



## Virtual Team-Building Activities: Benefits and 16 Ideas

Many teams, especially international ones, are fully remote. Although remote work has many benefits and rewards, it can sometimes make employees feel isolated. Without consistent in-person interaction, they may struggle to connect with your company or feel like they have no one to share their workplace challenges and triumphs with.

To build cohesion and reduce employees' sense of isolation, your company may want to consider using virtual activities to simulate face-to-face interactions. Remote team-building activities offer fun, low-pressure ways to create some of the team spirit that naturally develops in an in-person office setting.

To help you, we've put together this guide full of ideas for team building at work. Feel free to pick and choose the options that would work well for your team's culture and preferences.

### **What is remote team building?**

Remote team building involves promoting unity and a common purpose among your distributed international teams — often through specially designed activities.

Team building can start as early as onboarding. Once you've selected your new employees and formalized their contracts, you'll want to make them feel welcome and supported. You

can start by setting them up with the information and guidance they need — smoothing their transition into their new roles.

However, once your new employees have settled in, you'll likely want to implement more formalized remote team-building strategies. These often include structured activities like short virtual icebreakers, events, and other getting-to-know-you exercises. With a bit of creativity and hard work, you can foster the same camaraderie you would encourage in an in-person setting.

## Important benefits of virtual team-building activities

What is the importance of team-building activities for your growing company? Virtual team-building exercises help your teams feel more confident and comfortable working together. They give your employees a safe environment to express themselves in ways that encourage and promote their best work.

Let's explore a few advantages of team-building activities for work in more detail.

### 1. Productivity

Team-building activities increase productivity by boosting unity and engagement throughout your distributed teams. When your employees have a common purpose, they work more harmoniously together.

According to the U.S. management consultant company Gallup, for instance, teams that rank in the top 25 percent for employee engagement **are typically 14 percent more productive** than teams that rank in the bottom 25 percent.

When your employees get along well, they will likely feel more comfortable asking for help and more willing to pitch in to assist on critical projects. When they all have a clear shared direction and a strong sense of your company's goals, they can work together more

efficiently. Both of these outcomes boost productivity for your company.

## 2. Positivity

Remote team activities facilitate a positive atmosphere by promoting team spirit and camaraderie. When your company leads remote team-building activities and events, employees get the chance to engage with each other differently. They can have more personal and fun-focused interactions than they would necessarily experience during a typical workday.

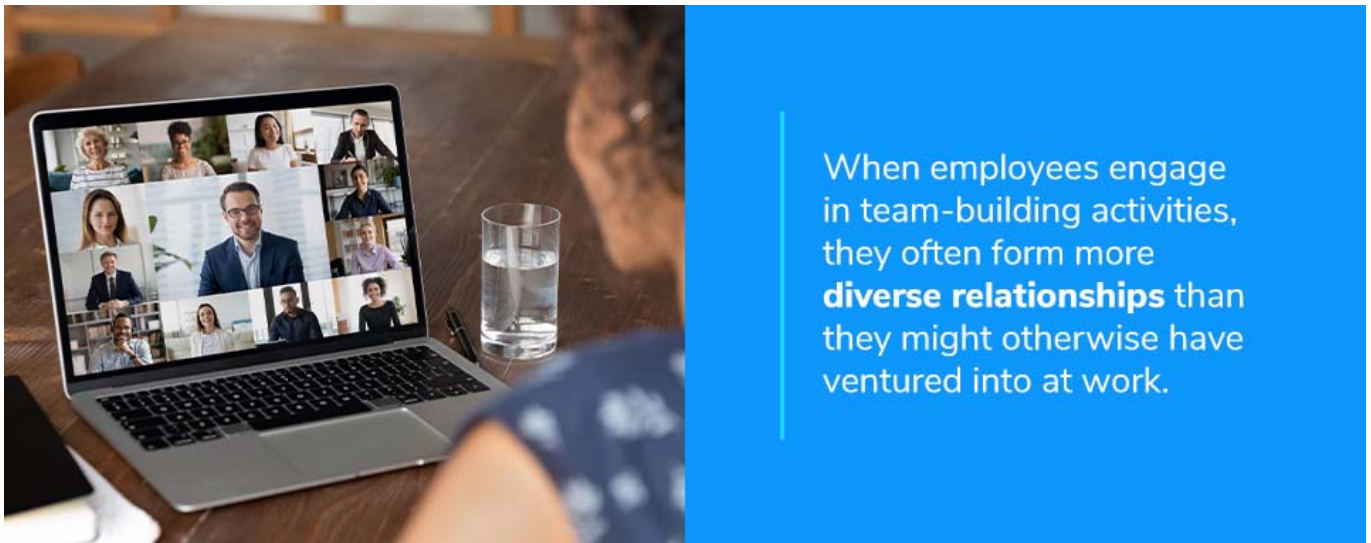
For these reasons, the right team-building exercises boost positivity and engagement in your teams. They can make your employees more excited about working remotely and help them feel happier and more productive.

