



# Adapting communication styles for **inclusive remote and hybrid work**

## Information on the Case Study

**Organisation:** AthenaTech Solutions

**Size:** 150 employees

**Location:** Athens, Greece

**Sector:** Information Technology and Software Development

## Operational Context

AthenaTech Solutions is a technology SME based in Athens, Greece, specialising in developing software solutions for clients across various industries. The company employs software developers, project managers, UX/UI designers, and support staff. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, AthenaTech Solutions adopted a hybrid work model, allowing employees to work remotely and on-site per their roles and preferences. The shift to hybrid work aimed to provide flexibility while maintaining productivity and collaboration.

## The Problem/Opportunity

**Problem:** The transition to remote and hybrid work highlighted communication challenges within the company. Remote employees reported feeling excluded from critical discussions and decision-making processes. Differences in communication styles and preferences led to misunderstandings and reduced collaboration. Communication practices needed to be adapted to ensure inclusivity and effective collaboration in the hybrid work environment.

**Opportunity:** AthenaTech Solutions recognised the opportunity to address these communication challenges proactively. By adapting communication styles to be more inclusive, the company aimed to improve employee engagement, foster a sense of belonging, and enhance overall productivity.

## What Was Done

### 1. Conducting a communication audit:

**Action:** The HR department conducted a comprehensive audit of existing communication practices to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

**Example:** Analysed communication channels, meeting formats, and feedback mechanisms through employee surveys and focus groups.

### 2. Implementing inclusive communication training:

**Action:** Provided training for all employees on inclusive communication practices.

**Example:** Conducted workshops on active listening, non-verbal communication cues in virtual settings, and cultural sensitivity. Specialised training for managers on leading inclusive virtual meetings was also provided.

### 3. Standardising virtual meeting protocols:

**Action:** Developed standardised protocols for virtual meetings to ensure equal participation and inclusivity.

**Example:** Established rules such as rotating facilitation roles, using round-robin formats to ensure everyone has a chance to speak, and encouraging the use of chat functions for input. Ensured all meetings had clear agendas and were recorded for those unable to attend live.

### 4. Enhancing asynchronous communication:

**Action:** Increased the use of asynchronous communication to accommodate different time zones and work schedules.

**Example:** Used project management tools like Trello and communication platforms like Slack for updates and discussions. Created a central repository for project documentation and updates accessible to all team members.

### 5. Creating feedback loops:

**Action:** Established regular feedback loops to improve communication practices continuously.

**Example:** Implemented monthly surveys and virtual suggestion boxes where employees could provide feedback on communication effectiveness and inclusivity. Held quarterly town hall meetings to address feedback and discuss improvements.

## 6. Promoting a culture of transparency and openness:

**Action:** Encouraged transparency and openness in all communications to build trust and inclusivity.

**Example:** Regularly shared company updates and strategic decisions with all employees through virtual all-hands meetings. Encouraged leaders to model open communication by sharing their experiences and encouraging questions.

## Outcomes

### 1. Improved employee engagement:

**Outcome:** Inclusive communication practices led to higher employee engagement.

**Evidence:** Employee engagement scores increased by 25%, with specific improvements in the areas of communication and collaboration.

### 2. Enhanced team collaboration:

**Outcome:** Teams reported better collaboration and fewer misunderstandings.

**Evidence:** Project completion times improved by 20%, and team satisfaction scores regarding collaboration increased by 30%.

### 3. Increased participation in meetings:

**Outcome:** Standardised virtual meeting protocols ensured more equitable participation.

**Evidence:** Surveys showed a 35% increase in employees feeling that their voices were heard and valued during meetings.

### 4. Greater flexibility and work-life balance:

**Outcome:** Enhanced asynchronous communication allowed for greater flexibility.

**Evidence:** Employees reported better work-life balance, with satisfaction scores in this area improving by 20%.

### 5. Continuous improvement and adaptability:

**Outcome:** Regular feedback loops enabled continuous improvement of communication practices.

**Evidence:** Ongoing adjustments based on employee feedback led to incremental improvements, with quarterly reviews showing consistent progress.

#### 6. Stronger sense of belonging:

**Outcome:** Transparent and open communication fostered a stronger sense of belonging and trust.

**Evidence:** Employee surveys indicated a 30% increase in feelings of inclusion and belonging within the company.

### Conclusion

By proactively adapting communication styles to be more inclusive, AthenaTech Solutions successfully navigated the challenges of remote and hybrid work. The company's comprehensive approach improved employee engagement, collaboration, and overall satisfaction. These efforts not only enhanced the work environment but also contributed to better business outcomes, demonstrating the critical importance of inclusive communication in a hybrid work model.