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Remote management of a communication project

Louder Italia srl case study



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1. Introduction

The main goal of the thesis is to help a small communication agency to work completely in remote, thanks to a software or a set of different softwares that I will examine.

Thanks to my work of thesis, I want to synthetize the two main experience that I faced as professional during this year: the internship experience and the Coronavirus health emergency.

So, my aim is to show how it was like to work in a communication agency as Louder Italia srl and how it can face a situation of complete smart working, caused by the spread of the epidemy, in order to achieve the same or even better results, in terms of KPI, as a normal period.

2020 will be always remembered as the year in which the World knew COVID-19. The epidemy, started in December in China, arrived in Italy around February; knowing that the transmission of the virus occurs through respiratory droplets, it was absolutely necessary to avoid crowded places, workplace as well.

For the first time, the employees of all firms were forced to work from home and to collaborate just using conference call and online supports.

What really fascinated me is that we already had all the tools and technologies that make complete smart working effective and possible, simply we did not use all their features until this historical moment.

So, according to me, it is necessary for all kind of firms and public administration as well to better study and know new technologies and their functions, because this period of crisis could be seen as the opportunity to progress and improve skills and capabilities.

We are asked to imagine new routines, new methodologies, new kind of communication; we are forced to create a digital revolution for which, fortunately, we have already created the tools.

Now is the moment to go deeper in the knowledge of our new instruments, trying to take advantages from a moment of crisis.

Starting from this intuition, I propose my work of thesis as a starting point for a small communication agency to digitalize and innovate their processes and to be hungrier of novelty in the field of project management and organization.

A process of digitalization will surely require a primary step of study and the establishment of rigorous work phases, flow, prioritization of steps and information.

For this reason, first I will analyze Louder project management as it was before the spread of Coronavirus, then I will propose how to digitalize each phase, following pattern and needs, analyzed and highlighted in the physical management, in order to face complete smart working.

It will be the opportunity to think again about how work is performed and maybe find new and improved way of carrying out projects, correcting old routines and shortening time of execution.

In this chapter, after an analysis about COVID-19 health emergency, I will talk about Louder Italia, focusing on its history, structure, main clients and tasks as well as most important projects realized, referring also to my internship experience.

a. COVID-19 and the need for smart working

Due to COVID-19 health emergency, on March 2020 every firms were forced not to work in the place that they have created to run their business and without the possibility to physically meet no one of the stakeholders of each project. For this reason, in this period it is highlighted the importance of smart working and of all the tools that can help to simplify carrying out a project.

The primary step to deal with the emergency was to know our opponent and try to fight with it: “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus. [...] The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important to also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).”¹

Knowing that the virus was arrived in Italy, at first each firm began to follow precise rules, in order to avoid the infection inside the office. So, during the second part of February, workers were asked to wash hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and not touching face, cough into a flexed elbow, avoid organizing crowded meeting, trying to respect distances.

Where it was possible, some firms start to turn workers, keeping some employees inside the office and some others at home, using the so called “smart working” or agile work, a solution already used in some firms and agreed for some days a month in the newest contract. Never before this moment it was used in this way.

It was taken just as a possibility and a way to keep in contact with office, without crowding the space; nobody could have foreseen that soon it would be the only way to continue working in most companies and that, the one that could not use this work method would be forced to stop production flows.

In fact, with the DPCM of March 9th, Italian government propose agile work as methodology that COULD be applied also without specific individual agreement with

¹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

each worker;² so, the decision about how to organize work during the first day of crisis was leaved to firms' management.

For example, Louder Italia on Friday March 7th decided that the following week all workers will experience for the first time the smart working: this decision was taken in order to prevent something that maybe would have imposed soon by the government.

As Louder head office foresaw, on March 11st a new DPCM stated to implement maximum use of agile work for the activities that can be carried out at home or remotely³, applying the 2087th article of the Civil Code⁴ that commits the employers to take all necessary measures to protect the physical integrity of the employees.

In this way, the usage of agile work method started to be the unique chance to carry on business activities during Coronavirus health emergency.

Some firms were a bit more prepared than others to face to the situation, thanks to technologies already used to carry out projects; but, for sure, nobody was completely ready to deal with something characterized by so much uncertainty, unforeseen conditions and psychological pressure.

Moreover, it has to be mentioned that “agile work is not only a method, it’s a mindset”, as Bain’s Darrell Rigby said during an interview with Rob Markey.⁵ So, it has to be considered that using agile methodologies does not mean just working together by remote.

It entails a radical change in work management, in terms of “leadership and the culture in the organization. You probably will change your management systems—planning, budgeting, reviewing—to do those things more frequently.”⁶

What it is happening now could be considered as a starting point that could pave the way for a management revolution that maybe will follow the digital one.

² <https://www.pmi.it/economia/lavoro/326957/coronaviru-lo-smart-working-e-quasi-un-obbligo.html>

³ <http://lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/normative/Documents/2020/DPCM-11-marzo-2020.pdf> point 7.a

⁴ <https://www.codice-civile-online.it/codice-civile/articolo-2087-del-codice-civile>

⁵ <https://www.netpromotersystem.com/it/insights/agile-is-not-just-a-methods-its-a-mindset-podcast/>

⁶ Darrell Rigby interview

Surely, this historical period would stress a behavioral change in each company, making easier the advent of agile, that is considered for management.

Companies must keep in mind that the condition around them cannot be controlled and that the only way to survive is to be ready and extremely reactive to external condition radical changes.

Even though this it is one of the basic rules to apply running a business and it is something that every entrepreneur already knows, I think that Coronavirus health emergency has reminded us the concept in the most effective and brutal way.

b. Louder overview and history

Louder Italia srl is an international “event organization, marketing and communication agency that conceives, creates, plans and executes Living Marketing for leading brands in the Italian and international market.”⁷

“The agency operates in different product sectors, demonstrating high expertise in the Food & Beverage and Fashion & Luxury world, providing numerous services designed and developed to achieve the communication objectives of companies and brands: roadshows and sampling activities, corporate events, such as conventions and meetings, consumer promos, graphic design, fairs, sponsorships and more generally all the contact activities of Living Marketing and Events.

Louder proposes itself as a real partner of the company that creates efficiency and added value, responding to the different communication needs towards multiple targets, final consumers, sales force, stakeholders, developing and organizing activities and events capable of involving the target audiences in an effective way, achieving all the defined objectives.”⁸

The core team of the company was born in 2004 when it was contacted to organize the “Olympic Torch relay 2006” for Coca-Cola. It was composed by Davide Caggiano (Louder managing director), Nicola Uliari (creative director) and Edoardo Cogo (administrative director), who in the following year will became the founders of the company.

They already had several years of experience in the world of events and promotions, especially in trade and in consumer goods sector.

The organization of the OTR (Olympic Torch relay) has allowed them to position their selves on the large tour market, offering them the opportunity for a widespread network throughout the country.

⁷ <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/about>

⁸ <http://www.lannual.it/inserzionisti/louder/>

In 2006, they elected Turin as their permanent head office and at the end of 2007 an international communication company, based in Helsinki, offered them to join their group of European agencies: Louder.

