



MCQUAIG PRESENTS

# THE QUICK GUIDE TO REMOTE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS





# Introduction

Few would argue having an effective team is worth its weight in gold. 2020 has been a year of upheaval, but if there's one thing we've learned, it's that teamwork has never been more important. With everyone working remotely, keeping teams together and on track has become a top priority for talent professionals across the globe. The task, however, has been far from easy.

Helping teams reach maximum effectiveness goes beyond merely updating your communication strategy for a remote environment. There are many elements to an effective team from staying on top of productivity to managing team dynamics, but when you have to keep your distance from your colleagues, what's the best way to take charge of remote team effectiveness? The following pages of this eBook are designed to help remote managers tackle their approach to teams and provide tactics and solutions to keep employees together in a virtual world.

## **Did you know?**

In 2020, 42% of the US labour force began working remotely full time.<sup>1</sup>



## Why do team dynamics matter?

In order to have an effective team, leaders need to account for team dynamics. Team dynamics refers to the way team mates behave and the psychological processes underlying their interactions with each other.<sup>2</sup> How they work together influences how each member of the team feels about their colleagues which can, in turn, impact the attitudes and motivations of the entire group. The impact of these dynamics can be a positive or negative force on your team. **Proactively managing interpersonal relationships and team processes can therefore be the difference between building stronger bonds between employees and having a team spiral off track.**

When team dynamics are prioritized and discussed with the group, teams see a boost in many areas. Trust increases as team members feel more confident asking others for help or support. Collaboration improves as well which can help teams solve problems more creatively and find better strategies to achieve targeted results. Connected teams are also more likely to hold each other accountable as there's more of a sense of team cohesion and camaraderie. Instead of having a culture of "everyone for themselves," improving a team's understanding of each other builds a culture of empathy and inclusion. It allows employees to see that a team really is more than just the sum of its individual parts. Once teams realize they can achieve more together, your team building initiatives have a better chance of effecting long- term change.

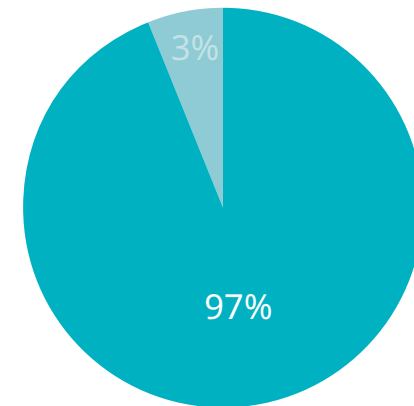




## What do the numbers say?

Of course, you don't take our word for it that managing team effectiveness matters. Let's look at what some of the more current research on the subject has to say about the matter.

- 86% of employees and execs cite a lack of communication and collaboration for failures at work<sup>3</sup>
- 58% of managers receive no team or management training<sup>4</sup>
- 89% of bosses believe their employees quit because of salary but only 12% leave for that reason<sup>5</sup>
- 80% of business now use some sort of social collaboration tool to enhance teams<sup>6</sup>
- Companies who communicate effectively are 4.5x more likely to retain their best talent<sup>7</sup>



**97%** of employees believe a lack of team alignment impacts the outcome of a project<sup>8</sup>

By investing in teams and improving the way they work and communicate you can save your company from early turnover, a decrease in productivity, and a loss of motivation. Training managers and employees alike to be better team members can also boost your collaboration efforts and create a stronger team culture. So don't take your employees for granted. Working with a dream team is possible but it's not going to happen by accident.



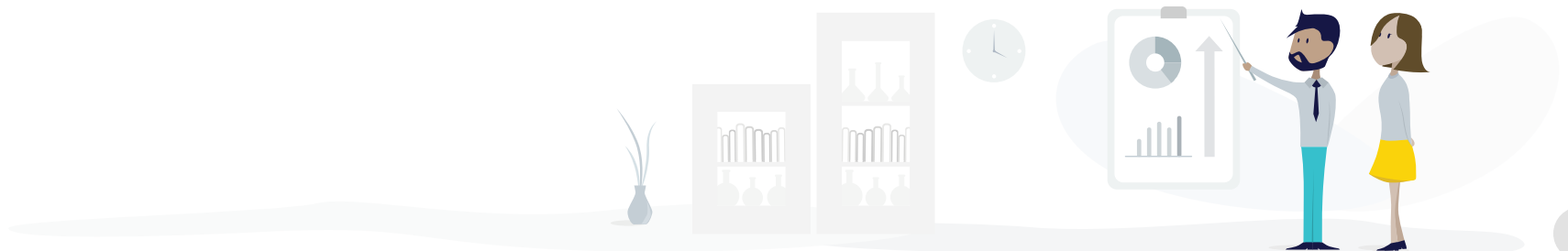
## Tactics to increase team effectiveness

