

COLLABORATING REMOTELY – WHY REMOTE COLLABORATION IS IMPORTANT



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Business



Do you work with folks who are far away? Are they across the state, the country, or even, the world?

In the modern age of globalization, multinational corporations have become commonplace and remote collaboration has become more important as a result. In

many cases, corporate offices are located in at least two continents. Even on a national level, it's common to see multiple branches located in different regions of the same country.

Since you will likely have to work with your counterparts who are located elsewhere, you will need to learn how to work together with remote collaboration. Herein, we'll give you a breakdown of remote collaboration, why it's important, and why it's the way forward.

What is remote collaboration?

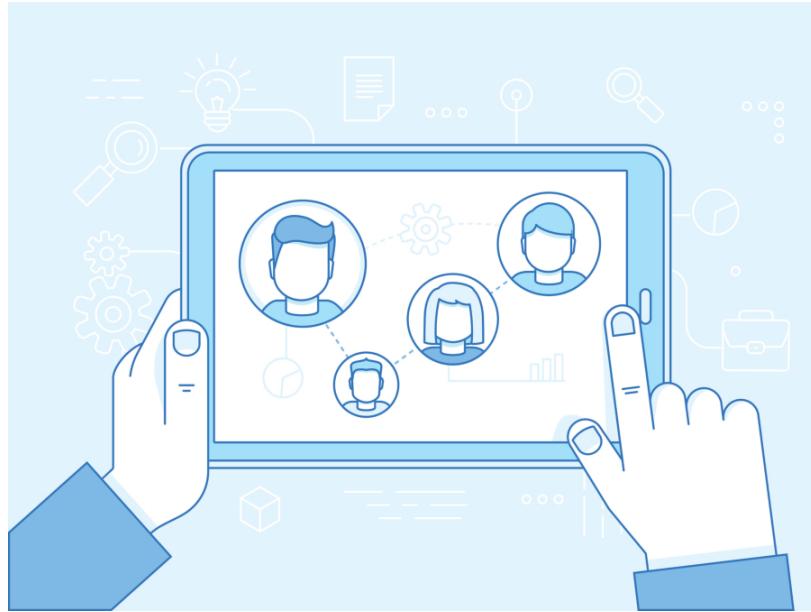
Remote collaboration refers to the ability to engage as a team from anywhere in the world. Gone are the days of needing to work in the same physical space as your coworkers and superiors - with remote collaboration, you can truly be anywhere! This also applies to international corporations that require much communication between teams separated by thousands of miles.

Remote collaboration remedies distance limitations by way of collaborative tools. In order to optimize a team's success it is best to understand the different variants of said tools as well as the differing ways in which distance may manifest itself.

First off, tools meant for remote collaboration are based primarily on the features a team may require to best succeed. Shared word processing services, file-sharing hubs, [video conferencing](#), and general project management interfaces are just a few examples of features that may be required from remote collaboration tools.

Distance is the operating parameter around which remote collaboration operates. Without distance, remote work would not be necessary. To that end, bear in mind that remote collaboration's distance is not just physical, but also

operational and affinitive. Operational distance refers to that of communication between teams of various sizes, as well as the gap between the skill levels of different team members. Affinitive distance, on the other hand, involves the resultant gap in operational styles between team members, and its effect on synergy, camaraderie, and management.



What are the main factors of remote collaboration?

It's unlikely that you'll be able to jump straight into the facilitation of remote collaboration without thinking a few things through first. The underlying factors that will aid in your ultimate success are well worth the discipline and consideration you'll need to put into them.

Universal Participation

Without a team to collaborate with, remote collaboration is nothing more than a meaningless buzzword. Even with a

team, however, remote collaboration is useless when the team, or certain team members, do not actually engage in collaboration.