From that moment on, the international scope of the works and the daily confrontation with structured realities have allowed them to undertake a path of growth that will soon pay off its fruits, making the turnover grow steadily.

Since 2011, the original team has 100% acquired of the Italian section, maintaining excellent business relationships with the Finnish group and keeping their name and logo, but adding the symbol that today represents Louder Italia and makes it recognizable: the red heart in the target

Since that time, Louder Italy identity has taken on a defined shape; independence and experience combined with the great enthusiasm that distinguishes the company, help them to surround their selves with new and young skills, capable of increasing their services by supporting a very fast and ephemeral market.

The constant growth of the company is confirmed and rewarded by prestigious award in the fields of event management and communication.

In 2013, Louder won at first place the Best Event Award (BEA) for sport event with the event “Energizer Night Run”, a night run in the Sempione park in Milan, with the Energizer flashlight and with the aim of donating the entire proceeds to UNICEF.⁹

In 2014, with the event “Baci da Napoli” for Perugia, the company won the BEA for low budget events category and the “Mediastars, il premio tecnico per la pubblicità” for best event and in the categories of Street Marketing and No profit¹⁰; in 2015, organizing Love Jukebox Baci Perugia, they won again the BEA in Street Marketing category¹¹.

In the same year, Louder obtained the first place in the category Corporate Social Responsibility event with H&M World Recycle Week, creating the Recycle Box, to

⁹ <https://www.besteventawards.it/events/energizer-night-run-for-unicef/>

¹⁰ <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/news/louder-premiata-alla-xix-edizione-del-mediastars>

¹¹ <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/news/unaltra-stella-bachecca-louder>

collect used textile product, in the most important square of Turin, Milan, Naples, Bari and promoting a more sustainable future for the fashion world.¹²

In 2016, the company reached the first place at the International GrandPrix Advertising Strategies 2016 in the category “Public event” with the project “Bacardi Summer Wave”, organized at Elba Island and turning the whole island in an open-air disco during summer 2015¹³.

In 2017, Louder obtained the Mediastars award in the Audiovisual Technical Section and in the No Profit category for Special Olympics Italia movie. Next year, it has received Media Key Award for corporate events for the organization of “Nothing is impossible”, Unilever corporate convention.¹⁴

Today with a turnover of almost 8 million euros and a staff of about 30 people, Louder Italy is one of the independent agencies with the best brand reputation in Italy and with one of the highest potential rates to be expressed¹⁵.

¹² <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/case-history/recycle-week>

¹³ <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/news/best-public-event-2015>

¹⁴ <http://www.louderitaly.it/it/news/promotion-global-award-2018-miglior-evento-corporate>

¹⁵ All information about Louder history was directly collected interviewing Davide Caggiano, managing director of the company.

c. Louder structure

The Company is composed of five departments:

- Art;
- Production;
- Account;
- Sales;
- Administration.

The art one is the creative soul of the company: it is composed of copywriters, art directors, creative director, strategists. They are enrolled of translate clients' ideas in real images, words, features. They create the concept that is beyond a campaign or an event, following the direction of the client and practically draw and write what is needed.

Art department is supported and work together with production one. It is composed by designer and production manager: they translate in physical object what is drawn by the arts; so, together with their suppliers, create gadgets, hostesses' uniforms, stands, mascots, booths and all visibility materials request by clients and drawn by arts.

The bridge between clients and the agency is represented by the account department: it is composed by project and account managers, account assistants and the account director. Account managers keep in touch with clients, enrich the relationship between the agency and clients, collect and take new brief: so, they have an external and institution role for the company.

Moreover, they have an internal role when they explain to art and production departments what the clients want, fix deadlines, midterm internal and external presentations, deal with project deliveries and final presentations and, list but not last, calculate the budgets.

Account assistants work with account manager and, helping them, they learn their job. Account managers are assigned to one or more clients, project manager, instead, are assigned to one or more specific project of different clients.

During my internship, I was assigned to account department as account assistant and I had the opportunity to work in different teams and with different account managers, in order to learn more than one method and to deal with several kind of projects and events.

Sales department has the role of searching for new clients, keeping in contact with other firms, with whom it would be possible to collaborate. Taking into consideration that the company is very young, their principal role is to “sell” the company outside the boundaries of usual clients, organizing presentation meeting to create awareness about Louder.

Sales managers are usually present during the brief meeting, where the client has the first approach with the company, explaining what they are asking for a new project; so, as a consequence, they will be present again during the first creative meeting, an internal one, to share with the team what are the goals to be reached.

Their role in the internal meeting is fundamental because they were the first to get in touch with the new client, so, maybe they could have particular insights or intuitions about the new brand contacted.

There are two resources assigned to sales department, but it has to be mentioned that also the account managers are always trying to enrich the relationships with usual client, broadening the collaboration scope, and to know and meet reference of firms, with whom Louder has never work with before.

Administration department is composed of three resources that deal with resources management, bank account management, bills, invoices, wages and all administrative and bureaucratic aspects of the company.

d. My internship experience at Louder Italia srl

In October 2019 I have started my experience at Louder Italia as Account Assistant; I have worked until March 2020 and then, from April until July, I follow my thesis research, without taking part to operative tasks.

During October and November, I focused on the basic knowledge about communication and events, following different tasks and projects, to better understand the whole mechanism that is behind their realizations.

In particular, the first project in which I have work was the organization of a sampling tour for Bel Italia for the launch of a new snack for children. We participated to the tender for the assignment of the work and I follow the project from the explanation of client's brief until the delivery and presentation of Louder proposal and rework.

I had the opportunity to understand what a brief is and how it is taken by the account manager and sales manager and transmitted to the team, how it is subdivided in task and each of them assigned to a resource.

I was assigned to different tasks: creation of the roadmap, research and selection of possible partner, location and event, creation of the Gantt chart, market and competitors' analysis.

In the same period in which I was involved in the presentation of Bel's project, I performed minor tasks in other teams. In particular, I have supported HBC team in suppliers' research for Christmas Markets, organized inside some of HBC plants. In this way I knew another Louder's client, work with another team and deal with a different kind of project.

Then, I worked also with Diageo team: this is composed of an account manager for the whole brand and four managers, one for each different spirit brand: Tanqueray, Gordon, Baileys and Johnnie Walker.

For each of them, I have supported for several months the manager in the post evaluation phase: Louder organize special event around Italy for Diageo and then reports the number of people contacted during the parties.

This is done thanks to a data entry platform called Orbis, in which I inserted type of activation, brand, locations, number of people contacted, number of samples distributed and pictures of the activities. In this way, I had the opportunity to keep in touch with for different brands and understand how they communicate with their final clients and how they convert new clients.

In general, I understood how a post evaluation analysis is performed. Moreover, I worked with the same team, dealing with invoices and bills, so taking part also to the accounting phase.

After the delivery of Bel Italia project, I was involved in a new big project for one of the most famous Italian radio stations: RDS. Louder was called to participate to two different tenders: one for a national tour and the other one for the organization of a fun race.

I have worked on both the projects from the briefing to the delivery, searching suppliers, partners and locations, participating to all the alignment meetings with creative staff, studying how a final presentation to client is done.

