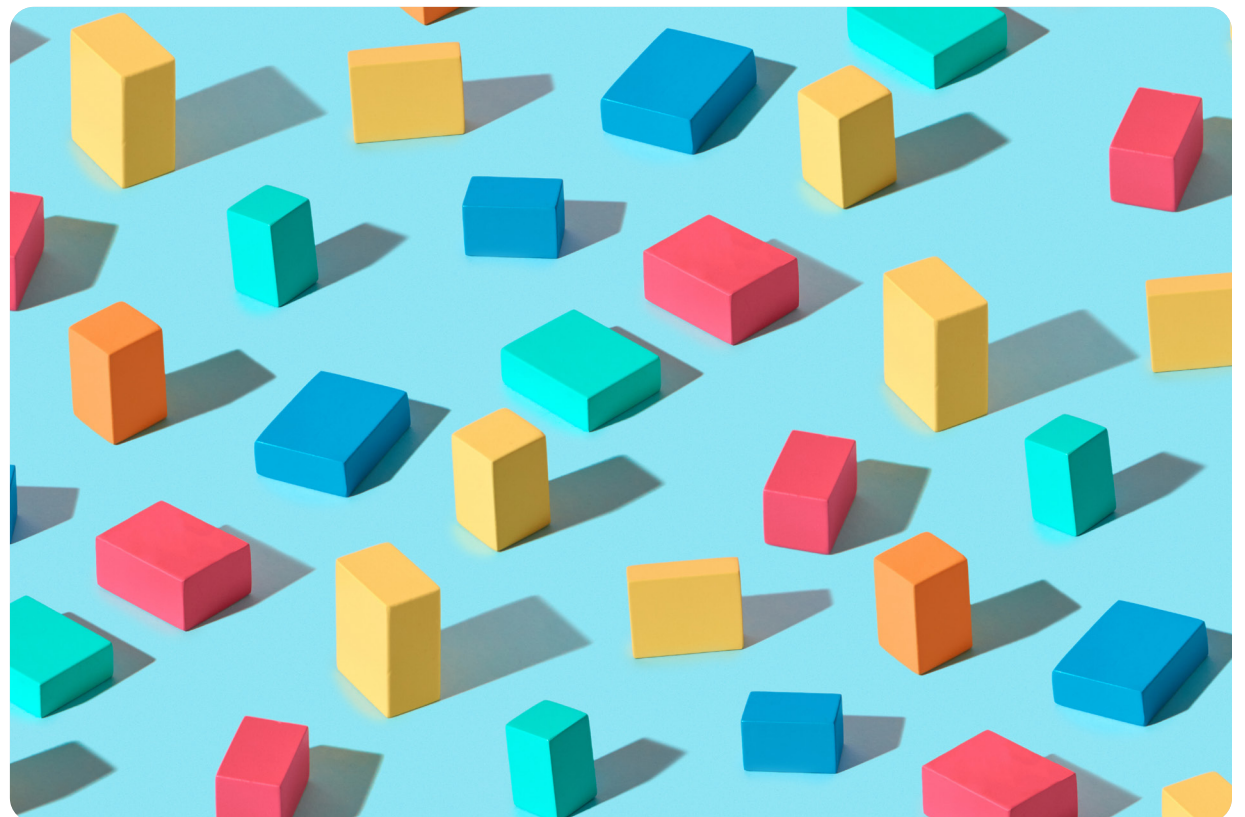


The distributed team blueprint

A crash-course guide to people management in a distributed world



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An era of distributed work

When COVID-19 struck, most of our teams became distributed overnight. And for many, that shift to distributed work turned permanent. Now, whether your reports are hybrid, remote, or a mixed bag of both, the reality remains: distributed work is here. And it's not going anywhere.

Today, most teams are still struggling to hit their stride with distributed work. Now, symptoms like communication challenges and a rampant burnout crisis point to a much larger, underlying issue: most teams are still using operational models that fundamentally aren't designed for distributed teams.

In this ebook, we'll outline the most urgent challenges stifling your distributed team. And we'll share examples, resources, and ideas to help you uplevel your management practices for distributed work.

55%

of employees say that their ability to work flexibly will impact their choice to stay (source: *Gartner*)

75%

of organizations report gaps in managing distributed team culture, and managing team connectedness (source: *Deloitte*)

49%

of employees say they're at least somewhat burned out (source: *McKinsey*)



The hierarchy of challenges for distributed teams

According to McKinsey, 52% of employees want to work in a hybrid model—one where they split time between the office, and their homes.

And they're serious about it: about 30% say they'd plan to switch jobs if ever required to work in an office full time.

