

# REMOTE WORK REVOLUTION

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*Succeeding from Anywhere*

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**TSEDAL NEELEY**

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## CHAPTER 2

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### How Can I Trust Colleagues I Barely See in Person?

#### TRUSTING THE HEAD AND THE HEART

Trust is the glue that binds a team together, drives performance, and enables collaboration and coordination, but you can't force trust. It is a judgment people must reach on their own. By trusting our colleagues, we are willing to be vulnerable to them when it comes to making sure that they will do their part in tasks or keep in confidence whatever we might confide in them. In teams, trust includes an expectation that people will act for the good of the group.

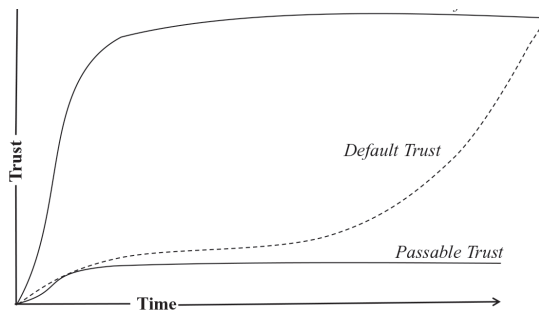
Two basic terms that help us think about how to choose from the nuanced palette of trust available when working together are *cognitive trust* and *emotional trust*.

Cognitive trust is grounded in the belief that your coworkers are reliable and dependable. Teams motivated by cognitive-based trust use their heads to consider their colleagues' qualification to do the task at hand; trust is usually formed over time, and confirmed (or disproven) over numerous experiences and interactions. For example, when you learn that a colleague has gained significant experience from a previ-

ous job or has graduated from an institution you respect, you begin to form cognitive trust. As you work on a project together, your cognitive trust will rise or fall depending on how consistently your colleague has behaved to demonstrate reliability over time.

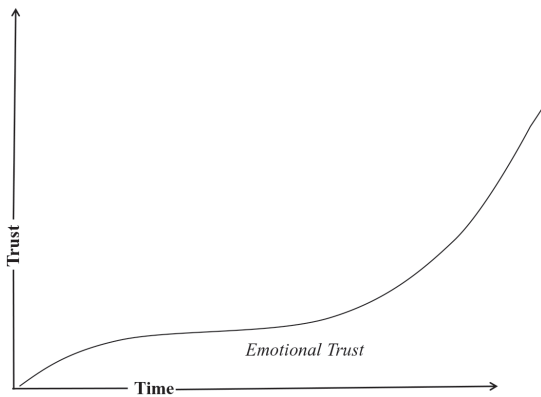
By comparison, emotional trust is grounded in coworkers' care and concern for one another. Relationships built on emotional trust rely on positive feeling and emotional bonds, and they crop up most easily when team members share common values and mind-sets. If you consciously mentor a colleague or a group takes up a collection to give a coworker a gift, for example, that's driven by emotional trust. Relationships based on emotional trust are akin to friendships and involve the heart. They do not require more time to achieve, but they are more difficult to form among remote teams.

Passable trust is more dependent on cognitive trust, whereas swift trust is more dependent on both emotional and cognitive trust. Passable trust is necessary but not sufficient for most remote teams. It's useful and frequently used for communicating outside of teams and across organizations—it's the fuel that keeps organizations working—but because it doesn't become more intense or involve emotion it's not the special ingredient that makes a team, but especially a remote team, really gel. (see Figure 1 for Cognitive Trusting Curves and Figure 2 for Emotional Trusting Curve).



**Figure 1: Three Types of Cognitive Trusting Curves**

The trusting-curve graphs show that while an intense level of cognitive trust is typically reached fairly quickly with remote colleagues, it takes longer to reach emotional trust. Thus, remote colleagues are likely to work together with a relatively shallow level of emotional trust and a level of cognitive trust that is relatively intense. Note that while emotional trust takes longer to develop, it can eventually meet up and combine with cognitive trust; the two types are not mutually exclusive. One type isn't necessarily better than the other; what's important when designing or leading remote teams is to understand what kinds of trust exist and how they can increase collaboration and productivity when deployed well. How do you curate the right kind of trust for your team? What's essential?