## 3. Morale

The levels of positivity on your teams have a direct bearing on employee morale. When employees know they have positive relationships at work they can lean on for support when they need to, their morale tends to rise. Team-building activities help create and develop those morale-boosting relationships.

Your company can also uplift morale through team building by running friendly contests for fun prizes. You might consider instituting employee or team of the month awards or giving prizes for team productivity, for instance. Receiving this positive recognition helps employees feel good about their work and strive to improve even more.

## 4. Diverse relationships



When employees engage in team-building activities, they often form more diverse relationships than they might otherwise have ventured into at work.

In our recent survey of 1,250 employees across 15 countries, [58 percent of the surveyed workers](#) named team diversity as the top benefit of working on a global team. Yet, employees often form work relationships only with their close contacts, and remote work only amplifies this issue.

By opening your virtual team-building activities to a broader audience, you can encourage employees to diversify their relationships. As your team members laugh and share experiences with a diverse range of people, they'll form lasting relationships. Those relationships will serve them well down the road when they need to interact with employees beyond their immediate circles.

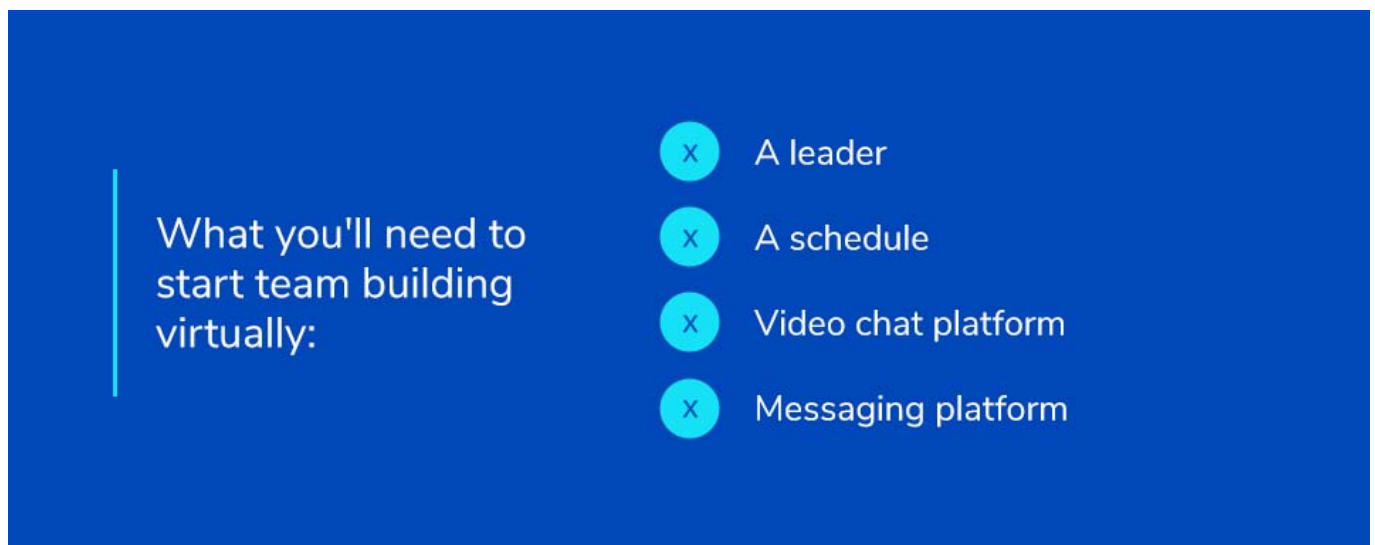
## 5. Innovation

Team building helps promote innovation by providing exercises to get your employees thinking in exciting new ways.

When your workplace team-building activities bring together people from different

departments and with different mindsets, they can add to each other's thinking to promote profitable growth and new perspectives. Bringing people together for team building also frequently leads to brainstorming sessions that result in innovative ideas.

## What you'll need to start team building virtually



What you'll need to start team building virtually:

- x A leader
- x A schedule
- x Video chat platform
- x Messaging platform

Before you can start incorporating team-building exercises into your virtual workplace, you'll need to strategize ahead of time. Be sure you have all the plans and tools you need to make your activities successful. Here are some of the resources you will likely require:

- A leader: The first step is to select a leader who can organize and direct the team building. A dedicated leader can encourage participation and shepherd the group toward the desired outcome. This person can also model and generate enthusiasm for the activity.
- A schedule: Once you have a leader, you'll need a schedule of events to ensure your teams know what will happen when. The schedule might be as simple as 15 minutes blocked off for a few icebreaker questions among new team members. You might also set up regular video conference meetings for your teams, or complement your open-door policy with scheduled drop-in hours for opportunities to chat and share ideas, perhaps monthly or quarterly.
