



Fun Virtual Team-Building Activities

18 EASY GAMES AND ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR REMOTE TEAM STAY
CONNECTED WHILE THEY WORK FROM HOME

(NO SPECIAL SOFTWARE NEEDED. INCLUDES DOWNLOADABLE TEMPLATES.)



Hassan Osman

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By

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Preface

In early 2020, the world was in the middle of a major coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

Several countries were put on lockdown and economies crashed. Many people lost their jobs, and those who didn't were asked to work from home.

I was fortunate that I worked for Cisco Systems, a company that is a technology leader in the space of collaboration and working remotely. (*Note: Views are my own and not those of Cisco*). I was already working from home before the pandemic hit, and I was grateful that the impact on my own job was minimal.

Others weren't so lucky.

In an effort to give back, I wanted to come up with a way to help the maximum number of people by leveraging my skills in writing books and managing virtual teams. That's when I came up with the idea of writing this book.

I had three main goals.

First, I wanted to teach people how to write and publish a book. Given that I've published several books myself, I thought I'd encourage anyone who had considered writing a book to finally write one. To do this, I documented the entire journey on my blog and my podcast. I explained everything, including choosing a topic and designing a cover. I also explained how I presold the book and how much money I raised. My hope was to inspire those who were able to use some of their free time to publish a book themselves. (If you're interested in reading about that process, it's all documented [here](#)).

Second, I wanted to help remote teams stay connected through virtual team-building activities. During the pandemic, a big pain point for virtual teams was that they were feeling isolated and missed the social interactions that naturally happen in the office. A common saying was that "social distancing" should be replaced with "distant socializing." Given that I manage virtual teams for a living, my goal was to solve that problem by providing remote workers with a set of games and activities that would help them stay connected.

Third, I wanted to raise some money for COVID-19 relief efforts. I watched healthcare workers, first responders, and essential workers risk their own safety to help others while some of us had the privilege of working from home. For the first month after the book's publication, I decided to donate 100% of the profits from the book to COVID-19 relief work.

I hope I was able to accomplish all three goals, and if you purchased this book, I want to thank you for helping me out with the third.

Stay safe,

Hassan Osman

Introduction

Virtual teams can feel very lonely.

Even before COVID-19, remote employees tended to focus on their own silos. They didn't frequently interact with their colleagues in an informal way as they would in a regular office. Meetings, in particular, often felt very transactional and dry.

This is one big disadvantage of virtual teams—they lose what's called the “water cooler effect” in a regular office where team members bump into each other in break rooms and talk about things unrelated to work.

Although such minor interactions can seem trivial, their impact is quite significant on team performance. They have a long-lasting effect on building trust and improving team morale.

Because of this, leaders should encourage activities that help increase those team-bonding factors.

Who this book is for

This book is for team leaders who lead remote teams at any organization. It's for managers at Fortune 500 companies and for entrepreneurs leading small businesses.

The activities are designed for virtual teams of (ideally) five or more individuals that are either just starting out (i.e., in the forming stage of team development) or have been working together for a while on a collaborative project (i.e., in the storming stage or beyond).

The activities are especially helpful for teams that interact multiple times throughout the week using email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and other collaborative tools.

What you'll need

Here's what you'll need for the activities:

- **A collaboration/screen-sharing tool:** You'll need a tool such as Webex, Zoom, GoToMeeting, or any other tool that allows you to communicate with your team. The two features you'll need are video conferencing and screen sharing so that participants can see each other as well as what's being presented.
- **A facilitator:** You'll need someone to help moderate and facilitate each activity. Ideally, this would be you as the virtual team leader, but any other team member can fulfill this role.
- **Dedicated time:** You'll need to dedicate some time either at the beginning or the end of a regular work meeting. You can also set up a separate meeting that focuses on the activity.
- **[Optional] A Google account:** You'll need a Google account (free or paid) to access supplementary resources to this guide, such as sample templates and quizzes. Although those resources are not absolutely needed, they will save you a lot of time.

That's it. You don't need to download any other special applications or tools.

I have intentionally kept things simple because the more you make your team “work” to play using a new tool or process, the less likely they'll be excited about playing.

How are the activities organized?

Each activity is listed on a separate page, and they're all independent from one another—you can play any one of them at any given point in time. Simply flip through this guide and pick one you think your team will enjoy. They're not presented in any specific order.

For some activities, I also include variations that help you mix them up and play in a slightly different way.

To make it easy for you, I provide resources that you can download to save you time (you'll need a free or paid Google account to access them). You'll get sample templates and quizzes for some activities. I also include “How to Play”

instructions on Google Slides so you can explain the rules before you do the activities with your team. Feel free to use these resources as-is or modify them to meet your needs.

Finally, I also highlight a few activities that are particularly helpful during a lockdown. Some of those were played during the coronavirus pandemic and were really fun for teams who were stuck at home (I marked those as “Great for lockdowns”).

A quick note

I’ll be the first to admit that when I played some of those activities in the past, I found a couple of them not very entertaining. However, keep in mind that different people enjoy different things and what’s fun for one team might not be for another.

A good idea before playing a game is to have your team vote for one. Simply pick three you like and run a quick poll to ask which one looks most entertaining. You can also add your own spin to some of those games to suit your team’s needs.

With that, let’s get started with your first activity!

Activity 1: Little-Known Facts about Me

Time Required

Approx. 25 minutes for a team of 5 (5 minutes per team member)

Resources

- [How to play *Little-Known Facts about Me*](#) (instructions on Google Slides)
- [Sample spreadsheet](#) (link to Google Sheets)

Description

The objective of this game is to connect with your team members on a personal level.

Most virtual team members don't have a lot of time to mingle or chit-chat, so this game is great because your team members can open up to each other and learn about everyone's background.

Here's how it works.

First, ask each team member to send you three personal facts about them to you as the facilitator. Make sure they send you facts that are hard for their colleagues to guess. If you have a large team, then you'll probably want to ask each person for just one fact each so that the game doesn't take a lot of time.

Each team member should send this information to you privately a few days before the meeting so you have enough time to consolidate the data. You will then enter those facts in a spreadsheet in random order.

On the day of the meeting, you can then share the spreadsheet on your screen-sharing software (Webex, Zoom, etc.) and ask each team member to guess who that fact belongs to.

The spreadsheet will look something like this (I'm showing only three team members here for simplicity). Check the resources for a downloadable sample spreadsheet.

	Guesses of <Name 1>	Guesses of <Name 2>	Guesses of <Name 3>	Correct Answer
Fact 1				
Fact 2				
Fact 3				
Fact 4				
Fact 5				
Fact 6				
Fact 7				
Fact 8				
Fact 9				
Total Correct				

You will then start with “Fact 1” at the top of the sheet by reading it aloud and asking each of the team members to guess who they think that fact belongs to.

You'll then type those guesses into the spreadsheet while sharing your screen so everyone can see. Once that row is complete, you'll move on to fact two, and so on.

Note that each person can “guess” their own facts. They can either be honest about it or pick someone else to throw people off. This makes it even more fun and competitive.

After filling in all the rows, you'll then reveal the right answers in the “Correct Answer” column. And as you go through the right answers, ask the person with the associated fact to speak about it while you tally up the scores at the bottom row.

The person with the highest score wins a gift card or some bragging rights.

This activity is much more entertaining than it sounds because as you go through the facts, the guesses by the team are hilarious. And the facts you find out would reveal quite a bit about each team member's background.

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