



TEAM BONDING AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FOR A HYBRID WORK- FORCE RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide is designed to help executive leadership, team leaders, and supervisors in virtual and hybrid environments with team bonding activities that amplify a healthy and uplifting culture.



Igniting Greatness in Companies and Their People

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In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- Involve employees in the decision-making process by setting up focus groups and encouraging companywide brainstorming before a big decision is made. Give rewards for big ideas that lead to change within the company and encourage employees on every level to contribute. Employees may win cash prizes if their ideas are implemented.
- A company in Milwaukee has a full-time director of training and development, who leads the creation of customized career paths, development plans, and training opportunities to help employees realize their full potential.
- Identify and communicate key corporate behaviors. Create an engaging way to track when these corporate behaviors are exemplified among team members. Employees that achieve all of the desired behaviors can be recognized. One company designs a PowerPoint presentation about the employee and gives them a bonus.
- Many businesses are moving away from performance reviews. Rather, a focus on each individual's developmental needs, with a deep understanding of their specific talents, roles, and responsibilities, is the key. For one company, a minimum of once a year, Career Impact and Growth surveys are utilized, so that each person can express their desired growth plans. Others use facilitated discussion tools, such as UMAP.
- As a result of the pandemic, a company pivoted to becoming a continuous feedback company (versus filling out old-fashioned performance reviews) by using UMAP, a Best and Brightest recommended platform. This tool has made it much easier for managers to provide continuous feedback to their employees and also allows employees to provide feedback to each other, as well as their direct report. This tool has significantly shifted their culture, as they are not just focused on business-related goals, but equally on employees' personal goals.
- For those in more skilled and specific industries, training and mentoring is a valuable tool for engagement. One Best and Brightest company provides employees with specialized training in scientific, financial, and technical fields. Employees are then matched with other workforce talent from around the country, to ensure they are successful in every area of development.
- Many companies are moving towards paid training programs prior to work beginning, as a way to engage employees from the beginning of their positions. A Chicago winner begins education and development with an extensive five-week training program at world headquarters. Senior leaders conduct global onboarding calls with all new hires. Also offered are a structured career development program and a leadership development program. Employees are encouraged to build skills and increase networks outside the company, accomplished through an annual \$1,500 per person training and development budget.
- A Virginia winner has established "Next Generation Leaders" for early-career staff to learn about leadership principals, as a way to engage and retain young talent. There are monthly team activities, as well as individual reading and assignments. The program is led by the company president and co-founders and is designed for staff to develop new perspectives on leadership and to encourage new relationships and connections across the business.
- A Midwest winner trains leaders to take the time to know each team member's strengths, preferences, and areas of development, to ensure employees are placed in assignments that best utilize their unique skills and experience. They use a tool specifically designed for their organization.
- Many Best and Brightest companies anonymously poll team members on a regular cadence. For one winner, results are provided to the company president, who uses them to shape the focus of the company's annual planning session, driving a culture of continuous improvement.

In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- One winner, in an effort to engage families, encourages work-life balance with its new-parent transition program, easing the challenges new parents face when returning to work after maternity, adoption, or parental leave. They offer a flexible return-to-work period during the first months back on the job, with a gradual transition from reduced hours to full-time.
- Achieving ambitious goals is rewarded by a Chicago winner with incredible trips, such as Napa Valley wine tours, South Beach deep-sea tours, and relaxing Cancun retreats.
- Many winners are enhancing their DEI efforts to engage team members. One winner has a strong emphasis on diversity, with six committees to recognize the needs of specific groups, including Associated Women's Network, Young Professionals, Cultural Awareness Network, Veteran's Network, Pride & Equality Exchange, and Forward Abilities Network, serving individuals with disabilities. Feedback from these groups is communicated to leadership for changes and improvements in the company culture and policies.
- One way to engage the team is to train and certify "playbook coaches" to teach new hires. Bonuses are provided to those who are certified to teach new hires after they submit a completed 90 Day Success Plan for the new hire at the end of the training period. They recently expanded this playbook concept to include Client Service Playbook Coaches with a similar approach.
- High scoring companies believe that health and wellness correlate to a more engaged employee. An example of a best practice is offering team members up to \$100 reimbursement for wellness-related expenses, such as gym memberships, Weight Watchers, yoga pants, or new athletic shoes. Other examples include a focus on stress reduction by providing workplace massages; a room for meditation, prayer, and yoga; and by being a dog-friendly workplace. Some have wellness coaches as an on-site resource offered to all employees, available during or after work. One company out of Detroit offers an in-house certified nutritionist who oversees all wellness activities for the company.
- Post pandemic, many CEOs are working diligently to have more creative and ongoing communications for in-person and hybrid work. Examples include digital weekly video, fireside chats to answer any question, and weekly emails. For example, one CEO emails a weekly "Lesson of the Week," which provides motivation or tips on teamwork and how to be a good leader from their own experiences. Another example at one Chicago Best and Brightest winner is a weekly five-minute training program conducted by leaders in the organization. The sessions are quick and to the point and are recorded so they can be reviewed at any time.
- An Atlanta organization focuses on work-life balance solutions for team engagement. They have a concierge service for team members who travel or work additional hours. Concierge services include dry cleaning, house cleaning, car detailing, catered meals, childcare, yard services, and more. This has helped them retain and engage team members.
- A creative Rhode Island Best and Brightest Company offers employees a voluntary subscription to a faith-based video library, which includes thousands of leadership videos, such as those of Patrick Lencioni and John Maxwell. They also offer an onsite corporate chaplain, weekly prayer meetings, a financial literacy and budgeting course, mindfulness, and meditation.
- On the west coast, this Washington-based organization has a "Happyologist" on staff, who focuses on celebrating achievements and works with HR to understand what makes each employee tick and to guarantee that they feel appreciated with custom employee experiences.