But even so, most teams are feeling the pains of subpar distributed experiences. And if you're reading this: you're probably making a point to address them.



These are some of the biggest challenges to watch for:

Connection

Employees that don't feel socially connected are less than 1/3 as productive as their connected counterparts (source: [BCG](#))

Collaboration

Peer-reviewed research shows that "mutual knowledge" is reduced when people collaborate from afar (source: [Organizational Science](#))

Visibility

37% of employees feel that distributed work gives them less visibility and access to leadership (source: [Indeed](#))

Despite those challenges, the majority of employees [want distributed work](#). But to create a successful distributed team, you'll need to shift in the way your team works.

Quick tip

What's the difference between remote, hybrid, and distributed work?

You've probably heard phrases like "remote," "hybrid," and "distributed" used interchangeably—but they're not the same. Here's how we think about it:

Remote

- A working arrangement set at the individual employee level
- No tie to a central office or office hub
- Employees work from a mixed bag of locations
- Employees work from afar nearly 100% of the time, potentially with occasional trips to a central office
- Employees get context exclusively through async-friendly communication (like Slack messages and team docs) and video calls

Hybrid

- A working arrangement set at the individual employee level
- Tied to a central office or office hub
- Employees located near an office hub
- Different employees may be tied to different office hubs
- Employees work both remotely and in-office on a split schedule
- Employees get context through async-friendly communication (like chat pings and team docs), through video calls, and casual in-office interactions (like hallway chats or lunch conversations)

Distributed

- An approach to work at the team or company level
- Can encompass all hybrid employees, all remote employees, in-office employees at multiple hubs, or a mixture of those options

Creating a successful distributed team is the art of balancing the mix of employee-level working arrangements on your team. The goal is to keep your reports productive and engaged. That starts with getting every report on the same level of connection, collaboration, and visibility.

There are three, interconnected challenges at the core of most distributed teams' struggles:

Connection, collaboration, and visibility. You'll need to solve all three to create a high-functioning distributed team.

1. Connection

The first, and most basic challenge for distributed teams is connection. In a distributed work environment, your team has no real organic run-ins with teammates.

Some call it “the water cooler problem.” Your team isn't hearing about projects they aren't directly involved in, their relationships with teammates take longer to gel, and they have a much harder time deciphering what their team, as a whole, has prioritized.

That makes it hard to feel connected to a shared goal, or to feel a sense of belonging on the team. For better or worse: the burden of creating that connection falls on the shoulders of managers.

2. Collaboration

The next challenge is collaboration. In a distributed world, all of the usual pains that come with collaboration—like miscommunication, tricky expectation setting, and unclear process—are compounded. Different working hours, different tool stacks, and different workflows make the hard task of working together that much harder. And in this scenario, an onslaught of video calls can make things worse, not better.

3. Visibility

The highest level challenge is visibility. With less organic interaction, it's harder for employees to give their managers context on what they're working on. And on the flip side, it's harder for you to gauge your reports' capacity.

Even the most experienced manager might be tempted to micromanage in this scenario. But putting the burden on your reports to create that context—like asking them to build manual decks, reports, and dashboards—isn't a good use of their time. It's manual, reactive, and frankly: really slow.

