EMPOWERING WOMEN
FOR DIGITAL & REMOTE HR CAREERS

MODULE 2 · COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION · LESSON 2.1

Collaboration platforms in HR work

Four platforms, one question: where does this message belong, and will anyone find it again in six months?



1.25 training hours · Building the basics · RemoteHeR

WHAT THIS LESSON COVERS

Five things, in order

- The platform landscape — Teams, Slack, Google Workspace and Zoom, and what each was actually built for
- Channels, threads and direct messages — structuring HR communication so it can be found again
- Synchronous or asynchronous — choosing deliberately rather than by habit
- Time zones and part-time patterns — working across them without excluding anyone
- Confidentiality in shared channels — what must never be written in chat



The tools are not the hard part. The decisions inside them are.

Nobody gets stuck because they cannot find the send button. People get stuck because they put a sensitive message in a channel of forty people, or because the answer to a question they are asked every week is buried in a direct message from March.

THE LANDSCAPE

Four platforms, four different jobs

Microsoft Teams

Built around the organisation. Channels sit inside teams, files live in SharePoint behind them. Strongest where HR already runs on Microsoft 365.

Slack

Built around the conversation. Fast, searchable, strong threading. Weaker on documents — it expects files to live somewhere else.

Google Workspace

Built around the document. Chat and Meet are add-ons to Docs, Sheets and Drive. Weaker as a home for structured team conversation.

Zoom

Built around the meeting. Does one thing very well, and is not a home for your written communication however tempting the chat panel is.

WHERE YOUR WORK WILL LIVE

One workspace, many places to lose things

You will rarely choose the platform. What you choose is where each message goes inside it — and that decision is the whole lesson.

- A message in the right place is found by someone who was not there when you wrote it.
- A message in the wrong place is seen by people it was never meant for.
- Both decisions take seconds, and both last for years.



In HR, a message is often a record.

A note about a flexible working request, an agreed return-to-work date, a warning about conduct. In a dispute these can be disclosed. Module 6 covers the law.



WHERE THINGS GO

Channel, thread or direct message

Channel

For anything the team may need later. Policy announcements, process questions, decisions. Findable by search, visible to people who join afterwards, and it survives you leaving the organisation.

Thread

For the discussion hanging off one message. Keeps the channel readable and keeps the answer attached to the question. Post the outcome back to the channel if the thread decided something.

Direct message

For things that genuinely concern one person, and for nothing else. A DM cannot be found by anyone who needs it later, including you. Treat it as a corridor, not a filing cabinet.

STRUCTURE

A workspace that can still be searched

1. **Name channels for what people search for**

   hr-policies and hr-recruitment beat general and stuff. Someone searching in eighteen months is guessing at words, not remembering your naming meeting.

2. **One channel per recurring subject, not per project**

   Projects end and their channels go quiet. Subjects recur. Recruitment happens every year; the 2026 hiring round does not.

3. **Write the first message in a channel as its purpose**

   Pin it. "Questions about leave, absence and flexible working. Anything about an individual goes to the HR inbox." That one line prevents most misuse.

4. **Decide what does not belong, and say so**

   Every channel needs an out. Naming where sensitive things go is what stops them appearing where they should not.

THE TEST

Will someone find this in six months?