Thanks to RDS projects, I had the opportunity to deal with a national tour and a new kind of event, sport one; so, I learned how a race village is structured, how to deal with partners and sponsors, how to organize a program of the activities hour by hour during a race, how to organize the promotion and the ticketing services, how to price the participation to the race, how to deal with public administrations for public land use.

In parallel, I followed other two small projects for Paulaner and Nissan.

For Paulaner, the famous German beer, I made a market analysis, comparing different beer maker tours, campaigns and in store activations, in order to understand what competitors do and propose something original and new for our client events. So, it was a way to learn new characteristics and features of food and beverage market segment communication.

For Nissan, we participate to a tender for the organization of a press event for the launch of a new car model: it was very interesting to deal with automotive sector and with this particular kind of event.

The press one, in fact, is completely different to mass events, you will have a very little public with very high expectations; organizing the day schedule you must know very well what you are exposing and, in this particular case, we need to understand the features of the new car model, in order to highlight them in an original way.

Nissan project gave me the opportunity to see how a strong storytelling is create and how to fascinate a very particular public, searching for amazing locations and brand-new performers. We also involved two influencers, so, it was the way to see how to deal with this new working figures.

During December and January, I had the opportunity to focus on just one project, in order to follow each phase from the start to the close up: it was the realization of one of the most important International meeting of the top management of Reale Group and it took place 23rd and 24th January in Turin.

It was the one and only big project that I had the opportunity to see until its realization, being present also on field during the two days of activities. For this reason, I will take it as a reference model to analyze project management in Louder and I will talk widely about it in the following chapters.

In February, I managed a small project completely by myself: a famous furs producer asked Louder for the realization of two days of interviews during the Milan fashion week, to collect data about customer satisfaction and taste.

Carrying on the project, I have dealt with the management of two operative resources on field, direct relationship with the client and the creation of the budget.

I have also participated to the preparation of the presentation for three tenders for the clients: Porto Piccolo, Mazda and Mc Arthur Glen.

Porto Piccolo and MAG was two similar projects: the clients asked for the organization of a big inauguration event each and some other minor events during the following weekends, for the first one inside the little sea town of Porto Piccolo and for the second one inside of one of their designer outlet.

My principal tasks for the projects were to study the briefs and search for an appropriate performers and kind of entertainment for each event, then contact the artists'

agency to stipulate a draft of contract for their engagement. I also participate to the preparation of the final power point to be presented to the clients and to the definition of the budgets.

With Mazda project, I came back again to automotive sector, but dealing with a different kind of event: an incentive travel. For the first and unique time I dealt with a project addressed to a very small public, just four people, so with a very specific attention and one by one personalization of the experiences. It was a tender again and we won it, even tough it was then postponed due to Coronavirus spread.

The peculiarity of the project was linked to the realization of something really surprising and unconventional, making parallelism to what the guest, that was car vendors, have to recreate in the explanation of the peculiarities of the car they are selling.

The travel aim was to make them continuously inspired and involved in what they are doing. For this reason, our work was extremely centered on the creation of tailor-made experiences, always surprising and customized in all details.

The big challenge for the participation to Mazda tender was not only to practically find unconventional experiences, but also to make the client understand the premiumness of what we were proposing. For this reason, the very critical task of the project was the realization of an effective presentation, that could really attract and catch client's attention.

At the end of February, I was assigned to Coca-Cola team: one of the main clients of Louder is in fact the famous beverage company and there is a work team entirely dedicated to the management of their events.

In particular, joining this team, it was possible for me to know how national tours are managed; in fact, I have worked for the organization of Coca-Cola Zero and Coca-Cola Energy hit and run national tour and events.

It was extremely instructive the participation to the meeting with the client for briefs taking: basically, they explain us what was their idea for the next events, but it was done thanks to deep market analysis, customer satisfaction analysis and brand commitments.

It was the opportunity to understand how the marketing and communication department of a very big multinational works and what there is behind a marketing campaign with this huge impact.

My operative tasks were linked to logistic of the staff and of the product samples; in parallel, I was studying how this events work, because it was something I have never seen before joining the team.

I was working on Coca-Cola tours also during the smart working period, in fact, on March 9th Louder office were closed, having no idea of when it will be open again. As it can be imagined, the client asked us to postpone or even delete all the events scheduled for 2020.

Unfortunately, after one month of smart working, my internship was stopped on April 1st, due to the continuing COVID-19 health emergency and the following contraction of work. From that moment on, I continue to study about the topic of remote work and smart working applied to communication and event agency.

2. Approach to project management in Louder Italia srl

During the internship, I had the opportunity to come into contact with the management of different type of communication projects and events.

In this way, it was possible for me to understand how projects are performed inside the company, how tasks are identified, assigned, monitored and controlled and which tools are used.

So, I will explain how that company works in “normal situation”, during which all the team collaborate inside the same office, and how a project is carried out, dividing the chapter in:

- a) Portfolio management**
- b) Project management and stages of a communication project**
- c) Tools**

As I have anticipated in the previous chapter, talking about project management, I will take as example the organization of Reale Group international meeting, a project that I have the opportunity to follow from the start to close up procedures.

a. Portfolio management

Louder Italia has a numerous clients portfolio and each client is assigned to one and only account manager; in this way the manager will be completely responsible for keeping in touch with him, creating and catching new collaboration opportunities, taking care about the relationship with him, carrying out his projects, participating to his tender, representing the agency in his regard.

The assignment of a client to an account could happen in two ways:

- if the referent of the new client is a direct contact of the account, he will be his reference of the company;
- if the new client arrived from the sales department or from the top management, it will be the account director to allocate him to the account manager who is, at first, available to manage another client and second to the one that already managed projects or product sectors similar to the one of that brand.

Moreover, the top managers have to pay attention to competitors: in fact, the company cannot work at the same time with companies that are direct competitors and, for sure, cannot assign them to the same account manager.

Sometimes, Louder asks directly to the old client if it is possible to work with that new one or, at the start of the collaboration, they sign an agreement in which direct competitors (whit whom Louder cannot work from that moment on) are listed.

There could be account manager devoted to just one client (mono-client): it happens when the project involved lasts a long time (one year or more) or in the case in which there are different projects of the same client, assigned periodically to the same agency.

This kind of big clients, with a portfolio of projects, will need a constant support and it will be easier for them to deal always with the same internal referent, who better know the brand, the type of communication and events and have already created a trust relationship and loyalty not only towards the company, but also towards the specific account manager who handles his projects.

For example, in Louder there is an account manager full time dedicated to Coca-Cola, one dedicated to Diageo, one dedicated to HBC.

There could be period in which the client does not need a constant support, so the single client account could carry out other little projects, contribute to other accounts' work or participate to presentation of tenders, that usually have the delivery date few weeks after brief taking.

All the other account managers are often allocated to different clients, trying to follow one project a time and managing their own working hours, allocating the right time to different projects.

It is account director responsibility to allocate the right workload to each resource, taking into consideration their feedbacks.

The same thing happens in the creative department, having each graphic designer working with an account manager and supporting him with a particular client: in this way, a team is created having the account manager dealing with his client, together with the graphic designer that will always work with him for that specific customer.

