

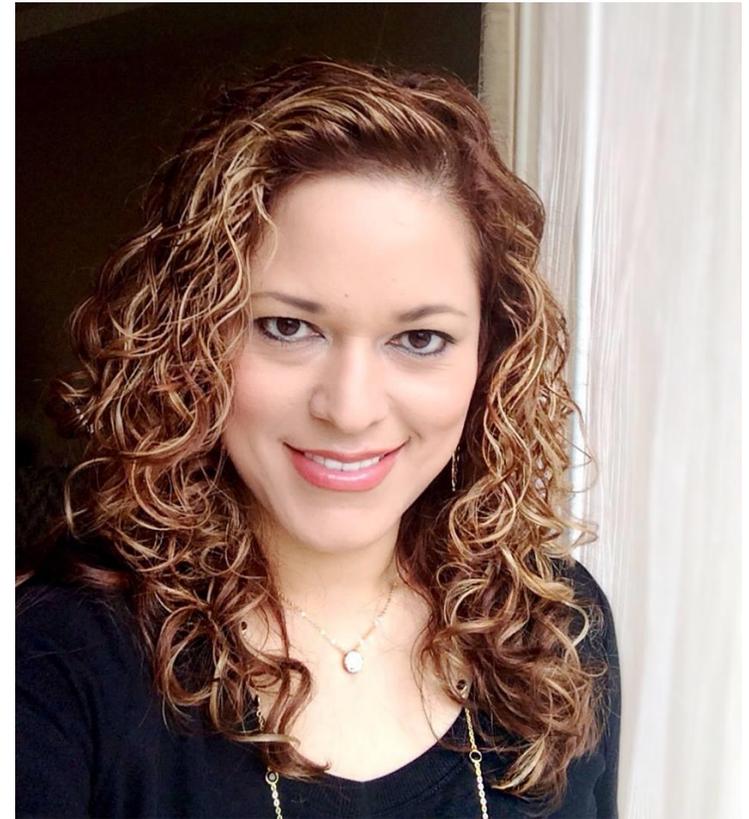
Virtual Teams and the Critical Factor of Communication

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Introduction

Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson, *Senior Consultant*

- ◆ Passionate about people development, self-awareness, and leadership
- ◆ Specializes in planning, strategy, and learning for people and organizations across many different industries within the U.S. and globally
- ◆ Over 15 years' experience in roles that include teaching, leading, and consulting
- ◆ Master's degree in Leadership, graduate concentration in Adult Learning Methods & Instruction, and is pursuing her Doctorate in Transformational Leadership & Change



Agenda

July 26, 2018

- 01** The Changing Space & Place of Work
- 02** The Criticality of Communication
- 03** 5 Essential Skills for Virtual Team Communication
- 04** Summary and Final Considerations

Changing Space & Place of Work

The American Workplace Evolution

01

To-Do

- ◆ Balanced my checkbook
- ◆ Paid monthly utility bills
- ◆ Sent a B2B domestic wire transfer
- ◆ Bought groceries for the week
- ◆ Purchased a birthday gift for a friend
- ◆ Bought craft supplies for a new project
- ◆ Returned décor that didn't work in my space
- ◆ Reconnected with a friend from long ago
- ◆ Wrote a proposal to help a new leader build cohesion across his management team
- ◆ Participated in a lecture on an interesting topic
- ◆ Completed all coursework for my Doctoral degree (officially on the dissertation now!)
- ◆ Reconciled a medical billing error for a doctor visit
- ◆ Binged-watched Season 5 of the series "Vikings" (my new fav)

Why remote work?

4 in 10 American workers spend at least some of their time working remote



- ◆ Attract better talent
- ◆ Be able to hire the right person for the role
- ◆ Employee/Workforce Demands for flexibility in their work
- ◆ Employee Retention
- ◆ Rapid Business/Personnel Growth
- ◆ Logistics / Physical Space Limitations
- ◆ Geographic dispersion of business

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Employees Are Spending More Time Working Remotely

Employees who work remotely in some capacity has risen from **39%** to **43%**.

Employees who work remotely 80-100% of the time has risen from **24%** to **31%**.

