



Job Aid: Telework/Blended Team Communication Plan

Office of Human Resources

Introduction

Communication is perhaps the biggest challenge for virtual or blended teams. The goal of a communication plan is for team members to have quick, flexible access to information and one another within a predictable set of communication standards.

There are two main components to consider in communication planning:

1. Establishing methods/tools for delivering messages/communicating
2. Creating meaningful opportunities for connection among the team

Communication Methods & Tools

It's important to discuss appropriate communication tools with your team – *let the purpose of the message/communication determine the platform*. For example, face-to-face communication, phone, and videoconferencing are best for team meetings and giving feedback. E-mail is best for detailed work instructions and updates, and instant messaging is appropriate for quick confirmations or requests.

Opportunities for Connection

Set clear expectations for how often employees will connect as a team AND how often employees will connect one-on-one with their supervisor.

How to Establish your Team's Communication Plan

It's never too late to establish a communication plan for your team – even if you've been working remotely for some time! Get started with the discussion questions on the next page. Use them to gather input from your team on their communication preferences. This can be done as a survey, in a chat, or during a meeting. Whatever method you choose, it is recommended to share the prompts with your team members in advance so they have time to think about their answers.

Then, use the information you gather to create a communication plan that outlines which communication methods/tools should be used when and establishes frequency of team and individual meetings. Consider using the template table provided on the next page.

It is also recommended to review and revise your team's communication plan as you go – you may find a better method or new tool in the future!

Additional Resources:

- <https://www.computerworld.com/article/2519498/6-rules-for-better-communication-in-virtual-teams.html>
- <https://www.sococo.com/10-communication-rules-for-virtual-teams/>
- <https://hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten>

Communication Planning Discussion Guide

Part I: Communication Tools

1. What communication tools does our team currently use or have access to?
(i.e. Zoom, Email, Teams, Cell Phones, SharePoint)
2. For each communication tool listed, when is it appropriate to use that tool?
(For example: "Teams Chat should be used for quick, simple questions" or "If an email conversation requires more than 3 responses, it should be a phone call.")
3. For each communication tool listed, what is the preferred response time?
(For example: "Respond to emails within 1 business day" or "Respond to a Teams chat message within 2 hours.")
4. For each communication tool listed, what other expectations will help this tool be effective for your team?
(For example: "During Zoom meetings with team, turn on video when talking.")

Communication Tool	When to use	Preferred response time	Additional expectations
Example: Email	To schedule meetings, send instructions, share updates	Within 1 business day (if response required)	Use clear, direct subject lines; only CC those who need to be involved; only reply-all when it is relevant to entire group

Part II: Connection Standards

1. What makes a team meeting meaningful/useful?
2. What is the best frequency for regular team meetings? How long should they last?
(For example: "Once a week for 90 minutes" or "Twice a week for 30 minutes.")
3. What should we cover during regular team meetings?
(For example: Roundtable updates, problem-solving, brainstorming, team-building)
4. How often should team members connect with one another outside of standing team meetings? What tool/platform should be used for these connections?
(For example: "Daily check-ins on Teams messenger" or "Weekly Friday round-up email")

Note: If you have sub-teams or sub-groups, consider answering the above questions for those units as well.

5. What makes a one-on-one meeting with your supervisor meaningful/useful?
6. What is your preferred frequency for one-on-one meetings with your supervisor? How long should they last?
(For example: "Once a week for 60 minutes" or "Twice a month for 90 minutes.")
7. What would you like to cover during one-on-one meetings with your supervisor?
(For example: Problem-solving, professional development, performance feedback)
8. How often should your supervisor connect with you outside of standing one-on-one meetings? What tool/platform should be used for these connections?
(For example: "Daily check-ins on Teams messenger" or "Weekly check-ins via email on Monday")

Part III: Additional Communication Considerations

- How should team members share availability with one another?
(For example: Outlook calendars, Teams messages or status, Zoom status)
- How often are team members expected to check their email/Teams/other platforms?
(For example: "At least 3 times per day" or "Once in the morning and once in the afternoon")
- During what hours are team members expected to adhere to preferred response times?
(For example: "Between 8am-5pm on weekdays only")