Technology Tips to Bridge the Distance for Remote Workers
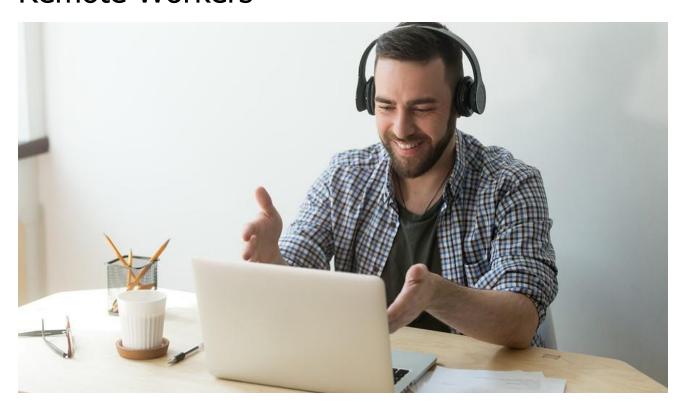

Employees in today's workforce are increasingly likely to work from home, from hotel rooms or even from a table in the corner coffee shop. In fact, 43 percent of the workforce works remotely at least some of the time.

Hiring remote workers offers benefits, from cost savings to increased creativity and employee retention. But the distances also bring challenges. Collaboration and communication across time zones can prove tricky. Likewise, building company culture with an increasingly remote workforce requires new approaches. Fortunately, technology offers solutions.

Cloud-Powered Teams

Cloud-based document management systems empower team members to easily and securely access shared documents from any location. In addition, with Office 365, co-authors can collaborate in real-time on a shared document.

For instance, envision a sales team preparing a PowerPoint presentation for an important user conference. In the old days, team members might edit individual copies of the presentation or take turns editing a central document.

Now, co-authors can edit a shared document simultaneously, regardless of the distance between them. Each author can see the other's changes as they make them. With version control and real-time collaboration, Office 365 saves time and headaches.

Dynamic Communication in a Virtual Environment

In-house teams benefit from the ability to evolve quickly from a casual chat across the cube wall to a full-blown strategy session. For remote workers collaborating on a team, the challenge remains to duplicate that dynamic quality in a virtual environment. Fortunately, technology is rising to meet the challenge.

For instance, Microsoft Teams embeds its flexible chat feature within Office 365, empowering team members to engage in a group chat or a private conversation while collaborating on a document. Then, with the click of a button, workers can switch immediately from instant messaging to video conference.

Teams provides tools for audio, video and web conferences, as well as live broadcasts. Within a single meeting, a workgroup can connect an in-house conference room with remote team members working at desktops or connecting on the go via mobile devices. Meeting attendees can collaborate real-time on shared documents and virtual whiteboards.

Efficient Virtual Meetings Connect Remote Workers

Cutting edge technology alone will not create an effective meeting. Follow a few common-sense tips to make your virtual meetings as efficient as possible.
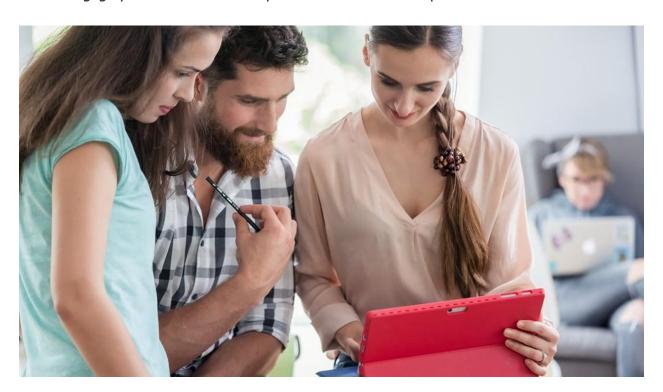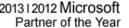
- **Agendas never go out of style** – Whether team members gather from across the hall or across the world, take the time to get everyone on the same page. Include the meeting topics in the calendar invite or email an agenda 24 to 48 hours ahead.

- **Come prepared** – Before the meeting, compile any notes or background information you need to reference, as well as a list of talking points or questions.

- **Troubleshoot your tech** – Confirm how to dial in and that your speakers work. If you need internet to access your conference or your email or notes, test your connection ahead of time.

- **Sharing is caring** – If you are reviewing any information with accompanying visuals or statistics or if the meeting will reference external documents, make sure all participants can follow along. Set up a screen share so that you can keep everyone on the same page.

- **Be direct** – To avoid indistinct vocal jumbles or empty air time, frame questions specifically to other meeting participants.

- **Personality perks** – Adjust for the difference in visual cues in the virtual environment. Be as personable as you would be in person—or more so, as the meeting requires. High energy will engage your audience and keep them tuned in to the topics at hand.

Culture Enhances Collaboration

Culture building takes on an increasingly critical role as teams become more separated by distance and local customs. The time you invest in creating a unified culture will pay off in terms of increased collaboration.

Tried and true methods like monthly newsletters, perhaps with features and updates by remote workers, continue to connect team members. Add a social media presence to engage workers on multiple channels.

Be creative in employing technology to build culture. Implement a virtual happy hour or weekly trivia game in a group chat. Meet via video frequently. Consider deploying virtual reality headsets for in person collaboration.

Our Story, Your Benefit

Regardless of whether you are a remote worker or an industry leader in charge of multiple teams, you need the right tools to build collaboration, enhance communication and maintain a dynamic company culture. Microsoft Teams and Office 365 provide a great place to start.

Since 2001, eMazzanti Technologies has supported companies bridging the distance gap. And as an international company with offices in multiple time zones, they have also utilized these same services. From innovative business cloud computing to multilayer security solutions designed to include remote workers, eMazzanti can help your organization stay connected and productive.