Connecting Teams at a Distance
Working in a virtual environment creates additional physical, psychological, and emotional distance. This means that virtual team leaders must be **mindful, purposeful, and intentional** when collaborating, communicating, and connecting with their teams.
Ask Yourself

• Do you do these best practices?
• Do you do them often enough?
• Do you do these well enough?
What do you expect to learn from this webinar today?
Learning Objectives

• Identify, and discuss, the three critical skills that virtual leaders need to know in working with virtual teams
• Examine challenges in connecting virtual teams, and identify solutions to those challenges
• Identify differences in communicating with virtual teams, and recommend communication best practices
• Examine the elements of virtual team collaboration and discuss how to implement them
• Discuss special circumstances that arise with virtual teams
Poll: Which of the 3 key principles is most challenging for you?

Chat: Why is it challenging for you?
CONNECTION
“One of the more profound issues is how to get team members to bond and develop the collective energy so vital to pushing projects forward and achieving results.”

Yael Zofi – Author of “A Manager's Guide to Virtual Teams”
Share an example of when you have been a member of a well-connected team.

Share an example of when you have been on a team that did not connect well.
Connection Best Practices

- Leading intentionally with purpose to connect
- Detecting and resolving conflict
- Helping everyone feel included, involved, and responsible for the collective mission of the team
- Building and nurturing cohesive working relationships
- Leveraging technology
Leading Intentionally with Purpose to Connect
What are some ways you can lead with intention?

What are some of the challenges to that?
How do you know if conflict is occurring in your virtual team?

What can you do about it?
Helping Everyone Feel Included, Involved, and Responsible for the Collective Mission of the Team and the Agency
How can you tell if someone is not involved with the team?
How can you create a virtual environment where everyone feels included, involved, and responsible for the collective mission of your team, (e.g.)?
Building and nurturing cohesive working relationships
Share ways you build and nurture informal working relationships on your team in a virtual environment, (e.g.).
Leveraging Technology
What are some ways you can leverage technology when connecting your team at a distance?

Which technology works best?
Connecting Wrap-Up

✓ Lead or work intentionally with purpose to connect
✓ Check in and touch base regularly with team members
✓ If possible use periodic face-to-face meetings
✓ Celebrate success as a team with “virtual celebrations”
✓ Find commonalities
✓ Create virtual open-doors, water coolers, hallways
✓ Begin your virtual meeting with informal conversation or chit chat
✓ Take virtual coffee breaks or lunches together
✓ Use web cams or other visual medial tools if possible
“The two words ‘information’ and ‘communication’ are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.”

Sydney J. Harris – Author of,
“The Authentic Person: Dealing with Dilemma”
What communication behaviors have you seen that erode relationships within a virtual team?
Communication Best Practices

✓ Recognizing the importance of frequent, authentic, and transparent communication
✓ Using appropriate methods of communication
✓ Identifying various communication styles, personal work styles, and personality types
✓ Connecting and communicating with “micro-meetings”, check-ins and virtual open door times
✓ Leveraging technology
Types of COMMUNICATION

TRANSPARENT

FREQUENT

AUTHENTIC

people

connection

message
Do you have some examples of when the *WRONG* communication method was selected for a message?

What was the impact?
# Methods of Communication

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<th>Method</th>
<th>Suitable for</th>
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| **Email**                     | - Daily/weekly progress updates  
                              - Non-urgent questions  
                              - Individual or team accomplishment highlights |
| **Telephone**                 | - Any situation where the tone could be misconstrued when put into written form  
                              - Real-time information sharing (for example, brainstorming and decision making)  
                              - Urgent issues  
                              - Discussions about projects and information updates |
| **Video conferencing/Webcams**| - Discussions about projects, development needs, feedback, and recent successes  
                              - Monitoring team morale  
                              - Delivery of difficult messages (when in-person meetings are not an option)  
                              - Team meetings |
| **In-person**                 | - Initial team meeting, if possible  
                              - Recurring team meetings for team building, if possible  
                              - Delivery of difficult messages |
| **Document Management (DM) System** | - Collaborative work  
                              - Idea sharing |
When in doubt use...
Communication Styles, Personal Work Styles, and Personality Types
What do you need to do to adapt your communication style to the different members of your team?

