

Building a Virtual Team

Teambuilding may seem more complicated when many of your staff are working from home. However, good communication will help you build a virtual team that can accomplish goals effectively. Try these tips:

- ▶ **Establish expectations.** Team members should understand both their responsibilities and the procedures they are expected to follow. It's important to be consistent about expectations regarding start and end times or length of lunch hours. If you've instituted a more flexible schedule for people working from home, create guidelines for coverage, meeting attendance, etc.
- ▶ **Get to know team members on an individual basis.** Have a periodic one-on-one call with each member of your team. This will give you a better sense of who they are as people and what unique skills they bring to the table. Look for opportunities to help each of them develop new skills.
- ▶ **Communicate a clear vision.** Clearly articulate how your team contributes to overall business goals, both in day-to-day operations and over the long term. A team that understands its role within the larger organization is more likely to make good decisions.
- ▶ **Engage in teambuilding efforts.** Give your team the occasional "recess." Schedule a virtual team luncheon or a time for online game play.



Creating opportunities for team members to interact in a more relaxed setting may increase trust and foster better working relationships.

- ▶ **Expect a variety of reactions to change.** Take a realistic, positive approach to difficulties and focus on concrete steps that will help keep team goals on track.
- ▶ **Anticipate turnover.** Every team has to deal with turnover, whether due to retirement, people moving on to new positions, or changes within the organization. When your team experiences a departure, consider if it may be an opportunity to realign positions based on shifting business needs.
- ▶ **Develop leadership skills.** Read a book, take a class, or challenge yourself with new experiences.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can provide more ideas on how to build an effective team. Consultation is available 24/7/365.

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