### *Type of leadership*

How a manager approaches communicating and making decisions on a team impacts the culture of that team. An autocratic leader, for example, can create a culture of dependence and lack of trust.<sup>9</sup> Employees learn not to colour outside the lines and take their cues purely from their manager. A democratic leader, on the other hand, is able to create space for all team members to share their inputs in order to make decisions as a group. If your team is losing energy or communication is declining, it may be time to look at what leadership style is being used and whether it might unintentionally be creating barriers on the team. Strong teams have a foundation of trust that comes from the top. How you decide to lead will impact how your team is able to follow.

### *Communicate clearly*

The importance of communication in a remote world cannot be understated. Effective teams need to be able to communicate clearly and openly with each other without fear of judgment. Part of this is about developing clear expectations about communication such as what channels will be used and how often team members will be required to connect with each other. Another piece, however, ties into how much psychological safety is present on a team. Psychological safety refers to how comfortable employees are speaking their mind and sharing their ideas.<sup>10</sup> The safer a team feels, the more actively they'll reach out to each other. This can strengthen brainstorming, increase creativity, and boost productivity.





## Tactics to increase team effectiveness

### *Define roles and responsibilities*

At the start of the pandemic there was a sense of “all hands on deck” for many organizations and employees were eager to take on new responsibilities if it meant keeping the doors open. But that sort of high output isn’t sustainable, and we’re already starting to see the rise in burnout as a response.<sup>11</sup> Spend some time with each employee and gain a more accurate account of what their remote roles entail and any ways they’ve changed. With everyone working apart, there may be unintentional overlap between roles or responsibilities that could be shared in more effective ways. Doing work exactly as it was done in the office may not be a reasonable goal right now. Check to see if a little extra clarity on role definitions might help alleviate some of the stress and tension facing your team.

### *Account for personality dynamics*

Part of being able to work effectively together comes down to who’s a part of your team. Your team isn’t likely made up of the same personality type so there may be a learning curve as employees figure out the best ways to work together. Misalignments between how colleagues work, view the world, approach problem-solving, or maintain their motivation can lead to sources of conflict on a team. Leveraging personality assessments is a quick and easy way to help team members learn more about themselves and each other. Celebrating individual differences can strengthen interpersonal relationships and help employees learn about each other’s skills and abilities which can be helpful down the road as they’re needed. Better yet, personality assessments can be taken, scored, and debriefed remotely, making this a fast option for struggling online teams.





## Tactics to increase team effectiveness

### *Collaborate together*

How are you encouraging collaboration at a distance? The first place to start is by reviewing if you have the right technology tools in place to support remote collaboration. Many of us live our lives on Zoom or Slack these days, but check to make sure there's no communication bottleneck because of the platform choices being offered to employees. Once you have the right tools in place, help employees embrace new ways of working together. You've probably seen a lot of chatter about pairing up remote work buddies to have coffee breaks together or daily check-ins or team meetings to bring everyone together. Another collaboration strategy gaining popularity these days is parallel working. Parallel working is when two employees work as normal but keep their videos on so their colleagues are on the screen and already "there" when questions occur, more closely simulating the office desk dynamic.

### *Learn together*

The pandemic is causing a boom in employee development and team management training as businesses take advantage of a quieter home work setting that can be more conducive to solo learning. Managers can take on a more coaching type role to help their employees learn new insights about themselves and how they related to others, or whole team activities like virtual workshops or online training can be used to educate everyone at once. No matter how you decide to integrate L&D into your team culture, it's important to support what is learned beyond the exercise itself. For example, if you're going to participate in a half or full day workshop, make sure to incorporate any takeaways into upcoming projects, one-on-one meetings, and personal long-term development plans to underscore the tactics being learned.





