

VIRTUAL COLLABORATION BEST PRACTICE

SYNCHRONOUS SPRINTS

OUTCOME(s): Team members set aside periods of time to work individually but in close contact, facilitating collaboration, building cohesion, and inspiring effort.

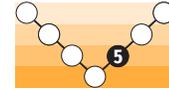
People working on remote teams may feel disconnected from their peers between scheduled meetings. Emails go unanswered, feedback isn't received on shared work, and people feel like they are working in a vacuum. Combat this sense of isolation with synchronous sprints in which everyone works on the same project in a shared place at the same time. People needn't be on the phone or in a web conference in a synchronous sprint, though some sprints use a drop-in meeting space. It isn't a formal meeting; instead people consult spontaneously, usually via text communication. Simply being in the same shared workspace and seeing the product of others' efforts makes team members feel connected.

Thank you all for making time for this. We've agreed to work on shared documents. You can find a link and instructions in the email with today's agenda. We will reconvene in two hours to check in.



TIME
2 hours or more

Facilitation Model
Stage 5
Supporting Action



Steps

1. Identify who will be taking part in the sprint. It may be the whole team or a subgroup.
2. Schedule the sprint for a block of time during everyone's working hours. If working hours don't intersect neatly, get agreement from those who have flexibility.
3. Create a loose agenda for the sprint, including start and end times, participants' names, and a general idea of each person's work. Specify which tools will be used for doing the work and for maintaining communication if this isn't obvious.
4. Distribute the agenda to everyone who will participate.
5. Kick off the sprint with a message in the communication channel you have chosen. Ask an easy and fun question to get everyone to check in via the channel; people will be energized by this proof that everyone is taking the sprint seriously and is actually responding.
6. If the team is new to the practice, you might need to check in via the communication channel a few times during the sprint window to stir up conversation.
7. When the sprint is over, use the communications tool for a quick check-out round (similar to the check-in in Step 5). Ask how it went, how much was accomplished, or what everyone plans to do next.
8. Debrief the sprint at your next team meeting and make adjustments based on feedback.

Tips

- If there is no project that multiple people need to work on together, use the sprint as a time when everyone keeps a closer eye on the team's communication tool and can respond quickly to questions or requests for feedback as they work on their own tasks.
- Synchronous sprints work best when everyone is working in the same shared space and can see the work that others are doing as they do it. It's very motivating to watch the product come to life!
- If the group can't work in a shared document, turn to your project tracking tools. Encourage the team to update its progress frequently, every time it reaches even a minor milestone, during the sprint. Team members will see one another's achievements grow.
- Schedule a synchronous sprint in the middle of a team meeting for a change of pace.

Supporting Tool Types

Collaboration Spaces, Collaborative Visual Reviewing, Project Management, Remote Access, Shared Documents, Team Messaging