

Boosting Team Engagement in a Hybrid Work Environment



Enhancing team participation poses an ongoing challenge for professional teams, regardless of whether they operate in-person or remotely. The issue of "domination by the few," where a small number of individuals exert significant control over meetings, shaping the team's activities and direction, is a common obstacle. Encouraging contributions from quieter team members is already a challenge in traditional settings, and additional barriers must be addressed when operating in hybrid environments.

The significance of addressing this challenge lies in the fact that, without a structured approach to ensure full participation, team members may not feel valued. This, in turn, can lead to premature departures from positions, negatively impacting both company morale and overall productivity.

Addressing the challenge of fostering equal participation among all team members at BeRemote has been a primary focus. With extensive experience managing diverse workplace challenges, ranging from personality styles to cultural differences, I have observed the significant impact these factors have on team engagement.

To enhance teamwork, participation, and trust within companies, several tactical approaches can be implemented to ensure the development of high-performing teams.

Equitable Voice: Many teams experience the phenomenon of "domination by a few," where a small group controls discussions, potentially leading to biased assessments by managers. This can result in overlooked and underappreciated team members feeling disengaged and becoming flight risks. Creating a safe and inclusive team environment involves actively soliciting questions, providing multiple avenues for sharing thoughts, encouraging dialog, and learning about each other.

Mix of Formal and Informal Engagement: In the remote work landscape, the balance between formal and informal interactions becomes crucial. While live meetings offer formal communication, fostering more informal conversations throughout the day is essential. Increasing the frequency of short, story-based conversations between team members promotes empathy, appreciation, and, ultimately, improved trust and participation.

Create Tasks That Require Participation: A strategic yet often overlooked tactic involves creating tasks that necessitate the participation of the entire team. Rather than relying solely on planned events or offsites, incorporating weekly team tasks fosters a habit of collaboration. These tasks can combine participation factors, such as creating a photo collection based on a "get to know you" topic, ensuring everyone contributes before releasing the collection.

Recognition: Recognizing individuals through simple expressions of gratitude, such as a thank-you, can have a profound impact on participation. Building a recognition culture within teams transforms the overall environment into one of positivity and collaboration. Regular expressions of gratitude, done informally and authentically, contribute to a shift in team dynamics and encourage positive and productive conversations.

Frequent Check-ins: Increasing the frequency of one-to-one check-ins between managers and employees goes beyond traditional evaluations. These more frequent interactions foster familiarity, connectedness, and a deeper understanding of the individual beyond their role within the team.

In conclusion, managers should experiment with specific mechanisms tailored to their teams to enhance overall participation. Safeguarding team information, building trust, and consistently implementing activities that encourage contribution form the foundation for improving team engagement.