As I said for the account, allocating always the same creative resource to the same client will make the work easier, taking into consideration that he already know brand guidelines, type of project, way of communicate, visibility materials to be created.

In this case, it is the creative director to orchestrate and moderate the workload on each resource, taking into consideration his department feedbacks.

This specific task of account and creative directors is supported by the planner; in fact, in Louder, there is a sort of portfolio manager that collect all the projects in progress with the relative resources allocated. In this way, there is a track about the overall workload of the whole agency.

It is really useful in terms of resource management and portfolio management; in a constantly changing situation, it is fundamental to have an always updated instant photograph, that changes week by week.

In fact, it happens very often to have short deadlines for the presentation of a project, the agency deals with project with short delivery time, for this reason the portfolio of projects changes week by week and it has to be constantly updated.

In order to have each workers inside the company aligned with the portfolio, the company meets every Thursday morning for the agency meeting: during this hour, the top management starts listing the projects in progress, the ones that are about to enter and the other ones that are about to be closed.

They also give administrative and organization news and take the chance for publicly raving about someone work.

After top management speeches, each worker is called to add something more about the projects he or she is working on.

This is done not only to be aligned about the work in progress, but also to share the experiences, to make everyone aware about the work performed and how the business is going on, to consider the agency as a whole and to be informed about what your colleagues are doing.

It will be useful in order to have in mind the case history and to know who is working on that particular project that maybe could be useful to be taken as a model for a future one; it is linked to collaboration and be a part of something bigger, a gear of a machine that could work just with everyone commitment.

The agency meeting is also the place to highlight that you are full of work and need some help or, conversely, that you have some free time and could be available to collaborate in someone else projects. It could be the place to implement the portfolio, proposing new projects, new clients, new tenders.

The proposal is analyzed by the top management that understand if it is convenient or not to add one other job. In particular, it is important to accurate evaluate the participation to a tender; in fact, it is something costly and that could bring back no revenues.

So they will evaluate how many firms participate to the tender, if is there an exit fee, in the case in which Louder proposal will be discarded, if the project is aligned with

Louder core competences and expertise, if they already know the client, if the deadline is compatible with the ones already fixed.

The evaluations are made by the top management, helped by the planning document, and the planner, that summarize portfolio, deadlines and account department workload.

The document is prepared and updated during the account meeting, usually on Friday afternoon, by a senior account manager, the planner, that deals with agency situation as a whole.

The meeting is the step back for the agency one; in fact, it is started by the account director, that takes stock of the general situation; then, each account manager is called to list the clients and the projects he is working on, highlighting needs, criticalities, lessons learned, deadlines.

That information is collected in the planning document that will summarize the overall workload for next week (for this reason the account meeting is made on Friday afternoon).

i. Portfolio management tool – The planning document

The planning document is an excel file that summarize Louder workload week by week, it is filled by a senior account manager, the planner, during the account meeting, collecting projects flows and allocations.

It represents an instant photograph of agency situation, department by department and workers by workers. The document is composed of three sections, each one related to one of the operative departments:

- **Account**
- **Creative**
- **Production**

As account and creative departments closely work together, in the same way their planning sections are closely related and can be considered as unique one; instead, production department has more independence in performing projects with common deadlines with the other ones or independent projects that requires just physical production; so, it has a separate section in the document.

ii. The planning document – Account and creative section

So, the first section is related to the account one: the document has an account-oriented point of view, so the first column indicated the name of the account manager. In this way, it is read starting from the manager.

Scrolling through the planning, the first information is not related to the client or the project, but to the account manager.

Ideally, it follows account meeting flow: as during the meeting each account manager, one by one, explain with which clients and on which projects is working, in the same way, the document list in the first column the account, in the second one the client assigned to him, in the third one the specific projects of that specific client, assigned to that manager.

The following steps are related to the creative resource, so, which graphic designer or art director is assigned to work in that project and then the delivery date and the actual processing status at the meeting date

In particular, processing status could be:

- **Incoming Brief**

This status is referred to that particular moment in which a client announce to the account manager that soon he will share a new brief; the agency prepare itself to a new project, starting to understand which resources will be available.

The top management select who will participate to the brief meeting with the client and the same workers will share it with the internal team.

- **Work in progress**

The brief has been already shared with all the team selected, the tasks are assigned and each department works in parallel in order to deliver the project.

- **Delivered**

The final work has been presented to the client, through a speech, supported by a power point and financial part, composed of the budget.

Usually the presentation is made at client's central office by a team composed of the account and the art assigned to the project and, eventually, a sales manager or one of the top managers.

His presence depends on the type of client and the strategic importance of the project for the company; one of them will be surely present in case of new client and very strategic project.

- **Waiting for feedbacks**

After delivery and presentation, the referent of the client will take some times to examine the proposal and, in case of tender, to compare Louder project with other agencies ones.

The client will probably come back to agency with some questions or clarifications, suggestions to improve the project or corrections to missing points or conceptual errors.

- **Rework**

After receiving feedbacks, the agency is asked to change something inside its initial presentation, in order to better center client's requests, correcting and improving the first step delivery.

The phase of rework is usually too shorter than the work in progress one and here is measured the ability of the team to change its mind and properly understand corrections, in the shortest time and giving client what he really asked more. After the rework, the project is delivered and presented again to client.

- **Creativity completed**

The creative process ends, all materials are created, designed and ready to be produced.

- **Processing completed**

All the steps are carried out and the project goes live.

The planning document does not take into consideration the operative part; in fact, in that moment the commitment of the account manager is lower: during the event, he will coordinate and act as a supervisor for project manager and event coordinator.

Moreover, it will be the moment in which strengthen the relationship with client referents, collecting feelings about how the activity is working, feedbacks, suggestions for future collaborations.

If we are talking about a tour, the account will be physically present, during the date in which also the client referent will be present, during the most important ones, during the firsts ones to give more precise directions; during all the other stop of the tour, he will control remotely the activity, keeping in contact with the event coordinator and performing the post evaluation analysis.

The last columns of creative and account section is represented by priorities and notes: the projects are ranked for strategic importance, urgency, time constraints and, taking into consideration this features, it is assigned to them a rank for zero to five starts to visually highlight to which pay more attention.

At the end, there is a section dedicated to notes related to the whole project, something that has to be better explain and cannot be understood just reading the previous columns.

iii. The planning document – Production section

Production section is similar to account one and it is related to the same row of the previous section, so it indicates again client and project name, then you can find to which production manager it is assigned and when the delivery deadline for physical production will be.

Also at the end of this section, we have a notes column in which is added something more about what the department is asked to perform.

It has to be mentioned that there could be projects in which just production resources are involved, for example, the creation of materials for which is not required the intervention of creative department; for this reason we have a section completely separate to the other one.

The department has a sort of independence whit respect to the interdependent account and creative departments.

iv. The planning document – conclusion

Therefore, the planning document is a descriptive table compiled by the planner during account meeting, shared with all workers during the agency meeting, printed by the production department, in order to have a direction and prioritization of works, used as a base for organization of tasks in the creative department.

It can be considered as a graphical representation of clients and projects portfolio and it has to be taken as a reference to understand how the company is working. If properly used, it is a powerful tool to organize work inside the agency, but to do this, it has to be recognized as it is from all department.