Employees who work remotely 100% of the time has risen from **15%** to **20%**.

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Industries where 3+ of 10 employees work remote



Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Industries where 3+ of 10 employees work remote

FINANCE/INSURANCE/REAL ESTATE

TRANSPORTATION

MANUFACTURING OR CONSTRUCTION

HEALTHCARE

COMPUTER/INFORMATION SYSTEMS/MATHEMATICAL

LAW OR PUBLIC POLICY

ARTS/DESIGN/ENTERTAINMENT/SPORTS/MEDIA

COMMUNITY/SOCIAL SERVICES

SCIENCE/ENGINEERING/ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION/TRAINING/LIBRARY

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Industries demonstrating % growth in employees who work remote

FINANCE/INSURANCE/REAL ESTATE

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Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Employees Are Spending More Time Working Remotely

Work Space / Place Benefit
Flexible work time (choice over when you work)
Privacy when you need it
Personal workspace
Own Office
Door you can shut
Temperature you can control



Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Rising Trend Continues

Employees Are Spending More Time Working Remotely

Work Space / Place Benefit	% of Workers who would leave their job to another one to have:
Flexible work time (choice over when you work)	54
Privacy when you need it	42
Personal workspace	41
Own Office	38
Door you can shut	33
Temperature you can control	33

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

Move towards virtuality

PHYSICAL MEETINGS LOSING OUT TO VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

Face-to-face meetings and phone meetings are on the decline, while work collaboration platforms are on the upswing.

Figure 1. Expected use of communications channels in the next three to five years



n = 11,070

Source: Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, 2018.

Deloitte Insights | deloitte.com/insights

The Question of Employee Engagement

Q: Are remote employees more or less engaged than their office counterparts?



Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

The Question of Employee Engagement

Q: Are remote employees more or less engaged than their office counterparts?

- ◆ Overall engagement levels are similar for fully remote employees to the levels of those who are always in the office.
- ◆ All employees who spend at least some (but not all) of their time working remotely have **higher engagement** than those who don't ever work remotely.
- ◆ Spending some time in a location different from coworkers is not detrimental to many employees' engagement or progress. In fact, the autonomy and flexibility has been linked to giving rise to better performance and employees who feel more connected to their company.

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

The Question of Employee Engagement

Q: Are remote employees able to do their work successfully like their office counterparts?



Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

The Question of Employee Engagement

Q: *Are remote employees able to do their work successfully like their office counterparts?*

Fully remote workers are:

- ◆ 17% more likely than non-remote employees to ***strongly agree they have a clear job description***
- ◆ 27% more likely than non-remote employees to ***strongly agree they have the materials and equipment they need to do their work right***
- ◆ 31% more likely than non-remote employees to ***strongly agree they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day***

Source: Gallup's *State of the American Workplace* report, 2016

The Result?

Increased proliferation of organizations and industries who use and rely on remote workers to work as part of a virtual team to achieve results.

Increased personal flexibility in the job market to work within a desired job or industry, from anywhere.

Increased move towards virtual work conditions and virtual collaboration, even in fully co-located and on-site teams.

— Implication for Leaders and Orgs —

To Know:

What are the critical factors that support engagement and performance in virtual teams?

In Order to:

Develop virtual team members who can more effectively handle the challenges created by the virtual environment.

