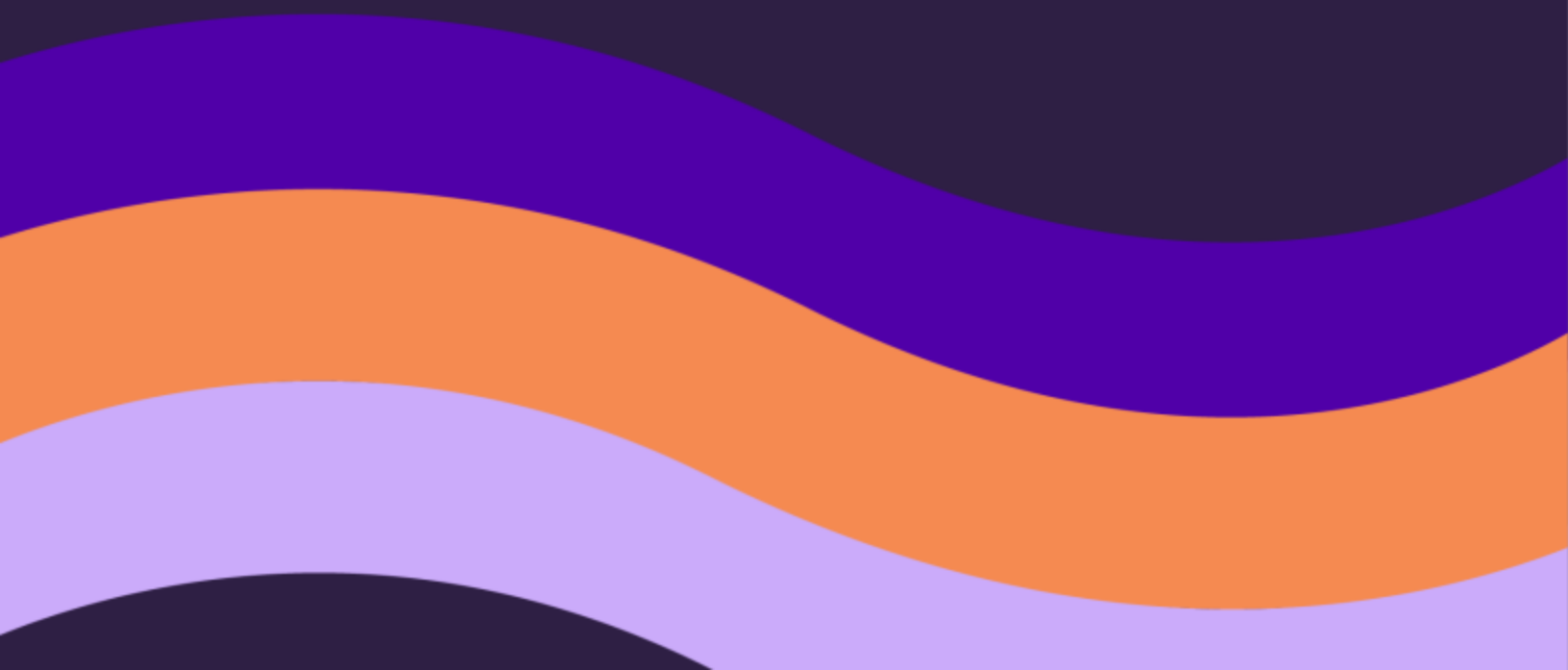# The Complete Hybrid Team Communication Guide

Get best practices for communicating when 10 are in the room and 10 are on the Zoom.

Why do you need this guide?

No matter its industry, age, or ambitions, your organization is entering a new phase in the world of work. Some employees may return to an office full-time, while others will continue to enjoy the flexibility afforded by remote work.

Our default mode should account for people in different places. We need to adjust our communication styles thoughtfully, yet efficiently. The water cooler can't be the decision-making hub, and adding a video conference link to the invite is mandatory.

There's no one-size-fits-all system for hybrid work. But there *are* best practices for communicating using the tools we've become so accustomed to … so that no employee gets left behind—or left out—because of their location.

General best practices:

- **Assume there's a virtual presence**. Start with a baseline expectation that someone will not be physically in the room, then work from there. You'll save your teams a lot of time and miscommunication.

- **Consider all behavioral preferences.** You've probably learned by now which team members prefer Slack messages to video calls, and vice versa. Keep these learnings in mind, in addition to knowing who's where, and let them continue informing good communication habits.

- **When in doubt, go the documentation route.** Notes, recaps, and stored recordings are your friends. Water cooler conversations can't suffice as "official word" any longer. If a conversation leads to action, it should be documented and shared—so everyone's in the loop.