In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- An Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) has given a Kentucky-based winner a model for engagement. Employees own 20 percent of the company. The ESOP promotes a culture of accountability and a sense of pride within their workforce, which helps to achieve the company's goals and objectives, while attracting and retaining top talent
- Personal growth is another approach to creating an engaged team. A Las Vegas firm brings in a speaker every month and hosts a four-hour personal growth class. Once a year, they also host a three-day personal/professional growth employee conference. One or two employees per month attend a Rapport Retreat, which is all about leadership building.
- One Grand Rapids-based Best and Brightest winner hired an outside consultant to facilitate revisiting company shared values, assuring there is consensus on their beliefs.
- A Texas-based winner hosts an annual Hack-A-Thon, where employees separate into small groups and present ideas that would help to better the company. Leading ideas win prizes and most ideas are implemented, engaging team members in strategy and idea sharing.
- At this Illinois company, each morning begins with Good News, during which employees recognize their coworkers' successes and managers recognize employee and team achievements. Leaders send handwritten letters of recognition to employees' homes to thank them for their contribution to the company's success. Their monthly "Rockstar" program is based on peer votes, without input from management. The winner receives a monetary bonus, a custom bobblehead, and a designated parking spot. New hires are asked to list and rank five ways they like to be recognized for doing a great job; this feedback is used to customize compensation and benefit incentives.
- A Chicago company hosts weekly meetings where employees talk about innovative ideas they have seen in the marketplace and brainstorm on how to continually improve the company.
- Many Best and Brightest companies offer in-house training universities for leadership, cultural, and skills training. Since the pandemic—and with many hybrid employees—training programs are now elevated in priority. Some design these in-house and others partner with third parties for a plethora of education needs for both work and life. Others offer free college-level course reimbursement, which includes fees associated with taking college courses, such as the cost of books and lab materials. In many cases, companies partner with a local community college to provide customized curriculum for their team members, as well as for hiring for future team members. One example is a curriculum for a Sustainability in Manufacturing degree, created by a Michigan-based company with the local college. Those graduating with that degree are often hired by this company.
- Many companies survey employees on a regular basis to measure engagement with questions formatted around the company's vision and goals. Employees are encouraged to share honestly and senior leadership uses this feedback to improve culture and monitor shifts in employee engagement. A company in Atlanta uses an engagement survey tool that polls team members about their mood, overall happiness, feelings about company culture, and stress levels.
- An Atlanta company created an innovative compensation plan in which all employees receive a percentage of overall company profit, ensuring all employees are engaged, deliver, and work as a team towards the company mission.
- The Pivot Opportunity program at a San Francisco company allows employees to pivot into a new department or position for a specified period of time or a specific project, which sometimes leads to the employee growing into a new role or promotion.

In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- In Pittsburgh, each employee at this organization creates their own Objectives and Key Results goals, which are measured monthly, quarterly, and annually. The company takes great pride in achieving and celebrating these goals.
- At the start of an employee's tenure at this San Diego company, they are asked to fill out a survey that identifies their likes, motivators, and more. The company tailors impromptu moments of recognition around what is meaningful to each employee, based on the individual's survey.
- Using the tool StrengthsFinder, a company in the Midwest has each team member spend at least 80% of their time working within areas of personal strength. A member of their team is also a certified Strengths Coach, who conducts full-team meetings to review members' strengths.
- In the hybrid and post-pandemic world, many companies are redesigning their work locations. A best practice is to have an open floor concept for managers and executives, making them more accessible to all team members.
- At this Michigan-based company, all team members complete a Vision and Goals Worksheet that combines work and personal goals. Leaders check in quarterly and ask, "On track or off track?" If the answer is off track, leaders ask how they can help.
- This creative Best and Brightest company uses open book management, where each employee is empowered to act and think like an owner. They meet weekly to discuss financials and all have a stake in the outcome and share profits quarterly.
- More and more companies are hosting Town Hall staff meetings on a more frequent basis. Town Hall meetings help employees understand the firm's priorities and strategies. One example is a company that hosts them at different locations and rolls them out to the entire firm via video. Employees have the opportunity to anonymously submit questions in advance. The critical component is anything that needs action is addressed and communicated between meetings.
- A California company has found it a competitive advantage to offer alternate work schedules, including compressed workweeks, staggered start and end times, and the ability to schedule start and end times on a daily basis.
- An Atlanta manufacturer's CEO has breakfast or lunch with at least five employees from all departments in the company one or two times per week, to thank them for doing a great job and to solicit feedback about working at the company.
- A Best and Brightest company out of Chicago provides financial literacy training to employees during their onboarding process, so they can fully understand company financials and how their actions impact the company.
- A CPA firm created a section on their website where new team members journal about their expectations and experiences at intervals of their first year.
- A Chicago firm has 19 different peer-led, industry-specific affinity groups, each having its own goals and initiatives, to provide a competitive advantage and engage employees in strategy.
- A winner in Las Vegas has a monthly 15-minute "check-in" between each employee and their supervisor, via an online portal called the Relationship Performance Initiative, which permits dual-direction feedback.

In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- In Dallas, a Best and Brightest company uses Poll Everywhere technology to allow employees to share feedback via smartphone, for interacting during employee meetings.
- An automotive supplier hosts an Employee Appreciation Month, during which each weekday involves something special for employees, such as field days, food trucks, and an in-office espresso barista. Other Best and Brightest companies also engage family members in various activities, as well.
- This Best and Brightest CEO teaches self-development classes outside of working hours to employees and non-employees alike, with bonuses given to those completing the course. This course offers, via a rigorous curriculum with outside-the-classroom assignments, guidance to create change in their lives, develop healthy habits, and strengthen relationships.
- This company engages employees as “Team Teachers.” Each month, one employee has the opportunity to teach the team something that they have learned or feel that they are a pro at.
- This winning company hosts a quarterly event called Innovation Week. This is a cross-functional team, culture, and innovation event, where team members compete to come up with creative solutions to problems within the company.
- To address a need for increased C-suite communications and transparency, this CEO communicates with staff on a daily basis by sending a “Thought for the Day.” He also sends out weekly “Did You Know” messages for associates and live-streams to staff about once a month.
- This engineering firm developed two new focus groups—Women in Engineering and a Young Professionals group—which meet monthly to explore ideas to make their organization more “user friendly.”
- This financial winner offers online education, with over 300 courses that employees can choose from to enhance their soft skills. They also offer mandatory compliance training and learning paths for their leadership personnel, as well as tuition reimbursement that covers up to \$5,000 per year, per participating employee.
- This global CEO has “brown bag” sessions with each department, so every employee feels that they have a voice with the senior executive and will be part of change.
- A winner spent the last two years focusing extensively on employee wellness, partnering with a company that offered a more robust EAP with concierge services, biometric screening, and an app/website for wellness to engage their team in taking charge of their health.
- At this logistics company, employees may participate in a four-phase leadership development program, providing them with career path options, leadership planning, and talent development opportunities.
- This national marketing firm holds career advisor meetings for their team members with manager-level employees who are not their supervisors, to ensure they have someone to go to outside of their managers to talk about their careers.
- Every new hire at this Tennessee food company is asked questions about themselves—favorite movie, favorite food, etc.—as well as what personal sustainability means to them. The information and a photo are added to their office book, which is an easily accessible resource to help celebrate differences and get to know one another.

