

# TEN PRINCIPLES

## For Successfully Integrating International Teams

### Overview

Integrating international teams into existing operations can be a smooth and overwhelmingly positive experience. Relay’s Ten Principles help by providing foundational concepts that make a real difference. Intentionally incorporating these principles into your process will set your organization up for success.

### 1. One Team, Many Locations

Cohesive teams are not limited by geography – they can exist effectively across multiple locations. Defining a team by proximity creates artificial and costly barriers to effective collaboration. Leaders should continually reinforce, in words and actions, the principle of One Team, Multiple Locations. This eliminates destructive Us vs Them dynamics and replaces Otherness with Belonging.

### 2. Context and Mythology

Providing context and introducing team members to the mythology of the company helps them feel connected to the organization and understand the importance and value of their work. Local team members can acquire this knowledge organically, but we recognize that international teammates require our intentional action to furnish this critical information.

### 3. Incremental Onboarding

The path from joining a team to producing valuable work includes important, progressive steps that build capabilities and confidence. These steps are often compressed or overlooked for local hires, who benefit from proximity, but they should be carefully attended with new international team members. Following a standard protocol for introducing work de-risks the onboarding process, resulting in a faster path to value and better outcomes. Companies should invest time in developing the material required for incremental onboarding, and avoid predictable pitfalls by committing to this process.

### 4. Cultivated Relationships

We recognize that relationships are important for a healthy work experience, and that active support of personal connections for international teams replaces the organic collisions enjoyed by local teams. Processes encouraging the creation and maintenance of authentic interpersonal connections boost intrinsic motivation, lower levels of stress and burnout, and improve work performance. Organizations with international teams should incorporate these approaches as individuals may overlook these opportunities.

### 5. Intentional Word Choice

The labels we use inevitably shape behavior and understanding, creating huge opportunities and costly pitfalls when describing international operations. Leaders should adopt words and phrases that support positive outcomes (and avoid those that undermine these efforts). These descriptors should appear consistently in verbal and written communications, and leaders should respectfully redirect the use of undermining language.

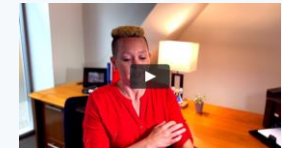
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## TEN PRINCIPLES

### For Successfully Integrating International Teams

#### 6. Regular, Structured Communications

Consistent, appropriately paced communication keeps teams aligned and engaged. Failing to communicate regularly undermines the effectiveness of a distributed team. In an international context, sustainable processes that foster communication help avoid long periods without interaction, and mitigate their destructive impact. By establishing and maintaining a healthy cadence of communication, organizations can keep team members longer, allocate resources effectively, and prevent small problems from becoming larger ones.

[Regular, Structured Communications 3:17](#)



#### 7. Variety and Career Path

Most people gradually lose interest in repetitive work over long periods, as even once-exciting activities become routine. Addressing this on a micro-level involves providing a variety of tasks during someone’s regular job. On a macro-level, it means allowing for professional growth, lateral job mobility, and career path opportunities. Failing to recognize the heightened importance in international teams can lead to higher turnover and declining work quality.

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#### 8. Office Community

Although technology allows for work to be performed anywhere, psychology and utility point to offices as the best place to work. Individuals crave the community, relationships, and human interaction found in a shared space, and benefit from clearer boundaries between work and home. Offices also provide better security, connectivity, and ergonomics with far fewer distractions. A well-designed office promotes employee satisfaction, productivity, and accountability.

[Office Community 2:16](#)



#### 9. Well-Designed Work

Effective design of work is just as important as design in products, buildings, and manufacturing. Knowledge work involves adding value to information, and we can clearly articulate inputs, required operations, outputs, and hand-off methods. International team members benefit disproportionately from effective work design, as they lack the proximity that often masks shortcomings in this area. Focusing on these approaches leads to better outcomes in distributed teams.

[Well-Designed Work 3:02](#)



#### 10. Globalization Beters All

Operating globally benefits everyone involved and is not a zero-sum game. Building a distributed workforce makes opportunities in new markets, but also creates positive change for existing team members, customers, and the organization overall. Acknowledging and explaining these positive impacts provides useful context and generates support and excitement for these efforts.

[Globalization Beters All 3:13](#)



Contact your Customer Success Representative if you would like to discuss specific interventions, ways to incorporate these Principles, or custom or in-person training for your team.