The key, in this instance, is to ensure that your team achieves universal participation. Are certain team members contributing less than others in meetings? Is this a result of work output, or a side-effect of the remote work environment? Whatever the reason, it is the responsibility of those facilitating remote collaboration to note differing outputs and find solutions in order to make such discrepancies a thing of the past.

However you choose to ensure universal participation, whether it be individual meetings or new [effective meeting](#) strategies, you'll have the end result to thank you. Especially when it comes to smaller teams, the more voices heard and opinions in the mix will only serve to strengthen the final output.

Accessibility

Just as universal participation amongst team members is essential for the success of remote collaboration, so too is access to and communication with the other members of the team. This is particularly important when you find yourself requiring a collaborator's input, only to find that they're away from their computers or offline.

Ultimately, this factor comes down to the need for regular working hours. In most situations involving remote collaboration, especially team members who regularly work from home, the traditional concept of 'working hours' may seem outmoded. However, another commonality in remote collaboration is the presence of team members from a litany of time zones, perhaps continents away from one another.

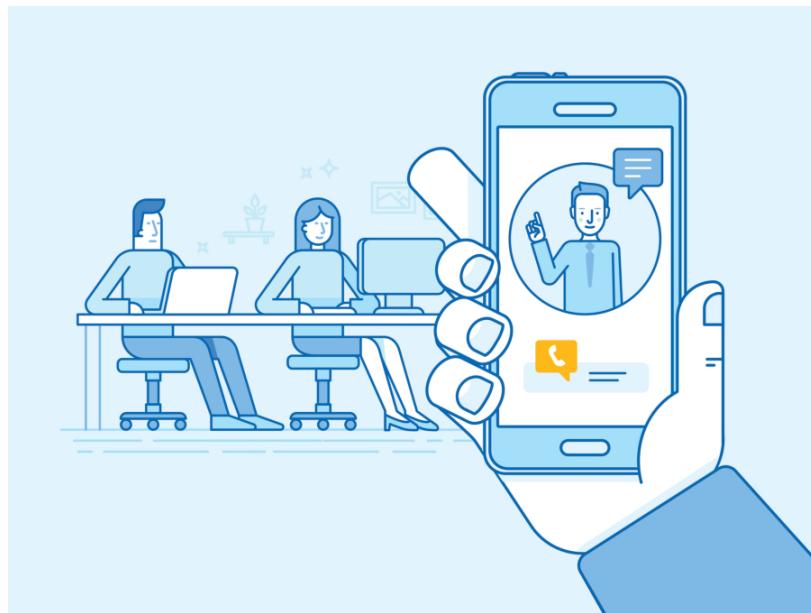
When time has the potential to become such a variable, many facilitators of remote collaboration opt to set a minimum window of mandatory working hours. During this time, all team members should ideally be accessible and able

to communicate on a moment's notice. Keep in mind that this does not mean a whole 9-hour workday is being mandated for team members across the world. Instead, a small block of two or three hours would work just fine, and keep this essential factor from becoming a problem.

Regularity

Mandatory working hours, as effective for effective remote collaboration as they may be, are only one part of a greater whole. Regularity, or habitual routines and practices, is the primary factor that governs the efficiency and success of remote collaboration.

Attendance at team meetings is essential for any team-based operation. In remote circumstances, which are typically more flexible than ordinary work environments, regularity ensures that attendance becomes second nature. Moreover, just as in the case of accessibility, regularity makes certain that collaboration occurs, even when team members are remote and located all around the globe.



Why is effective remote collaboration

important?

Remote collaboration is one thing, but *effective* remote collaboration is another concept altogether. Like with most other types of [project collaboration](#), poor lines of communication and a lack of internal standards are just a few symptoms of ineffective remote collaborations. We've outlined some of the main reasons why effective remote collaboration is so important below.

Clear and efficient communication

Considering the remote nature of remote collaboration, there is nothing more important than ensuring that your team's communication is both clear and efficient. In that regard, it's necessary for remote collaborators, who largely rely on text-based messages, to pay attention to the amount of messages they send and the tone and manner they are using.

