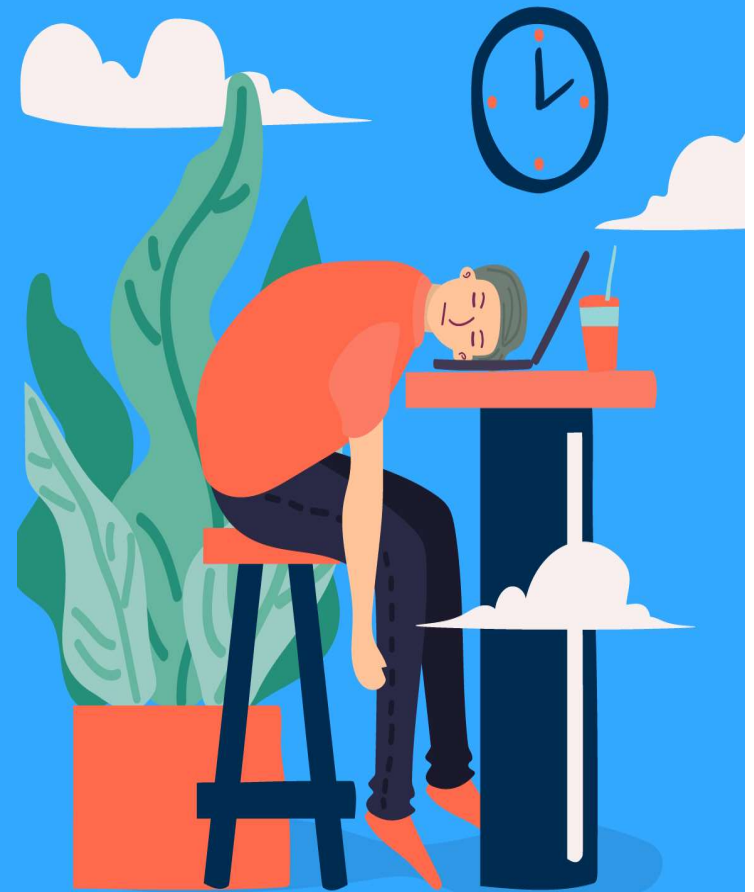
22%

Feelings of Isolation/Loneliness

21%

Poor wi-fi connection

10%



Challenges of Virtual Teams for Organizations

1. Like anything, virtual team management also presents some unique challenges for the organization.
2. One of the biggest is the reliance on technology for virtual communication and managing work. Tech issues are inevitable but can cause delays and disruptions in a workday.
3. Virtual team members don't have much opportunity to get to know one another. This can lead to miscommunication and a lack of effective collaboration.
4. Virtual leadership is also a challenge for managers. Especially if your virtual employees lack effective communication skills.
5. Implementing Code of Conduct – “Moonlighting”

Challenges for virtual teams

1. Collaboration with coworkers

- To increase team efficiency and reduce errors, use communication and project management tools.
- Hold regular virtual meetings to make sure everyone is on the same page.

2. Interruptions

- To minimize interruptions, designate an area of your home to set up as your home office. Ask your family or roommates to avoid disturbing you during working hours.
- You might want to find a place where you can go and work outside your home, whether it's a co-working space or a cozy cafe.
- If you're a virtual team leader, consider providing colleagues with equipment to reduce interruptions, such as noise-canceling headphones.

Challenges for virtual teams

3. Sticking to a routine

- If you struggle with sticking to a routine while working on a virtual team, try creating a schedule around your working hours.
- Aim to wake up, go to bed, and eat your meals at the same time every day, as this will help you stick to your work routine.
- Managers who notice their teams struggle with time management may want to enforce set working hours.

4. Stopping at the end of the day

- Decide what time you will start and end your workday. Then, make sure your colleagues are aware of your working hours, especially those in other time zones.
- As a leader, you could set up an automatic notification to send to your teammates when it's time to log off.

5. Loneliness

- If you're a virtual team leader, host virtual get-togethers and coffee breaks.

6. Poor internet connection

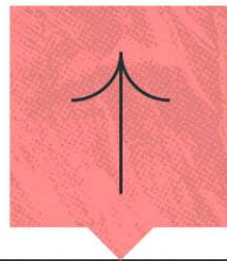
5 key elements to leading successful virtual teams