**Figure 2: Emotional Trusting Curve**

## **CHAPTER 4**

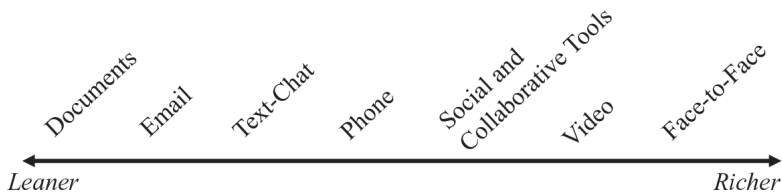
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### **How Should I Use Digital Tools in Remote Work?**

#### **LEANER TO RICHER MEDIA**

If you talk to any technology-enabled communication expert about how people should select their media to fit their needs, they will start talking about rich or lean media.

Rich media are those that convey greater amounts of information, including social cues and social presence, which enhance understanding across a wide swath of situations, even those that are ambiguous, whereas lean media are those that convey less information, fewer social cues, less social presence, and have relatively limited communication. Both lean and rich media are important and exist on a continuum. The richer media are more effective in situations with higher ambiguity, higher equivocality, and less clarity, while leaner media will be more effective in situations that are more straightforward (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Examples of lean versus rich media**

As you will notice, leaner media tend to be asynchronous while richer media tend to be synchronous. When thinking about what types of work activities were best suited for different levels of leanness/richness and synchronicity, researchers determined that communication is made up of two primary processes they call *conveyance* and *convergence*. Conveyance describes the transmission of new information from one person to another; for example, that a new shipment of a certain number of goods is expected on the morning of October 15. The receiver of the conveyed information might then need time to check the shipment's inventory against an original order of goods. Lean, asynchronous media would be suitable for this work activity. Convergence, on the other hand, describes communication in which individuals must discuss and interpret information to come to an agreement. Discussion about how to best use the shipment of goods upon arrival would require back-and-forth dialogue in a richer, synchronous media.

However, not all work activities can be assigned to solely to media that is lean, rich, asynchronous, or synchronous. Much depends on the circumstances. Sometimes richer media is called for to coordinate who among a group will be responsible for a large set of competing tasks, while other times a lean, asynchronous poll can coordinate the best time to schedule a meeting among a group of people. (See Table 1 for a breakdown of the types of work activities that match media characteristics in most circumstances.)

	<b>Rich</b>	<b>Lean</b>
<b>Synchronous</b>	Complex coordination Discussion Collaboration Team building	Routine coordination Information exchange
<b>Asynchronous</b>	Content development Team selection	Information exchange Simple coordination Complex information processing

**Table 1: Work Activities and Digital Media Characteristics**

Other researchers took this work a step further. They noted that although both a phone call and instant messaging are synchronous (or mostly synchronous) media, they do not provide the same level of effectiveness in all circumstances. Someone can easily send an instant message that will be transmitted simultaneously to many people; a phone call carries voice and sound, usually to one person or a relatively small group. By characterizing technology by specific capabilities, they identified five that mattered the most: the speed at which a medium can deliver a message to intended recipients, the number of people a medium can simultaneously reach, the variety of expressions a medium conveys (physical, visual, and verbal information), the extent to which the medium enables the sender to rehearse or fine-tune a message before sending it, and the extent to which the medium enables a message to be captured and made permanent to reexamine, reprocess, or repeat. These capabilities, mapped out in Table 2, further detail how we can think about the characteristics and effectiveness of certain media when choosing what to use when and under what circumstances.