⚠ Lost

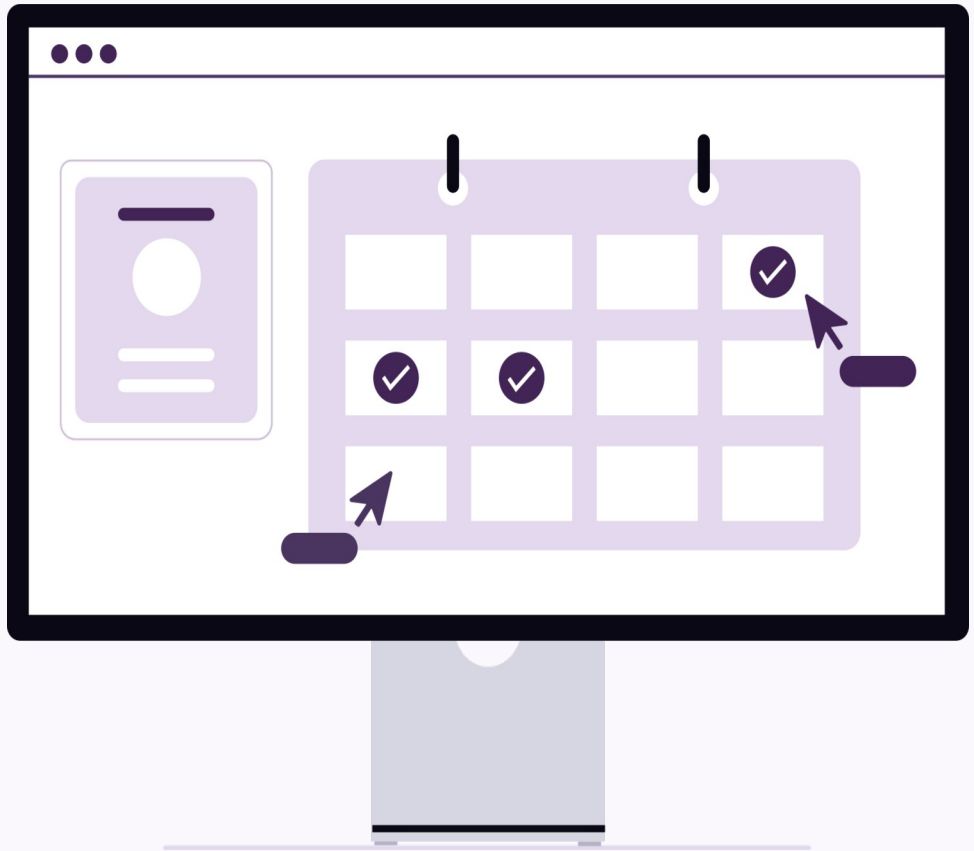
- The parental leave process, explained in a DM to one manager
- A decision made in a Zoom chat panel that disappeared when the call ended
- "See attached" with no attachment and no subject line
- A channel called general with four years of everything in it
- The answer to a common question, given eleven separate times

Findable

- The parental leave process, in hr-policies, with the words people would search for
- The decision posted back to the channel after the call, in one sentence
- A message whose first line says what it is about
- A channel per subject, each with a pinned purpose
- The answer written once, pinned, and linked to when it is asked again

Most things do not need to happen live.

The default in a distributed team is written, findable, and answerable when the other person is working. A meeting is what you choose when the topic genuinely needs a voice.



CHOOSING DELIBERATELY

When to write, and when to talk

Write it

- Anything factual — dates, entitlements, process steps
- Anything more than two people need
- Anything that will be asked again
- Anything that needs a record
- Anything where people need time to read carefully — a policy change, a benefits update

Talk about it

- Anything the person may find upsetting
- Anything where you need to hear how they respond
- Anything you might have to change your mind about mid-conversation
- A disagreement that has already been through two rounds of email
- Anything you would not want misread

IN PRACTICE

It is 17:40 on Friday

A manager messages the shared HR channel: “Can you confirm Ana's last working day? She's told the team she is leaving and people are asking.” Ana has not resigned formally. She mentioned to you, in confidence, that she is considering it.

What good looks like

- Do not answer in the channel. Anything you say there — including "I can't discuss that" — confirms something about Ana to forty people.
- Reply to the manager directly, not in the channel, and keep it factual: you will come back to them on Monday.
- Speak to Ana first, by voice, on Monday. She may not know the team is discussing it.
- If a resignation does arrive, the announcement is Ana's to shape, not the channel's.

44%

Of respondents worked in a hybrid pattern by 2024, while fully remote working fell to about 14%. Many also work part-time or compressed hours.

Eurofound e-survey, 2024, as cited in the RemoteHeR Skills Mapping Report (2026), section B2.

That means a meeting at 09:00 Monday is not neutral. It is a choice that includes some people and excludes others — and the ones it excludes are disproportionately those with caring responsibilities.

In HR you are often the person setting the time. Whoever sets the time decides who can be in the room.

