



Team Communication Norming Tool

Overview

This tool serves as a strategic guide to improving team communication productivity and satisfaction by establishing clear communication norms and expectations. This tool primarily improves team collaboration through 1) optimizing communication choices to better fit team members, 2) highlighting areas for improving team communication productivity, 3) reducing communication misunderstandings, and 4) reducing the productivity losses stemming from the pressure to engage in communication “impression management.”

Step 1: Individual Expectations and Preferences

Instructions: Complete the questions below individually.

Name:

- Response Times:** Fill out the chart below about your communication expectations. Use the blank spaces to add communication tools specific to your organization (e.g., Social Media and Project Management Platforms).
Note: all team members should have the same overarching categories.

	How quickly do you want a response from teammates in each mode?	How quickly do you believe teammates expect a response from you for each mode?
Emails		
Instant messages (Slack/Teams/etc.)		
Text messages		
Phone calls		
Meeting or calendar invitations		

2. **Ideal Mode:** Fill in the answers below with your preferred mode of communication for each activity and a brief explanation for your response. Use the blank spaces to add any other activity categories specific to your team.

Note: all team members should have the same overarching categories of “activities.”

	Preferred mode for each type of interaction	Brief explanation
One-off questions for you to answer		
Urgent matters for you to answer		
1-on-1 task-oriented conversations		
Giving/receiving 1-on-1 feedback		
Whole team brainstorming		
Whole team decision making		
Recurring team catch ups/meetings		
Receiving simple team-relevant information		
Receiving complex team-relevant information		

3. **Time Allocation:** *Fill out the matrix below to indicate your ideal and actual time spent on various tasks, and then calculate the difference between the two. Use the blank spaces to add any other activity categories specific to your team. Note: all team members should have the same overarching categories of “activities.”*

	Average amount of time you <i>actually</i> allocate to each task daily	Average amount of time you <i>ideally</i> would like to allocate to each task daily	Difference
Meetings (including video, in person, and phone)			
Text communication (including emails and instant messages)			
Work tasks			

4. **Other Comments:** *Describe any other communication preferences you have (e.g., detailed instructions, bullet points, visuals, concise summaries) or suggestions for how your team could improve its communication.*

Step 2: Team Analysis & Syncing

Instructions: A facilitator on the team should collect each team member’s responses and tally both the average and minimum/maximum responses for questions #1 and #3. They should also tally the frequency of responses for question #2. These totals should be displayed to the team at the beginning of the conversation. Then, use the questions below as a general guide for the subsequent conversation about team communication expectations and norming. If the team conversation diverges to a productive area outside of these questions, you should feel free to explore it.

Response Times (Individual Question #1)

1. Where do we see differences between expectations of others’ response times and what we think others expect of us?
2. Are these differences generally the same across the team or do they vary by individual?
3. Why do we think these differences exist?
4. What do we think is a reasonable response time for each mode?
5. What is the best way to actively communicate to teammates that you are temporarily unable to respond to communications within the expected amount of time (e.g., due to an important work task, a work task that requires deep focus, or a personal issue)?

Ideal Mode (Individual Question #2)

1. Where do we see similar versus varying views on the best modes for activities?
2. Why do these differences exist?
3. In which areas should we reach a consensus on the preferred communication mode, and in which areas are we comfortable allowing individual variations?
4. For the team decisions, which mode does each of us think is best and why?
5. [If hybrid or remote] Why do we feel we should have cameras on versus off for virtual meetings?
6. For choices that don’t need full team agreement, what is the best approach to maximize the proportion of time individuals are able to use their preferred mode?

Time Allocation (Individual Question #3)

1. In what areas do we observe variations between the preferred and actual time allocated to communication as opposed to work?
2. Are these differences generally the same across the team or do they vary by individual?
3. Why do these differences exist?
4. What are the ideal time allocations for our team, and what can we do as a team to reach them?

Other Comments (Individual Question #4)

1. What other comments were noted by individuals that weren’t addressed in the other questions?
2. What else do we feel our team could do to improve our communication, and how should we execute it?
3. What is the best way to revisit the points from this discussion in the future to determine a) if we are sticking to them, b) to what degree they are working, and c) whether we should adjust further?