	<b>Delivery Speed</b>	<b>Number of Recipients</b>	<b>Variety of Expression</b>	<b>Fine-tune Potential</b>	<b>Message Permanence</b>
<b>Face-to-Face</b>	High	Medium	Few to Many	Low	Low
<b>Video-conference</b>	High	Medium	Some to Many	Low	Low to Medium
<b>Conference Call</b>	High	Low to Medium	Few to Some	Low	Low
<b>Shared Folder System</b>	Medium to High	Medium	Few	High	High
<b>Social and Collaborative Tools</b>	Medium to High	Medium	Some to Many	Medium	Medium to High
<b>Instant Messaging</b>	Medium to High	Low to Medium	Few to Some	Medium	Medium
<b>Email</b>	Low to Medium	High	Few to Some	High	Medium to High
<b>Documents</b>	Low	High	Few to Some	High	Medium to High

**Table 2: Comparison of Selected Media and Their Capabilities**

## CHAPTER 6

### How Can My Global Team Succeed Across Differences?

#### INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS IN GLOBAL TEAM MEETINGS

Global teams have to ensure that the fluent English speakers learn to *dial down dominance*, the nonfluent speakers learn to *dial up engagement*, and everyone, especially the managers, learns to *balance for inclusion*.

Dial Down Dominance	Dial Up Engagement	Balance for Inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Slow down the pace and use familiar language (e.g., fewer idioms).</li><li>✓ Refrain from dominating conversation.</li><li>✓ Ask: "Do you understand what I am saying?"</li><li>✓ Listen actively.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Resist withdrawal or other avoidance behaviors.</li><li>✓ Refrain from reverting to your native language.</li><li>✓ Ask: "Do you understand what I am saying?"</li><li>✓ If you don't understand others, ask them to repeat or explain.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Monitor participants and strive to balance their speaking and listening.</li><li>✓ Actively draw contributions from all team members.</li><li>✓ Solicit participation from less fluent speakers in particular.</li><li>✓ Be prepared to define and interpret content.</li></ul>

Figure 1. Rules of Engagement.

## Action Guide

This Action Guide is intended to help you and your team apply insights and best practices from each chapter to your own working environment. Each set of action practices is designed to take you deeper into the chapter content to enable reflection, learning, and application. Your remote team and leader will be asked to answer questions to sharpen your remote work acumen so that you can launch, trust, enhance productivity, use digital tools effectively, become more agile, work across differences, lead virtually, and prepare for global crises. The questions and exercises are also intended to foster bonding experiences as you share and discuss the material in *Remote Work Revolution* and the specific ways in which it applies to your team. The questions are not meant to be a test of your abilities! They are meant to help you succeed from anywhere.

You can use the Action Guide in a number of ways. You might want to engage in the action exercises immediately following the reading of each chapter in order to absorb the information and make it “stick.” You might want to reach for the action exercise that seems most relevant to your immediate situation. Some leaders may send individual action exercises out to each team member to complete in preparation for an all-member meeting that takes place over the digital medium of your choice. Others may want to post the practice questions in an online collaborative tool that people can contribute to asynchronously and/or anonymously. Remember also that the action exercises can be revisited and repeated over time as team conditions change.

## CHAPTER 1

### **How Can We (Re)Launch to Thrive in Remote Work?**

The following practices will take your remote team through the first and most fundamental step in the remote work revolution: the team launch session. Treat these prompts as guideposts—or more precisely, launchpads—to frame your session and get you off the ground. Your team should cover the key areas of a successful launch session: refining the team's shared goals, establishing its communication norms, understanding each team member's contributions and constraints, and identifying the resources necessary for success. If you are a leader, you should convey your commitment to help the team thrive.

These actions should be repeated and adapted for each relaunch session as well. As the chapter made clear, launch sessions cannot be successful if they are treated as an isolated event that kicks off the journey before being abandoned. Launching and relaunching is a continuous process throughout the full duration of any team's life cycle—especially remote teams.

**1. Describe your team's shared goals.**

**2. How would you describe your communication norms?**

**3. In the table below, record your thoughts on a relaunch discussion to improve your current communication norms.**

<b>Communication Norm</b>	<b>Impact</b>

**4. In the table below, create a list of your team members' contributions and constraints.**

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Contributions</b>	<b>Constraints</b>
<b>Jenny</b>	Jenny is a twenty-year company veteran and has a great deal of institutional knowledge.	She works remotely in a different time zone than the majority of the team.