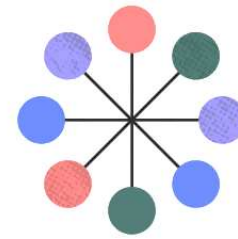
Trust



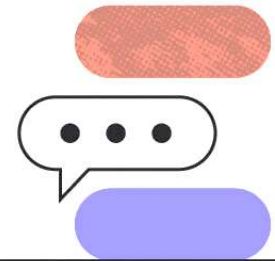
Autonomy



Motivation



Collaboration



Communication

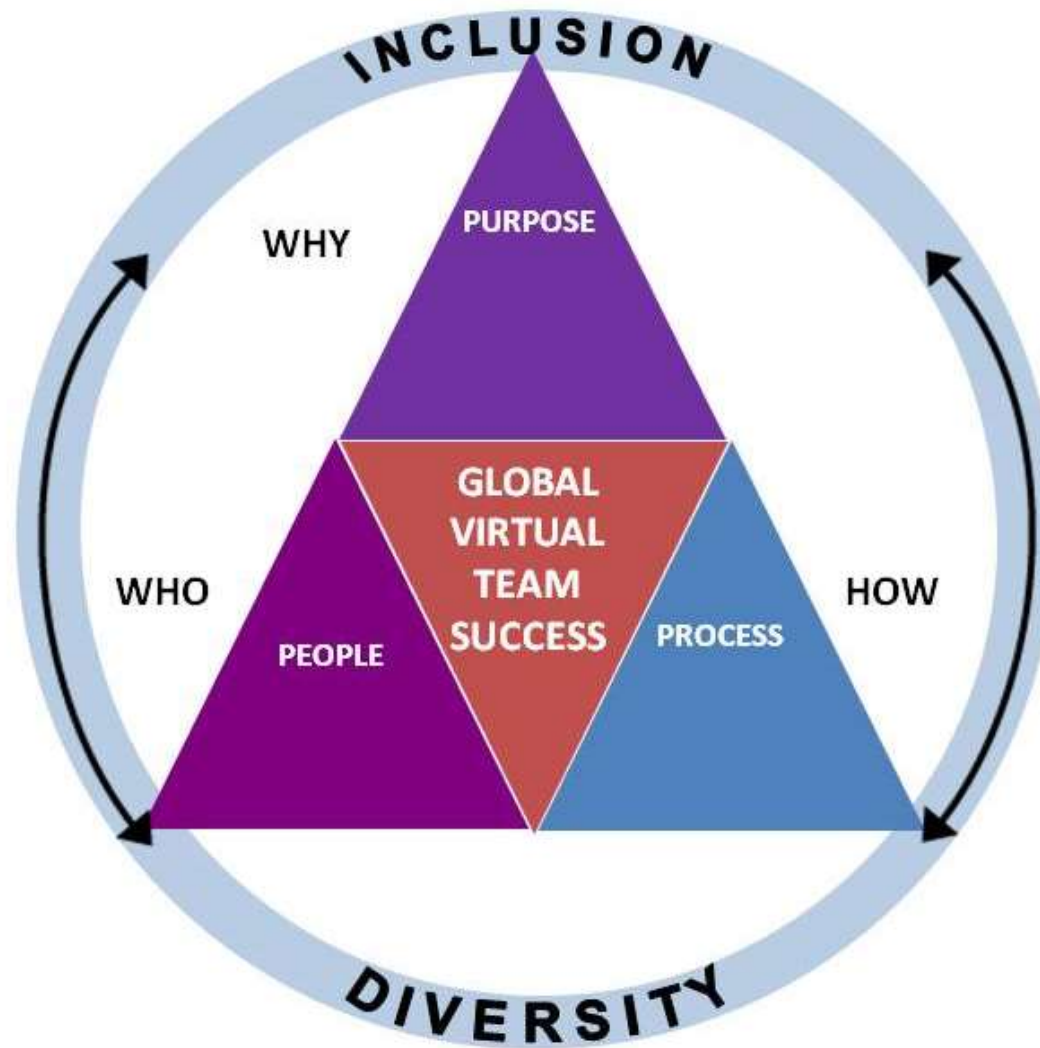
Tips for being a great remote Leader

1. Be visible and approachable
2. Maintain constant communication
3. Prioritize one-on-one time
4. Challenge thinking, not schedules
5. Delegate
6. Make it fun
7. Stay lighthearted
8. Encourage social interactions
9. Balance self-learning and nurturing

How do you motivate remote workers?

- Prioritize results over hours worked
- Don't require people to have consistent set working hours or say when they're working
- Don't encourage or celebrate working long hours or on weekends
- Encourage teamwork
- Say thank you often

A Model for Virtual Team Success



A Model for Virtual Team Success



6 Habits of Highly Effective Virtual teams

1. Regularly invest in getting to know one another as human beings
 - Ask more than “how was your weekend.” And, really actually really care about one another and look for ways to help.
 - Schedule times to connect at a human level and provide synchronous and asynchronous opportunities to talk about life stuff.
 - Take the time to get together in-person (within safety guidelines). Share some meals, do something fun, and just connect.
2. Have a clear definition of “what” success looks like.
 - Have clearly stated, measurable MITs (Most Important Thing strategic priorities).
 - Have interdependent goals. We truly need one another to be successful.
 - Have a regular cadence of talking about what’s working, what’s not, and talk about what we need to do to improve.
 - Communicate about how team communicate.

6 Habits of Highly Effective Virtual teams

3. Spend time communicating about how team communicate.

- Have responsiveness expectations for each communication channel (e.g. how long it should take to return email, texts, and slack messages).
- Have candid conversations when needed.
- Leverage synchronous and asynchronous channels to have the most efficient and effective conversations.

4. Collaborate with one another informally.

- Don't wait for a team meeting to get stuff done; reach out and work together to share best practices and solve problems.
- Be deliberate in reaching out to people on the team
- In hybrid teams, make a deliberate point of collaborating with people who don't sit nearby.

6 Habits of Highly Effective Virtual teams

5. Carefully design virtual meetings

- Be strategic in who to invite to each meeting and resist the urge to gather input or “make decisions in the hallway” without including appropriate remote workers.
- Equalize the playing field. For virtual meetings, everyone takes part on their own computer, even if some of team members could be in the same room.
- Check for understanding and schedule the finish to ensure everyone is clear on what’s happening and give people an opportunity to express their feelings and concerns.

6. Constantly look for ways to improve.

- Regularly “Own the U.G.L.Y.” and talk about what team can do better.
- Share best practices and micro-innovations.
- Collaborate on new I.D.E.A.’s to improve the business.