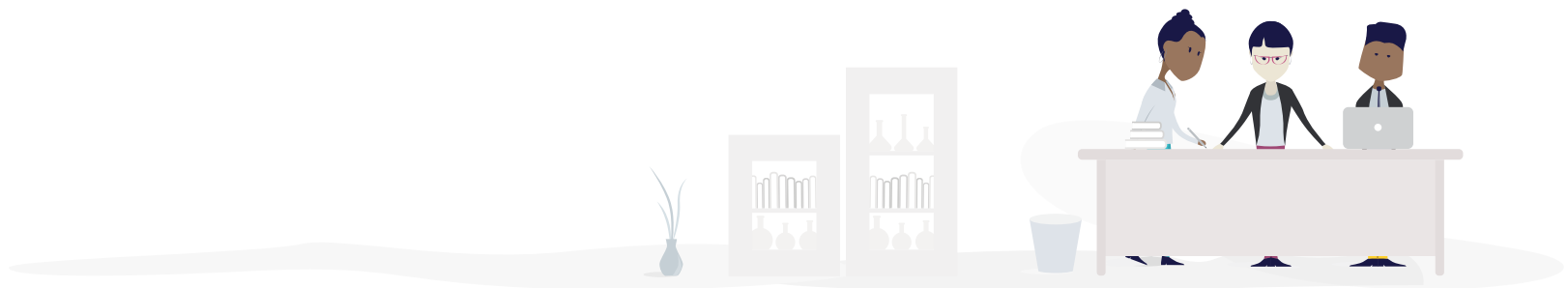
## Tactics to increase team effectiveness

### *Ask for feedback*

You'd be surprised by how often teams function without any sort of formal feedback structure in place. Asking for input from your team doesn't need to be a scary prospect. When done well and often, employee surveys or feedback channels can be an effective tool to keep your team healthy and happy.<sup>13</sup> Collecting feedback allows managers the chance to see how well their team is truly functioning and if there are any issues that need to be addressed that the manager may be unaware of. Employees may not feel comfortable asking for help through a screen or there may not be enough psychological safety in a group to support candor and honesty. Asking for anonymous feedback can be a good way of skirting those issues in order to get to the heart of what's truly happening on your team.

### *Set and track goals*

Effective teams know how they're doing on any given week. They have a good sense of what needs to be achieved and how far towards their goals they've come.<sup>12</sup> Instead of working blind, these teams have a clear understanding of what their goals are, what metrics are being used to measure performance, and what timeline they need to stay within. Setting clear goals also goes hand-in-hand with prioritizing open communication. When managers and teams are able to have difficult conversations about work and productivity, it helps everyone maintain a more realistic view of what they can achieve. That can help improve the quality of work the team is able to produce as they have a clear vision for what is required and what standards need to be reached.







## Using assessments to improve team effectiveness

While there are multiple ways to improve how a team works together, assessments are a fast and effective way to support team development. At McQuaig, we provide a suite of assessments that are psychometrically strong measures backed by rigorous scientific research and testing. Our tools can be used in a variety of setting from hiring, to onboarding, to development to help you retain your best staff. If your team is currently struggling to work together, you might want to consider our half-day workshop **Maximize Team Effectiveness with the McQuaig Platform**.

Our workshop is designed to help teams start working more effectively together. Through an exploration of your team members' unique personality traits, an analysis of the team's overall personality composition, and a focus on leveraging each team mate's strengths, your team will develop strategies to support each other, manager group weaknesses, and ultimately become a more positive, cohesive unit. By moving personal insights into team insights, employees can take a more active role in their own development process to better contribute to their team's overall effectiveness.

To learn more about our team workshop or assessments, please visit [www.mcquaig.com](http://www.mcquaig.com).





## Conclusion

In a remote world, leading and managing teams presents more of a challenge than it ever has before. Without the benefit of daily, face-to-face interactions, keeping teams connected and cooperative requires more effort to facilitate. Part of running a remote team involves the tools and resources you have available to support online collaboration, but the more important factor to manage is how team members interact with each other. Do you have a group of employees who feel safe and supported or is everyone working on their own with blinders on? How your employees develop relationships with one another will change the entire culture of your team so it pays to take a more hands on approach as a leader.

**When teams have a better understanding of each member and how they work, they're able to come together more effectively.** Instead of responding with annoyance at work misalignments, they're more likely to use empathy and reason. They're also more willing to lend a helping hand to a struggling colleague or come together to brainstorm new solutions to problems or barriers. Effective teams see setbacks as opportunities to do better and achievements are shared as a group effort. Building a culture of trust and respect can help employees better understand their own personalities and how they relate to those around them. Instead of using their differences to pull teams apart, they leverage each other's strengths to achieve more together. While effective teams take some work to create, when done right, their impact can be felt across the entire organization.

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

- Babe Ruth<sup>14</sup>



## Notes

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