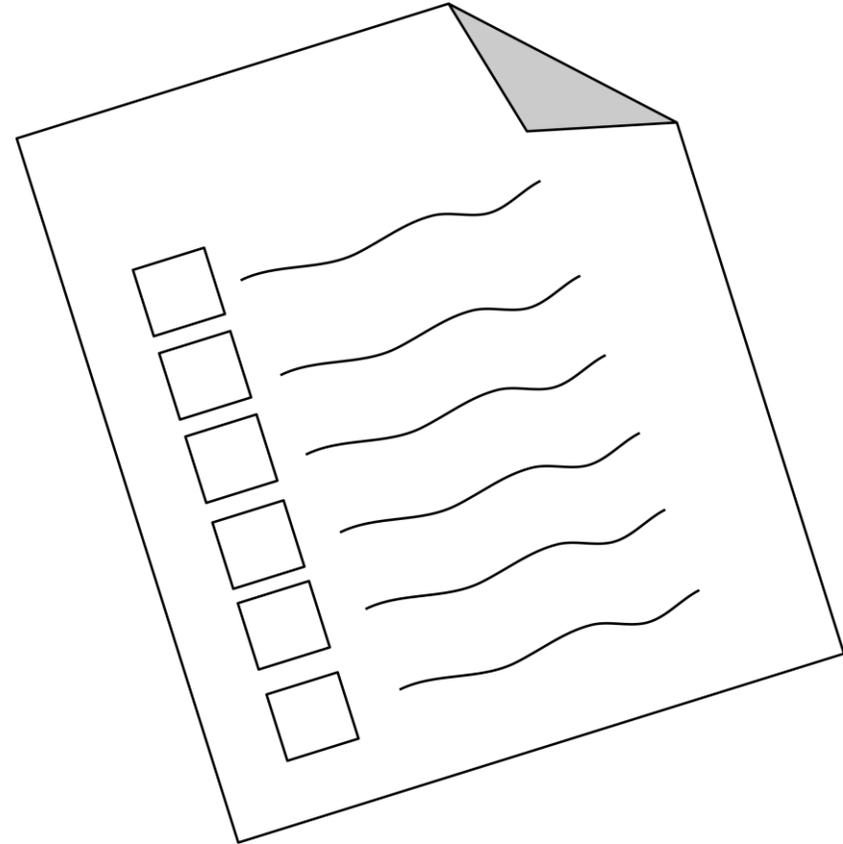
Communication in Virtual Context

The Critical Factor

02

Let's Take a Poll

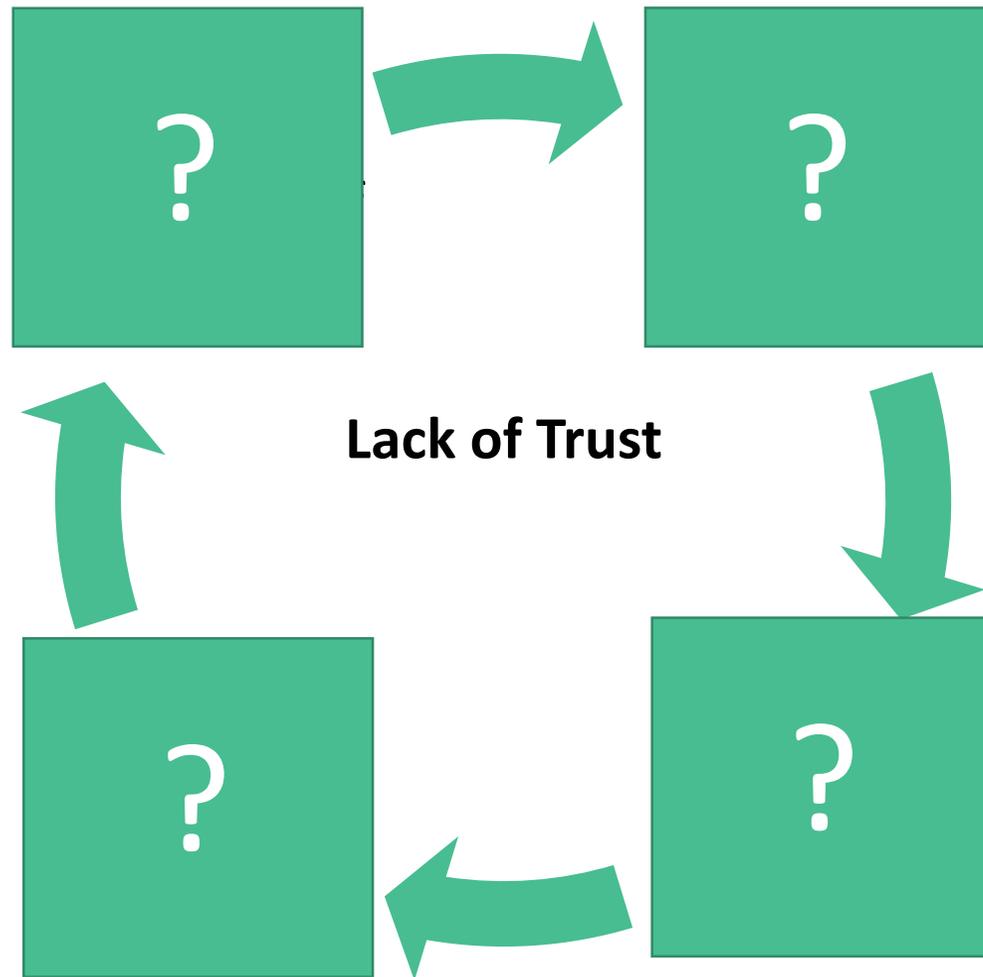
Would you say that your virtual team(s) are communicating effectively?"