Now, it is Google Sheets document shared just among who works on it, as the planner and her assistant and not among all the agency. As I said, the production department print it and hang it on the wall week by week, in order to clearly see what the deadlines and the overall workload are.

It is also used by creative director to organize and divide tasks among graphic designer. As I said, if it would be properly used and shared among all manager of the company, it could represent a powerful tool to be aligned on the same goals and with the same priority.

Considering it a strategic document, it is not possible to attach it on my thesis, in order to not disclosure sensitive information.

b. Project management and stages of a communication project

The best way to analyze step by step the execution of an entire project will be taking as a model a process that I directly follow from the start to the completion: the organization of a corporate convention.

As a starting point, it is important to understand what a convention is:

- it is an “aggregative event of limited duration (it can last a few hours or a few days) and of a commercial, celebratory, relational nature, that involves the participation of a homogeneous and well-identified public; it is a communication tool, generally directed towards an internal audience (corporate convention), but often also open to the outside world (e.g. dealers convention)

Conventions can be organized to present the launch of a new product or a marketing initiative, for the presentation of objectives and business opportunities and the assignment of sales targets, etc.

The primary purpose of a corporate event is, more generally, to create the conditions for the public to live a memorable experience, such as to stimulate positive mental associations with the promoting company.

Since the involvement of the public is essential for the success of the event, a convention usually associates moments of leisure (e.g. a gala dinner) with business meetings, so as to create a favorable atmosphere for the company and at the same time motivate the participants.

In particular, in the corporate conventions organized annually, common experiences are retraced, successes highlighted, plans and strategies for the future outlined.

In addition to corporate organizations, conventions are often organized and managed by professional associations and private clubs, essentially with the same goal of relaunching the idea of belonging to a shared body.”¹⁶

Having clear which kind of event is it, we can go deeper on that particular one: the client was Reale Group, a new client for Louder, and the agency was called thanks to a private contact with one of their managers.

To know this new possible supplier, the Reale communication responsible invited us to participate to a tender for the organization of a top management International Meeting.

They preferred to call it “International meeting”, but it was basically articulate just as a classic convention: it lasted two days, its goals were to celebrate the results achieved during the previous years and launch the objectives to be attained in next years, it was composed of moment of leisure, but also business meeting.

Moreover, it had the goal to take the first step in the company's internationalization process: to make people of equal professional figures from different countries (Italy, Spain and Chile) known vis a vis; before that moment they had only spoken to each other by phone or mail and never seen in person.

Our task was very important: organize the first international meeting is a memorable moment for the entire company. The best way to understand the process of event organization is to divide it into a sequence of chronological steps:

- i. Brief taking and team selection
- ii. Internal brief presentation and tasks assignment
- iii. Creative planning and midterm internal meeting
- iv. Operative planning and budgeting
- v. Delivery to client - Feedback and (eventual) rework - Final delivery
- vi. Operative stage
- vii. Location staging and event
- viii. Post evaluation and close up procedures

¹⁶ <https://www.glossariomarketing.it/significato/convention/>

i. Brief taking and team selection

Receiving the brief on November 25th, the team was selected, taking into consideration the actual workload inside the departments and the type of event to be organized. It was composed of:

- a senior account manager, that followed the starting steps, during the most critical moment: the tender;
- an account manager, who was the account of the entire project and the direct referent of the client;
- me as account assistant, dealing with all steps and learning how to carry out the activities;
- two graphic designers;
- a copywriter;
- two production manager that would take part to the project just at the end of the tender presentation and then during the operative part;
- four project managers involved just in case of winning bid.

In this case, brief taking was not performed through a physical meeting, but the brief was sent via mail and then a phone appointment was set, in order to discuss doubt and ask client more precise questions about the services requested.

ii. Internal brief presentation and tasks assignment

For this reason, also the internal brief presentation was divided in two parts: in the first one (first meeting), the account of the project presented the brief, showing the power point sent by the client and trying to collect missing points and doubts, from all team members.

During the following days, the team was asked to study by itself the brief and collect any additional questions to be asked to Reale referents, in order to start the very operative part of planning.

After a couple of days, another meeting (second one) was fixed to list all doubts to be asked during the call with client, trying to clarify all missing points.

So, in a week the team had all information about what the project requirements was and a final internal meeting (third one) was done, to report client answers and start dividing tasks between team members.

As it can be easily understood, it was a long and costly process that required three meetings, very expensive in terms of working hours and resources employments.

During the third meeting the tasks were divided among team members; we can divide the preparation for the tender in two parts: the creative one and the operative one.

iii. Creative planning and midterm internal meeting

During the first part, the team, with a strong effort of art department, had to put the base for the realization of the project, so, propose a naming, a kind of entertainment, following specific themes and start thinking about a graphical representation, in terms of logo, power point format, visibility materials, coordinate image.

This is a common stage for each project, but every kind of event has a different set of visibility materials that has to be created, according to type of activities and locations selected and requested.

To easily meet client's requirements, the team decided to propose three different alternatives for the event setting, so, the creative department visualize three different keys visual, coherent with the three themes.

At the same moment, the account department started a work of location scouting, team building and entertainment researches, to find different set of places and activities that could be in line with each alternative.

So, during the first step, production managers were not involved in the process, their role was fundamental during the second part of the realization

In fact, having clearly identified the definitive proposals, a fourth meeting was set, a sort of midterm internal meeting, in which definitely fix the alternatives that will be presented to client and switching from a creative work to an operative planning of what will be practically done.

Creative resources identified which visibility materials to implement and use, account department selected which location and create a draft of timetable and program for each alternative.

Locations was selected taking into consideration the specific type of participants and their number: there were 153 managers invited to the event, that was an important criticality for the organization; in fact, there is in Turin few locations to be used, having this much people.

In that particular tender, it was impossible to organize sites inspections before the delivery, due to stringent time constraints, but it has to be mentioned that it was a difficult and long task also to ask and receive by locations suppliers the proper information about the space that could be used for the event and how it could be possible to set up it.

For the midterm internal presentation, it was fundamental to have a set of different locations, for each alternative, with related sizes, maps and logistic information. During the meeting, each option was definitively fixed and set, assigning locations, type of team building, entertainment, dinner, performers.

iv. Operative planning and budgeting

Having clear all details about what we were proposing to client, we started to go deeper on the definition of collaboration contracts with all suppliers, costs and type of staging.

This is a fundamental step to define the budget for the event: talking about a tender, we already know the range of price in which the project has to be.

Defining three alternative, we had also three different budget, calculated on the same final amount, but created ad hoc, combining various activities whose sum made the same total.

The budgeting phase starts defining which are the cost items to be considered; in that particular case, they were:

- **Creative idea and management**

It is an item present in all Louder budget and it includes concept design, event supervision and coordination, graphic development, DUVRI practices, sites inspections, agency fee.

- **Production**

It includes the realization of all product necessary for the event (video editing, photographic report, personalized desks, badges, lanyards, etc.) with also production managers working hours and stock handling.

It is production managers responsibility to exactly forecast resource usage and necessary productions and to calculate costs of all items, including designing, realization and staging.

