

ZOOM or TEAMS?

INSTEAD, ASK: "WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE & HOW DO WE WANT TO WORK TOGETHER?"

Are you and your colleagues using too many different platforms? Do you find yourself spending precious brain energy learning yet another new program? Is your organization ready to just pick one platform, but you are worried it won't meet all your needs?

First, start with asking: "What is the purpose of our work?", and "How do we want to work together?"

Once you clarify those questions, you can easily find the number and combination of tools that is "just right" for your organization. It depends on the kind of work you do, and the work culture of your organization. Do you need something with the flexibility of a co-working space? The formality of a board room? Or, are you a highly collaborative team that co-authors writing and needs real time cloud based co-authoring?



THE 'JUST RIGHT' VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS

THE CUBICLE



Pros: great for external processors, & workspaces that depend upon very frequent feedback.

Cons: constant interruptions and ease of micromanagement.

Virtual solutions: consider the purpose of office cubicles. For most organizations, it wasn't to facilitate collaboration or co-working, but to maximize space while providing a bit of privacy. So while the live meeting functions of platforms like Teams and Google Hangouts might feel familiar, I don't find that they create usable structure that makes for skillful meeting dynamics.

THE CO-WORKING TABLE



Pros: share accountability and ease in eliciting informal feels like the group is collaborating, even if their tasking is unrelated.

Cons: instead of taking a formal break or shifting spaces, sometimes the co-working table can be distracting.

Virtual solutions: for accountability and quick feedback, I don't have a preferred platform because they all allow for the ability to mute and unmute as each person signs in to attend a meeting. One feature that makes me appreciate Zoom for this sort of set up is the "gallery view" option, the ability to start/pause your camera and mute/unmute. You can do a quiet "study hall" or work session on zoom where you only show yourself to ask a question or get quick informal feedback.

THE CONFERENCE ROOM

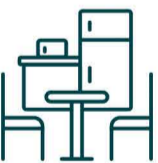


Pros: formality that supports trust, privacy, and focus, so much becomes possible.

Cons: the magic of a conference room has little to do with the room itself. The secret is in cultivating the right conditions for the meeting.

Virtual solutions: without question, Zoom is the optimal space for meetings about problems, strategy, and innovation. Zoom allows for many small rooms to be created and dismantled in an instant. Gallery view permits everyone a seat in the "front row" as they each receive equal size and distribution. Zoom allows us to amplify the purpose of conference room meetings: anonymity, a synchronous chat, and recording for bits and pieces (votes, discussions, and summaries). It is accessible by anyone inside/outside of the organization, and does not require licenses to participate (just to host).

THE CAFETERIA, KITCHEN, OR BREAK ROOM



Pros: eating is a social activity for so many of us, and it can feel like a "back stage" spot in a workplace.

Cons: in a space where it's not always clear who is in charge, chaos can rule.

Virtual solutions: while it might feel tempting to ignore the human needs for connection (and it's not possible to sway votes in your direction with a dozen doughnuts anymore) trust building is essential for effective collaborations. The excellent news is that this is easy to accomplish in live meetings by the skillful use of cameras - any platform that allows for visual connection is well suited. My personal favorite trick for asynchronous work is Marco Polo, where groups can send video messages to a single participant or a group similar to email.

THE RETREAT



Pros: Innovations abound with a change of pace & a shift in perspective.

Cons: expenses, an over scheduled or unproductive time.

Virtual solutions: Taking a multi-day retreat online is not a 1:1, hour for hour transition, but a reorientation and discovery that can yield remarkable satisfaction with no sunburns. Again, for me Zoom is the clear winner for panel presentations, summits, discussion groups, social bonding. It won't be the same as a trip together, but it can still be good.

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