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As international development professionals, we are accustomed to collaborating with people who are not located in the same office as we are. It comes with the territory—working with people in multiple countries, across various time zones. Beyond this, remote working in the sector includes people teleworking regularly from home, supervisors managing employees who spend time working away from the office and daily interactions with colleagues posted overseas.

We know that effective collaboration is incredibly important to the success of development work. After all, it is the C in Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA). In order for remote working to be successful, we need to ensure that it fosters effective collaboration; but that is a lot easier said than done. We have developed this tip sheet of remote working tips for international development staff to improve the efficiency and productivity of important working relationships.

This resource lists the most common sets of challenges faced in remote working and provides practice advice and remedies. It also identifies the applicability of each tip by remote working profile.



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<h2>Tips for building strong relationships and engagement</h2>	You are a ...			
	Remote Worker	Regular Teleworker	Teammate of a Remote Worker	Supervisor of a Remote Worker
Day to Day				
Be proactive. Take the initiative to set up virtual meeting room links, conference lines, get materials, set a clear agenda, provide follow-up notes if needed, etc.	X	X		
Set boundaries. Ground your work in personal boundaries. Block off your calendar during non-working hours, especially if you are based in another time zone. Be cautious about being overly responsive to emails during non-working hours to prevent the perception that you are always online.	X	X		
Be a time traveler. If you are based in another time zone, volunteer to support field-based calls in the morning to help cushion requests from your team since you are already up and working.	X	X	X	X
Clearly communicate your availability. Be intentional about discussing changes in availability with your supervisor and teammates (e.g., if you will be less available by email for a specified period because you need to concentrate on a big project). Proactively set and manage expectations about both overall responsiveness (e.g., responding to emails, availability via chat) and productivity (e.g., the time it will take to finish a project or deliver a product).	X	X	X	
Engage often. Use a chat function in the way that you would normally drop by someone's desk (ask if you can give them a quick call).	X		X	
Leverage your remoteness to build connections. Connect with someone new every week via phone, chat, or email. During trips back to the office, try to physically meet with new staff and others you don't typically interact with remotely.	X			
Use calls/chats instead of emails. Schedule a call or use chat instead of sending an email.	X	X	X	X
Create opportunities for making connections, especially with new team members. Identify a shared interest or goal with someone who you don't usually work with, and establish a buddy system/check-ins for skill development.	X		X	
Use a plurality of modes for sharing information. Ensure that formal meetings are not the only forum for sharing information across the team. Complementary modalities might include: regular 1-on-1 check ins, virtual coffee meet ups, and knowledge sharing through an intranet, wiki or even a simple shared document.	X		X	
Don't forget about snail mail. The speed and efficiency of sharing most of our documents electronically has huge benefits. There might be times, however, when sending something through the good, old-fashioned mail service might have added benefits (e.g., sending products from events to remote workers or snacks to office celebrations as a reminder that you (as a remote worker) are there in spirit if not in person).	X		X	
Make a point of offering informal feedback. We're accustomed to giving each other informal feedback in person (e.g. after meetings, in the hall, at happy hour). Opportunities for providing informal feedback to remote workers might be less obvious, but creating them is important for building a sense of belonging and engagement.			X	X
Give verbal recognition. The "out of sight, out of mind" trap makes it more likely that remote workers receive less praise than their non-remote counterparts. Making sure to point out in public (whether in a chat channel or on a team video chat) when a remote team member has done a good job will go a long way toward building a sense of belonging and recognition for them.	X			X

