

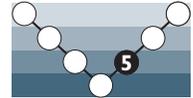
Virtual Collaboration Best Practice

Buddy System

Objective: Ensure that team members who miss important meetings receive essential information and feel more included.

The invisibility of absent members is one of the greatest challenges in remote work. We can't glance around the room and see empty chairs, so we sometimes miss that certain people are not present. It's not unheard of for someone to be accidentally overlooked and not receive meeting details, recaps, assignments, or other critical information.

The buddy system ensures that each team member has a colleague whose job it is to remember them. Team members pair up and agree to represent or advocate for the other when they can't be present, ensure they are not overlooked when information is distributed, and check in with each other from time to time. As a result, pairs develop a rapport, and each person feels connected to at least one other on the team.



Stage:
5—Implementation

Time:
30 min. set-up with ongoing small time commitments

SARAH ABBOTT

BUDDY PROFILE



Lives in: London, England

Timezone: GMT +1 (8 hours ahead of U.S. west coast)

Skype ID: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Mobile/Text: 11 111 11111

Usual work location: London office

Typical Work Hours: 7am to 4pm

Personal Info: I like to travel, especially in Asia. In fact, I have a room in my house decorated with furnishings and art I've collected in my travels there.

Tips:

Buddies can also teach each other how to use team tools, pair up for brainstorming or reflection activities, and check in with each other periodically.

Some sample buddy roles include just-in-time technical support during meetings; connecting a few minutes before the meeting to review action items or meeting topics; weekly social interactions or shared coffee breaks.

If your group has cliques or is divisive, use the buddy system with caution. Partners may develop an 'us and them' perspective that could be detrimental to the team.

Steps:

1. Think about the things you want your buddy system to accomplish and plan how you will present the idea to your team. Decide how to pair up people, either by creating the pairings yourself, allowing them to choose, or generating random pairings.
2. In an initial group meeting, introduce the concept of the buddy system and invite ideas for buddy tasks and responsibilities. Give examples from your own list.
3. Distribute a Buddy Profile template to all team members and have them fill it out for themselves. (The sample above was created in Google Slides). Then instruct the buddy pairings to exchange profiles. Printing and posting the buddy profiles will help each person keep his or her buddy top of mind.
4. Document the pairs and responsibilities that the group decides to adopt.