In-Person and Hybrid Employee Engagement Best Practices and Thought Starters

- This construction firm requires all employees to receive a minimum of 24 hours per year of paid training; however, a majority of employees exceed this amount, as the company is constantly looking for new training to help build their employees' skills. Employees take advantage of this program through seminars and conferences, workshops, one-on-one coaching, and web-based courses.
- This California nationally recognized software company established an award-winning Leadership Edge Program to develop a consistent, strong team of leaders and to increase retention and engagement of top talent. Current leaders learn to thoughtfully consider and refine their leadership style, while aspiring leaders learn about the challenges they may face in a leadership role. By offering this training to both groups in one cohesive environment, this company establishes a network for leaders, offers mentorship opportunities, and demonstrates their commitment to career development at every stage in a leader's journey.
- This Best and Brightest winner started a new Diversity Education initiative, for which they bring in or offer video of a speaker on various topics related to diversity, including Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+, Gender Equity, and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. They also created an internal newsletter that shares information related to favorite podcasts, books, restaurants, and feedback regarding Diversity. Additionally, they have core operating hours with flexibility to start and finish the day as needed for employees' personal schedules, and they let employees take up to two hours off during the day and make that time up throughout the week.
- Team member engagement is a top priority for this credit union. They have a Communication and Culture Workgroup, which meets monthly to cultivate a caring workplace culture that inspires employee connectivity, fosters teamwork, and embodies the core values established by their founder. Workgroup members and Culture Ambassadors are selected from all divisions to ensure fair representation. The Communication and Culture Workgroup is responsible for spearheading events/initiatives that are meaningful to the team members.
- This manufacturer conducts periodic "stay interviews" with high performing employees to gauge their general satisfaction of employment and to understand where they may be experiencing challenges, issues, or dissatisfaction. More immediate checkpoint sessions take place with all new hires to ensure they are receiving the training and support they need to become productive and efficient in their roles.
- Organizational learning is key at this tech firm. They bring in their business/life coach to teach them about themselves and the value of unique skills each employee brings to the company. Through this training, they have all become conversant in DiSC, Strengthfinders, Workplace Big 5, Rockefeller Habits, and a number of other learning tools.
- This winner invests their time in conducting stay interviews, to find out why their employees continue to work there. Stay interview check-ins are conducted the first week, 30 days in, after 6 months, and then annually. The stay interview has a scoring system called a "Happiness Score," which uses a scale of 1-10, taking into account the time of year the scoring is done. They have found a correlation with team members who score a seven or below, who end up resigning earlier than the ones who score higher on this self-assessment. They pay special attention to any team member scoring at seven or below, to help identify issues that can be addressed and resolved quickly. This insight helps the organization shape internal policies, programs, and benefits.

The Basics

This section covers best practices that most employers have implemented and have adapted to fit their culture.

25/45 Meetings

Allow meeting durations to end either at 25 minutes or 50 minutes depending on the importance of the conversation. This allows team members to transition between meetings, refill their drink, take a bio break and have breathing room between digital meetings.

Nimble and Transparent Status Messages

Whether you are in person, hybrid, or at home, ensure communication with the company to allow all other employees to know your work status via whatever communication platform your company uses. Employee status messages should change often throughout the day. Encourage team members to communicate wellness breaks or when they are “out for a walk” to show support of wellness and wellbeing in the workplace.

CEO Q&A Coffee Hour

Host a monthly coffee hour with the whole team and the CEO of your company either on an ongoing schedule or periodically. Questions to the CEO could be submitted in advance anonymously or directly during the coffee hour. The goal is to create a safe environment for questions to be answered and to get clarity of company objectives.

Comfortable Days

Whether in person or hybrid, set up Comfortable Days where employees have the option to not do their hair or make-up and can wear comfortable clothes. Many companies require cameras on for digital meetings. On Comfortable Days, employees shouldn't be asked to turn their cameras on.

Giftboxes

If your budget allows, send your virtual team gift boxes or gift cards to make their home offices more comfortable. Holiday cards are also appreciated. Some companies are sending food kits, such as cookie design kits to be delivered at home, and schedule a decorating day with best cookie contests. Others are sending delivered meals for team meetings and social hours. Gift boxes such as “sunshine boxes” can be sent at stressful times or in the winter to brighten their day.

Charity Bonding Activities

Find a charity and set up a volunteering day for all team members to be able to volunteer together, either by bringing donations to be dropped off or whatever is needed for the charity that can be done remotely. Some in-person and hybrid environments are creating “all team” charity activities to engage team members that normally do not see each other in person.

Lunch Overs

If a meeting is scheduled to go over the lunch hour and budget allows, offer GrubHub or DoorDash for employees to order food. Everyone can share what they are having for lunch during a break in the meeting. If in person, cater food in for the team and bring them together in a conference room to socialize while eating.

Mental Health Days

In addition to PTO, you can offer a Mental Health Day each quarter for employees to be able to unplug. These days can be taken at any moment with no questions asked.

Extra Vacation/PTO Day

Managers can be empowered to give one extra PTO day to each individual on staff as a way to show appreciation when a team member goes above and beyond with performance.

Growth and Development Opportunities

Encourage employees to attend training programs and workshops or provide them with opportunities to take on new responsibilities. This shows that the company and leaders value professional development and want them to succeed. Provide monthly speakers within the organization to speak to teams or find outside speakers who can help develop the team.

The Basics

Retention Bonuses

Offering retention bonuses can be a best practice in some situations to incentivize employees to stay with the company for a certain period of time or through a specific project or initiative. It's important to note that retention bonuses should be used as a supplement to a comprehensive retention strategy.

