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Amy Vetter • Mar. 14, 2019

Technology has made the modern work environment at once ultra-connected and increasingly lonely. In every profession, even if you work in a bustling office amid a clamor of people, the interpersonal disconnect we experience is a strange side-effect

of communicating from behind computer screens and consuming media of all kinds.

workday. In our profession — and in any business for that matter — we have to begin lacing equal value on human connection and the gift of technology. More importantly, we have to be intentional about the processes we build around it.

Combating isolation at work

The levels of loneliness we deal with at work is influenced by how we engage with the environment around us. While technology makes it easy to create limitless connections with others and collaborate more easily from afar, using it in excess, or as a substitute for closer human connection is a mistake.

How often do you send a message to someone you could easily speak with face-to-face? Could the way you use technology be hindering your connectedness with those around you? Your decided mode of communication could absolutely be a contributor to your level of loneliness at work. Future Workplace's 2018 Global Work Connectivity study of more than 2,000 managers and employees showed that nearly half of their day was spent communicating via technology and not in person. Slightly more than half felt lonely "always" or "very often" as a result. The study suggested that this type of communication was detrimental to the wellbeing of workers and made them less productive.

It would be near impossible to replace in-person communication in all of our day-to-day work, but it's best to be aware when you're making the decision between connection and convenience. Now, that's easier said and done, which is why I recommend these simple tips to ward off isolation at work and start fostering the balance that might be the missing ingredient to a more happy, healthy life.

The three-to-one rule

Speaking with someone in person and hearing their voice is an invaluable aspect of

Even if you're not the type to ask a colleague out for happy hour or an after-work event, it's important that colleagues create connections outside the confines of work. Getting to know one another in a new environment will foster a more friendly culture, and can create a healthy team that works together well. Lead by example by setting up social events. By showing your willingness to get to know the team, you will empower others to do the same. And if you're less of a spontaneous leader, it's fine to schedule it out. Great leaders can reinforce the culture of togetherness by creating regularly occurring events for the entire team.

Virtual gatherings

Even if you're on a remote team, technology can help connect you in a meaningful way when used with the right intentions. To help create more personal connections with your team, try sending your remote employees a coffee shop or restaurant gift card and ask them to invite one of their other remote colleagues to a virtual meetup over video chat to get to know each other better. The connection you build with your coworkers is paramount — so find ways to make it happen remotely whenever possible.

Technology is truly amazing, and we have the power to decide to use it in smart ways, and in ways that don't get in the way of the important relationships, we have with those around us. Making small changes like getting up to talk to a colleague in person or introduce yourself to someone new can ensure you're not inadvertently becoming isolated at work. By becoming more mindful of how you adopt communication systems at your workplace, you can help your team become more engaged with one another, more focused, more present, and more productive.

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