- Video chat platform: To facilitate conversation and engagement during team buildings, you'll need a high-quality video chat platform. Zoom and Google Meet are two popular

options for meetups with several participants. Choose a platform that fits your budget and is intuitive for employees to learn. Ensure it also comes with the features you need — such as breakout rooms or chat capabilities — to make your remote team-building exercises a success.

- **Messaging platform:** Your company will likely want to consider a messaging platform for an alternative communication channel. [Many collaboration platforms are available](#), each with unique features and benefits. Options like Slack give you dedicated channels for specific team conversations, while solutions like Microsoft Teams combine video calls, audio calls, chat capabilities, and collaboration tools in a single platform.

## 16 ideas for virtual team building

Here are our favorite virtual ideas for team building at work. We've organized these suggestions into categories so you can easily choose the type of activity that best supports the goals for your team.

### Virtual icebreaker questions and activities

Virtual icebreakers are an excellent option for the early onboarding stage. They provide a fun, low-stakes way to help new employees get to know other team members more quickly.

For icebreaker activities, you might consider a few simple virtual workplace team games like these:

- **Life story in five minutes:** For this activity, send your team members into breakout rooms in pairs. The pairs must take turns telling their complete life stories in five minutes. Then bring the pairs back to the full group. All the participants must then take turns introducing their partners to the group.
- **Two truths and a lie:** In this popular icebreaker game, each employee states two true personal facts and one lie, such as "I have three sisters, I grew up on a farm, and my favorite sports team is Manchester United." Then, the other employees try to guess which statements are true and which one is false.
- **Scavenger hunt:** This option requires your team leader to put in a little work ahead of time. The leader of the activity should request and list several general facts about the



participating employees. For instance, the list might read, “One person has a master’s degree,” “One person has four dogs,” “One person has traveled to 100 different countries,” and so forth. Then, during the activity, the employees must take turns asking each other questions until they find the person who matches each description.

- Birth map: For this option, you’ll want to locate a world map and share it with all participants. Have your team members put virtual pins on the map to indicate their birthplaces. Then, have the participants go around and share something they love or find interesting about where they were born.
- Personality Pictionary: Have all your team members draw four or five simple pictures that represent themselves and their lives or workplace goals. Then, go around and have the employees describe what the pictures mean to them.