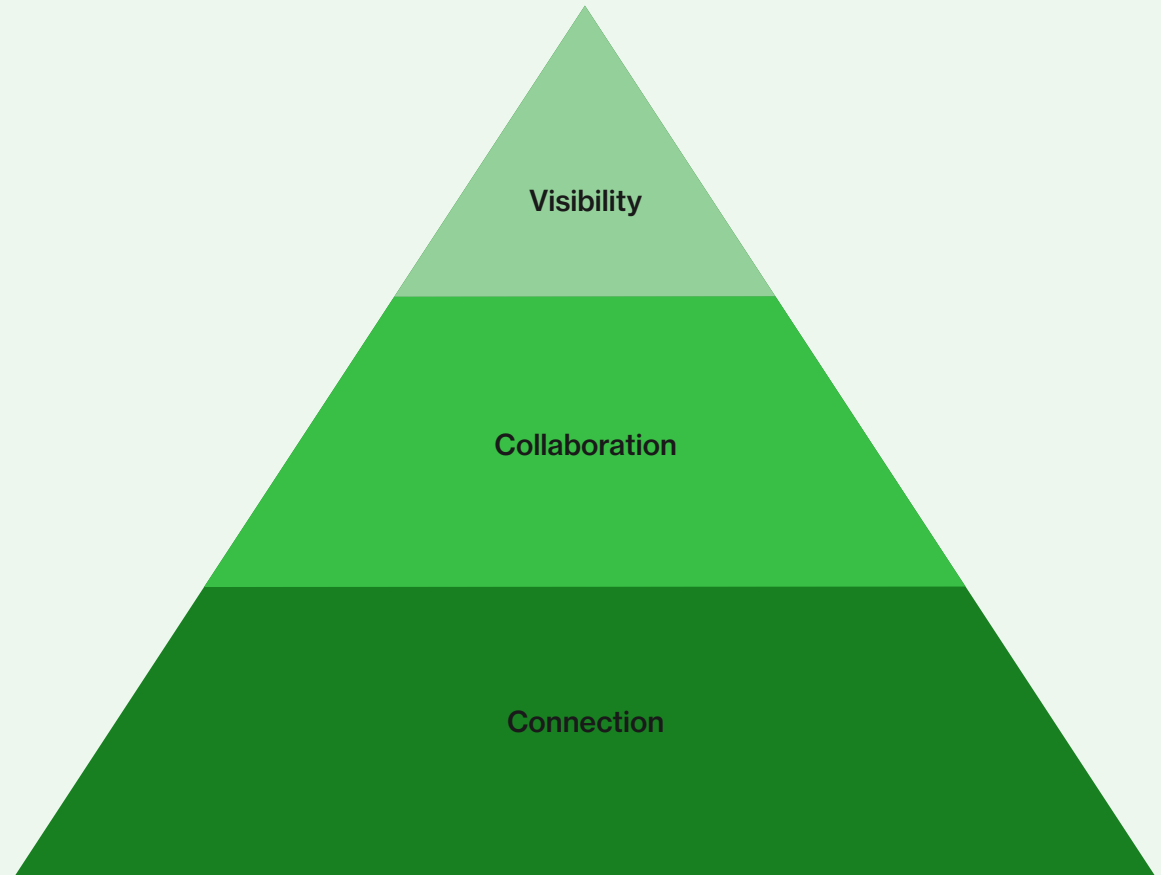
But enough about the challenges that make distributed teams tough to manage. Let's talk about how to mitigate them.

The three core challenges of distributed teams

Visibility: Employees are able to balance their workload and share context on their work to management without reliance on redundant operational tasks (like chat pings, video calls, and the like).

Collaboration: Employees are empowered to work with their teammates, and cross-functional partners with minimal thrash.

Connection: Every employee feels like a part of the team. They're aligned to, and rallied behind company goals and priorities.



Managing through the core challenges of distributed work: connection

Connected employees feel like they're a part of the team.

They have a sense of belonging, which comes from their relationships with their colleagues, and to their alignment with your company's goals and priorities. That helps them avoid the all-too-common feelings of social isolation that tend to come with distributed work.

While every manager should invest in team-wide connection-building, that investment becomes all the more important in a distributed environment. **Here's a look at how some distributed teams at Airtable stay connected:**



Example 1:

Mixing team-wide bonding with team-wide learning

Jon Harbison oversees a team of customer-facing implementation experts at Airtable; his team helps other teams build and roll out complex workflow solutions. With direct reports in two time zones, he needs to proactively bring them outside of their day-to-day functions—since they don't naturally get opportunities for low-stakes, informal chats.

Weekly team “lunch and learns” have done just that. Once a week, Jon's team members sign up to share something new that they learned on the job, or present a walkthrough of a work-centric topic they care about. Learning together in an open forum helps them form connections quickly—and gives them a sense of who their internal experts are for each subject.

Try it for your team:

- Set a weekly recurring meeting for the whole team. Check your reports' time zones to make sure it doesn't overlap with any breaks or lunch hours. Collect the weekly meeting notes into one place ([like this](#)) so the team can see what's coming—and can check out notes from topics past.
- [Create a form](#) that pipes directly into your meeting agenda for each week. [Set up an automation](#) to remind your team to submit topics they want to share a few days before each meeting. As they submit topics through the form, you'll automatically populate your agenda.
- When the meeting comes, make sure you record it. Then, set up an integration between your meeting notes repository and your video call software to add every meeting recording to the corresponding agenda in your notes base.

Example 2:

Keeping everyone in the loop with team-level internal comms

As Executive Assistant to the CMO, Angi Psaros doesn't just manage a packed calendar—she also plays a huge role in keeping the marketing team in sync.

Even with remote team meetings, team building events, and the like, Angi found that her fast-growing, distributed team was struggling to get a sense of what was happening in the org: the projects folks are working on, the priorities they're focused on, and the new folks on the team. To help the team stay up-to-date—and to help them meet their teammates—she created a weekly team newsletter.

