

Why I Need to See Your Face...And Not on a Screen

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As we come to the close of an unprecedented year, it is interesting to consider the challenges, changes, and new normal that will carry into the new year. Over the last several months, many corporations have been forced to implement a remote working environment due to the global pandemic. As a result, there have

undoubtedly been a number of findings realized due to this shift – one perhaps being a growing view that physical meeting sites may not be as critical as previously thought when it comes to managing people. Flexibility, technology, and cost savings are driving factors for a continued remote workplace beyond the pandemic.

However sound or convincing those factors are, the successful management of people would suggest otherwise. In today's matrix environment, project managers (PMs) are responsible for cross-functional oversight – leading the collective efforts of individuals across multiple departments and geographic locations. The members of the team often report to individuals other than the PM—typically their functional manager—for their job reviews, pay raises, and performance feedback. This means PMs don't have the leverage to hold people accountable, nor do they have the “carrot” to incentivize. How then are they expected to deliver a quality project on-time and on-budget in this matrix environment? Leverage their people skills. Today's successful project managers know how to build loyalty and trust among their project teams so that those teams want to help them achieve a goal.

While Zoom, and other platforms like it, have become the primary means for communication over the last several months, our reliance on technology in communication has been present for years. The average person on a project team has worked with other people on his or her team for years, yet many probably can't describe what their teammates look like. Why? Because historically every interaction that team member has had with his or her teammates has been done virtually through email, chat, IM, or other collaboration tools.

True bonds, participation, and involvement, however, cannot be replaced with these technologies. Getting the entire team into one room for a multi-day planning session encourages team members to develop real relationships with each other. It also removes many of the obstacles that get in the way of effective project management, particularly excuses from team members who claim they didn't know about or understand something because they weren't part of the planning process.

When everyone plans together, you get ownership among the entire team for the project plan and mission. Once all the pieces are agreed upon, and everybody has buy-in, the team moves toward the same goal rather than running off in different directions. PMs who don't have leverage or incentive at their disposal instead gain respect and accountability from these individuals.

Amidst today's global health crisis, we should be grateful for the technology that keeps us connected. However, as we move past this challenge before us, let's not forget that key connections and conversations that lead to powerful time and cost savings can only be realized in person. It's only when you gather people together in a room in a collaborative way that these things bubble to the top. After all, which team members would you prefer to have on your team?

For more winning insights on how to manage effective remote teams and deliver A+ projects, pick up your copy of *How Teams Triumph* on Amazon today!

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