



**Theresa Dekker**, Vice President of Corporate Business Development and Strategy at Ontario Power Generation (OPG), 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?*

## Theresa's Point of View

First of all, that's a great question. In my experience, there are some ways to leverage the tools and technology that we have available to help build connections amongst the team.

### *Informal Individual Chats*

One of the things that I've found that a number of folks have been really missing in this virtual world is the ability to spontaneously chat with a colleague or team member to see how they're doing, and build or maintain the connection with them by sharing what's going on in each other's lives. So, I'd suggest looking for ways to simulate those experiences, such as through setting up periodic coffee dates or check-ins with team members. They can be planned well in advance or more sporadic, but the key to these sessions is spending some time talking about each other's personal life, and catching up like you would in the office.

### *Get the Group Together*

Another observation I've had as this pandemic has continued, is that it's easy to lose a sense of being part of a team – it's been an isolating experience for some and they may not always think to reach out. In addition to connecting individually, it's important for the team as a whole to get together. So, in addition to periodic virtual coffee dates, I'd suggest connecting with team members via chats, phone or video calls fairly frequently (at least a few times a week). If you have a large team try splitting it up and having smaller check-ins and then mixing the team members around. This is more intimate and encourages more interaction.

## *Promote Curiosity*

Learning together is another great way to encourage team work and collaboration. Getting the team together regularly (I'd suggest at minimum monthly) to discuss key projects/initiatives, learn about a work-related topic, or discuss relevant external events really is a great way to promote curiosity and sharing amongst the team. It also helps in providing a sense of togetherness for the team.

## *Add a Healthy Dose of Fun*

My last piece of advice is to look for opportunities to have fun together as a team. Although we can't go out and socialize physically, virtual games (hangman, Pictionary, etc.) or trivia can be a great substitute. It can really help build the camaraderie amongst the team and has a side benefit of allowing the team to explore the tools and technology your organization has, which can then be used to collaborate more effectively on work activities. A real win-win!

In my view, all of these suggestions relate to maintaining a sense of community within the team and simply caring for one another. We are in such unique and trying times that I think even just focusing on those two things will really pay off.



**Theresa Dekker** is the **Vice President of Corporate Business Development and Strategy at Ontario Power Generation (OPG)**, accountable for development of OPG's corporate strategy, as well as various elements of execution. This involves understanding how the energy industry is evolving and how OPG can continue to be a leader in that transformation to the benefit of all Ontarians. A key part of this work involves leveraging Ontario's low-emitting electricity to drive down transportation emissions. Ms. Dekker is proud to sit on the board of the Ivy Charging Network, as Co-President. Ivy is the result of a partnership between OPG and Hydro One to build and operate Ontario's largest and most reliable EV fast charging network.

Ms. Dekker joined OPG in 2004 and has held a variety of positions throughout the company, gaining experience in Nuclear Project Management, Organizational Design, and Enterprise Risk Management. In her most recent role as Director of Corporate Strategy and Planning, Ms. Dekker led the acquisitions of Eagle Creek Renewable Energy and Cube Hydro, expanding OPG's hydroelectric portfolio into the U.S. Ms. Dekker holds a chemical engineering degree from the University of Toronto and is a Professional Engineer.



**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.