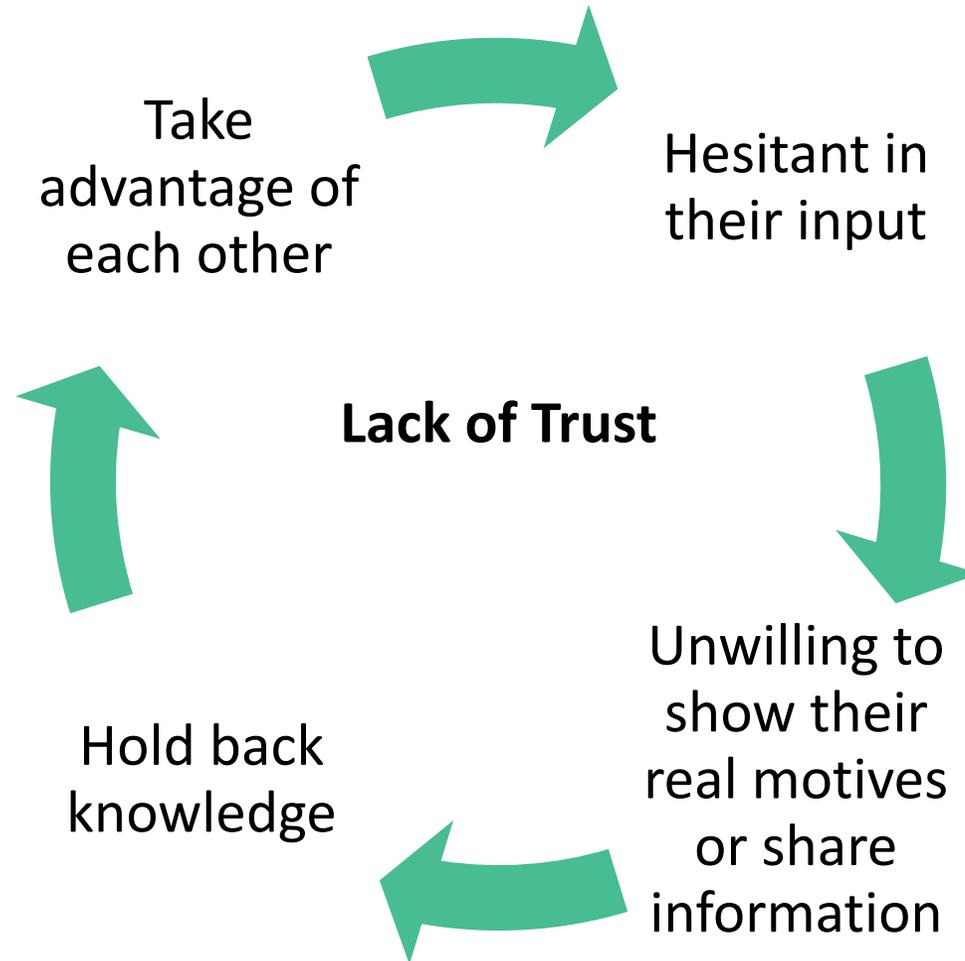
The Criticality of Communication

- ◆ Effective communication, as a team process, is a key driver of both objective and subjective measures of virtual team effectiveness (Martins et al., 2004, Journal of Management).
- ◆ “Members are more likely to work together, put themselves at risk with regard to the other group, and identify other group actions in a positive light in situations with high levels of communication quality” (Chang & Hsieh, 2014, Journal of Total Quality Management & Business Excellence).
- ◆ Low quality communication, whether in remote or traditional teams, hinders effective team performance (Baltes, et al., 2002, Journal of Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes).

