Team Ground Rules + Norms

Leading Hybrid Teams Tip Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WHY THIS MATTERS

When everyone understands expectations about how team members interact and how work is accomplished, people can better contribute and do their best work. This frees the team to devote their energy to meaningful work and priorities. Assuming everyone understands the implicit rules can lead to harm, ineffectiveness, and poor decisions.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Ground rules are shared expectations for how *individuals* will behave and interact within the team. **Norms** are shared expectations for how a *team* functions. Identifying team ground rules and norms supports inclusion, invites diverse perspectives, supports psychological safety, and describes and creates the environment where people want to work.

ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES + TEAM NORMS

Begin your team's brainstorming process by using these questions, and encourage your team to create their own:

Ground Rules

Sensitivity + Respect	Creativity	Openness + Communication	Feedback	Roles + Responsibilities
How do we show respect and caring for each other, especially in challenging situations?	How will we enable everyone to contribute their creativity and foster innovation?	How will we share information and openly communicate?	How will we provide information to help individuals and the team grow?	Who is responsible, accountable, consulted, informed (RACI)?

Team Norms

Meetings + Decision Making	Communication	Problem Solving	Confidentiality	Recognition
How will we approach meeting design execution, and the decision process? Who will be involved?	How will we share information? What information will be shared and how often?	How will we approach challenges when they arise?	How will we ensure private/confidential matters are protected?	How will team members and successes be recognized and celebrated?

HOW TO DEVELOP GROUND RULES + TEAM NORMS

1. Set the Stage | When you develop ground rules and norms with your team, start with the 'why' to set the stage. Establish an understanding about how team ground rules and norms will support inclusion, positive team interaction, effectiveness, and wellbeing.

2. Involve Everyone and Ask for a Commitment | Develop the ground rules and norms together with your team to uncover what is important to everyone. A collaborative approach will ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their perspectives, and will increase a sense of personal ownership and accountability. As a team, select those everyone can agree to and ask for commitment from the team to implement. Document the rules and norms, share the document with everyone on the team, and revisit often (especially if team members change).

3. Hold Everyone Accountable | Together as a team, discuss everyone will be held accountable. We all forget things sometimes or occasionally act in uncharacteristic ways. Discuss respectful approaches to remind one another when someone has stepped outside the agreed ground rules and norms. Call people in by approaching the situation with curiosity rather than judgement. Take time to talk about how the norms and rules have positively affected the team's effectiveness and demonstrate the teams' values.

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Working in a hybrid environment will be new for many people, and it will take time to learn how to best facilitate healthy and productive practices. You are not alone in this transition to a hybrid work environment. Some of us have more experience leading hybrid teams than others. We encourage you to talk openly about your successes and challenges. Share your ideas, tips, and tools with your colleagues. Be curious, ask questions, and seek support.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Human Resources, Health, Safety and Environment (HRHSE) offers a range of options for you to learn more about setting expectations, like team norms and ground rules, and holding your team accountable to them. We also offer extensive workshops and programs focused on leadership development.

Learn more about our leadership and professional development programming on the **HRHSE website**.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Managing a hybrid work environment does not mean learning a new skill set but it does mean being more intentional with the best management and leadership practices you are already using.

Below are a few resources to sharpen your leadership competencies around team norms and ground rules.

Articles/Websites

Baker, Scott. "How to Define Your Team's Norms (And Why It's Important)." *Forbes* 1. July 2019.

Brownless, Dana. "Has your Remote Team Defined Ground Rules Yet? Here's How." *Forbes*. 25 March 2020.

Parris, Aer. "How to Create Group Norms That Make Your Team Stronger." *Ambition and Balance by doist* (blog). Accessed 4 November 2021.

Schwarz, Roger. "8 Ground Rules for Great Meetings." *Harvard Business Review*. 15 June 2016.

Santos, Jose Maria Delos. "Understanding Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RACI Matrix)." 14 April 2021.

Videos

Sinek, Simon. "Start with Why" Ted video, 18:00 min. 1 May 2020.

Corentus, Inc. "Setting Team Norms that Stick." 4.25 min

Academic Impressions. "Identify and Actualize Your Team Values to Increase Trust and Engagement." 60 min.

HRHSE. "Elements of effective teams and creating team norms." 28 min.

Books

Shapiro, Mary. *HBR Guide to Leading Teams*. Harvard Business Review Guides. Harvard Business Review Press. 2015

Sinek, Simon. *Find Your Why: A Practical Guide for Discovering Purpose for You and Your Team*. Penguin Press. 2017

Patterson, Kerry. *Crucial Accountability: Tool for Resolving Violated Expectations, Broken Commitments, and Bad Behaviour*. 2nd ed. McGraw-Hill. 2013.

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