5. In the columns below, create a list of resources: what you need to meet team goals, how they will help you succeed, and where to locate them.

What	How	Where

6. If you are a team leader, describe three ideas of how you can show commitment to your team through launch and relaunch sessions.

CHAPTER 2

How Can I Trust Colleagues I Barely See in Person?

The following action plan engages you and your team with key concepts for building trust among virtual team members: the trusting curve, cognitive passable trust, cognitive swift trust, emotional trust, direct knowledge, and reflected knowledge. The type of trust—and how much—varies based on a remote team’s unique situation. These

exercises help you determine what trust should look like in your own remote team—in relationships among team members and clients alike.

**1. How can the trusting curve help your team determine the level of trust that is necessary to reach its goals? Please be specific.**

**2. What is the difference between swift trust and passable trust? Use examples from your remote work to explain.**

**3. Describe a person you have developed emotional trust with remotely in the last six months. What words or actions do you notice about that trusting relationship?**

**4. Develop a plan that can help you gain direct knowledge in your relationships with virtual teammates, leading to a better understanding of their personal characteristics and behavioral norms.**

**5. Develop a plan that can help you gain reflected knowledge in your relationships with virtual teammates, leading to deeper insight about how teammates see you and deeper empathy for their perspective.**

**6. Generate three ideas that can help you develop cognitive and emotional trust with virtual clients.**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Can My Team Really Be Productive Remotely?**

There are three tried-and-true criteria for productivity that *thrives* on remote teamwork instead of subduing it: 1) delivering results; 2) facilitating individual growth; and 3) building team cohesion. On the team level, the following action practices will help you accurately assess your team's productivity, identify potential blind spots, and increase your team's cohesion. On the individual level, the exercises will help you elevate the contributions of teammates while enhancing your own remote work performance as well.

**1. Assess your team's output to date. (See Sample Response)**



Results	Met Expectations? (Yes or No)	Exceeded Expectations (Yes or No)	Explain
<b>New Web App Tool</b>	Yes	Yes	We met the client's basic needs to share project data, and then also created a dynamic user-friendly interface and added natural language processing functionalities, to go the extra mile.
<b>Sales Goals</b>	No	No	Goals were 16 percent under target

## 2. How can remote work enhance your individual growth on the team?

**3. Evaluate your team’s cohesion. Describe any changes you have observed over time, and list potential next steps. (Sample Response)**

Evidence of Team Cohesion	Impact on Productivity	Next Steps
We doubled the amount of small group virtual meetings.	There seems to be less tension among virtual team members; they seem more connected.	We are planning to require daily virtual check-ins to see if it helps team cohesion even further and reassess in one month.

**4. What can you do to make teammates feel included on your remote team? Please be specific.**

**5. Comment on the list of attributes that describe your home conditions as a remote worker, and evaluate how each attribute impacts your job satisfaction and productivity.**

## CHAPTER 4

### **How Should I Use Digital Tools in Remote Work?**

Digital tools lay the infrastructure for remote teamwork. Without them, communication would not just be more difficult—it would be impossible. But as this chapter showed, not all digital tools are created equal. Different occasions call for different mediums. The following action practices prompt you to reflect on the key considerations for using digital tools most effectively on your team. On an individual level, the exercises will make you more precise in choosing the right digital tool for the right situation, and more communicative within each medium. On the team level, these practices will boost knowledge sharing among team members, making the team more collaborative as a whole.

**1. Describe the last time you experienced tech exhaustion. What would you do differently to avoid it in the future?**

**2. How would you describe the primary differences between face-to-face interactions and digital communications?**

**3. Discuss the following numbered items with your team and decide the best digital tool in your organization for you to achieve each. For example, videoconferencing might be your choice for coordination that requires a synchronous and rich medium.**

	<b>Rich</b>	<b>Lean</b>
<b>Synchronous</b>	1. Coordination 2. Discussion 3. Collaboration 4. Team building	7. Coordination 8. Information exchange
<b>Asynchronous</b>	5. Content development 6. Team selection	9. Content development 10. Information exchange 11. Simple coordination 12. Complex information

1.	7.
2.	8.
3.	9.
4.	10.
5.	11.
6.	12.