Avoiding the Trust Trap



Avoiding the Trust Trap

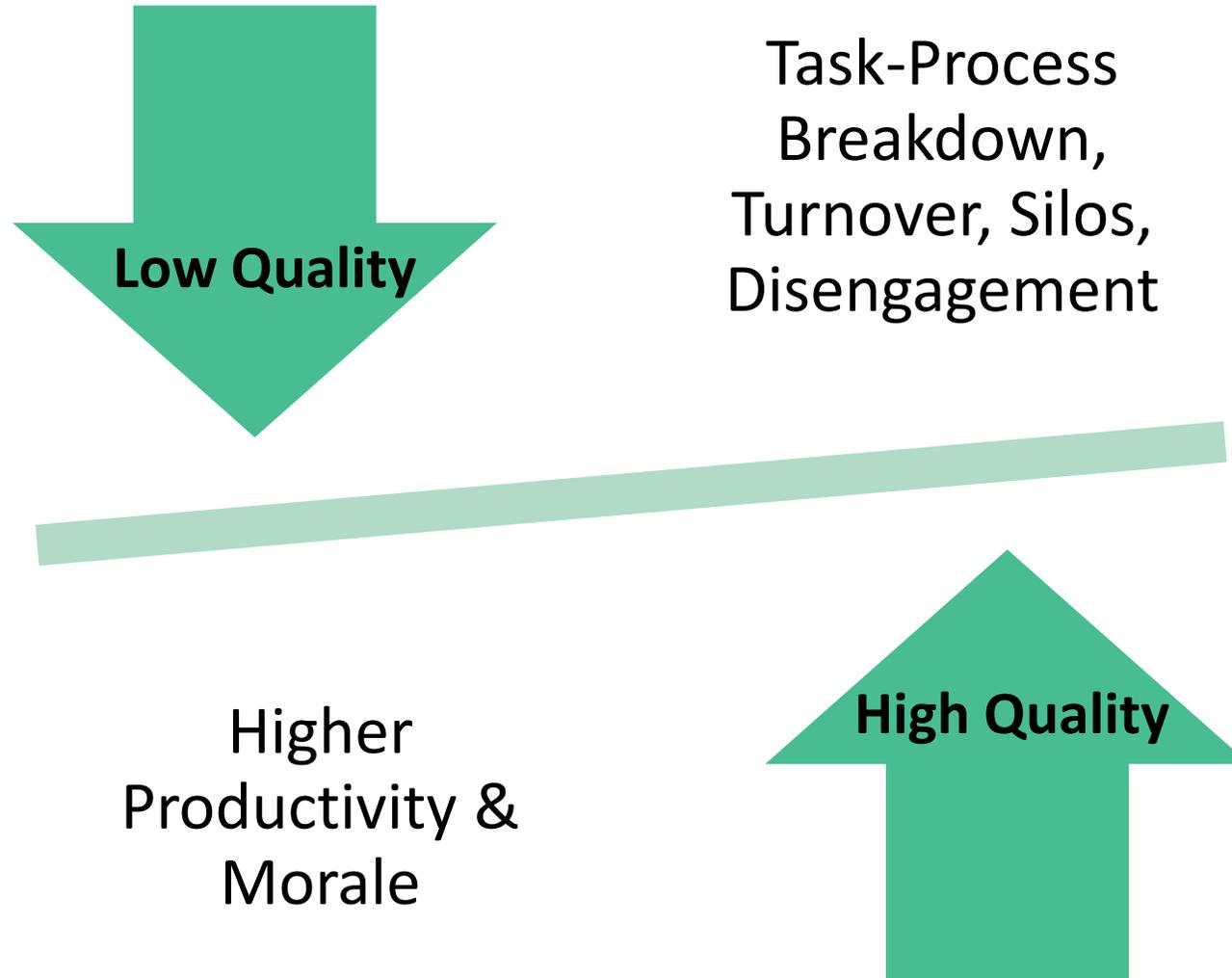


Avoiding the Trust Trap

- ◆ Encouraging good communication quality on the part of members of virtual teams might help to foster a climate conducive to the existence of interpersonal trust, which has been linked to individual and team performance.
- ◆ Good communication quality in teams provides:
 - reassurance that others are attending to the task at hand and
 - increases member trust in the team and feelings of cohesiveness.