Wellness and Wellbeing Seminars

Set up seminars with a professional on managing stress, wellbeing, and mental health. By creating digital or in-person breakout rooms, people are able to chat together and feel included.

Meeting Schedule Management

No Meeting Days

Choose a day in the week where meetings are not allowed so employees can get work done without disruptions.

Required Time Off

To ensure your team is taking advantage of non-screen time, you can create a required time off policy where you close the office early on specific days. For example: Monday – Thursday work hours are 8-5PM, and Fridays are 8-1PM.

Mental Health Time Blocks

Allow team members to block calendars for mental health breaks on their own or set a company policy that no internal meetings happen between specific times, so that employees can focus on e-learning, childcare, lunch, and daily walks or wellness breaks.

Team Chat Channel

Have a chat channel on your communication platform that is created for the fun and social aspect of your team members. You can call this your Virtual Water Cooler or The Hallway. Leave this chat open for anyone who wants to share announcements, celebrations, or photos of their families. You can have weekly ice breaker questions such as “What are you grateful for” that employees have social group conversations. This open channel creates an opportunity for employees to feel stronger relations, not only with each other, but also with the company. It provides a secure space in which employees can drop in and out easily and feel like they are not just disconnected telecommuters, but a big part of something far larger.

Buddies

Randomly assign two employees to match together for the month. Ask them to check in on one another and help stay connected while working from home. Change the employees on a rotational schedule.

In Person Meetings, Outings, or Volunteer Activities

As a way to preserve culture, some companies are hosting in-person activities in addition to their hybrid work. These meetings are focused on team building opportunities and are set in advance throughout the year. Ideas include volunteering at a local charity, craft facilities such as painting, nature walks/hikes, or fun group activities at a local business.

Impromptu Rewards and Incentive Ideas:

- Treat your employees to a long lunch—send them a delivery or food gift card
- Snacks sent to home offices and/or stock up the break room with a variety of healthy treats
- Provide a gym membership or stipend for fitness equipment
- Welcome pets, both digitally and onsite, if feasible.
- Design branded merchandise that is fun to have; send something fun for their pets or kids
- Personalize appreciation gifts—know your team members' favorite things and send them those specific items you know they will enjoy (examples: favorite candy, gift card to their favorite local shop, a bulk order of their favorite snack, etc.)
- Write an appreciation letter and mail it to their home
- Pay for your team members to do something fun with their family or spouse—date night, dinner, etc.
- Impromptu day off or “close” early on an individual basis

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

5 Things in Common

As the host, pair up people that work in different departments or that work on different teams. Each team will have 15 minutes to chat in a break-out room and find five things in common that they share outside of work. After the time is up, bring everyone back to the main room and let team members share what they've learned.

Baby Photo – Guessing Game

Have employees submit their baby photos and ask employees to guess who each baby is. Reveal the answers at the end of the day with fun prizes.

Business Bingo

There are many ways you can play bingo during meetings, virtual conferences, and throughout the week. There are free and online bingo cards to use or bingo cards can be customized for the business culture and made internally.

Book Club or Streaming Club

Invite your team members to start an internal book club or streaming club. Once the book, movie, or show has been chosen, set a time for the next meeting. Most meet once or twice a month and ask each other questions on different topics shared in the book, show, or movie.

Charades

Charades is a basic game that translates easily to virtual meetings. Split into teams and use the charades idea generator below to choose words and phrases. The person who is acting out the charade uses the virtual meeting “spotlight” feature, and their team has one minute to figure out the phrase. Charades idea generator: <http://www.getcharadesideas.com/>

Team Social Hours, Coffee Connections, and Meeting Ice Breakers

Host a social hour, with one person in charge of having 4-6 open-ended questions ready for a relaxed discussion that participants can share stories about. Each social hour can have a theme about specific topics or can be open ended.

Here are some sample questions you can use:

- If you could have your own TV show, what would it be called?
- When did your life change for the better?
- What is the largest crowd you have ever been in?
- What are your parents' best qualities?
- What is your favorite memory of your childhood?
- What is one life lesson you will never forget?
- What is the scariest thing you have ever done for fun?
- What is in the trunk of your car right now?
- If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be and why?
- What was the first concert you attended?
- What advice would you give your younger self?
- If you had one extra hour of free time a day, how would you use it?
- If you could only get one item at the grocery store, what would it be?
- Name one thing no-one knows about you.
- What do you consider your most famous moment?
- What is your most embarrassing moment?
- What is one item on your bucket list? Why is it on your bucket list?
- What was your first job in high school or college?
- Best piece of advice you have received either personally or professionally?
- What is your favorite book and why?

Decorating Contests and Kits

For holidays, such as Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, and Christmas, you can ask employees to share photos of their holiday decorated areas. It can be their work space, front yards, mantels, etc. Share the pho-

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

tos without naming the owners in an email or on your social channel and have other employees vote for the best decorated space. Winners can be announced at the end of the day or in team meetings. Prizes can be awarded.

Some companies are sending decorating kits home to employees, such as baking kits (cookies, pumpkins, gingerbread, cupcakes, etc.) for decorating contests.

Employee Spotlight Appreciation Week

The employee spotlight appreciation week (or appropriate time frame) honors each one of your team members with a special shout out to celebrate them. One point person will send an email out every day with 5 (or more) employees that will be highlighted that day. Other team members are encouraged to email these highlighted employees with special shout outs, texts, or photos highlighting a few of their special qualities.

GIF Story Challenge

Using Microsoft Teams, you can play GIF Story Challenge, which compels players to tell a story using only GIF images. *To play:*

1. Split the group into teams
2. Send each team a tale to tell, either a famous book, movie, song, TV show, or an original story.
3. Allow teams five minutes to strategize and select GIFs.
4. Have each team take a turn telling the story via chat.
5. Challenge the opposing team to guess the story.

If the team guesses correctly, then award a point. You can award extra points for creativity, humor, and good use of GIFs, too! The team with the highest score after all rounds wins the game.

Guess That Song

Prior to the game starting, have a play list of popular songs. Have all participants be muted and play a song. Ask the players to unmute or use the chat feature and shout the correct name and artist of that song. The first person that guesses correctly gets a point. Include all genres and generations in the play list.