Each week, Angi assigns two people to curate the newsletter content: one person from marketing leadership, and one individual contributor. Together, they curate a quick overview of that week from marketing leadership (called “thoughts of the week”), plus quick updates from each pod on the team. At the end of each week, Angi shares the final version of the newsletter via the internal wiki for the team to peruse.



Angi Psaros,
Executive Assistant,
Airtable

“I think it all comes down to relationships, and having a really clear overview of the team’s priorities and goals. The newsletter gives us the chance to explore both of those: building relationships between each week’s facilitators, and giving the team a peek into what the rest of the marketing team is working on.”



Angi 2.0 APP 12:03 AM

Hi there,

Please don't forget to update the task "Vol. 1, Issue 33" | Web Dev before tomorrow's EOD.

You can use the following view:

<https://airtable.com/tblFYyU07V7y9sc7W/viwkzttCKpN1bbhbm?blocks=hide>

Thank you!

Angi's uses automated Slack messages to assign tasks to newsletter curators

Try it for your team:

- ❑ If you don't have one already, create a directory of just the folks on your team. Make sure you include which pod or team they're a part of. This also comes in handy when you're onboarding new reports.
- ❑ Create a set of tasks that each contributor needs to complete for the newsletter. Angi uses Airtable Automations (you could also use a script) to populate a list of those tasks for each iteration of the newsletter, and assign them out to your curators.
- ❑ Set up an automated chat notification to remind your newsletter contributors what they need to do, and when. For example, you could set a notification three days before the newsletter launch date to remind them to gather updates.
- ❑ Share your finished newsletter via your internal wiki, your team hub, or anywhere else you'd like. Set up an automation to notify the team whenever a new newsletter goes out.

The screenshot shows an Airtable table titled "Marketing United Schedule". The table has columns for "Name", "Task Name", "Responsible", "Status", "Newsletter", "Scheduled Date (R...", "Progress", "Marketing Lead (from...", and "Attachments". The data is organized into sections for "Vol. 1, Issue 1", "Vol. 1, Issue 1B", and "Vol. 1, Issue 1B". Each row represents a task with its assigned person and status.

Name	Task Name	Responsible	Status	Newsletter	Scheduled Date (R...	Progress	Marketing Lead (from...	Attachments
Vol. 1, Issue 1								
1	"Vol. 1, Issue 1" Marketing Ops	Marketing Ops	Vivian Cheng	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1	January 16, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
2	"Vol. 1, Issue 1" Web Dev	Web Dev	Angi Piaros	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1	January 16, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
Vol. 1, Issue 1B								
3	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" ... Thoughts of the Week	Thoughts of the Week	Nima Asar Haghighi	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
4	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Enterprise / developer psm	Enterprise / developer psm	Arcy Dow	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
5	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" End User Marketing	End User Marketing	Christy Roach	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
6	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Team Love	Team Love	Angi Piaros	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
7	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Content	Content	Margaret Jones	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
8	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Creative	Creative	Alan Roll	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
9	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Comms	Comms	Matt Steinfeld	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
10	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" SEO	SEO	Derek Sakamoto	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
11	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Performance	Performance	Phul Lakshika	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
12	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" About me	About me	Gretchen Kenney	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 14, 2021	Done	Nima Asar Haghighi
Vol. 1, Issue 1B								
13	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" ... Thoughts of the Week	Thoughts of the Week	Alan Roll	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
14	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Enterprise / developer psm	Enterprise / developer psm	Arcy Dow	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
15	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" End User Marketing	End User Marketing	Christy Roach	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
16	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Team Love	Team Love	Angi Piaros	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
17	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Content	Content	Margaret Jones	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
18	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Creative	Creative	Alan Roll	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
19	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Comms	Comms	Matt Steinfeld	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
20	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" SEO	SEO	Derek Sakamoto	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
21	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" Performance	Performance	Patty Quan	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll
22	"Vol. 1, Issue 1B" About me	About me	Arcy Dow	Done	Vol. 1, Issue 1B	May 21, 2021	Done	Alan Roll

Example 3:

Rallying your team with well-documented goals

Research shows that up to 95% of workers are unaware of, or don't understand their company's top-level strategy—and that's only worse when your team isn't co-located. Objective and key result (OKR) tracking is a way to add some much-needed clarity, and rally your team around your shared goals. It's a planning framework that aligns teams around measurable goals, split into "OKRs": objectives and key results. "Objectives" capture the high-level value you want to create for the business. "Key results," on the other hand, are measurable outcomes that ladder up to those objectives.