Source: Chang, Journal of Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 2014

The Criticality of Communication



Virtual Team Communication Success

5 Essential Skills for Every Team Member

03

Essential Communication Skills

1. Communication Frequency

KNOW / BELIEVE

Effective teams understand that communication frequency is important to team development and functioning and are aware of their team's optimum frequency level.

+ DO

= RESULTS

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

1. Communication Frequency

KNOW / BELIEVE	Effective teams understand that communication frequency is important to team development and functioning and are aware of their team's optimum frequency level.
+ DO	As a result, the team's needs drive the frequency of communication among the team. Team members successfully manage the balance of the team's needs for information exchange while minimizing unnecessary sharing or overload. Team members emphasize appropriate timeliness.
= RESULTS	They achieve results of greater collective understanding, shared cognition, and increased efficiencies in team functioning.

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

2. Communication Content

KNOW / BELIEVE Effective teams understand that both task and relational interactions are important to team development and functioning.

+ DO

= RESULTS

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

2. Communication Content

KNOW / BELIEVE	Effective teams understand that both task and relational interactions are important to team development and functioning.
+ DO	As a result, the team communicates around task-orientation (communication focused on task completion) and relational interaction (communication of an interpersonal nature). Team members successfully manage the interplay between the team's work and the need to build and sustain trust among team members.
= RESULTS	They achieve results of greater cohesion, strengthened states of trust, and dependency on each other in obtaining the team's collective goals.

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

3. Communication Quality

KNOW / BELIEVE Effective teams understand that communication quality is essential to team development and functioning.

+ DO

= RESULTS

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

3. Communication Quality

KNOW / BELIEVE	Effective teams understand that communication quality is essential to team development and functioning.
+ DO	As a result, team member communication can be described as “clear, effective, complete, fluent, and on time”. Team members emphasize appropriate checks for understanding in their communication.
= RESULTS	They achieve results of accuracy and shared understanding, which boost team effectiveness.

Source: González-Romá & Hernández, Climate uniformity: Its influence on team communication quality, task conflict, and team performance, Journal of Applied Psychology, 2014

Essential Communication Skills

4. Diversity

KNOW / BELIEVE

Effective teams understand their diversity and how it plays its role in their team communication.

+ DO

= RESULTS

Essential Communication Skills

4. Diversity

KNOW / BELIEVE	Effective teams understand their diversity and how it plays its role in their team communication.
+ DO	As a result, team members work towards building understanding, mitigating challenges, minimizing risks, and maximizing results across team interactions.
= RESULTS	They achieve results of shared understanding, recognition of multiple perspectives, and stronger decisions.

Essential Communication Skills

5. Situational Recognition

KNOW / BELIEVE

Effective teams understand that their communication must be flexible to the unique needs and realities of the team, their work, and the organization.

+ DO

= RESULTS

Essential Communication Skills

5. Situational Recognition

KNOW / BELIEVE	Effective teams understand that their communication must be flexible to the unique needs and realities of the team, their work, and the organization.
+ DO	As a result, team member communication is marked with actions that recognize awareness of how communication needs are situationally informed. In other words, team member communication is driven by the team's interdependency, their function, and their diversity.
= RESULTS	They achieve results of smoother overall functioning, shared understanding, and heightened team effectiveness.

Summary and Final Considerations

04

Tips for Managers / Leaders

Customizing Your Communication Approach to Your Team

- ◆ Assess your teams' current communication
- ◆ Evaluate how communication is helping the team (or not)
- ◆ Gauge employee needs in regards to skills for effective communication in virtual contexts
- ◆ Align developmental resources to promote and build necessary skills
- ◆ Bring in outside help
- ◆ Serve as a the facilitator of high-quality team communication

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Questions?