Tips for building strong relationships and engagement	You are a ...			
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During Team Meetings				
Be the early bird. Join conference calls early to have informal chats with co-workers	X	X	X	
Always create an agenda. If you are facilitating a meeting, always <u>design the agenda</u> ahead of time for an effective meeting. This helps remote workers stay on the same page about what is being discussed.	X	X	X	X
Find an in-person ally. Have an ally in the room to prompt and encourage your participation.	X	X		
Five minute social. Schedule first five minute of meetings for social, non-work related time; this often happens anyway but making it formal will set expectations and allow more accurate time management.	X	X	X	
Hear from remote staff first. Ask phone folks to go first in meetings and provide opportunities during conversation to participate.			X	X
Gentle reminders. Remind people in the room that we have remote teammates at the start of the meeting.			X	
Contain sidebars. In meetings, avoid having sidebar conversations; it is distracting particularly for those listening/watching in.			X	
Remain fully present from afar. Participate in the meeting as if you were in the office - don't stay silent. Focus on being effective and give yourself permission to jump in to the conversation as if you are in the room.	X	X		
Be aware of participation styles. Some participants are more comfortable talking and offering their ideas verbally, on the spot during meetings. Other prefer providing their ideas in writing or 1:1 with time for individual reflection before sharing. To accommodate all types of participation styles, consider sending the agenda out before the meeting, setting up a document for ideas, or scheduling appointments to talk 1:1 after the meeting.	X	X	X	X



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Tips for effectively using technology	You are a ...			
	Remote Worker	Regular Teleworker	Teammate of a Remote Worker	Supervisor of a Remote Worker
Using Technology for Better Meetings				
Agree on platforms. Set up relevant conference lines and/or remote connectivity options if needed (remote workers to help and in-office workers need to open lines).	X	X	X	
Use a digital flipchart. Instead of or in addition to taking notes on a flipchart in the room, take notes in a virtual document that can be seen and edited in real-time by remote staff.	X	X	X	X
I, 2, mic check. Check with your team that they can hear you and/or see you before you start your conversation.	X	X	X	
Instant tech feedback. Give feedback even if it's not directly asked for from you. For example: if you have trouble hearing the person working remote, let them know. If you have a choice between giving feedback in person or immediately to remote workers, choose immediately.	X	X	X	
Use video. Use video whenever you can as well as audio for meetings with remote participants.	X	X	X	
Have a remote buddy during breakout group work. Think about facilitation ahead of time and have a remote 'buddy' or remote group separate from the in person group; different platforms facilitate this in different ways.	X	X	X	
Leverage technology to take the lead, even if you're not in the room. Offer to facilitate meetings and ask everyone to participate from their computer so you can all work from the same document together.	X	X		
Troubleshoot technology (ahead of time). Make sure that cameras and speakers are functioning properly and work to quickly replace anything that is broken. It may be worth investing in new technology like video cameras and headsets.	X	X	X	X
Universal editors. Allow guests to modify invites and then share how they're connecting in the invite	X	X	X	
Think and share digitally - in advance. Share materials including agendas ahead of time and include links to documents in the calendar invite and/or agenda for the meeting.	X	X	X	
Share your deets. Use shared calendars to show what you're working on and set your hours.	X	X		
Use open platforms. Use viewable documents, such as Google Docs, instead of flipcharts in order to allow remote participants to more effectively engage	X	X	X	
Knowledge management - for all. Create a place for tacit knowledge needed for situational awareness such as a team wiki or blog	X	X	X	

Tips for when remote workers spend time in the office	You are a ...			
	Remote Worker	Regular Teleworker	Teammate of a Remote Worker	Supervisor of a Remote Worker
Making the Most of In-Person Time				
Identify your desk in advance. Find out which desks are available and if applicable, double check to make sure that your assigned desk has a working computer.	X			
Make sure you have access to working spaces. Be sure to acquire key cards to access working spaces. Ensure you have an active ID card or badge if necessary.	X			
Maximize face-to-face interactions. While it is important to have a desk, you probably won't be spending much time there. Schedule time to meet with people face-to-face, this is an opportunity to build relationships with people you might not work with on a daily basis. Schedule breakfasts, lunches, and social time after work with colleagues if possible.	X	X	X	X
Give yourself the gift of time. Allow yourself an extra day during your trip just for team time. Make time for colleagues, walk the halls, and keep your phone with you so you don't lose track of time when greeting teammates. Instead of 60 minute meetings, plan 50 minute meetings to give yourself enough cushion to casually walk back and chat with colleagues instead of running late from one meeting to the next.	X	X	X	X
Schedule trips with intentionality. Try to schedule trips back to the office at times that will allow you to participate in team retreats, strategic planning activities, and office events.	X	X	X	X



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