- **Staff and logistic**

It includes hostesses, stewards, event coordinator, translators, fitters working hours and, more generally, the work of all resources dedicated and hired just for activity days.

- **Team building**

One of the activities requested for the convention was something that will make managers cooperate and know each other in a funny, but effective way. Nothing better than two team building sessions, organized by experienced moderators able to involve all participants.

These activities were completely outsourced to specialized organizations and coordinated together with Louder account manager, in order to include them in the best way during the event days.

- **Locations**

It is an item linked with location fee, rent, audio and video services, basic staging.

- **Catering**

Including a dinner, a lunch and two coffee breaks during the two days of event and calculated on the base of number of participants.

- **Transfer**

Considering that part of the guests arrived from Chile and Spain, it was necessary to organize dedicated transfer, also inside Turin between different locations, to have all participants arriving together and strictly respect the timetable scheduled.

- **Extra**

It includes costs items related to services not expressively requested by client, but strongly suggested by Louder.

The agency acts not only as a service provider, but it also has a consulting role, so, highlighting criticalities, time constraints, difficulties and suggesting what client can add to his original idea to enrich the project.

Each macro section of the budget refers to the work of a department: creative idea refers to art one, production to the homonym department, all the other cost items refers to services selected, organized, managed by account managers.

So, it can be understood how the work of the account manager is extremely complex in terms of scouting activities, locations, services, stipulating contracts with partners and suppliers, grouping and collecting all information from external entities and from other departments, budgeting and interfacing with client.

Operative planning and budgeting are strictly linked because, to fill budget, it is essential to plan all the activities, contacting the stakeholders involved on the realization of the project and list all cost items that will generate the budget.

At the same time, art department was working on the other fundamental documents, required by client: the project presentation.

It includes a captivating description of the activities scheduled by the agency, linked together by the theme choose and the related key visual. There were some examples of how the coordinated image will be declined on visibility materials, highlighting strength and differences between each alternative proposed.

As the budget summarize the project with a financial and operative point of view, the presentation helps not also in summarize, but also to start visualizing and imaging how the final work will look like, collecting account technical information with arts ideas and visualization.

The account of the project is the direct responsible for the budget as the copywriter is for the presentation, supervised by account and art director, respectively.

In these activities, it would be supportive the usage of dedicated software to have always clear works performed, to do, deadlines, missing points, team workload.

In fact, it is a very fragmented work, plenty of rework, continuous program changes, with hundreds of details that could be easily forgot.

The difficulty emerge when final documents are drawn and all information has to be collected by who will made the files: in that moment, if the work of all resources it is not perfectly organized, it will be impossible to summarize and collect necessary data and to find errors or missing point in a chaotic work report.

Moreover, in this phase it can happens that a part of scouting is easier and bring back results in less time than one other; so, it could be helpful to have always clear the workload on each team resources, in order to favor cooperation between members and reach the expected results faster than when all workers act by their selves.

Using tasks management and monitoring software, problems of misalignment or delays in critical activity would be minimized.

v. Delivery to client - Feedback and (eventual) rework - Final delivery

During the fifth internal meeting, the final presentation was shown to team members, to check if all information inside it were clear and respondent to what they designed; the document was corrected and implemented with additional information and it was done a final double check with the budget.

On December 4th, the project, after less than two full weeks of work, was ready for the first delivery, having three different proposals completely defined with three themes, kinds of team building, three different locations and gala dinner alternatives, together with key visuals and visibility materials related to each.

In this particular case, the project was not physically presented to client through a formal meeting at their office, but tenders documents were uploaded on their online platform.

Even though the project was delivered, it was necessary to keep in contact with partners and suppliers until the results of the tender, in order to maintain the options for booking spaces and resources, in case of win of the bid.

Presenting three proposals, the number of stakeholders involved was multiplied for three, so, it was a demanding task to update day by day suppliers and ask to all of them to wait until Reale decision.

Moreover, we started to carry out locations inspection to collect information about them and to be ready to design staging and highlight eventual criticalities of each; in parallel, we started meeting important suppliers as the team building provider.

That activity was the main one of the first day, the most important, the one that would establish the successful outcome of the event, giving guests the best first impact with convention days.

In addition, it would be very useful for the agency to meet always new services and experiences providers, to enlarge its external relationship and create a trustful

connection with external entities, that could become strict partners for future events and links with new business opportunities.

For these reasons, we can consider that time spending as an investment for the future, talking about a market environment in which relationships care is fundamental for success.

On December 9th, client decided to ask for some rework to two agencies; so, we were in shortlist for winning the bid.

In particular, they have really appreciated how the project was imagined by Louder and ask for a deepening about one of the three proposals, but saying that that one was not their final choose; in other words, we were asked to maintain options and booking related also to the other two.

We knew that the way in which we would present the improved version of the presentation would tip the balance between the other agency and us, for this reason we tried to perfectly answer to rework request and also add something more impressive on extra section.

In particular, they asked to propose an alternative location to one that they have already use for precedent meetings and dinners, additional information about team building management and choose of gala entertainment.

Thinking out of the box, we proposed to perform the team building inside a location that for sure nobody has never used.

In fact, proposing as main theme of the event “Space Conquest”, we ideated, together with team building provider, a new format completely design inside the “Space Adventure”, a temporary exhibition organized in Turin at “Promotrice delle Belle Arti” and opened exactly during tender days.

Moreover, we propose, as entertainment during the aperitif, another format of team building, a mixology one, collaborating with another suppliers, a famous bartender, and the idea was to make guests create their own cocktail, working together in small groups.

This activity would be done in the same location used for dinner, minimizing transfer and maximizing leisure and fun time.

Concerning extra, for the second delivery we proposed a new idea for the cadeau: we imaged to create a personalized bag for each of the space team building team, containing a plexiglass photo frame with two pictures, one of all convention guests and one other with the team in which that particular guest was.

It was an extremely customize cadeau, having a personalized bag with the team logo, the box inside it personalized with convention poster and two memory pictures; it will always remember to participants not only the convention in general, but their group, feeling a particular attention to every single person.

A double check with team building provider was fundamental to make client understand what we were proposing and creating, going into more details about the activity in the new presentation.

The budget was updated too, taking into consideration new cost items, modified locations and entertainment, further details.

Louder team tried to delivery the second version as soon as possible, to make Reale understand and appreciate our reactivity and readiness to changing.

It has to be mentioned that, together with the two documents mandatorily requested, the account manager decided to attach also a Gantt chart, that described project tasks and internal deadlines, in case of Louder win.

This is a strategy to make client understand that the team was completely ready to start working on the project, that tasks duration and milestones were already set and making them understand, reading the document, how to deal with supplier deadlines.

vi. Operative stage

Having a consultant role, the account of the project immediately warned client about time constraints: the event was fixed just two weeks after the conclusion of Christmas holidays, so it was extremely necessary to start critical activities, that lasts more than fifteen days, before the break.

We immediately contacted all locations to confirm the options for the one that were linked with space proposal and to organize sites inspections, but also to cancel booking for venues related to the two discarded proposals.

The same thing was done with team building providers, performers, entertainers, annulling the engagement with the ones rejected and starting to sign contracts and to fix appointments with the ones involved in the project.

