



EXTRA READING - 10 Collaboration Tips for International Teams

1. Time zone awareness

Try to spread team meetings across the day when most people are at work. Avoid it always being one team in one country who has to attend a meeting at an unsocial time. You can use [TimeAndDate.com](https://www.timeanddate.com) to plan meetings.

2. Use online tools

Pretty much anything that you use for managing your projects with a co-located, national team can also be used in an online version for working with an international team. For example, you do not have to be restricted to brainstorming in face-to-face workshops. [Online mind mapping](#) tools give you the option to use advanced mind mapping systems in a virtual environment and share the output with your team members, wherever they are based.

3. Instant messaging

With instant messaging you can see whether people are at their desks and it makes it easier to get responses – You contact people if you know they are there and likely to respond. It also suits the style of working which is normally to do as much as possible in the time you have. If you do not like the down time at the start and end of meetings or when people are gathering back after a break and while it is not good practice to use online tools, do emails or instant message people while you are supposed to be concentrating in a meeting, then it is a lot quicker to send a message before the meeting starts again than it is to try to get the person on the phone.

4. Maintain meeting discipline

When you have to rely on virtual meetings, meeting discipline is really important. This means:



- Starting on time
- Using agendas
- Finishing on time
- Sticking to the topics
- Not getting side-tracked by any other business
- Giving everyone the space to contribute.

5. Introduce yourself

When you are talking with international colleagues, do not assume they automatically know who you are (actually, this is good practice for virtual teams even if they do not have an international element). Make sure to introduce yourself in every interaction on conference calls online or on the phone as they may not be able to distinguish your accent and identify you as you.

Ask others to do the same, especially people who do not speak up often as they are the people who will not get recognized. It is hard to participate if you do not know who is talking as you cannot put their remarks into context.

6. Manage language difficulties

Talking of talking, you should assume that international teams will have some language difficulties. Be prepared for them and deal with them as they arise. This means making sure that people who do not have the common language as their first language have extra time to understand the goals and messages, and perhaps following up with them afterwards to make sure they really understood.

7. Remember international holidays

Your international colleagues will not work the same hours as you, especially if you have not specifically put that into their contracts. Put the international holidays into the project plans so you do not schedule resources to work on days that their local offices will be closed.

In fact, international holidays give you a great opportunity to learn more about different cultures, so use them as a talking point in the team to discuss cultural differences.



8. Set ground rules

Ground rules are the criteria by which you will run the team. You set the tone as project manager and are able to create the culture of your team. If you want meetings to start on time always, set a ground rule that says this will happen. Make it clear to everyone about what is expected. You are taking cultural differences out of the equation and setting a project culture that everyone is expected to abide by.

If everyone on the team knows the rules, you can then act accordingly if your behavior standards are not met.

9. Have fun

Have fun! Working on international projects is great, so enjoy it! Try to find ways to have fun with each other even if you do not meet and have no plans to get together in real life.

10. Share goals

Finally, share the project's goals often and frequently. This is a great way to make sure that everyone knows what they are working for and why. Goals sharing and working for the common objectives are two of the fastest ways to build team cohesion and a sense of team culture. Sharing objectives and working towards the same thing bring people close together. When they can see how what they are doing is contributing, they can feel part of something bigger. Share your project goals and make the link between project tasks and the overall deliverables really clear for everyone to see.