To map it out for your team, you can build your own OKR tracker in your team hub. The goal is to map your team's projects directly to key results to help them stay focused—and to give a gentle, ongoing reminder of why you do the work that you do.

Try it for your team:

- ❑ First, you'll need to [establish a remote hub](#) for your team. (Take a peek at the [section on building a team hub](#) below for a more detailed walkthrough!)
- ❑ Once you've established a team hub, add three separate tables: one for objectives, one for key results, and one for projects. Make sure you include information like: driver (who's responsible?), timeline (when do you need it done?), and anything else you need to accurately track progress.
- ❑ Next, add your objectives and key results into their respective tables. Your objectives should describe high-level goals, and your key results should describe the tangible actions you'll take to achieve them (more on that [here](#)). Don't worry about linking them together just yet—we'll do that in the next step.
- ❑ Once you've inputted your OKRs, you'll need to link your KRs to their corresponding objectives. In Airtable, you can do that by [adding linked records](#) to your hub. From the objectives table, added a linked record field that links to the key results table, then link the corresponding KRs to show how they're related.
- ❑ Finally, pull a list of your current projects into the projects table. Then, add another linked record field to the projects table that links to the key results table. Link each project to a KR to show how each of your projects contributes to your KRs.

Customer spotlight

Merging a multi-geo team: Hearst

Hearst Magazines manages a portfolio of more than 25 powerful brands in the United States. They publish 300+ editions, and 245 websites for a massive global audience. They've been publishing for more than 130 years, creating and managing household brands like Car and Driver, Cosmopolitan, Popular Mechanics, Esquire, and Good Housekeeping.

When Hearst Magazines needed to streamline their operations by merging product teams across web, magazine, and subscription management, they turned to Airtable.

Starting with a living roadmap that captures the needs of customers, they developed a global publishing ecosystem that every team around the world—from the US, to Japan, Europe, and beyond—can rely on. With this single source of truth, Hearst kept their teams aligned from afar, and dramatically improved publishing speed and scale.

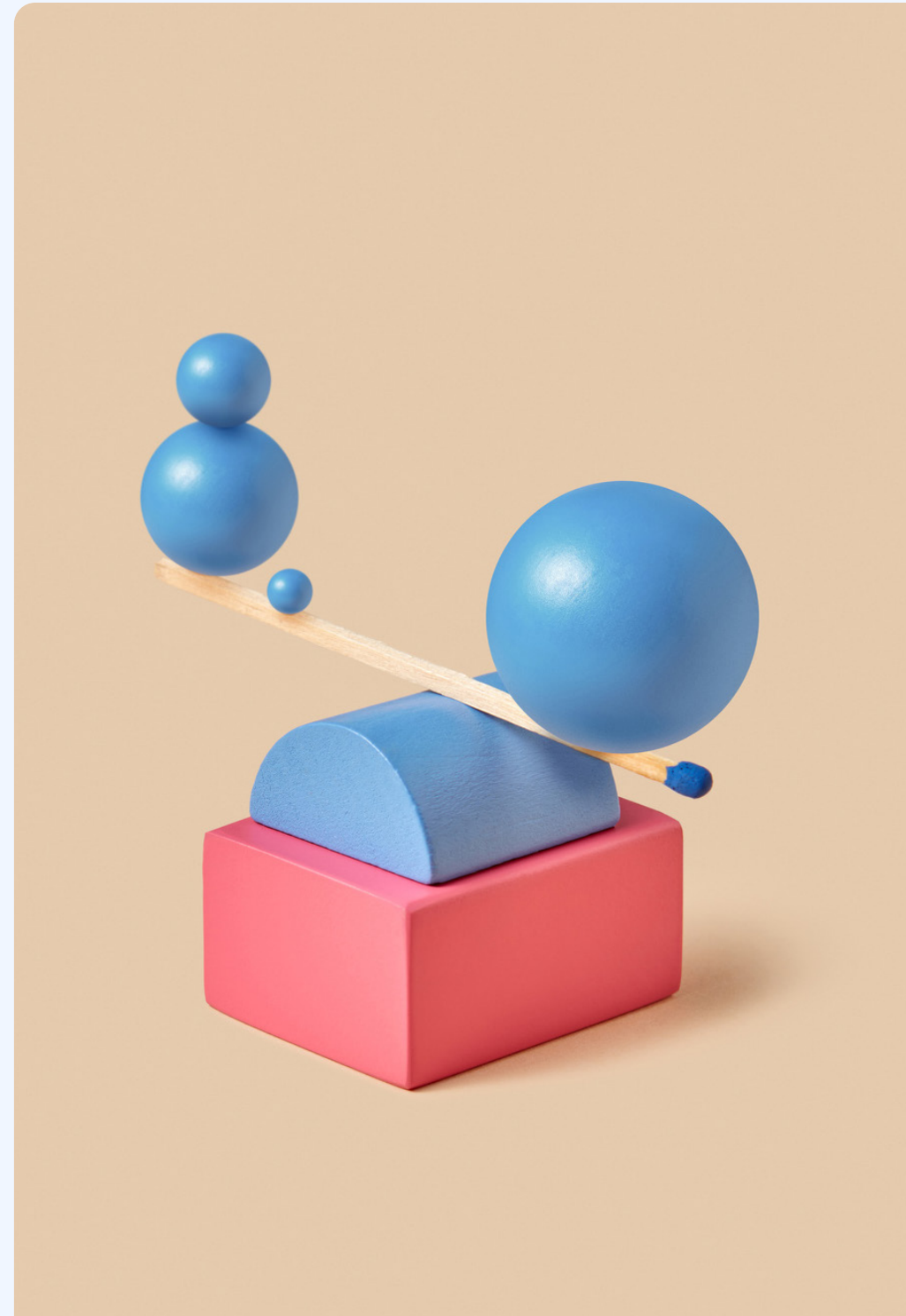
[Read more](#)

