

# 10 TIPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR E-WORKING RELATIONSHIPS



- 1. Be genuine** – Provide information about yourself. If a space for profiles is available on the site you are using, complete yours with interesting facts; take time to read what others post.
- 2. Believe the best** – Don't read negativity into messages or assume that others are upset if they seem abrupt. People bring their unique personalities to online communication; some like crisp, concise messages while others prefer a more relaxed conversational tone. Also, messages may be typed quickly and words/phrases may have unique regional meanings.
- 3. Watch for subtle clues** – Notice words, phrases, or comments that help to paint a picture of others' culture and style. Just as in face-to-face relationships, diversity has an impact.
- 4. Take time for small talk** – Relationships are often strengthened in casual "offline" conversations, just as they are around the water cooler in the office. If available in your online community, participate in discussions in the "cafés" or "keeping in touch" forums. Acknowledge celebrations (e.g., if someone mentioned an upcoming marriage, baby, or holiday).
- 5. Don't be a lurker** – In online communities, just as on a teleconference, if you don't speak up, it's as though you're not there (i.e. no one can see you). Contribute comments to blog posts, participate in social media groups, and offer your help.
- 6. Give...don't just take** – Share freely and keep your eyes open for tips or resources that would benefit your online colleagues. Relationships are strengthened by giving back.
- 7. Respect community norms** – Just as you adjust your style (i.e., language level, tone, dress) if working face-to-face, monitor your online presence – avoid using acronyms unless you're confident everyone will understand, match conversational tone, don't monopolize conversations, and don't spam your community or use it solely to sell.
- 8. Move beyond text** – Make full use of options to liven up your online community (e.g., use emoticons, upload photos or brief audio/video files, insert images and links to YouTube).
- 9. Be cautious about introducing new technologies** – Don't assume everyone has the same level of comfort or discomfort with technology. Allow for differing levels; recognize that "fancy stuff" might excite some colleagues but intimidate others.
- 10. When in doubt, phone** – Although it's definitely possible to build strong working relationships online, sometimes it is best to pick up the phone and ask for clarification or offer support. It's great to hear a colleague's tone and to talk freely without typing!



Adapted from The Contact Point Bulletin, Fall 2010. Read the full article at:  
<http://contactpoint.ca/2012/10/building-working-relationships-online/>

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