How can you as the team leader help your team adapt their communication styles?
Chat: How does being an introvert or extrovert affect your ability to build teams where everyone feels included, involved, and responsible for the collective?

Poll: Are you an introvert or extrovert?
Micro Meetings and Virtual Open Door

Do you have some examples of when the WRONG communication method was selected for a message?

What was the impact?
What are some ways you can ensure that informal discussions and micro meetings take place with all members of your team?
Communication Wrap Up

✓ Have frequent discussions to keep everyone connected and on the same page; use micro-meetings
✓ Reduce uncertainty; Say what you mean and mean what your say
✓ Develop effective listening without the benefit of visual cues—listen and probe—use questions to increase understanding
✓ Know your team member’s communication preferences
✓ Encourage social communication
✓ Use a variety of media methods
COLLABORATION
“Virtual collaboration holds amazing promise. When successful, it enables talented peers to work together regardless of location and organizations to mine the collective wisdom of a widely dispersed employee population.”

Carol Kinsey Goman – CEO and author of “The Silent Language of Leaders”
What is one of your challenges in getting a virtual team to collaborate?
Collaboration Best Practices

✓ Establishing and maintaining trust
✓ Holding team members accountable
✓ Establishing shared goals
✓ Holding effective virtual meetings
Establishing And Maintaining Trust
In what ways have you seen virtual team leaders build trust?
Holding Team Members

ACCOUNTABLE
How can you ensure accountability in your virtual team members?

What is the biggest challenge in holding people accountable?
Establishing Team Goals
What are some ways to establish a sense of shared purpose with your teams?
Fostering Collaboration in Virtual Meetings
Poll: Which of these challenges in running effective virtual meetings is most frustrating to you?

- Lack of visual cues and body language
- Difficult social interaction
- Lack of strong facilitation skills
- Lack of participation and multitasking
- Geographic distance
- Technology

Chat: List additional frustrations related to running effective virtual meetings.
Starting the Meeting with Purpose, Agenda, and Ground Rules
Good facilitators don’t just run a meeting they lead a meeting

1. Set the tone for the meeting.
2. Use an agenda to keep meeting on track.
3. Use visuals to keep participants’ attention.
4. Record discussion notes visibly (can be separate note taker).
5. Provide frequent opportunities for each person to speak to the group.
7. Intervene when things are running off track.
8. Wrap up and debrief at the end of the meeting.
Dealing with Disruptive Behavior
Poll: Have you ever multitasked during a virtual meeting?

- Yes
- No

Chat: Why?
Prevent Multitasking
Preventing Multi-tasking

- Use web-cams so everyone can see each other
- Assign agenda items to everyone
- Discuss expectations and meeting etiquette at the start of your meetings
- Use interactivity tools in Web Ex such as the chat feature to increase engagement
- Front load important discussion items
- Use visuals
- Build time in longer meetings for breaks
Collaboration Wrap Up

✓ Meet in person early on if possible
✓ Establish trust at the start; discuss what it means with your teams
✓ Establish shared goals and collective purpose at the start
✓ Be up front—set guidelines for checking in, decision making, meeting etiquette, technology etiquette, and goals and deadlines
✓ Clarify tasks and processes, not just goals and roles
✓ Create progress reporting systems to track responsibilities and results
✓ Celebrate milestones and results in team meetings
✓ Start virtual meetings with agenda, purpose and ground rules to set the tone
✓ Assign agenda items to everyone to decrease multi-tasking
✓ Leverage good facilitators and practice good facilitation skills
✓ Use Web cams as much as possible to increase engagement during virtual meetings
Working in a virtual environment creates additional physical, psychological, and emotional distance. This means that virtual team leaders must be **mindful, purposeful, and intentional** when collaborating, communicating, and connecting with their teams.
Ask Yourself

• Do you do these best practices?
• Do you do them often enough?
• Do you do these well enough?
• Do you know what area you need to improve?
Webinar Assessment

1. What did you like?

2. What surprised you?

3. What will you do immediately?
THANK YOU