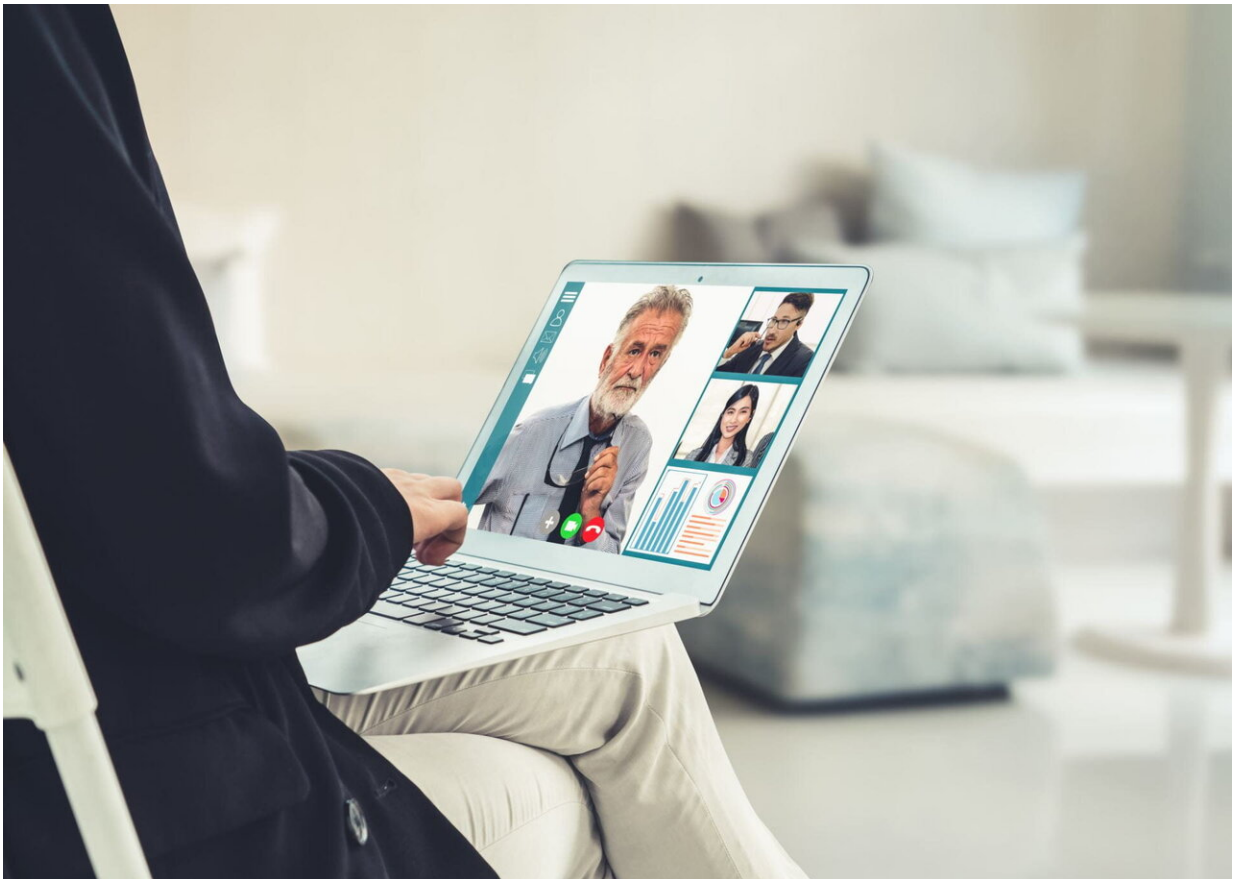


How leaders can encourage strong teams during the pandemic

September 15 2020, by Amy McCaig



Credit: 123rf.com

Among the many stresses caused by the pandemic, workers accustomed to meeting with their teams in person are navigating the shift to a virtual

workplace. New research from psychologists at Rice University offers tips on how leaders can encourage strong and productive teams during this difficult time.

"Challenges for team leaders transitioning from face-to-face to [virtual teams](#)," an article that will appear in *Organizational Dynamics*, identifies 10 tips for [teams](#) transitioning from face-to-face to virtual work environments.

Drawing upon previous peer-reviewed research examining teamwork in virtual settings, the authors are Denise Reyes, a [graduate student](#) in [psychological sciences](#); Miguel Luna, an undergraduate student majoring in psychological sciences, and Eduardo Salas, the Allyn R. and Gladys M. Cline Professor and department chair of psychological sciences.

"It's obviously a very timely issue," Salas said. "We looked at the main concerns and found that at the individual level, accountability is a lot more difficult to maintain. From the organizational level, places are struggling with employees who start to feel distant from their workplace. They're lacking that connectedness. We've come up with recommendations that we hope will help with these issues at the individual and organizational levels."

Other areas of concern they identified are making team members feel recognized for their work and looking after employees' work-related mental health and wellbeing. The researchers offer the following tips.

- Hold daily check-in calls at the beginning of the workday.
- Manage or avoid calls and emails after the work day has ended.
- Check in with the entire team each day so everyone stays informed about each others' tasks, the current priorities and how these play into the team's overall goals.
- Use an online team project and task management tool for

- everyone to share task progress and other important updates.
- Continue to have one-on-one calls that are not just related to tasks, based on individual needs.
 - Create, engage and encourage fun, non-work related virtual events (such as a virtual happy hour) to uplift those who are feeling isolated.
 - Send out weekly or biweekly emails to summarize accomplishments and goals.
 - Email higher-up leaders on the team's accomplishments and goals with team members carbon copied (cc'd) to remind them that their work matters.
 - Suggest individuals meet with one another for smaller interdependent tasks
 - Meet with every newcomer individually, giving them a private, less-intimidating space to ask any questions or express concerns.

The researchers hope their work will help leaders and organizations foster connectedness and efficiency among teams during the pandemic, as well as provide them with a framework as they navigate post-pandemic organizational changes.

"Virtual teamwork is complicated," Reyes said. "It was evolving even before the pandemic hit, and now more teams than ever are incorporating it into their work. While this technology brings challenges, we hope these tips will provide leaders helpful advice on how to keep their [team members](#) productive, engaged and fulfilled."

More information: Denise L. Reyes et al. Challenges for team leaders transitioning from face-to-face to virtual teams, *Organizational Dynamics* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2020.100785](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2020.100785)

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