



Support and Expand Your Long-Distance Team

By Krystal Kitchens Grant (Page 250)

Use the following worksheet to develop a strategy for supporting your long-distance team.

Words of Wisdom

While nothing takes the place of face-to-face contact or connecting by phone, harnessing the power of Internet technology and online services can help you overcome the challenges of creating a sense of community and connection with long-distance teams.

Acquiring the Tools of the Trade

- Create a separate e-mail address that you only distribute to team members.
 - ✓ Check with your company first to see if they provide this service.
 - ✓ Yahoo!: www.yahoo.com
 - ✓ MSN: www.msn.com
 - ✓ Other online services: http://www.emailaddresses.com/email_web.htm
- Create a subfolder in your e-mail program to store all of your team-related e-mail so that you can find messages quickly.
- Commit to responding to your team's e-mail as soon as you log on each day.
- Create an online group to provide your team members with a sense of community.
 - ✓ Add useful links and personalize the group settings for your team.
 - ✓ Send an invitation to join the group to every person in your organization.
 - ✓ Two sources of free groups:
www.groups.yahoo.com
www.groups.msn.com
- Send an e-newsletter each month to communicate updates, educate and recognize top achievers.
 - ✓ Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) offers a great tool to create professional-looking newsletters—even if you don't have Web design skills.
- Conduct online trainings for long distance team members. Leverage your training time while adding a "visual" component to your training.
 - ✓ Chatzy.com (www.chatzy.com) offers free chat rooms for small groups, and upgrades are available for a reasonable fee.

-
- Establish a free instant messaging account for situations where real-time communication is necessary.
 - ✓ America Online (www.aim.com) offers free IM
 - ✓ Yahoo! (<http://messenger.yahoo.com>) offers free IM
 - ✓ MSN (<http://messenger.msn.com>) offers free IM

Keep in mind that, while it's possible to provide quality support via the Internet, nothing takes the place of voice-to-voice and face-to-face interaction. It's important to continue holding regularly scheduled coaching calls with each team member. As a long-distance team leader, you should plan to attend your company's national convention and strongly encourage your team members to attend as well. Use the opportunity to personally connect with each member and to hold meetings that sustain your long-distance team.