Guess That Movie

Prior to the game starting, curate a video playlist with movie scenes. Mute all participants and play a movie scene without revealing which film the clip is from. Then, ask the players to submit the name of the movie to you privately in your meeting's chat box. The first person who guesses the film correctly wins the round. A suggestion is to use "best movie scenes of all time" or "top movie clips" on YouTube to put together your list.

Guess Who

This is a modified version of the board game Guess Who?, in which players guess each other's "mystery character" through a series of yes or no questions. Here's a simple set of rules: All players decide on a single TV series, movie, or show that features many characters. It doesn't matter what genre it is as long as all players are familiar with its characters. Each player chooses a specific character and finds an image to display on their screen. Do not share screens at this point. Then, each will take turns asking each other yes or no questions about the other's "mystery character." Questions may include "does your character have glasses?," "does your character have short hair?," "is your character human?," and more. The player guessing the correct character wins and the screen is revealed to show who the "mystery character" was. This can be repeatable for different characters and shows.

Guess Whose

Find a theme for the week to share a specific item. It can be coffee mugs, front doors, stuffed animals, favorite trinket, etc. Employees can take photos of that specific item and send it to the point person. Throughout the week these photos can be shared in an email or a social channel, and employees will guess whose item each one is. Players can offer hints.

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

Jeopardy

Here is one way to create a game using PowerPoint. It will take about 20 minutes to create a customized Jeopardy game. Visit this link to see the full list of instructions:

<https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/how-to-make-a-jeopardy-game-in-powerpoint>

Lunch and Learns with employees and their families

This is a great way to highlight individuals in your organization and learn more about your team members, their backgrounds, and family members. Invite your team members to select a lunch date that works best for them to share a story. This could include sharing more about their religion, cultural background, a fascinating life story, or more. For example, you could ask your Jewish team members to teach about Passover, or parents with adopted children to share their adoption story, or your ethnic team members to share more about different cultural traditions.

Pictionary

To play, divide into teams. Find a word or use the Pictionary word generator below and choose a team to play first, as well as a designated drawer on that team. The drawer generates a word and has one minute to draw that word for their team to guess. If the team guesses the word correctly, they get a point.

Pictionary word generator: <https://randomwordgenerator.com/pictionary.php>

Recipe Share and Company Cookbook

Host a team lunch and ask team members to come prepared to talk about their favorite recipe. A theme can be determined for each session, for example desserts, traditional favorites, seasonal treats, and so on. Ask them to send their recipe and a few photos to the team member that will compile the recipes into a book. During the team building session, each team member will share their recipe verbally and share a story along with it. This is great for getting to know your team members, while also creating something as a group.

Robot Training

While Robot Training usually focuses on instructing a team member through a simple task like tying their shoes or assembling a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, participants can also play this game entirely digitally. To play this version, ask one colleague to share their screen. Then, using step-by-step directions, proceed to dictate the steps necessary to complete an action on their screen. For instance, ask the player to pull up a creative software for drawing and instruct them on how to draw a cat. It could be any software that requires instruction. The point of Robot Training is to develop your team's communication and cooperation skills.

Run and Find Scavenger Hunt (Great with Kids)

Get all participants ready on camera on a virtual meeting platform. Do not share the scavenger hunt list items in advance. Once everyone is on camera and ready, mention the first item that they need to find (example: a shoe). After you mention the item, all participants will run and find that particular item and bring it back to the camera. The first person that returns with the item back to the camera gets a point. You can keep playing until all items have been collected and everyone breaks a sweat. Participants must bring new items every time, no repeats. Tally up the points and announce the winner at the end of the game. Here are examples of scavenger items: a book with a person on the cover; something that smells good; an item that covers you from the rain; a coffee mug with words on it; a piece of fruit; a breakfast food; a flag; something you can use as weights; something that makes music; sports equipment; fresh dessert; something that can be turned off; something that provides light; something that grows and needs nurture; a key.

Scattergories Game

This weblink is a digital version of the game Scattergories and can be screen-shared for a group meeting: <https://swellgarfo.com/scattergories/>

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

How to play:

- Share screen and click play when everyone's ready. Note the restart button for additional games or to start over.
- Per each category showed on the screen, players write down answers that they can think of that start with the shown letter for each category.
- When the time stops, everyone must immediately stop writing. After two minutes, everyone shares their answers.

Show and Tell

Create a themed "show and tell" and give team members at least one week to select their item. Each team member is given time to show their item and tell stories to go with it. This will spark engaging conversation and create some fantastic team bonding. Some show and tell ideas:

- Favorite childhood item
- Vacation memories
- Family photos
- Can't leave the house without
- Favorite quote and why

Spirit Days or Spirit Weeks

Spirit Weeks or Days are where various themed activities happen around the organization, usually meant to hype up team spirit or to bring awareness to a specific event or cause. Team members are also encouraged to wear outfits that correspond with themes for the day. Whole weeks are great, but a fun way to implement spirit days are during team meetings. Invite your team to wear something in the spirit of the time of year or during a season. Team meeting Spirit Day ideas:

- Favorite summer hat
- National Eyewear Day
- Favorites sports jerseys
- Your favorite school
- Your favorite color

Spot the Difference

To play:

- The group will split into teams of two to five.
- All teams will have one minute to study the screen before entering breakout rooms.
- Within breakout rooms, the teams will decide one background object to change.
- Teams will rejoin the main room.
- Players will hunt for differences and make guesses by typing in the chat box.
- The first player to spot the difference wins a point for the team.

Talent Show

Talent shows are a great way to involve the whole family in these team and cultural building activities. Encourage your team to include their family, roommates, and pets.

Preparing for the show:

- Ask performers to sign up to perform in advance.
- Set up a show agenda with 2-5 minutes per act.
- Recruit a different team member co-host for each show.
- Keep the show short—30 minutes at most, with 5 to 6 performers each time.

During the show

- Have a specific host or emcee to introduce all the acts.
- Use the "mute all" feature and then unmute the team member who is performing.
- After each performance, unmute all and give the team a chance to show their appreciation for 10 seconds or so.
- Turn off the chat feature to avoid distractions for the performer.

