

Top IT industry managers are divided on the need for face-to-face communication in the workplace

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Many managers are currently seeking a balance between digital and face-to-face communication. A [recent study](#) from the University of Eastern Finland published in *Information Technology & People* shows that top IT industry managers have different views on when and for what purposes face-to-face communication in the workplace is needed.

"Some top [managers](#) felt that all work tasks can be performed remotely with the help of digital communication. According to them, face-to-face communication is only necessary for maintaining [interpersonal relationships](#) and a sense of community," says Doctoral Researcher Lotta Salin of the University of Eastern Finland.

Others, however, felt that face-to-face communication is still needed, especially for [complex tasks](#) such as co-development, co-creation and co-innovation. Among the interviewees were also managers who felt that face-to-face communication in the [workplace](#) is important not only for maintaining interpersonal relationships but also for performing work tasks and maintaining a sense of community.

Maintaining a sense of community requires special attention from management

According to the study, managers shared the view of community building and maintenance in the workplace requiring deliberate attention. Remote work and digital communication have become the new norm in the IT industry and in the work of many professionals, which means that managers must deliberately devote their time and energy to fostering community-building communication.

The study suggests that building and maintaining a sense of community is possible through both face-to-face and digital communication.

"Face-to-face encounters provide opportunities for spontaneous and informal discussions when [team members](#) get together for lunch, coffee or company celebrations, for example. However, regular on-camera meetings and the opportunity to see colleagues in real time also creates the experience of being connected," Salin notes.

"Having an instant messaging platform where team members can exchange relaxed and informal messages fosters a sense of community. Through video, it is possible to organize activities that boost team spirit, ranging from remote coffee breaks for the team to entertaining video broadcasts aimed at the entire staff."

The findings emphasize that managers' objectives for workplace communication are not solely related to work tasks but are significantly broader. In addition to focusing on work tasks, managers' communication highlights the building and maintaining of interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Moreover, managers aim to convey a certain image of themselves through communication, with some emphasizing their own competence, while others present themselves as easily approachable. Furthermore, building and maintaining a sense of community through [communication](#) has recently emerged as a new, yet equally important, objective in managers' work.

The researchers interviewed 33 top managers from major IT industry companies in Finland. The managers had long leadership and e-leadership experience and they were members of the executive board of their company.

More information: Lotta Salin et al, Top managers' media selection and interaction goals in e-leadership, *Information Technology & People* (2024). [DOI: 10.1108/ITP-06-2023-0533](https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-06-2023-0533)

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