

# Encourage Team Connection

## (CULTURE INFUSION: PRINCIPLE 9)

At Actualize, building strong, lasting relationships with our team members is vital to our success. Whether your team is fully remote, hybrid, or in-person, showing appreciation and fostering connections can significantly enhance morale and overall productivity. In today's evolving work environment, it's essential that every individual feels valued, no matter their location. To help you achieve this, we have compiled a list of simple yet effective activities that can strengthen relationships with your team, boost engagement, and create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

### What can you do to show your people you care?



#### Host Leadership Chats

Try conducting video or in-person small group sessions with your team and leadership with a clear topic of discussion in mind. For example, in our chats, we ask, *"Why are you passionate about Actualize?"* One of our partners will answer the question first, then open the floor for the rest of the group to share their perspectives. As a leadership team, we get to witness what inspires everyone, ensuring they are able to do more of what they enjoy going forward.



#### Send Care Packages

Whether a hand-written letter or a custom package, send something via the mail to strengthen personal connections. Our internal team recently participated in a virtual facial, and the aesthetician sent a package to all team members. Additionally, we've sent out Actualize swag and other items we know our team would appreciate. When someone is expecting a baby, we send Actualize onesies. With a move or marriage, we like to send customized cutting blocks. Lastly, when someone experiences the loss of a loved one, we find that chimes are a thoughtful way to help them remember that their loved ones are always with them.



#### Regular Check-In's

At our firm, supervisors and direct reports are in contact at least monthly. Conducting regular check-ins with your teams is a great way to open the door for more empathy and authentic two-way communication. These regular check-ins allow you to connect personally and professionally with your team members, enabling you to provide tailored support or solutions as needed.



#### Encouraging Self-Reflection

Encourage your team to engage in self-reflection, as accountability is a two-way street. This practice can pave the way for meaningful and necessary conversations. To facilitate this, we have added five introspective questions to our goal and performance review templates:

- > What do you want to accomplish in the next year at our firm?
- > What can we do to better support your aspirations?
- > What aspects of your position challenge you?
- > How do you currently use your resources (ex. Training budgets, mentors) and how can you better use them in the future?
- > What makes your job less enjoyable?

The same questions are answered at the beginning, middle and end of the year so we can track progress and concerns.

## How can you foster team connection?

### Announce Wins

- Encourage team members to share personal and professional wins to display for all the firm to celebrate (newsletter, portal, boards)
- Start a weekly win email with immediate team members

### Conduct Activities

- **Cause-Related** - Giving back through cause-related initiatives truly brings people together. We support our teams in hands-on giving efforts.
  - \* “Elves” give back at the holidays in different regions. We had people on each of our global teams give back to those in need.
  - \* Get involved in local communities to support teams, homeless, and less fortunate. For example, sponsoring local kids’ teams, feeding the homeless, and donating time and resources to those needing support
  - \* Choose a cause – we annually do a wellness event to raise money for Alex’s Lemonade Stand in support of childhood cancer and research.
- **In-person** is always the best, yet this can be difficult these days with teams working in different locations and personal commitments. Whenever possible our team finds these efforts most rewarding.
- **Meeting Connection** - Creating a fun theme or introduction topic fosters camaraderie leading to higher engagement during the meeting. If the theme requires preparation, communicate with your team in advance to create an inclusive meeting environment.
  - \* Wear a Funky Hat or Sunglasses
  - \* Collect the Team’s Favorite Memes
  - \* Showcase Your Favorite Background
  - \* Start with a question such as:
    - This or That (ex., farm vs. city, text vs. call)
    - Use the “thumbs up” emoji to respond to the Never Have I Ever questions below (ex, re-gifted something, eaten food that broke the five-second rule)
    - What is your most prized possession?
    - What’s your go-to comfort food or guilty pleasure snack?
    - What is your biggest fashion blunder?
- **Virtual Connection Ideas**
  - \* Try a Fitness Class (Yoga/Bootcamp)
  - \* Share a Childhood Photo or Story
  - \* Show and Tell
  - \* Host a Virtual Wine or Spirit Tasting
  - \* Play Two Truths and One Lie
  - \* Compete for the Best Virtual Background
  - \* Hire Comedians for a Contest (DC Improv, Comedy Kumite)
  - \* Conduct an Improv Class
  - \* Meditate or Practice Mindfulness Together
  - \* Share Your Favorite Quote and Why
  - \* Start a Book Club
  - \* Tell Riddles
  - \* Cook Together
  - \* Showcase Your Favorite Book and Why
  - \* Participate in contests (wellness, firm ideas)