ACROSS TIME ZONES AND PATTERNS

Four habits that stop people being excluded

Rotate the awkward hour

If one time zone always takes the early call, that is a policy, not an accident. Rotate it, and say so publicly.

Decisions land in writing

Whatever was decided live gets posted to the channel in one short message. Someone who was asleep is not a step behind.

Publish working patterns

Everyone's hours and non-working days in one place. It stops guessing, and makes part-time patterns normal rather than invisible.

Record, but not everything

Record the information. Not the discussion where someone might say something difficult — people self-censor on camera.

Some things never go in a chat window.

Health. Disciplinary matters. Someone's performance, discussed without them. Pay. Anything you would not read aloud with that person beside you.





CONFIDENTIALITY

Four things that never go in chat

⚠ Health and absence reasons

"She's off with her back again" is special category data under the GDPR. The fact of absence may be shareable; the reason almost never is.

⚠ Anything about an ongoing case

Disciplinary and grievance matters go in the case file, not the channel. A stray line in chat can be disclosed and can undermine the whole process.

⚠ Opinions about a person

"He's not really up to it" written in a DM is still discoverable. Assessments of people belong in the process built for them, not in passing.

⚠ Screenshots of anything

Screenshotting one conversation into another strips its context and doubles the number of places sensitive information now lives.

IN PRACTICE

A manager sends you a direct message

> *“Quick one — Marek's been off three Mondays running. I think it's a mental health thing. Can you look at his file and tell me if there's history? Don't want to make it formal yet.”*

What good looks like

- Do not answer the question as asked. You are being invited to disclose health data to someone with no lawful basis to receive it.
- Do not continue the exchange in chat. Move it to a call — partly for confidentiality, mostly because the manager needs a conversation, not a file.
- Redirect to what the manager can actually do: a supportive conversation with Marek about the absence pattern, without diagnosing anything.
- Write your own note afterwards, in the HR system, about the advice you gave. Not in the chat thread.

IF IT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Something sensitive is in the wrong place

1. **Do not delete it first**

   In many organisations deletion is itself a problem, and in a live case it can look like concealment. Find out the rule before you act.

2. **Stop it spreading**

   Say clearly in the channel that the message should not be forwarded or screenshotted, and move the conversation elsewhere.

3. **Tell whoever owns data protection**

   Depending on what it was and who saw it, this may be a reportable personal data breach with a deadline attached. That judgement is not yours to make alone.

4. **Tell the person it concerns**

   They will find out. Hearing it from you, early and plainly, is materially better than hearing it from a colleague later.

Tools you will see used

Microsoft Teams

Free version is enough to practise channels, threads and permissions.

Slack

A free workspace is enough to practise channels, threads and permissions.

Google Workspace

A personal Google account gives you Docs, Drive and Chat.

Zoom

Free accounts are enough to practise. Check the current limits on call length.

You do not need a paid account for anything in this module. Where a tool needs a login, a free tier is enough.

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN

Which channel?



Sort fifteen HR messages into where each belongs

Channel, thread, direct message, or not in writing at all. Each one has feedback explaining why — including the ones you get right, because the reasoning is the point rather than the score.

It feeds into

Your channel reasoning, reused in the pack's line on why the sensitive message was sent the way it was.

No mark

Your tutor reads it and replies in writing. Activities carry no mark: only the module test and the artefact have a result.

RECAP

Before you move on

- Each platform is built around something — the organisation, the conversation, the document, the meeting. That tells you where things get lost.
- Channel for what the team may need again; thread to keep a discussion attached; direct message for what genuinely concerns one person.
- Write it when it is factual, repeated, or needs a record. Talk about it when it might upset someone or you need to hear the answer.
- Whoever sets the meeting time decides who can be in the room. Rotate the awkward hour and put decisions in writing.
- Health, discipline, performance and pay do not go in a chat window. If you would not say it with the person present, do not write it.

Next: the knowledge check for 2.1. It is never graded, you have unlimited attempts, and every option comes with feedback.

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Lesson 2.1 complete

Do the sorting activity, then take the knowledge check. Lesson 2.2 is virtual meetings and facilitation — where you run one yourself.

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