



Communication tools for each of the 4 ways of working



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Introduction

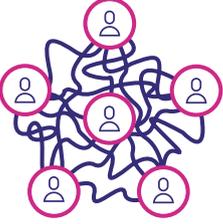
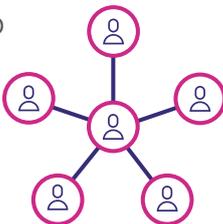
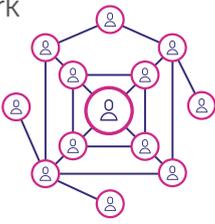
In this document we will focus on which communication technologies are most effective in supporting each of our four modes of working. Each mode requires different communications tools to be successful.

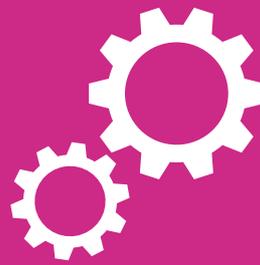
Ensuring that individuals have access to these technologies and the skills necessary to use them properly is essential to effective cooperation in distributed teams and organizations.





The tool

Mode of cooperation	Synchronous face to face	Synchronous through technology	Asynchronous through technology
Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Webmeetings > Video conference > Conference calls > Instant messenger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Email > Shared files > Social media spaces
Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > One to ones > Group meetings on common issues only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > One to one calls > Desktop video > Instant messenger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Email > Shared files > Social media spaces > Broadcasts
Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Community events and meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Online "Conferences" > Micro-blogging > Webinars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Social media spaces > Shared files > Community discussion areas
Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Networking events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Online "conferences" > Micro-blogging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Connection tools > Profiles > Social media spaces



The process

1. Spaghetti Team Technologies

Synchronous working requires spaghetti team members to be available at the same time, if not the same place, in order to achieve a truly **collaborative** goal.

True teamwork takes place in face-to-face meetings and through tools like video conference, audio conference and webinar that allow for simultaneous participation.

Teams require shared access to common documents and the ability to work on them collaboratively so wikis and shared spaces are essential.

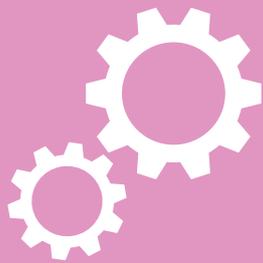
The big communication challenge in teams lies in creating **synchronous participation and engagement** particularly when communicating through technology.

Working through technology imposes additional constraints on team size. As teams grow they quickly find it difficult to have truly collaborative discussions through audio conference and similar tools. Larger teams effectively operate as groups when working together through technology.

Micro blogging tools such as Twitter or tools like Instant Messenger can be useful for sharing short updates or questions with team colleagues in real-time.

Because teams tend to have a longer lifetime, they usually develop a social component. Social media can be used to reinforce this with individuals sharing information of common interest about work issues, but also about external interests and perspectives.

Having access to this information in the team formation stage can accelerate relationship building by identifying areas of common interest. Simply sharing photos helps relationships form more quickly.



The process *continued*

2. Star Group Technologies

The main mode of communication in a group is one-to-one, to ensure **coordination** of goals and activities. Telephone, desktop video, web meetings and Instant Messenger are useful for synchronous one-to-one communication.

Groups may require shared access to common documents so wikis and shared spaces are useful.

The big communication challenge in groups is spotting what **relevant information** needs to be shared and making sure it is shared effectively without making everyone sit through collective updates of limited interest.

While groups do not need a high level of social contact to be effective, it is important that we maintain the quality of relationships and a sense of belonging, so that individuals know and trust each other enough to be able to pick up the phone and get help when they need it.

Social media is useful in maintaining this relatively infrequent but important social contact. It also enables us to have a richer understanding of our colleagues when we may not have a great deal of face-to-face time together.

Effective group working is also supported by a move away from push technologies like email, where information is sent out for everyone to read, toward pull technologies such as shared spaces where information is available for those who need it. Broadcast emails can be of low relevance to group members and may regularly be ignored.

Knowing where to look when an individual has an issue or problem is essential.



The process *continued*

3. Cloud Community technologies

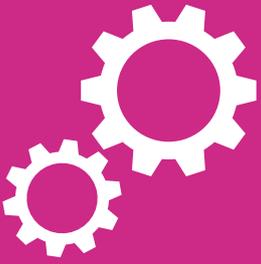
Communication in a Cloud Community is based either on sustaining the community itself or on advancing the particular knowledge, capabilities or interests of the community members.

Social media is ideal for supporting community building and maintenance. It is a low-cost way of sharing information of common interest and people can choose only to subscribe to information that they personally find relevant. It enables other community members to identify experts on specific topics and to engage with them easily.

Membership of online communities can be restricted if necessary and shared spaces can be used to store relevant information and updates which may not be of immediate need, but that could be of future use to community members.

These community spaces are an effective alternative to push emails for updates on subjects such as training, new developments and research papers. This kind of information may be important but does not require people to be interrupted from their current work.

A community discussion area, focused on a particular practice or capability can be a good place to store key documents, learning aids and to allow for community discussions of what members are finding works well, new developments or links to interesting articles or videos.



The process *continued*

4. Purposeful Network technologies

Communication in a Purposeful Network usually involves setting up and maintaining individual network relationships and sharing information with the members of your network.

Tools such as LinkedIn support business networking by making it easy and inexpensive to connect to individuals. Information can be broadcast to network members and it is relatively straightforward to search for specific individuals or characteristics through their profiles.

Once some concrete need for cooperation emerges from the network it will normally evolve into a one-to-one conversation, team or group to get things done.



Conclusion

In previous modules we have looked at how these four different forms of working can have an impact on collaboration, meetings and decisions.

In order for each mode of cooperation to work successfully it also needs to be supported by the appropriate form of communication technology.

Use this tool to think about whether you have put the communication tools in place to make this work and whether you are using the right communication tools for the mode of cooperation you need.

Do you have the tools you need in place for effective collaboration?

A common problem is over-using synchronous forms of communication like face-to-face and video meetings to discuss issues that don't require synchronous working.