Managing through the core challenges of distributed work: collaboration

In a distributed workplace, collaboration doesn't always come organically; it relies on strong systems, tools, and processes to bring the team together.

A team with collaboration is empowered to work with their teammates through the structures you set.

The question is: how do you bring a distributed team together? Here's how others are doing it:



Example 1:

Using team check-ins to break through blockers

At Airtable, very little gets shipped without our creative team's contribution. So as a Creative Project Manager, Bob Willson manages a laundry list of projects simultaneously, and an even longer list of stakeholders—from creative directors, to content creators, to developers, to C-level stakeholders (just to name a few). To deliver projects on time, his team has to collaborate with one another seamlessly. Among other things, that means clearing any and all blockers—and fast.

Under Bob's direction, the creative team conducts mini sprint meetings each week. They share what they're working on, the progress they've made against their projects, and flag where they're stuck in the production process. Bob amends their project tracker to note what's holding them up. Since each project is sorted by priority, he's able to address stuck projects in priority order, working with project stakeholders to knock out blockers, and let the creative team get back to their jobs.



Bob Willson,
Creative Project Manager,
Airtable

“When you're working with creative teams, the less maintenance and paperwork you can assign—and the more time you can give back to the creative side of their jobs—the happier they'll be. Carving out dedicated time to identify blockers as a team helps me figure out where to spend my energy without asking our team to provide constant updates.”

Try it for your team:

- If you don't have one yet, start by creating a project tracker for your team. At minimum, make sure you include a project due date, priority level, project driver, project contributors, key milestones, and project status (though you can add more context if you like).
- Create a recurring meeting for all of the contributors on your team. You don't have to include everyone on your team—just the people involved in day-to-day production.
- Create a view of your project tracker that highlights project milestones due in the next few weeks. Sort by milestone due date, showing the milestones due soonest first. Use the meeting to touch on each upcoming milestone, giving the corresponding contributor a chance to flag any issues.
- Once you've identified the blocked projects, update each of them with a status that indicates that they're paused—like an “On hold” or “Currently blocked” status, noting what the team needs to move on to the next step. Make a view of only projects marked as blocked. Sort them by the nearest milestone date, and then by project priority to give yourself an ordered list of project blockers to address.

Example 2: Facilitating collective problem solving with drop-in office hours

Getting advice from a peer—or sharing advice with a peer—is one of the best ways to grow trust within a team. But facilitating that sort of communal approach to problems is hard when your team isn't co-located. Manager Jon Harbison's team came up with the idea to help one another through weekly office hours.

Traditional office hours might look a little different—a manager sets designated time for their reports to drop in and ask questions, share feedback, and learn from their team leader. Jon's team, on the other hand, has created a different type of office hours: one where the team gives (and gets) support from peers. They can come to get help thinking through their own projects, or they can come to lend advice to a fellow teammate. They leverage the expertise of the team to tackle tough problems as a collective—which makes it easier for teammates to address tough problems, and learn new skills together.



Jon Harbison,
Implementation
Specialist Manager,
Airtable

“Our team manages high-complexity, high-pressure implementations for our customers. In an in-office environment, when someone from my team was managing a tough implementation, they might’ve just walked up to someone and asked for a section opinion. Office hours are a chance for them to get help when they’re stuck, or get validation on their approach without having to be in-person. It’s been invaluable for our dual-coast team.”