Unless you're using fully constructed sentences and completely spelled out words, assume that there is someone out there that will not understand your messages. This means that when collaborating remotely, you should stay away from using slang and other variants of shorthand. Although you're likely inclined to communicate in this manner for the sake efficiency, the fact is that clarity will also supersede brevity in this context. If the rest of your team is spending all its time figuring out what you're trying to say, then less time can be spent actually collaborating.

Internal process acceptance

Unfortunately, in the modern era of texting, there are more acronyms than one could ever hope to understand. As such, particularly when those acronyms are corporate in nature, we suggest that you write out it in full, unless agreed-upon beforehand. In fact, said agreement can be just one aspect

of your team's greater acceptance of a variety of internal communication processes. This is not just about slang and shorthand, but also about which word processor to use, which tone to use in official communications, and which format to use in internal memos.

Although these may seem somewhat trivial, when it comes to remote collaboration, no detail may be taken for granted. With so many people working pseudo-independently, personal preferences and styles will have a greater likelihood of carrying forward into the work at hand. Therefore, by agreeing to these matters ahead of time, potential issues can be resolved before they even arise.

Unique idea generation

Even with a greater number of remote workers than ever before, it is safe to say that remote work and collaboration are still outside the norm of traditional labor practices. As such, remote collaboration offers team members the opportunity to truly think and operate outside of the box. This is particularly true when it comes to contributors that perform better when working individually or away from the distracting influence of others.

When it comes down to it, remote collaborations possess the capacity to foster new and unique ideas. This doesn't necessarily only have to occur in collaborative brainstorming sessions, but also when it comes to problem-solving or other creative workarounds. When all is said and done, it is entirely possible that remote collaboration could lead to the idea that catapults the final product to greatness.

What are the pros and cons of remote collaboration?

Like anything else, remote collaboration has its benefits and its drawbacks. This is particularly the case when done in an ineffective and inefficient manner. However, when done well, remote collaboration can help team members transcend the sum of its parts and create final products that are nothing short of remarkable. With that in mind, the pros and cons of remote collaboration are as follows:

Pros:

- All working styles can be accommodated
- Remote employees are often more productive
- Employees can focus entirely on the job, instead of office politics
- Prospect of remote work/collaboration often attracts greater talent
- Can increase an employee's communication skills
- Allows team members to approach projects in different ways than in an office setting

Cons:

- Reduced need for corporate workspace
- Employees may feel isolated from the rest of the team and company
- Potentially limited accessibility, if working in multiple time zones
- Face-to-Face communication may be limited or nonexistent
- Relies on team members' sense of self-motivation
- Largely reliant on 3rd party software that can experience glitches or downtime

Remote Collaboration Tools

Because remote collaboration is such a commonality in today's professional environment, there are an array of tools available to make facilitating remote collaboration easy.

ViewBoard

In terms of collaborative hardware, ViewBoards are [collaboration displays](#) specifically designed with collaboration in mind. ViewBoard interactive flat panels like the [ViewSonic IFP 7550](#) offer the ability to import files, make on-screen annotations, conduct video conferencing, record live, and save all on-screen content. While ViewBoards are geared towards group collaborations in meetings, in a remote collaboration setting, they could be used as a means of facilitating remote collaborations from one centralized device.



myViewBoard

When it comes to remote collaboration, the Google Chrome based software solution [myViewBoard](#) is a powerful tool to have at your disposal. The fact that it is web based means that any device with Google Chrome is able to access the software no matter where they are.

myViewBoard comes equipped with wireless screen sharing and is a secure, unified way to facilitate remote collaborations. Additional features include live annotation, cloud-based content distribution, online whiteboarding, and seamless meeting recording, amongst others. This collection of powerful features make simultaneous group

access, hosting brainstorming sessions, or simply conducting quick check-ins easy and effective.

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