



Roundtable Member, **Matt Mejaski**, Director of Software Development & Public Alerting at Pelmorex Corp., —home of The Weather Network— shares strategies for building connection and tapping into collective intelligence among dispersed teams.

Mentoring **MATTERS**



Even though my organization invests in technology and tools that support remote teams and individuals to collaborate, I feel like silos are still there (and even growing!). What advice would you share for building connection between team members so we can tap into the collective intelligence and work together?

Matt's Point of View

The pandemic has certainly created the necessity to quickly evolve our normally in-office work behaviours and shift those same practices and processes to an online, remote world. It sure hasn't been easy, though!

When it comes to building connections between teams and team members, the first thing that comes to mind is ensuring that connectedness is part of the culture and the values that you, your team, and your organization hold strong. Regardless of the size of your organization, it's important to keep in mind that connectedness and building relationships with each other isn't always easy. While the technology is definitely there to help facilitate things, it still needs an intentional and focused drive from all levels within the organization to make it happen!

Silos tend to form in two areas: silos within teams, and silos between departments. Let's tackle each one separately.

Silos Within Teams

If you're leading your team, and finding that some individuals aren't quite being as transparent with others, or don't seem to be contributing to the team productivity, or overall team dynamic in the way that they used to, here are some tips:

- **Talk to them.** Yes, it's plain and simple. Ask them how they feel they're working with the rest of the team. Dig deeper to help them understand the potential impact that their siloed behaviour has on the rest of the team. Describing the impact can go a long way, and can often help people realize something is happening that they aren't aware of.

- **Start —and adhere to— mandatory daily stand-ups with your team.** A quick 15-minute huddle every morning (or afternoon) can do wonders to help align and bring the team together. Over time, they won't need to be mandatory; ideally the team will become so used to them that they'll want to run them on their own. Plus, you can make them fun and start to create connections between team members by throwing random questions into the mix like "Describe your favourite animal", or "What was the first (concert/movie/book, etc.) that you (attended/saw/read, etc.)"?
- **Encourage individuals within your team to pair.** This may be a bit more of a technology focused one, but have you thought about having some of your team members pair together to get a task or deliverable finished, instead of having them go solo? It may be a wild shot, but you'd be amazed at what two people would be able to accomplish together — both for building relationships as well as their finished deliverable.
- **Add additional fun activities to the team's week.** Start a "Fun Time" with the team, where you can get together to play an online game. Something like trivia, drawing, or strategy based games are enjoyable (Try drawguess.fun, Jackbox Games, or Codenames. Regular social time with the team can definitely help to boost the team connectedness and dynamics.

Silos Within Departments

When it comes to silos developing between departments, this one can be a little trickier because it's probably not all in your control to make an immediate impact. You have to work with others to get it done. It's totally doable, though! Here are some tips:

- **Create strategic alignments.** As a leader, pair or group with other department leads in your organization to arrange a discussion that reinforces the strategic alignment your departments have together. It's very important to repeatedly stress and emphasize how your departments are connected, and to also remind each team member of the skills and value that working together brings. While it may be obvious that Product and Technology, or Marketing and Sales should be working together, re-emphasizing the how and why they need to work together is crucial, especially when so many things these days can easily be "out of sight, out of mind." Additionally, be sure to paint a picture of how you'd like to see the teams collaborate better. Use examples so people can really picture it happening as clearly as possible.
- **Form a task force or ERG to help bring departments together.** In 2014 at Pelmorex, we formed Culture Crew, whose mission was to bring recognition, energy, and connectedness to life every day within the organization, across different departments and offices. Culture Crew helped to break down walls by organizing events and online gatherings to help people with common interests get together and get to know each other more.
- **Also, play fun activities together!** Just like within your own team, this helps to break down walls and remind the different team members who is on each team, and allows them to interact with each other.
- **Encourage informal gatherings.** An online tool that we've tried a few times to help with "online mingling" is Wonder.me - it allows a group of people to form small gatherings to meet and talk together in a less formal way than the daily Zoom meetings.

When it comes to connectedness amongst teams and departments, the thing to remember is that it may not come naturally, and will most likely need an intentional plan to make it happen. Once you start getting people onboard though, it will become easier. Good luck!



Matt Mejaski is the Director of Software Development & Public Alerting at Pelmorex Corp., home of The Weather Network. In addition to being a technologist with a passion for leading teams to bring high quality and performant software applications to life, Matt also has a strong drive to create a connected culture of people within his teams and organization. To that end, he is known for leading initiatives and events that bring people together with both fun and purpose in mind.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.