Try it for your team:

- Set up a recurring meeting for all of the individual contributors on your team. Make sure you set the precedent that this is a drop-in-if-you-need-it type of meeting—no need to join if they don't have a problem to work on, or time to lend advice.
- Make a point to be in the video call for the duration of the office hours, but encourage your team to answer one another's questions, offer second opinions, and generally weigh in. If necessary, drop teammates into breakout rooms to allow multiple conversations at once.

Customer spotlight

Collaboration at scale (and from afar): Red Bull Media House

Red Bull Media House is one of the most ambitious media companies in the world. They produce 1,250+ events per year, distributing content in 170+ countries and 36 languages.

Their content comes from all over, whether it's from one of their teams around the world, or one of their 700+ athletes. As a distributed team, they needed a single source of truth that could keep everyone in sync.

Now, Red Bull Media House uses [Airtable](#) to stay on the same page. With less time spent connecting siloed workflows from afar, the team can focus more on what matters: elevating compelling stories from all parts of the world.

[Read more](#)

Managing through the core challenges of distributed work: visibility

Visibility is at the top of the hierarchy of challenges.

Good visibility means you have visibility into what work is coming down the pipe, and what's already been done —and that your reports can see the same. To achieve it, you first need an aligned team (connection), and well-established means of working together (collaboration). Those prerequisites make it even harder to tackle.

In a distributed workplace, visibility has to go both ways. It's not just about giving you a view of what your team is working on; it's also about giving your employees the context they need to manage their workload.

But when you can't count on hallway conversations and lunch chats for extra context, creating two-way visibility gets a lot harder. **Here's how one team at Airtable is handling it:**



Example 1:

Establishing an ongoing project tracker and feedback loop

As the manager of a large team that consults directly with clients, Jon needs an always-on, bird's-eye view of what his team is working on—and what their capacity is. It's his job to make sure that no one on his team is stretched too thin, and that everyone's doing their part. To get a sense of what everyone's working on, Jon and his team keep a tracker of all of their current engagements: what's coming, what's in progress, and context on the consultation itself (like due date, plus quick facts about the customer pulled from their customer relationship management platform).

To go one step further, Jon also asks the folks on his team to rate their bandwidth. Every week, they can select their own qualitative workload rating—like “a little light,” “just right,” “tighter than feels comfortable,” or “totally underwater.” This gives Jon an additional layer of context about each person's capacity, knowing there can be huge variations in complexity and time-commitment from one engagement to the next.

Try it for your team:

- If you don't already have one, set up a teamwide project tracker. Make sure you add details about the project (like when it's due, who it's for, and the project status), plus details on who it's assigned to. (Note: You'll need a team project tracker to implement a lot of these workflows, so you'll see this pop up a few times in our suggestions.)
- Ask your team to update the status of their projects as they work. That way, you can get a quick view of what's in progress, and what's in their queue.
- Set up a recurring notification that asks your team to update their bandwidth status once a week. Use that status update to get a quick view of who could take on more projects—and who might need some work taken off their plate.

Example 2:

Balancing workload across the team with custom-made tools

Every time a new consultation comes into Jon's pipeline, he has to answer one big question: who on his team will handle it? Between everyone on the roster, their team juggles dozens of consultations at any given moment —so it's not always easy to answer.

To figure it out, Jon's team developed an Airtable script that uses a simple formula to recommend a ranked list of implementation specialists. **The script takes in data about each specialist and the consultation, creating a suggestion score based on:**

- Whether they've worked with this customer in the past (a yes bumps their score)
- The number of active consultations they have compared to the average (having more active consultations than average lowers their score)
- Whether they're in the same time zone as the customer (a yes bumps their score)
- The preferences each specialist has chosen (a project in the vertical or complexity level they prefer will increase their score)
- Their reported bandwidth score for the week (less bandwidth means a lower score)

The end result is a ranked list of available implementation specialists. It's a suggestion Jon can combine with his own context to decide who to assign a project to:

The screenshot displays an Airtable workspace titled "IS Queue Assignment". The main view is a table with columns for "Services Consultation: Consultation Name", "Account: Region", and "Services Requested". The table lists five projects, each with a "Services Requested" dropdown menu showing a ranked list of specialists. For example, the first project, "Vail Health PMO", has a dropdown showing specialists like Brendan McGown (99), Rod Hawkins (92), and Nathan Coffey (48). To the right, a "Suggestions" panel is open, showing a list of suggestions with columns for "Suggestions Last M...", "Open Consult", and "Open Consult" buttons. The suggestions are ranked by score and date, with Brendan McGown (99) at the top.