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

Microsoft Teams Guess Who Game

Microsoft Teams offers a feature called Together Mode that displays meeting attendees lecture-hall style, placing the image of each participant in an auditorium seat.

To play:

- Activate Together Mode in your meeting
- Choose a team member as the secret person
- Have players take turns asking questions like “does this person wear glasses?” or “does this person have a dark hair color?”
- Ask each player to turn off their video when eliminated by the answer to the question
- The game ends when only one player remains on screen or when a player correctly identifies the person.

Because the characters are your coworkers, this version of Guess Who is extra fun! Plus, if players use non-physical characteristics, such as “does this person run marathons?” to narrow down the choices, then teammates can learn more about each other, too.

Typing Speed Race

Typing Speed Races are a fun engaging activity for anyone that likes to chat instead of talk via Zoom (or any other video call platform). As the host, prep a list of words that range in easy to hard difficulty. Once everyone is ready, call out each word for players to type as fast as they can into the chat. The first person to type the word correctly wins that point.

Viewing Party

Viewing parties can be related to committees in your organization, such as diversity or wellness committees. For example, a documentary can be shared for Black History Month. Or, if preferred, a social viewing party can be hosted. These viewing parties can have themes, such as Halloween, holidays, or be genre-related. One can share their screen or there are many online resources for shared streaming with various apps, as well.

Virtual Campfire

Virtual campfires for remote workers include wildly smart stories, fun games, and s’mores. If your team members would like to have s’mores, they can bring a piece of chocolate, mini marshmallows, graham crackers, a small candle, and a toothpick. Open up the meeting link and enjoy a cozy fire chat with the team. Have some questions prepped, in case the conversation doesn’t flow on its own. There are digital fireplace or campfire videos that can be screen-shared during the campfire.

Virtual Musical Chairs

Virtual Musical Chairs adapts the idea behind the in-person game to an online environment. Instead of trying to steal chairs before the music ends, the last participant left dancing when the music ends loses the round. To play, create a playlist with dance tunes. Once everyone is in the online meeting room, start playing songs, pausing at random and phasing out the last player who is still dancing. As each participant is eliminated, ask them to turn off their camera to help keep track of who is still playing.

Virtual Tours

Host virtual tours where employees can share their workspaces, backyards, etc. You can also use the links below to go through a museum or a national park together virtually.

Travel the World with Your Team

There are several tour companies that are streaming virtually. Team members can either book a tour on their own or the company can purchase a private group live tour. Places like Belize, Paris, Prague, Amsterdam and other wonderful travel can be a shared live experience. <https://hopatour.com/>

Virtual Museum Tours

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

Virtual National Park Tours

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/national-parks/virtual-national-parks-tours>

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

War of the Wizards

War of the Wizards is a unique and engaging virtual team building activity. The game is a live, facilitated event that goes for 90 minutes and includes mechanics of RPG games, escape rooms, puzzle solving, storytelling, and world building. A group of wizards have been at war for eons, and none of them quite remember why. You and your colleagues become the wizards' minions, telling stories, solving puzzles, and completing challenges to earn "sparkle points," casting spells, and doing whatever it takes to bring a peaceful resolution to the war. This game is smart, fun, wildly different, and perfect for remote teams. <https://warofthewizards.net/>

Pet Channel

Pets are loved by many. Create a pet-themed channel where employees are able to share photos and stories about their pets. Pets can also be invited to team meetings and assigned job responsibilities.

Can You Hear Me Now?

You can play "Can You Hear Me Now" in a virtual conference room. Nominate one person to be the speaker and the rest are artists. The speaker uses a random image and the goal is to describe that image in such a way that the artists can draw it successfully, using only geometric shapes. For example, you could say "draw a large circle and then three equidistant triangles," but not "write the letter E." By limiting instructions, the speaker needs to exercise extremely accurate communication skills and the artists need to listen and interpret. Everyone can share their drawings once the speaker is done instructing.

MTV Cribs: Remote Team Edition

Your remote team members might never meet face-to-face. However, colleagues can still open their homes to one another and participate in some MTV-style fun. You can schedule a time where each employee gives a house or office tour while they share stories about different parts or things in the house.

Werewolf

Werewolf is a game of wits, deceit, and skillful manipulation, as you seek to survive the night. The game is based on speaking, careful listening, and voting, which can be run virtually. First, each player draws a card that indicates a role: werewolf, villager, medic, or seer. For a remote game, you could use a random generation tool and send each person the role in a private message. Werewolves eat other players, villagers vote on who they think is a werewolf, medics can rescue a player from the jaws of near-death, and seers can reveal a player's status as wolf or not. Once each one participant has a role, the game master announces that night has fallen, and everyone closes their eyes and does a pitter-patter drum roll for something fun to do and to mask other sounds. The game master then calls the werewolves to wake up, select one victim, then go back to sleep. Next, the medic wakes up, points to a person to save and then sleeps again. Finally, the seer points to one person to reveal whether they are a wolf or not, and the game master nods yes or no to confirm. Then, the game master announces it is morning and reveals whether the wolves successfully ate a villager. Usually, one villager dies in the night, with the exception of the occasional save by a medic. The survivors debate who the werewolf is, and then vote to either eliminate someone or skip the round. Anyone that dies or is removed from the game becomes a silent ghost and can no longer speak or otherwise participate in the game. Repeat this process until only villagers or wolves remain. Werewolf fuels a lot of discussion and is great for team bonding.

Call of the Champions

One way to make virtual calls fun is to assign roles during meetings. If someone has a specific job to do, like cheerleader or shade thrower, they will be more engaged. Call of the Champions is a fun way to recognize the heroic roles that participants play in making a virtual call fun.

- **Cheerleader:** Responsible for keeping spirits high during the meeting. This person will enthusiastically cheer on the speaker and other team members and lead others to do the same.
- **Mover and Shaker:** This role is like a virtual meeting traffic cop. When conversations get in the weeds or otherwise aren't moving along, then this person's job is to get everyone back on track.

Virtual Team Bonding Games & Activities

- **Shade Thrower:** Someone on your team is probably “that person.” Empower your champ by assigning the role of Shade Thrower, which is essentially permission to politely boo others. This role is mostly for games with an element of competition.
- **Photographer:** Throughout your call, there will be opportunities for photos and snapshots of your team. Remote teams need photos too! Give someone the role of group photographer and they can snap a few shots to share by chat or email later.
- **Scribe:** For some people, Scribe is the least fun role at the meeting, and for others it is the dream job. The scribe is in charge of taking notes.