**4. How well does your team share knowledge? How can you and your team improve?**

**5. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of communicating using private social media tools with your team?**

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **How Can My Agile Team Operate Remotely?**

Impressive team wins within organizations of vastly different sizes and ages—from century-old multinational behemoths to digitally born tech startups—show the exciting synergy between agile methods and remote teams. The following action practices usher you down the aisle of this marriage in a series of overlapping steps: connecting your team with the underlying mission of agile methodologies, applying the agile method to your team’s unique goals, reflecting more deeply on the ways that agile methods sync up with your team’s remote format, and engaging more intentionally with the digital tools that facilitate this harmony. Each of these steps will help your team grasp the agile philosophy as a concept, and then execute it on the ground in demonstrable ways that are specific to your remote team’s context.

**1. How can asynchronous communication tools help lubricate real-time discussions for your remote agile team?**

**2. How can the agile method help your team?**

**3. Describe how a remote format would improve your agile team's process. Provide at least two concrete examples.**

**4. How can you provide stakeholders a better experience as a member of a remote agile team? Please be specific.**

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **How Can My Global Team Succeed Across Differences?**

The following action practices prompt you to reflect on the specific ways that you and your team members are both alike and different, how these differences may have been challenging in the past, and how to apply concrete norms to bridge these differences and build a shared team identity. On an individual level, each of these practices will reduce psychological distance among you and your team members. On an overall team level, the exercise of building stronger shared identity will make the group more cohesive and collaborative.

- 1. How can you help build ONE identity for your team?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Describe a time when you encountered unfamiliar beliefs or norms on your globally distributed team. What was that like?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Describe a time when you felt you had common ground with a team member from another cultural background. What was that like?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What would you like to learn from your team members? What can you teach them?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Think back on the last month and describe a difficult interaction you had with a native or a nonnative speaker on your team. Explain why the situation was challenging to you. Explain why the situation may have been challenging to them.**

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **What Do I Really Need to Know About Leading Virtually?**

Meeting these challenges is a matter of adapting your in-person leadership tool kit into a virtual setting, and making deliberate efforts to lay the foundations of teamwork that may form more naturally on collocated teams. The following action practices will reinforce a remote leadership tool kit that prevents against the worst effects of faultlines (whether they be a result of status differentials, geographic dispersion, or cultural differences), maximizes the potential of each individual team member, and unites the team around its ultimate goals.

**1. How would you describe the primary differences between leading a collocated team and leading virtually?**

**2. How do status differences manifest in your team? What are three things that you can do to minimize them?**

**3. How do you think your team would rate you on your communication presence? What should you do differently?**



4. Using the table below, describe the individual strengths of your team members that can help you achieve your collective goal.

Team member	Strength

5. Identify and evaluate the faultlines that could negatively impact your team.

Faultline	Impact on team

CHAPTER 8

How Do I Prepare My Team for Global Crises?

The capacity to thrive within crisis depends on three skills: panoramic awareness, active anticipation, and acting immediately. The following action practices prompt you and colleagues to reflect on your team’s unique position within the VUCA environment, and how each of the

three skills can help your team respond directly to the inherent challenges. In each question, you and your team will apply general concepts from the chapter to the specific circumstances of your remote team.

**1. Describe the unique challenges that your team faces in a VUCA environment.**

**2. How can the diversity of your teammates help your team face the challenges of a VUCA environment?**

**3. How might you and your team be affected by the country-of-origin effect?**

**4. How would you describe your team's preparedness for global crises?**

5. Using the table below, evaluate your team’s panoramic awareness, active anticipation, and capacity to act immediately in the face of crisis. When possible, provide specific examples to help explain your response.

Panoramic Awareness	Active Anticipation	Immediate Action