# Harmonics Way Remote Best Practices

Since self-organizing teams are at the core of a workplace that promotes harmony, it is not unusual to regularly find oneself working with remote team members. Whether this is at home, a public place with secure connectivity, or pairing up from the office with a remote team member - similar guidelines apply.

The obvious challenge for remote working is the potential loss of quality in communication with other team members. As Alistair Cockburn outlines in *Agile Software Development*, the richness of communication decreases as collaborators' physical distance increases.
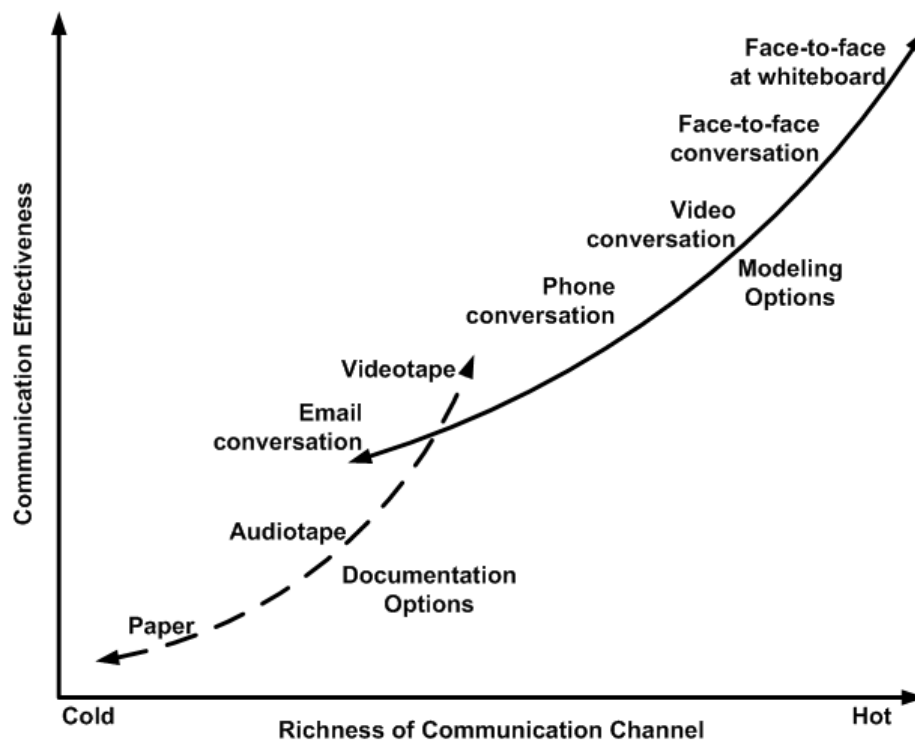
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Working remote requires sharing ideas without the advantage of being physically present in front of a whiteboard. While being aware of this challenge, we can leverage the Harmonics Way principles to establish practices while working remotely. Following is the list of principles and their application to this scenario.

Harmonics Way

Things should work as expected

- Have a mindset that you and your teammate are sitting next to each other. Your teammate can be anyone you are currently working with.
- Use tools that allow a minimum of effort to reach out to your teammate to ask questions, get feedback, and to enable them to do the same.
- Each team is different, and it is best to agree upon tools that team members feel comfortable using and work for their situation.
- Tools should work as expected. Be sure to use the same versions of tools to minimize unexpected technology issues.
- When a teammate needs you, they should know how to get a hold of you without jumping through hoops. The goal should be to get as close to the ideal of a 'single click' to start talking to a team member.
- Synchronized work schedules can be an effective way to chunk-up the day and harmonize communications.
- Vary your approach based on the task at hand and phase of the project.

Always know how things are going

- Start the day with a brief meeting to discuss the overall goals and priorities for the day.
- Depending on the work's intensity, keep in constant communication or touch base regularly.
- Discuss ground-breaking or new tasks with a team member to agree upon an approach.

Interaction should be distraction-free

- Although there are times when one has to make themselves available to the team at short notice, there are also times when one has to work without distractions. If you plan to complete some intense work that requires no interruptions, let your teammates know and set up a time in the future where you will be available.
- Be mindful of the fact that although there are times where one desires to have a distraction-free space, client demands and unexpected situations can arise where this may not be possible. Flexibility in handling such times is critical.
- Ensure that your working environment is distraction-free. Your tolerance for distraction may not be the same as your teammates. It is respectful to your team members to reduce background noise while talking/ interacting remotely.

Things go better when done with others

- Reviewing your progress throughout the day with another team member helps keep everyone in the loop and facilitates ease in task switching and task sharing.
- By not allowing too much time to pass between 'syncing' with team members, you will reduce divergence in work products and effort duplication.

Embrace your complexity, and no one else's

- Working remote affords the benefit of making physical location irrelevant. Ensure that environmental variables such as connectivity (bandwidth, security) do not negatively impact other team members' experience.
- Ensure that your remote work location has limited/acceptable noise levels and does not impede discussions with the team.

- If life circumstances require being offline, keep the team in the loop to compensate and insulate the client from any gaps.

Always know how the parts relate to the whole

- By staying in communication frequently and knowing what your team members are doing minimizes the misunderstandings, duplicated efforts, and time wasted backtracking from unnecessary tangents.
- Make a habit of being aware of what activities are occurring with other team members.
- Depending on the degree of your physical separation, establish a schedule to be physically present with other team members regularly.

Quality is baked in.

- If you notice something that can be improved in your team's processes, improve it, and inform the group what you did.
- Be aware of team metrics and overall health of the product or service you are delivering.