The week December 16th – 20th was the fullest of the entire work, in fact we tried to define as much activities as possible before the break.

It started with first client meeting on Monday 16th and it continued with several sites inspections: two at the Promotrice delle Belle Arti, one with team building responsible and one with client, one at OGR with client again and one at Reale head quarter, where they finally decided to organize the plenary session with coffee break and lunch.

As it can be seen from the Gantt chart, the most critical activity was related to physical productions: in fact, it was characterized by two client approvals and long durations.

The first approval was related to what client wanted to be created by arts, which materials and which not: the account manager proposed to Reale communication referent different sets of materials to be created, related to:

- the realization of a typical convention (badge, lanyard, format power point, directional poles, walk in video);

- particular activities organized for them (tags for first team building allocation, coins for second team building allocation and food pairing cards, signaling disk for team leader, cadeau);
- location staging and catering (moquette for coffee stations, accreditation desks, video wall personalization, hall settings).

Some productions are mandatory to be created for the good realization of the event, some others are “nice to have”, to make it perfect, demonstrating a special attention to details.

The client, confirming a trustful relationship with Louder team, accepted willingly suggestions about visibility materials.

However, it emerged very soon that client approval had a long internal path, so that it would be very difficult to have definitive decisions, approved by all Reale communication team members, in time.

Understanding the criticality, we tried to keep in contact with client referents day by day, asking for feedbacks even earlier than what required by the Gantt chart.

Moreover, even though both Louder account and Reale referent were available during Christmas holidays, Reale top managers, under which final approval passed, was not, so we necessarily waited for same approval.

The great risk was connected to physical production, for which manufacturing time cannot be crashed most of the time and, at the same moment, raw materials delivery could be late due to vacation closure of warehouses.

The unique way to prevent production delays was to continuously keep in contact with client referent, trying to receive approval in time, and with suppliers to shortening as much as possible completion time, paying more for extra work or switching to faster providers, as we made for printed objects.

In this way, we never talk about Louder internal delays that, for sure, could happen as well. In this particular project, the account manager tried to avoid it even more than in all the other projects because, as I said, time constraints were very stringent.

Concerning art department, its director decided to assign two resources to the realization of graphic materials, in order to make them work in parallel and to crash completion time.

Physical object to be created were roughly listed during tender phase to have a cost estimate for the budget.

Then, when the project was assigned, we waited by the client the approval about which materials had to be produced and, at the end, after their approval, a new production tab was written down, with all information about what has to be produced, how much of each material, dimensions, requirements, notes.

Production tab is an essential document for the realization of the project; in fact, it represents client requests, filtered by the account, and it summarizes what production managers are required to create.

If only one material is not on that document, production managers would not produce it, so it is extremely important to check it carefully.

For Reale project, it happened numerous times to update the tab due to client changing decisions or new needs, never highlighted before; for this reason, there was one missing material on the tab that was drawn by arts, but that production manager did not ever see on their list.

Fortunately, the error was found just before production deadlines and it was possible to produce it, despite it has been added at the end. This example to emphasize how important is the correct filling of the document.

Production managers contact suppliers, ask quotations and estimated time requirements, compare bids, choose among the ones received and take entire responsibility of controlling the right execution and production of materials.

If necessary, they also design physical materials, for example for Reale convention they created a tailor-made box for team building coin.

For most of the materials, it is necessary to receive graphical personalization by arts; so, to start production, arts' works has to be completely defined with the creation of

their final documents, press executives, created after client approval of graphical creations.

Operative stage also included staff members' brief; in particular, we had:

- **Hostesses and stewards' brief**

Louder does not have a big database from which takes staff contacts, in particular when client requests a high number of resources or when there are special requirements, as Spanish language knowledge for Reale convention.

For this reasons, we outsourced staff selection to an external suppliers; we met the resources just few days before the convention, to explain them the time schedule and the support requested, to assign them different tasks, to deliver their uniforms.

- **Testimonials' brief**

The plenary meeting was interspersed by the speech of David Avino, managing director of Argotech, Vanni De Luca, mentalist, mnemonist and performer, Linda Raimondo, scientific communicator for kids at Rai, Maurizio Cheli, a veteran of one NASA Space Shuttle mission.

They were contacted during tender phase to verify their availability for the date and cachet, after the officialization of the win, their engagements were confirmed and contracts were signed.

It was organized a call with each one to explain them with more details the settings of their intervention, speech timing, day schedule and they were invited to plenary rehearsal on December 22nd afternoon.

- **Project managers' brief**

Four projects managers were involved during the operative stage of the project: two were hired as organizing secretary during all January and they were external

consultants, two others were called for settings and event days to support the team and they were internal Louder resources.

So, the first two were briefed at the end of Christmas venues, the others few days before event days, to deal with fitters, settings, loading van, productions pickup and delivery.

Staff briefs are essential steps to have all operative resources aligned on what has to be done.

During the event, having a great number of workers, it is extremely necessary that everyone knows what he is required to do, there is no time for questions or doubt or errors, everything must go on easily and naturally as a well-oiled machine.

Everyone has to know to which resource refer in case of big technical problems, but he also has the responsibility to try to fix by himself what is going wrong.

Having all resources briefed about what their tasks would be on the event, loaded vans, visibility materials checked and ready to be set, the project was ready to go live.

vii. Location staging and event

For the event realization, three locations were mainly used:

- Promotrice delle Belle Arti for first team building;
- Officine Grandi Riparazioni for second team building, gala dinner and after dinner entertainment;
- Reale headquarter for the whole second day, that included plenary meeting, coffee break and light lunch.

The event started on January 22nd afternoon at Promotrice, so the first location to be set was this one; in particular, rent contract was made to have the location from the early morning, in order to stage it perfectly on time, before guests arrival.

During the staging of the first location, there were the account of the project together with three project managers, two completely dedicated to setting activities together with fitters and one that, together with me, check the presence of all necessary materials and dealt with tasks coordination and relationship with location responsible.

The staging of second and third locations was easier and shorter than the one of Promotrice, having less visibility materials and personalization spaces, so, it happened during 22nd afternoon, when two of the project managers were not necessary during first team building and had the time to set both sites.

Moreover, during the afternoon one other project manager, dedicated to the convention, together with one of client responsible and the event testimonials, did the technical tests for the plenary meeting (audio and video systems, projector, microphones, interpreting booth and translation system) and checked testimonials' speeches.

Event days were hour by hour scheduled, days before going live, in order to communicate to all staff members where to start working and how: for example, we had two hostesses dedicated to guests transfer, together with the translators, at Reale headquarter where there was the meeting point to take the dedicated bus.

They arrived at the Promotrice just after lunch and the first things to do was accreditation with hostess, saying name and receiving badge and team building tag for group assignment.

Having all guests inside the first room, we had Reale Mutua General Manager, Luca Filippone, speech to introduce them to convention days, giving them the welcome in Turin and wishing a pleasant participation to all.

Then, he turned it over to team building manager, who started dividing guests in group thanks to the tag that they received during accreditation and starting to distribute each group in one of the several rooms of the building.

The activities, a sort of spatial treasure hunt, were enthusiastically performed by participants who willingly took part to all games, experiences and challenges proposed to them; it ends with the announcement of winning team and teams and group photo.