Never Have I Ever: Rated E Edition

You can play the remote work-friendly version of the Never Have I Ever game. As the event organizer, you can write all the topics in advance or have team members submit topics that you filter for the group. Never Have I Ever is typically a knock-out game, which means you start with five fingers up and lose a point for each of the topics that you have in fact done. For example, if the prompt was “never have I ever eaten sushi,” then everyone that has eaten sushi would put a finger down. Some examples to use: Never Have I Ever...

- ...adopted a pet
- ...worked in a restaurant
- ...made pizza from scratch
- ...saw a double rainbow
- ...shoveled snow

Learn a New Language

Virtual classes can be held for employees to learn new languages. A professional can offer this class to all, or have fun with it and let an employee that knows another language share their knowledge with their co-workers. They can learn basic words such as “hello,” “how are you,” or even learn how to count.

The Price is Almost Right

The Price is Almost Right is a game where the host of a virtual conference call holds up household objects and other attendees shout out prices. The first person to guess within five cents of the actual retail price without going over gets one point for their team. If you guess over the retail price, then you are out for that round, but your team members may continue.

Spelling Bee Competition

Choose an event organizer to host a Spelling Bee competition within the company. Have them find words in the dictionary that each contestant can spell out. If they spell the word correctly, they remain in the competition; if they spell it incorrectly, they are disqualified. Continue playing until you have a winner.

Virtual Wine Tasting

Find a company who will send a box of mini wines/juices to each individual ahead of the virtual tasting. The virtual event will explain each wine/juice and the process of how it was made.

Virtual Escape Room

Team members can work together to solve puzzles and escape a virtual room within a set time limit. This activity is a great way to build problem-solving skills, communication, and teamwork.

Personality Assessments

Use an online service or leadership coach to have the team take individual assessments, such as Enneagram, Emotional Intelligence, or DiSC. The coach or service can perform a one hour debrief for the team, teaching them how to communicate, motivate, and collaborate with one another, once they know each other better.

Trivia Games

For trivia games, the first to answer in the chat correctly wins the point. Prizes can be awarded.

Company Learning Trivia:

Create customized trivia questions that can be used sporadically throughout meetings. Points and prizes can be given away. These trivia questions can help “train” people on proper protocol, policies, or fun items like company history and fun facts.

Dessert Themed Trivia

1. What is the rarest M&M color? (brown)
2. What is the top-selling cookie in the United States? (Oreo)
3. Where can you get a Frosty? (Wendy's)
4. What is the main flavor in a traditional Tiramisu cake? (coffee)
5. What is the main ingredient of a cheesecake? (cream cheese)
6. What chocolate factory is headquartered in San Francisco? (Ghirardelli)
7. This powdered sugar fried dough is very famous in New Orleans. (beignets)
8. What cookie is served as a dessert in Chinese restaurants in the US? (fortune cookies)
9. Name the state which is famous for their third largest production of juicy peaches. (Georgia)
10. This gourmet popcorn company is famous in Chicago. (Garrett Popcorn Shops)
11. Name a holiday on which pumpkin pie is prepared in the US and Canada. (Thanksgiving)
12. Name the official state dessert of Massachusetts. (Boston Cream Pie)
13. What is the state fruit of New York? (apple)
14. What dessert originates from Greece and is made with filo dough, nuts, and honey? (baklava)
15. It is a crisp, sweet crunchy tube filled with a cream or ricotta cheese filling. What is this Italian treat? (cannoli)
16. What sweet treat is popular in Mackinac Island, Michigan? (fudge)
17. What kind of ice cream does Ben & Jerry's use in its “Chunky Monkey” flavor? (banana)
18. What ingredients do you need to make a s'more? (marshmallow, chocolate, graham cracker)
19. Timbits are tiny donuts found at what store? (Tim Horton's)
20. What candy bar consists of nougat, caramel, and peanuts, wrapped in chocolate and was named after a family horse? (Snickers)

Beverage Themed Trivia

1. Anheuser-Busch Brewery had its headquarters in which U.S. city? (St. Louis)
2. The German beer festival is held in Munich during what month? (October)
3. What U.S. state drinks the most alcohol per person? (Nevada)
4. What soft drink has trademarked the slogan “Obey Your Thirst”? (Sprite)
5. What do you call a small, medium, and large coffee in a Starbucks shop? (tall, grande, and venti)
6. In “Pirates of the Caribbean” what does Captain Jack Sparrow love to drink? (rum)
7. What is in a screwdriver? (vodka and orange juice)
8. Name a drink that is served in a salt rimmed glass. (margarita)
9. How does James Bond prefer his martini? (shaken, not stirred)
10. This drink is typically served during brunch in a flute glass (mimosa)
11. Where is Starbucks headquartered? (Seattle, WA)
12. What is a Starbucks puppuccino ? (a small cup of whipped cream)
13. Name the sport that was created due to moonshine. (NASCAR)
14. Little kids sell this type of drink on the streets for 25 cents. (lemonade)
15. What is the first soft drink that was sent to space? (Coca-Cola)
16. Where is the main Headquarters of Coca Cola located? (Atlanta, GA)
17. What type of cocktail is served in a copper mug? (Moscow Mule)
18. Which beverage is advertised as being “Sports Fuel?” (Gatorade)
19. This drink is popular around the holidays and it has eggs in it. (eggnog)
20. Name one of the world's most famous wine regions that's found in California. (Napa Valley)
21. Name the only U.S. state which grows coffee beans. (Hawaii)

Wellness Activities

Please note that there is an additional resource guide dedicated to Wellness and Wellbeing in the Workplace. These are a few examples of group wellness activities for team bonding and employee engagement.

Dance party

If you have a dancer in the group, ask them to host a virtual dance party. You can either have everyone do the shuffle on camera or let them dance on their own to the same music.

Group Meditations

There are many free apps and online videos on meditation sessions, ranging from 10 to 60 minutes. Have team members join you in a meeting room and set a meditation session for everyone to breathe and relax together. Cameras can be off or on.