Project	Region	Services Requested	Specialist	Score
Vail Health PMO		2 - Standard Build (75)	Brendan McGown	99
Muscogee Nation Team - IS Request		1 - Foundation Build (6)	Rod Hawkins	92
Meredith Corp - Paid Services for Central Video Ecosystem Completion	East	4 - Custom Build	Nathan Coffey	48
ASO Operations	East	2 - Standard Build (75)	Maritza Barcelona	46
Consumer Insights Resourcing	West	2 - Standard Build (75)	Sunayana Basa	46



Jon Harbison,
Implementation
Specialist Manager,
Airtable

“For me, the most important thing is making sure we’re balancing the workload across the team. These suggestions give me a quick way to figure out who’s best suited for the job. I combine that with what I know about my team—like if I know they have less bandwidth than they’re giving themselves credit for—to make sure we’re distributing consultations in a way that helps everyone win.”

Try it for your team:

- In your project tracker, create a profile for each person on your team. Include details like their personal preferences (like types of projects they want to work on), time zone, pod, or any other information you want to use to determine who's best suited for your new project. Make sure that at least some of those attributes overlap with the project details (for example: if an interest in the Aerospace industry should mean they're more likely to get matched with an Aerospace company, you'll need to include the company vertical in the project details).
- Build a script that scores each person on your team based on the metadata most important to your team vs. the metadata associated with the project. Add points based on how many criteria they meet. The more points they score, the better suited they are.

Customer spotlight

Creating global visibility: Autodesk

Creators of household names like AutoCAD, Revit, Maya, and Fusion360, Autodesk is a giant in the software industry, employing more than 10,000 people around the globe.

When Autodesk set out to create the Autodesk Technology Centers, they had to host hundreds of participants in programs across North America. Initially, they started managing the program in a spreadsheet. But as the project scaled, it took so much effort to find basic information that finding space to improve the program was next to impossible.

To keep their distributed teams in line, they had to create a single source of truth: a central repository to help manage the tremendous amount of information moving between program participants, community managers, and employees across teams and geos.

Today, management, sales, software developers, and others use Airtable to streamline operations, eliminate unnecessary work, build a shared context, and communicate more effectively across the organization.

[Read more](#)

Building a distributed team hub

So we've talked a bit about the core challenges that come with distributed work—and some examples of systems and processes that can help you address it.

But where, exactly, do you build those systems and processes? For most teams, a network of spreadsheets, docs, and apps won't cut it. To manage those challenges, you need a team hub.



Ok...but what's a team hub?

A team hub is a central, async-accessible, living repository where you can store and organize the information most important to your team.

A hub could include (but isn't limited to):

- **Foundational team docs:** Team charters, key documents, and guiding principles (like best practices) that everyone on your team needs access to
- **Project tracking:** The projects your team is currently working on—plus upcoming projects and the ones they've already finished
- **Work distribution:** A view of who's working on which projects, plus space to allocate upcoming or current projects
- **Meeting notes repository:** A living record of past meeting agendas, notes, and the like to help keep track of team progress, and make it easy for people who missed a meeting to catch up
- **Goal tracking and mapping:** A list of current goals, objectives, key results, and a clear map of which projects are meant to help accomplish them

To create your own team hub, here's how to get started:

Get the ball rolling with a team hub template

There are lots of great team hubs out there to start with—so there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Start with a template, then customize it to your team to save time.

[Try remote team hub template](#)

Take a look at how other teams are organizing their hubs

Starting with a template is great—but it's way easier to implement once you've seen it in action. This 25-minute webinar gives an overview of how you can use it to manage your team.

[Watch webinar](#)

Customize your hub to suit your team

Once you have a vision for how you want your hub to function, it's time to customize the template to your team. Peruse these templates for even more inspiration on what to add, or check out the resource below for a full walkthrough.

[Read walkthrough](#)

| Conclusion

A successful distributed team is built on a combination of strong connection, collaboration, and visibility. It's not about just accommodating different work arrangements, or replicating an in-office experience. To maximize impact, you need systems designed to even the playing field between different working arrangements—and that keep everyone equally informed and engaged. Cultivating a shared sense of connection, collaboration, and visibility—in that order—is the key to building a next gen distributed team.

About Airtable

Airtable is an app platform that enables teams to build workflows that modernize their business processes. More than 250,000 organizations, including more than half of the Fortune 1000, use Airtable's visual, flexible tools to customize

workflows that meet their exact needs, whether they're creating blockbuster movies, designing running shoes, distributing life-saving vaccines, or anything in between. To learn more, visit airtable.com.

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