



Team Building Activities for Remote Employees Job Aid

Building connections among distributed teams can be difficult. With virtual team building activities, it's possible to develop similar connections, even within teams who work from home.

In an in-office environment, employees can rely on casual "watercooler" chit-chat and bonding over work-related activities, such as brainstorming new ideas during breaks or discussing impending tasks around a conference table. For fully distributed teams, relationships look much different. Since remote employees typically work alone in their homes, away from the physical hustle and bustle of a central work hub, they often lose many of the perks that come with casual conversation. Barriers such as varying time zones or language and cultural barriers also make team bonding more challenging.

Be very deliberate and intentional about spending some time in some virtual team building activities. Here's a list of just a few that you might be able to use at your financial institution.

1. 20 Questions To Get To Know You Better

This activity can be one of the simplest and fun. Although starting by asking personal questions may be tempting, it is crucial to keep the topics light and fun. This small questionnaire helps spark a conversation between colleagues. The deeper-level connections come later.

How It Works

You can set up this game in one of two ways:

Option 1: Include questions as a survey for new hires so that they can share some non-personal details about themselves, and the existing team can get to know their new colleague better.

Option 2: Break the questions up during the month, either as a daily question or five at the beginning of the week. Since long answers would not be required, this would be perfect for a virtual bulletin board or team communication hubs such as Slack, Discord, or Microsoft Teams.

2. The Video Call “Coffee Chat” or “Company Lunch”

Everyone loves a free meal, and some of the best conversations usually happen during a nice long coffee break or lunch. For companies with a distributed workforce, getting the entire company together in-person for a meal requires extensive coordination and significant funding. Fortunately, video conferencing and food delivery software can make things a lot easier for remote managers wishing to take everyone “out for coffee.”

How It Works

Employers should set a date and time for their chosen event well in advance to ensure most remote staff can take part. Since not everyone drinks coffee and many people have dietary restrictions, it is best to ask participants for their preferred meal or snack and have that meal delivered a few minutes before the informal video conference call.

Using reloadable gift cards so everyone can make order their own food ahead of time is also convenient. While it might be slightly strange to hear some slurping and seeing fellow staff members chewing via video, the

socialization and bonding that occurs by seeing each other's faces and discussing non-work-related things are priceless.

3. The “What If” Group Project or Plan

Out of all the virtual team building activities, this one may be the most creative yet. The object of this activity is to get staff members who would not regularly interact to show their most creative selves and work together to solve a “fun” problem. Because adding additional stress is not a goal for this project, it is essential to encourage the participants to have fun when dreaming up solutions and remind them that there are no wrong answers or plans for this project.

How It Works

Pick a team of four or five employees and dream up a scenario for them that includes anything from escaping a deserted island or creating a new (ridiculous) consumer product to planning the ultimate vacation on a specific (low) budget or surviving an alien invasion. Make sure you schedule the due date for this “project” at least a month beforehand. This allows everyone in different time zones the ability to join in at some point. If you are using collaboration software, such as Slack, make sure each team has their own private project channel. Participants can “present” their final outcomes any way they desire. Use a video presentation, PowerPoint, a blog post, etc. To increase participation in this activity, include a prize for the top two or three projects or plans.

4. Pair Up Staff For Quizzes

QuizBreaker is a great [ice breaker](#) for remote employees. This service enables teams to learn new things about each other and increase communication among remote staff. You can customize quizzes by day, timing, and frequency, so this service is perfect for a company with an upcoming in-person retreat or meeting. Complete quizzes with staff prior to the event, and it should alleviate some of the awkwardness that comes from meeting co-employees face to face for the first time.

How It Works

QuizBreaker sends out an email with a list of fun questions. From there, the team receives another email where they must guess and match the

answer to the person who said it. This becomes an ideal way to help get to know your team members and have fun doing it too.

5. Schedule A Virtual Movie or TV Show Night

With the boom of [social media](#) and television outlets, “live-tweeting” (sharing one’s reactions to TV episodes, sporting events, or awards shows while they are airing) is another virtual team building activity you can try with remote teams. It can also be quite simple to set up. The main goal here is to provide a means for your distributed team to relax and bond with one another.

How It Works

The most important requirement for this activity is setting up a screen-sharing software or streaming service. It is easiest when everyone is watching popular global or national events such as the Oscars or Super Bowl. Services like [Kast](#) enable users to create watch parties and view the same movie or TV show simultaneously. Determine a set time to stream the film by picking a date and time, and have everyone log on to the video stream at the same time. Kast also offers messaging capabilities so viewers can chat while watching.

6. Organize A Scavenger Hunt

Running out of ideas of how to build camaraderie for your remote staff? Don’t dismiss classic activities such as scavenger hunts. Two tools that should be in your arsenal for virtual team building activities are [ActionBound](#) and [GooseChase](#). These mobile applications take users on digitally interactive scavenger hunts, and because they monitor activities in real-time, they are perfect for encouraging collaboration among distributed teams.

How It Works

Users can play in teams and complete missions where they score points. You can schedule the hunts for a set time and duration. The applications enable users to submit and use GPS locations, directions, pictures, and videos during the hunt. When the game concludes, the event organizer can put together a slideshow of the best photos and videos of the hunt.

7. Celebrate Holidays and Special Occasions Online

Remote staff have lives outside of work, and because of the geographical isolation that often comes with telecommuting, it can be hard to bond with colleagues regarding things going on in their daily lives. It becomes necessary to celebrate important milestones in a virtual setting just as much as you would if you interacted face-to-face with your team.

How It Works

The easiest way is by putting every telecommunications tool in your arsenal to work. If you use a communication tool like Slack or Microsoft Teams, have a dedicated channel for “watercooler” news or personal events. Encourage staff to upload pictures of celebrations (weddings) or milestones (kids, pets, or sports activities). Host virtual baby showers or birthdays by having the team join in on a video call and send a gift or birthday cake to the person being celebrated. Want to make it extra special? Send everyone on the team a cupcake too so that they can join in on the tasty fun.

There are many ways that remote employees can come together and truly become a cohesive team. It just takes work, consistency, and a sincere effort by managers and their distributed staff members to make these virtual team building activities work.