

Cultivating workplace social connections

Having the right people to lean on when things get tough can play a big role in helping us regain our footing after life deals us an unexpected blow.

As many of us continue to work from home, finding a way to re-create the connections we used to find at work can help us feel less isolated.

There are many effective technology solutions and tools to foster our workplace social connections. Here are a few quick ideas to consider.



Try new technologies – For some, connecting by anything other than phone or email has been new. Maybe you’ve had other digital tools but never needed, or wanted, to use them. Or maybe your organisation has just started to embrace them. The good news is that you’re not alone, and it’s likely that there is someone in your workplace who is more than willing to help you get up to speed – yet another opportunity for social connection.

Work in parallel – Set up a video meeting and work online with your neighbors as you would in the office, minus the cubicle walls. It can be a great way to recreate the opportunity for those impromptu chats and discussions that define office life and create bonds. Of course, check with your IT department as they might prefer you preserve the network bandwidth instead.

Chat in the digital tea room – Chat rooms have been around for years. It's just the tools that have changed. Yesterday's MySpace is today's Microsoft Teams, Skype or Slack. Just like in the physical world, they are places for your team to connect with one another on anything....so long as it's not work-related, of course! Whether you use text, emojis or memes is not important. Team bonding is the goal here. Create a separate and distinct room for your chat room activity, so people can come and go as their work allows.

Hold a “bring your kids to work” session –

There are plenty of memorable videos out there of children, or pets, crashing their parents' online meetings. But what if we invited them to join us for a meeting, instead of shooing them away? Bringing our work and home families together can help to deepen relationships, plus it puts a face to names that children likely hear Mum and Dad talk about at home.

Stay connected to your tribe – Employee Resource

Groups (ERG) provide an invaluable opportunity for those with shared backgrounds and interests to connect, learn and support one another. While those connections are typically developed through in-person gatherings, there's no reason the tools mentioned above can't work for groups outside of our immediate work family as well. In fact, the experiences we share with our ERG colleagues enable us to connect in different ways that we might with team members.

Create shared online fun – Modern technology can bring us together for pretty much any experience. Bring your lunch and eat over video. Share your beverage of choice together at the end of a long day. Take an exercise class together.

When it comes to social connections the magic is not so much in what you're doing or how you're doing it. What matters most is who you are connecting with. In fact, having friends at work – and nurturing those relationships – may be more important than ever before. Not only will they help sustain us as we work together as things get back to normal, but they will create emotional health and resilience that can benefit us well beyond the walls of the workplace, be they real or digital.

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