

# Working with VIRTUAL TEAMS



## Working with Virtual Teams: Session Three

### Using Technology to Strengthen Virtual Teams

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#### Introduction:

In today's online environment, a multitude of tools is available to support virtual team efforts. This session considers basic principles of the technology and provides a brief overview of some options that exist.

#### Web/Video Conferencing:

- **Examples:** Zoom, WebEx, GoTo Meeting, Skype, and Google Hangouts
- Select the platform:
  - Consider the platform where the majority of the team members are comfortable.
  - Ensure your team has adequate IT support. This may involve a conversation with your IT support team.
- Pay attention to video/audio quality:
  - Encourage team members to use webcams and headsets to improve video and audio quality
  - Wired connections usually provide higher quality connections than wireless connections (WiFi).
- Consider whether to record or not record the meetings
  - Members should agree and be aware. Get confirmation from participants before recording.
  - Be aware of accessibility requirements and transcription. For example, if you need to post the video for public use, you need to Close Caption the video content.
- Test the system live with the team including:
  - Ability to connect
  - Video/audio quality
  - Screen/file sharing
  - Muting and unmuting
  - Don't assume members will test—test with the entire team

#### Audio and Visual Equipment Best Practices

- Use live video and audio unless echo or background noises prohibit.

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- Minimize outside distractions and interference
  - Audio (fans, background noises)
  - Video (lighting—especially background lighting, background distractions/clutter)
  - Interruptions (other computer applications, other people, cell phones--mute cell phones and don't place vibrating phones near your microphone)
- Position camera and microphone to maximize verbal and non-verbal communication
- Be professional: remember you're on camera
- Share specific applications versus your entire desktop; Minimizes inadvertent disclosure

## Team Collaboration Tools:

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- **Examples:** GoogleDrive, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox, Basecamp
- Discuss with team the features that matter for the tools
  - Simultaneous document editing
  - Document storage only
  - Integrated features such as task management
- Select the product with
  - Greatest team comfort
  - Easiest to manage
- Other tools may be used in conjunction with the primary collaboration tool, such as:
  - Brainstorming applications
  - Voting or decision making tools
- Test the collaboration tools with the entire team, such as:
  - Ability to connect
  - File uploading/downloading
  - Editing
  - Folder creation and management
- Assign a collaboration space manager
  - Should be very familiar with the platform
  - Serves as usage support as well as site overseer

## Tools for Communication:

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- **Examples:** email, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Chatter
- Create distribution lists if email is chosen – Can be discussion or distribution only
- Keep communications brief, clear, and task oriented
  - State the purpose of the communication at the very beginning of the communication – “Need a decision,” “Would like feedback,” etc.
  - Use the subject line to draw attention – “DEADLINE!”
  - Mobile factor – many emails are now being read on mobile devices—think small screens

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## Tools and When to Use Them

Tool	When to Use	Examples
Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick sync-ups or immediate answer situations</li> <li>• Personal connection</li> <li>• Solving complex questions</li> </ul>	
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications that don't need a fast response</li> <li>• Messages that need to be recorded</li> </ul>	
Group Project Management Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post announcements to the whole group</li> <li>• Pose questions/processes requiring team collaboration</li> <li>• Recording information</li> </ul>	Basecamp, Microsoft Teams, Chatter
Instant messaging/texting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages that need a quick answer, but don't need to be recorded</li> </ul>	Skype messaging, Slack, Google Chat, cell phone texting
Web conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduled team meetings</li> <li>• 1 on 1 or small group check-ins</li> <li>• Meetings you need to record</li> <li>• Times when seeing body language is important such as problem solving, decision-making, or conflict resolution</li> </ul>	Zoom, Skype, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting
Virtual Collaboration – Develop Your Virtual Strategy	<a href="https://trailhead.salesforce.com/en/modules/manage_the_sfdc_way_virtual_collaboration/units/msfw_virtual_collab_develop_your_strategy">https://trailhead.salesforce.com/en/modules/manage_the_sfdc_way_virtual_collaboration/units/msfw_virtual_collab_develop_your_strategy</a>	

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## Summary of Southern Region Technology Tools:

IT specialists across the Southern Region's Land Grant University Extension Service were asked which platforms their universities/units supported for its professionals. The table below provides a snapshot of those responses. (May 2018).

Category	Application	No. of Institutions
Email/Calendar	Office/Exchange	10
	Google Suite	1
Web/Video Conferencing	Zoom	9
	Skype	3
	Adobe Connect	1
	WebEx	1
Collaboration/File Sharing	OneDrive	6
	DropBox	3
	Google Drive	3
	Syncplicity	1
	Sharepoint	1
Content/Course Management	Canvas	4
	Blackboard	2
	Moodle	2
	Brightspace	1
	eLearning Commons	1
	Cornerstone	1