Social Distanced Walk/Hike

Pick a park or other walking location and invite team members that feel comfortable to go for a group hike.

Therapy Sessions

If budget allows, hire a therapist for a lunch and learn to provide tips and tricks on how to de-stress, relax, and unplug.

Virtual Workouts

Have a team member that is a fitness guru host weekly virtual workouts. The sessions can be held for 15-30 minutes and can start at an easy difficulty. Find out what equipment attendees have remotely. Cameras should not be required, for employees' comfort levels. There are many free online streaming workouts that can be screen-shared as well.

Virtual Yoga

If there is an avid yogi at the workplace, ask them to host weekly 15-20-minute yoga sessions virtually. Breathe and stretch for a relaxing moment. Keep the difficulty easy to ensure participation.

Wellness Challenges

Decide on a sleep, step, and/or water challenge and invite team members to participate. Set the daily/weekly goal and have everyone keep track of their progress. Challenges can last anywhere from three weeks to two months. A group chat channel can be created for participants and/or specific challenges can have separate chats. The challenges are not designed for a "winner," but to motivate each other in reaching their goals. *Examples of challenges:*

- Step challenge goal: 8-10 K steps per day
- Water challenge goal: 9-12 cups per day
- Sleep challenge goal: 7-8 hours per night

Wellness Chat Channel

Create a wellness social chat channel(s) where employees can share healthy tips, workouts, inspiration, and motivational quotes, as well as random stretch and water breaks throughout the day. Channels can have wellness related themes.

Wellness Activities

Walking Meetings

If meetings don't require computers or note taking, encourage employees to go for a walk during the meeting, with no video and microphones turned off. They can move their bodies and listen to important announcements at the same time. Another concept is to encourage employees to pick one meeting a day to walk during the meeting, when appropriate, or to take a walk after a meeting. Encourage status messages to show they are on a walk or attending the meeting while walking.

Walking Wednesday

In a virtual world, allow time each Wednesday for employees to go for a walk around their neighborhood at the same time or anytime during the day. Employees can then share photos of their walk paths via email or the wellness chat channel.

Nutritional Consultations

The goal of this activity is to encourage employees to eat healthier. To that end, consider hiring a nutritionist for a one-on-one consultation or set up several virtual workshops to support their dietary well-being. Cooking, shopping, and healthy recipes can all be shared digitally.

Healthy Cook Masterclasses

Set up virtual cooking classes with an experienced chef or from a team member that cooks healthy food. There are also free online cooking resources to stream or share with your team. This is one suggestion:

<https://onsite.fun/activities/categories/cooking-baking-classes/locations/online>

Goal Sharing Sessions

Goal sharing is one of the activities in your wellness program that can enhance sharing of personal milestones and a collaborative spirit. Regular checkups with the team ensure they encourage each other towards accomplishing goals.

Virtual Standup Comedy

Look for a workplace-friendly comic for a team celebration, virtual hour, meeting, or wellness activity. A budget-friendly version is to share workplace-friendly “dad” jokes, where everyone brings three of their favorite jokes to share.

Moments of Gratitude

Gratitude reflections are a great way to maintain a positive outlook. Before or after a meeting, open the floor for conversations about things the team is grateful for. It's important for leadership to participate as well. Supervisors can provide journals to log moments of gratitude to each team member and can provide time on a routine basis during meetings to journal gratitude.

Virtual Magician

Utilize AirBnB Virtual Experiences to find a virtual magician who can demonstrate tricks and show the team how to do them at home. It's relatively inexpensive for a 90-minute team building opportunity, while learning a new skill: magic.

Additional Resources: Engagement articles and discussion for manufacturing environments

Employee Engagement in Manufacturing: 9 Ways to Improve

<https://connecteam.com/employee-engagement-in-manufacturing/>

Factory Workers: 5 Simple Ways to Motivate and Run Your Production Line Like a Well-Oiled Machine

<https://www.beekeeper.io/blog/motivate-factory-workers-and-run-your-production-line-like-a-well-oiled-machine/>

4 Ways to Fix Manufacturing's Employee Engagement Problem

<https://www.manufacturing.net/operations/blog/21140191/4-ways-to-fix-manufacturings-employee-engagement-problem>

Improve Engagement Among Warehouse and Manufacturing Employees

<https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/employee-engagement-manufacturing-warehouse>

Why is Employee Engagement in Manufacturing Important?

<https://www.sensrtrx.com/employee-engagement-in-manufacturing/>

5 Ways Manufacturing Companies Can Increase Employee Engagement

<https://www.reboxcorp.com/5-ways-manufacturing-companies-can-increase-employee-engagement/>

Employee Engagement in Manufacturing

<https://industrytoday.com/employee-engagement-in-manufacturing/>

How to Engage Manufacturing Workers and Make Them a Part of Your Team

<https://www.workstream.us/blog/engaging-manufacturing-workers>

Employee Engagement in Manufacturing: 9 Ways To Improve

<https://connecteam.com/employee-engagement-in-manufacturing/>

Additional resources and ideas for digital team bonding and employee engagement activities

37 Best Virtual Team Building Activities for Remote Teams in 2023

<https://museumhack.com/virtual-team-building-for-remote-teams/#online-office-games>

Virtual Team Building Activities: 41 Best Ideas for Work in 2023

<https://teambuilding.com/blog/virtual-team-building-activities>

20 of the best team building activities for remote teams

<https://www.perkbox.com/uk/platform/recognition/team-building-activities-remote-teams>

13 Virtual Activities to Inspire Employee Wellness and Engagement

<https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/virtual-activities-employee-wellness>

20 Virtual Team Building and Wellbeing Activities

<https://kissthefrognow.com/20-virtual-team-building-and-wellbeing-activities/>

30 Virtual Wellness Activities for Remote Employees

<https://onsite.fun/blog/wellness-activities-remote-employees>

6 Strategies for Successful Wellness With Remote Workers

<https://www.wellsteps.com/blog/2021/03/16/wellness-remote-workers/>

14 Ways to Promote and Maintain Mental Well-Being of Remote Employees

<https://fowmedia.com/mental-well-being-of-remote-employees/>

13 Wellness Ideas and Activities for Your Remote Employees

<https://andysto.com/13-wellness-ideas-and-activities-for-your-remote-employees/>