### **Virtual team-building events**

Virtual team-building events are often more structured and elaborate than simple icebreaker exercises. Let’s take a look at a few examples:

- Trivia nights: Trivia nights are excellent ways for your employees to have fun, get to know one another, and dazzle each other with their knowledge of obscure facts. Designate an event leader to select trivia questions and moderate the contest. Then, have employees divide into teams. Ask the trivia questions one by one, and send the teams into breakout rooms to discuss their answers. The team that accumulates the most points should receive a prize — consider rewards like small gift cards or an extra half hour off during the week.
- Game nights: If you’d like to branch out from trivia, you can incorporate just about any game into a virtual workplace team games night. Try setting up a night for virtual Pictionary, a virtual murder mystery, a virtual escape room, or virtual board games. You could also use a virtual game site like Jackbox Games to get your team members laughing and getting to know one another better.
- Movie nights: Movie nights are ideal when you want to schedule a fun and less strenuous team-building event. Simply schedule a time for your employees to gather on your video chat platform and watch a movie of their choice. To increase engagement, you can have them vote for their favorite films ahead of time.
- Birthday parties: Consider acknowledging employee birthdays with virtual team events. Take half an hour out of your workday to celebrate each team member with a virtual game or chance for employees to chat. Encourage employees to eat and drink as they

attend. You might consider sending them online gift certificates to local delivery restaurants for these events.

- **Holiday parties:** You can extend the birthday parties to other holidays celebrated in your global team's countries as well. Consider virtual gatherings in costume or face paint for holidays like Halloween or Día de Muertos. Or bring your employees together to eat, drink, and chat virtually before they leave for their Christmas or Lunar New Year holidays.

### **Watercooler remote team-building activities**







## Watercooler remote team-building activities

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You can use virtual conference rooms or set up group chats for these occasions.

**Here are a few ideas:**



**Monthly catch-ups**



**Weekly sports nights or TV show screenings**



**Coffee or tea breaks**



Watercooler team-building activities tend to focus on personal news or chats about current events. For these activities, you'll want to create casual, come-and-go, low-pressure virtual meetings that employees can attend as they please. You can use virtual conference rooms or set up group chats for these occasions.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Monthly catch-ups:** You may already have one-on-one meetings to cover work topics with your employees. Still, consider setting up something more informal and team-focused as well. You can guide the conversation by asking employees about what's going on in their lives. Be careful to keep the conversation light so employees feel encouraged rather than pressured to share.
- **Weekly sports nights or TV show screenings:** To boost employee engagement and team spirit, your company might consider setting up virtual screenings of popular shows or sporting events. You can have team members vote on what show to watch or team to follow. Consider setting up more than one optional event if your group has divided interests. Encourage chat to flow naturally during the viewings.
- **Coffee or tea breaks:** Your company could also consider implementing biweekly or monthly beverage breaks as a way to get virtual workers together to chat. Employees can brew beverages at their locations and then convene virtually to talk about whatever is new.

### **Virtual group-building exercises**

Virtual team-building exercises often require more involved, coordinated, and complex collaboration. Here are a few ideas to help you build collegiality, cohesion, and unity among your remote team members:

- **Virtual team outings:** Consider having your teams take excursions together, even remotely. If you have an interesting cultural or historical landmark in your area, such as an art museum or historical site, consider leading a virtual tour for your remote colleagues. In return, you might have your employees sign up to serve as virtual tour guides for the unique sights in their locations. Alternatively, have your team members dress up and eat special foods for a virtual trip to a famous locale like Paris or Hawaii.
- **Virtual clubs:** Consider starting common-interest groups like book, debate, crafting, or

chess clubs. These team-building clubs allow employees to strengthen their relationships through shared hobbies and interests.

- Peer-to-peer learning groups: Bringing team members together virtually to learn from one another can be incredibly valuable. Consider having employees get together in small virtual groups to share new skills and develop closer working relationships.

**Learn more about hiring and managing remote teams with Globalization Partners**