

Build strong 1-to-1 interpersonal relationships You cannot use a cross-functional team as the only opportunity to build ties between different team members. For better relationships between teams as a whole, you must give people the opportunity to build stronger 1-to-1 relationships. Encourage employees to meet informally for a coffee to get to know each other further. Increase diversity understanding It's difficult to drop the mindset of us vs. them. Getting team members to meet 1-to-1 with people who are not necessarily similar to them helps to develop their empathy, understanding, and conflict resolution skills. Cross-functional teams are often made up of individuals with different interests, talents, work styles, and ages so this skill is essential. Meeting colleagues from different functions 1-to-1 starts to break stereotypes and helps team members to better navigate complex group dynamics.

Increase trust and respect between colleagues Trust and respect does not come hand in hand with a structural change – it requires a mindset shift. Challenge employees from different teams to meet 1-to-1 and discuss their respective industries over coffee. There may be baggage between departments that have previously competed directly/indirectly for resources, staff and recognition. Building a deeper understanding of different sides to the same coin can help employees to break the 'victim mode' of blaming external circumstances and, instead, strengthen alignment to the company's vision. Encourage face-to-face meetings where possible Especially in the early stages of building 1-to-1 relationships, when possible, people should meet face to face. This focuses people's attention and helps to drive transparency, trust, and efficiency. It also helps to avoid faceless passive-aggressive email threads further down the line. Give employees the space to keep growing and learning A lot of cross-functional teams are set up to tackle problems outside of each employee's day to day activities so there is a risk that they will be disengaged. By encouraging education and experimentation, team members will be clear of the value they are gaining from this in terms of pushing people to think outside of the box and sparking innovation.