

3 Powerful Consequences Of Face-To-Face Collaboration

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As we push toward a larger vaccinated population within our country and throughout the world, plans and expectations for society's new normal are anxiously being discussed and debated. While many look forward to eliminating some of the more bothersome outcomes of the pandemic—like mask requirements and social gathering limits—other byproducts of the pandemic, such as working remotely, are likely to linger for months to come.

The question we must ask ourselves is what are the consequences of not meeting face-to-face when possible? There are many, but let's consider three powerfully positive consequences that happen when face-to-face collaboration is prioritized:

1. **Eliminate the Source of Misunderstandings & Incorrect**

Assumptions. When project teams do not meet face-to-face for formal planning sessions, everything happens virtually. A lot of one-way communications (emails, texts, Jira posts, etc.) take place, and a lot of assumptions are made. Team members make assumptions about who is doing what, leading to missed deadlines or incomplete tasks which results in project slips. When key individuals are not in the same room together, incorrect assumptions—regardless of good intentions—can get projects off track and cause the team to miss the main objective. In-person meetings force individuals to address the priorities at hand and make the clarification of tasks and expectations immediate. In addition, when team members interact in person, they naturally have conversations. And while they may not see eye-to-eye on certain points, they come to respect each other. They begin to understand why someone in product development thinks differently than someone in marketing. This removes the tendency to see people with different skill sets or in different functional areas as enemies and, as a result, helps foster teamwork.

2. **Create Opportunities for Problem Solving.** When you pull teams together that normally interact via email and instead facilitate face-to-face interaction, problems get solved more quickly and effectively. It's as simple as that. Negotiations are a critical part of the project management process. Successful negotiations consider the needs of all parties and strive for effective compromise. Without getting everyone in the same room to build relationships and accountability, negotiations and agreements either take longer than necessary or don't happen at all. During face-to-face planning sessions, all parties work together to diligently meet the requirements agreed upon. Working together, in face-to-face proximity, team members more effectively find solutions that solve problems.

3. **Accountability Comes with Personal Connection Which Yields**

Sacrifice. At the end of each planning session for a project, a compression session is required. The compression session compares the desired target completion date to the current (as scheduled) completion date for the project. Usually, there is a gap between the two, so something needs to change. Either activity precedence relationships, durations, or scope needs to change to close that gap. This activity alone forces all the people in the room to look at their activities and make decisions and sacrifices to ensure the project will meet its deadline. It forces them to actively be team players. That doesn't happen if team members haven't spent the time to meet, get to know, collaborate with, and commit with one another face-to-face.

The power of face-to-face collaboration can't be overstated. Technology has allowed us to maintain and progress over the last year and a half, but interpersonal relationships that happen in the same room are the foundation of true and lasting success.

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