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COMMUNICATION IN A REMOTE WORLD: HOW DO WE TALK WHEN WE HAVEN'T MET EACH OTHER?

Abstract

The pandemic has taken the world and the workforce by storm, literally and figuratively. As our industry and the world transform in response to an ongoing pandemic, increasingly employees are working remotely and working with people they have not met in person. This is a new phenomena in aerospace, where companies are moving away from a traditional, work can only done in an office scenario, to work can be done anywhere.

To recruit and retain talent, companies should offer flexible work options and create an environment where leadership and communication does not solely rely on face to face communication. To build an inclusive, diverse, and global team, organizations must thrive on digital and remote communication. This is a critical aspect of building and sustaining the global space workforce. Without remote work options, people will be excluded from the workforce and organizations will artificially limit their talent pool to those who can be in an office.

This paper will highlight and summarize best practices from online communities, such as Discord servers, where teams are built, grow, and thrive without members ever having met each other. These communities rely on common purpose, defined expectations, and clear digital communications. Our current space organizations typically have two of these three driving forces, highlighting digital communication as a place for learning best practices.

Specifically, there are several best practices that will be discussed regarding digital communication and team building:
- Building trust with people digitally
- Communicating effectively across cultures and languages
- Creating rapport and camaraderie within remote teams

The methodology and results are based on evaluations and observations from Discord servers. Discord servers are globally used as a gathering and discussion place for topics such as online gaming, workplace discussions, and community discussions. They are equivalent to a Slack or Teams channel, but are not affiliated with an official organization and can be set up by anyone.

Openly discussing global, remote communications and best practices leads to a stronger, more inclusive workforce. We are evolving as an industry and as individuals in a remote environment, where we do not work with our colleagues face to face. The evolution of remote work will shape our industry for decades to come and leads us to many new talents and exciting opportunities as we grow the workforce.