

The Hidden Cost of Global Hybrid Work: Can Teams Meetings Bridge the Knowledge Gap?



(Global Collaboration in a Hybrid World: Leveraging Technology to Connect Teams Across Borders)

As more organisations embrace global hybrid work, we enjoy unprecedented flexibility. But is this shift costing us more than we realise when it comes to knowledge transfer?

In this new working model, the way knowledge is shared and retained has become more critical than ever. While technology platforms like Microsoft Teams enable seamless communication across the globe, they also introduce complexities in managing both explicit (formal, documented) and tacit (personal, experience-based) knowledge. These complexities, if unaddressed, could hinder your organisation's ability to retain its most valuable asset: **knowledge**.

This article explores how organisations operating globally can optimise tools like Teams to bridge knowledge gaps, preserve **organisational memory**, and unlock the full potential of hybrid work environments on a global scale.

From Global Teams to Global Silos: The Loss of Informal Knowledge Sharing

In global hybrid teams, where employees may be working in different regions and time zones, the exchange of knowledge is often limited to structured meetings. Some of the richest insights, however, come from informal conversations—whether they happen during a coffee break, a casual hallway chat, or spontaneous discussions after a meeting. These interactions are the moments when **tacit knowledge**, built through years of experience, is most often shared.

In a global hybrid environment, with reliance on scheduled Teams meetings, many of these casual moments are lost. While these tools ensure that explicit knowledge (such as reports, presentations, and documentation) is shared, the **silent cost** is the reduction in opportunities for tacit knowledge transfer. This can create **knowledge silos** where key insights remain trapped within specific regions, teams, or individuals, instead of being distributed throughout the organisation.

In the global context, this fragmentation is magnified. Cultural differences, language barriers, and time zone constraints further complicate the informal sharing of knowledge. It might be worth considering how your organisation can recreate these moments of informal knowledge sharing globally. Encouraging the use of Teams for "virtual drop-ins" or "office hours," where employees can casually engage across time zones, might help overcome this barrier.

Managing Global Intellectual Capital in Hybrid Teams

Intellectual capital, the collective knowledge, skills, and experience that your employees bring, is the backbone of any organisation's success—especially when operating globally. In a hybrid global model, managing this intangible asset becomes even more complex. It's not just about ensuring that **human capital** (employee expertise), **structural capital** (systems and processes), and **customer capital** (relationships and networks) are functioning smoothly; it's also about ensuring that knowledge transfer occurs seamlessly across regions and cultures.

For global hybrid teams, the challenge is ensuring that **human capital** is fully utilised regardless of location. Remote workers, particularly those in different time zones or cultural contexts, may feel disconnected from the rest of the organisation. They may miss out on spontaneous mentorship or casual conversations that often happen in a physical office setting. This creates the risk of **localised knowledge silos**, where key insights are trapped within certain regions or departments, rather than shared globally.

To bridge this gap, consider how to facilitate knowledge-sharing across borders. Creating more frequent opportunities for global, cross-regional exchanges of knowledge within Teams channels or during virtual meetings can help. You might also think about how to encourage global employees to share not just their explicit knowledge, but also their unique perspectives and experiences.

Leveraging Structural Capital to Overcome Global Knowledge Gaps

When it comes to managing knowledge transfer on a global scale, **structural capital**—your systems, processes, and technology—plays a critical role. Microsoft Teams and similar platforms are part of this structural capital, offering the infrastructure needed for global communication. However, these tools must be used strategically to ensure they support effective knowledge transfer across different locations and time zones.

Team's meetings, while efficient for task-oriented communication, are not always enough to bridge global knowledge gaps. One potential solution is to use Teams not just for meetings, but as a **global knowledge repository**. By creating dedicated Teams channels for sharing key insights, lessons learned, and global best practices, you ensure that important knowledge isn't lost across borders.

Recording meetings, offering translated summaries for non-native speakers, and creating asynchronous communication channels for employees in different time zones can help ensure that both explicit and tacit knowledge is accessible to the entire global team. Encouraging cross-regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing initiatives within these channels can prevent the fragmentation of knowledge across global hybrid teams.

Organisational Memory: The Importance of Knowledge Retention in Global Teams

At the heart of effective global knowledge management is **organisational memory**—the collective pool of knowledge that is built over time and retained within the company. In global hybrid teams, the

risk is that this organisational memory becomes fragmented. Employees across different regions may have different processes, tools, or insights, leading to inconsistent knowledge retention and transfer.

The challenge in a global hybrid environment is ensuring that both tacit and explicit knowledge continue to be shared and stored effectively. Without deliberate processes for sharing and documenting insights, valuable knowledge could be lost when employees in key regions leave or change roles.

The **Spiral of Organisational Knowledge Creation** can provide a useful framework for understanding how knowledge is created and shared globally. This process involves four stages:

1. **Socialisation**: Sharing tacit knowledge through shared experiences—something that becomes harder when teams are separated by geography and culture.
2. **Externalisation**: Converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. In a global context, this could involve documenting local market insights or cultural nuances in a way that is accessible to other regions.
3. **Combination**: Integrating explicit knowledge from different sources to create new global insights.
4. **Internalisation**: Absorbing explicit knowledge and applying it locally, turning it back into tacit knowledge through experience.



(The Spiral of Organisational Knowledge Creation: A Continuous Cycle of Sharing, Learning, and Innovation)

To preserve organisational memory in a global hybrid work environment, you may need to create deliberate opportunities for socialisation and externalisation. This could be achieved by dedicating time during global Teams meetings for employees to share market-specific insights or cultural experiences. Encouraging employees to document these insights ensures that they contribute to the organisation's global memory.

Building a Global Culture of Knowledge Sharing

In global hybrid teams, fostering a **culture of knowledge sharing** becomes even more critical. Employees need to feel empowered to share their insights not just with their immediate team, but

across the entire global organisation. This requires a shift in mindset—where knowledge sharing becomes a natural part of the company’s culture, regardless of location or time zone.

Consider how your organisation can encourage employees from different regions to engage in ongoing knowledge exchanges, both formal and informal. Team’s channels can facilitate global collaboration by enabling asynchronous communication, where employees can contribute to discussions and share insights regardless of time differences. Additionally, offering training and development programs that focus on cross-cultural communication and collaboration will help build a more connected global team.

Unlocking the Full Potential of Global Hybrid Work

Global hybrid work offers organisations incredible flexibility and the opportunity to leverage a truly diverse talent pool. But to fully unlock its potential, knowledge management—especially the transfer of tacit knowledge—must be a priority. The complexities of working across cultures, time zones, and borders make it more important than ever to ensure that knowledge flows freely throughout the organisation.

By leveraging tools like Microsoft Teams, organisations can create a structure that supports both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing across regions. More importantly, by fostering a culture of global collaboration and knowledge sharing, organisations can ensure that their intellectual capital is fully utilised, allowing them to thrive in a global hybrid work environment.

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