Instant messaging

(Slack, Gchat, etc.)

Best used for communicating:

- Quick questions
- Reminders
- Follow-ups
- 1:1 pulse checks
- Daily status ("in meetings," or "OOO")

Quick tips and best practices:

- Limit group chats (>2) so messages aren't buried.
- Reply using a thread when possible to keep a conversation in one place.
- Only use @here when everyone in a channel needs to see the message.
- Tag individuals or smaller groups as necessary.
- Audit and consolidate channels regularly. Consider leaving those you don't use.
- Check if there is an existing (#ask) channel that can be used for your topic.
- Apply a status or emoji update that helps communicate response-time expectations.

Best audience:

- Individual colleagues, teammates, smaller message-pertinent groups

Email

Best used for communicating:

- Questions containing sensitive or private information
- Department updates
- Calendar/event updates
- Messages requiring large attachments
- Notes, recaps, and action steps.
- Titled, time-stamped comms - things we don't want buried

Tips and best practices:

- Keep it open.
- Check it daily.
- Ensure an OOO responder includes at least one other teammate's contact info.

Best audience:

- External recipients (clients, vendors, other third parties)
- Full teams
- Everyone@ (your org), when applicable

Scheduled Meetings

Best used for communicating:

- Recurring check-ins and 1:1s
- Team meetings
- Cross-collaborative syncs
- Smaller brainstorms (<5 people)

Tips and best practices:

- Add an agenda.
- Include related docs.
- Include a video conference link for remote invitees.
- Utilize breakout rooms.
- Take notes rather than recording the meeting when possible.
- Note when a decision will be made during a meeting, and when attendance should be mandatory vs. optional.

Best audience:

- Responsible parties or stakeholders (as opposed to those who can be consulted or informed, before/after).

Video Messages

(Loom, Soapbox, etc.)

Best used for communicating:

- Pre-meeting context
- Product/project demos
- Process walkthroughs
- General update

Tips and best practices:

- Keep it under five minutes whenever possible.
- Supplement with a slide deck, doc or other resource.
- Include key takeaways.
- Include a timebox if appropriate (will it still be accurate if I watch it a month from now?).

Best audience:

- Visual learners.
- Those who need to be informed, but not necessarily invited.
- Groups who can refer back to the video as a "How To."

Impromptu Meetings

Best used for communicating:

- Urgent updates and need-to-know information
- Quick explanations made clearer via screen share or other visuals

Tips and best practices:

- Check the calendar and/or status of other invitees first.
- Explain why an impromptu meeting is ideal.
- Confirm stakeholder availability.
- Recap any key decisions made with notes or another form of written follow-up.

Best audience:

- New hires who may have urgent needs or more questions
- Key decision makers or stakeholders.

Internal networks & newsletters

Best used for communicating:

- Announcements
- All-company updates
- News from outside work (career transitions, life events)

Tips and best practices:

- Link to other docs/sites as appropriate.

Best audience:

- All employees

Project management tools & boards

Best used for communicating:

- Project plans
- Updates for team members
- Progress on tasks with contingencies
- New hire onboarding

Tips and best practices:

- When using a project management tool such as Asana, ensure others on the project team feel comfortable by aligning on expectations for how it will be used.
- Remember that tagging anyone (@+name) may results in an email alert for everyone on the task---not just the person tagged---so do so discerningly/sparingly.

Best audience:

- Groups of two or more sharing work, key deliverables, or project plans.

Miro

Types of communication:

- Brainstorming
- Group activities

What to do:

- Share the board with all invited parties in advance.
- Provide ample time for filling out the board, and space for people to elaborate if they choose.

Best audience:

- Smaller (>5) brainstorming groups.
- Team members with lower extraversion and/or higher patience drives.

Jira

Types of communication:

- Cases/queues
- Technical specs
- Bug tracking

What to do:

- Integrate with other applications.
- Apply to specific team workflows.

Best audience:

- Niche project groups and sprint teams

G Suite

(docs, slides, sheets, etc.)

Types of communication:

- Non-urgent project updates
- Asynchronous group work

What to do:

- Use team shared folders so everyone can access without requesting permission
- Utilize comments and tag collaborators (@_) where appropriate.

Best audience:

- Collaborating teams working toward a clear final deliverable (a presentation, a set of guidelines, a written or designed asset).

Dive deeper into hybrid work.

The 2021 People Management Report found that 68% of companies "have some hybrid teams" or "plan to have some hybrid teams" moving forward. Continue learning how to manage hybrid teams in the Hybrid Work Course.

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