

The great workplace debate:

Are in-person offsites essential for distributed teams?

PROS

When people actually set goals, in-person offsites can facilitate deep, collaborative work that's hard to pull off in a remote environment.

Offsites are big bets. When we meet face-to-face, and carve out larger blocks of time to connect and brainstorm, we create the conditions that allow ambitious ideas to emerge.

There really is no substitute for that trust and connection you can build in-person. You need to have that context to make the remote or hybrid approach really work.

CONS

For many companies, offsites are an expensive legacy practice that happens year after year without stopping to question the benefits.

Offsites are difficult for parents or caretakers with strict schedules, people with disabilities, or even just different personality types.

When companies plan activities without these various needs in mind, they're distracting at best, and at worst, can make people feel less included in their group.

Trust is built over time, not just by being in proximity to people over a couple of days. And most of what gets called "team building" doesn't actually build teams in any authentic way.