The guests where accompanied to the second location, OGR, where they were invited to take part to a second team building, with new groups and team leaders; groups assignment was made by the hostesses during the trip on a dedicated bus, distributing different coins for different teams to each guest.

The second team building was the opportunity to entertain participants during the aperitif, making them create their groups' cocktail, stimulating collaboration, strengthening relationships, improving team working abilities.

The gala dinner was characterized by the president of board of director, Luigi Lana, and a peaceful atmosphere, few guests decided to remain also for the after-dinner section, enjoying their cocktails, maybe because of the long trip to arrive in Turin, for Chileans and Spanish guests, but also because the plenary meeting was schedule for 8.00 the next morning.

During the second day, there was their internal meeting to celebrate last years' successes and to launch the new biennial plan, and it was interspersed with the four testimonials' speeches, the coffee break and, before lunch, the cadeau delivery.

For Louder team, it was the opportunity to strengthen the relationship with client referents, managing together the direction of the whole meeting.

viii. Post evaluation and close up procedures

Close up procedures included the realization of a final video and photo report of the event, the publishing of an article on an online trade magazine¹⁷, the delivery to client of one of each visibility material created, to collect them in their storage, check of all collaboration contracts and payment scheme to be respected, collection back of all staff materials (uniform, pins, folders, etc.), stock tidying up, feedbacks to suppliers.

Moreover, they included also internal and external post evaluation, in order to fix lessons learned, congratulate for successful outcomes, understand if something went wrong and why: a set of good practices that will be useful for the realization of future projects, trying to avoid precedent mistakes.

Talking about a convention, we had not numerical goals to reach in terms of KPI, as it could be for other kinds of events (number of contacted people, number of converted people, sample distributed, etc.).

So, the post evaluation was a qualitative process, in which, together with client feedbacks, we evaluated the successful outcome of the convention.

In addition to first impression, shared during the closing part of the plenary meeting, the referents of the client sent us a mail, thanking Louder team for the commitment and the seriousness demonstrated during the whole project realization, complimenting for the success of most of the activities carried out, but also pointing out the technical problems emerged during the days.

Client negative feedback was related to the timing of second team building that results too long and, in same moment, team leaders were not able to keep the focus of participants.

Unfortunately, it was the first time that Louder collaborate with this team building provider and it was impossible to intervene during the activity to accelerate the game.

¹⁷ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/louder-italia-srl_corporate-event-reale-group-activity-6630763582759940096-V8eD

Concerning some services providers, it is really difficult to forecast the final results of the activity, because you can base your evaluation just on their case history, project realized and trusting relationship that could born during planning phase. In our turn, we have reported criticism received to the supplier.

Another confirmation about Reale Group satisfaction about convention realization was that the communication referents invite Louder team to collaborate and participate to other tenders just after the event.

Looking at internal issues and internal evaluation, there were a great number of lessons learned to highlight; it has to be taken into consideration that time constraints were the real big problem, from which all other inconvenient came.

Even tough every project has deadlines and is often difficult to respect them perfectly on time: for Reale convention the general feeling, from the start, was that time was absolutely not enough to create this kind of big event; moreover, the problem was emphasized by Christmas holidays stop.

Account and art directors tried to overcome the criticality adding up resources to the team: so, we had, two account managers during tender phase, two external project managers during operative phase, two graphic designers.

This strategy was absolutely helpful and, in some step, necessary to carry on the project, but what emerged sometimes was an overlapping of work, so, that we found out two resources operating on the same tasks on their own or some other times no one working on a task, thinking that someone else has been already doing it.

So, we highlighted basically a tasks assignment problem, having continuously changing requests and a numerous team; having few time for each task, the general management of each was to carry on them “as soon as possible”, sometime missing details or adding up activities without having all team members informed and aligned about what happened, because it is time consuming to inform everyone about what is changing.

Even though the outcome of the event was absolutely successful, it is fundamental to think again about what was wrong and what created anxious situation during the realization: it is the only way to progress as a team and as a company, sharing your experience with all departments.

I will take as example of problematic situation the realization of the cadeau: as I said before, we realized a plexiglass photo frame containing first team building pictures; the proposal was accepted very late by client, so, we had few time to realize it and we needed to ask a crashed time to our suppliers.

What happens was that the frame was ready just the day before the event, when we found out that they were extremely heavy, so, that loading and unloading operation for transportation would be more and more difficult than how we imagined them.

Moreover, two other logistic problem emerged: how to bring them till the eighth floor of Reale Group building and where to prepare cadeau to distribute them, because we were afraid that a simple wooden table, as we planned, would have broken for the weight.

In a nutshell, site inspection did not give us enough information to overcome the problem, because we did not know some specific location requirements.

In addition, when during the evening the staff started to kit frame with the pictures, taken and immediately after printed in the afternoon, we found out that they were a couple of millimeter bigger than frames, because we discovered that photo standard size differs from A4 size by an inch.

This problem implied a doubling of payment for staff, because the work was longer than what forecasted, including not just frames kitting, but also photos cutting.

In normal condition, the team would have performed a product trial before starting the production, so, we would have discovered the dimension problem before the event evening.

Moreover, if we knew about the high weight of frames, we would have prepared a correct location for cadeau storage and distribution to participants and we would have check the presence of a dedicated load port at Reale head quarter.

We were able to overcome both cutting and loading problems in few hours, but it implied extra costs, extra work hours, additional stress and resources implied.

Adding up a new production, with few times to check what it implies, is risky, because there will not be time for trial and logistic problems will not be evaluated in a correct way.

Concerning this project, time lack was appointed as triggering factors for successive problems and forgetfulness; in my opinion technological supports could have helped to prevent and overcome them easily, keeping track about possible issues and related solutions.

c. Tools

Project management in Louder is characterized by a poor software utilization; the tools created to managed tasks listing, assignment, monitoring are usually excel sheet shared through the internal server. In particular, the documents are:

1. Production tab

It is an excel file filled during the meeting between the account manager of the project and production manager: it has an introductory section with general information, then it has a list of all productions required for event realization, together with the number of units required, materials, dimensions, specific deadline for each and eventual notes.

It is used to transmit to production department what they are required to produce and to check, step by step, which one is already arrived in Louder storage and which not; so, it is updated by ticking the ones ready as to report work performed. The document is shared via mail and uploaded on the server to make possible to everyone to consult it.

INFORMAZIONI SUL PROGETTO				
COMPILATO DA	PROJECT ACCOUNT			
EVENTO/CLIENTE	INTERNATIONAL MEETING REALE GROUP			
DATA INIZIO EVENTO	22/01/20			
DATA ALLESTIMENTO	22/01/20			
DEADLINE PRODUZIONI	20/01/20			
SCHEDA LAVORO				
N. Produzione	Descrizione	Q.Tà	DEADLINE SPECIFICA	Note
1	TOTEM ELLITTICI	2		100x220cm (welcome promotrice) - plastificato opaco
2	COPERTURE DESK	2		Stesso layout diversi f.ti
3	CAVALIERINI	5 + 2		A4 - accredito + guardaroba / confermare quantità e allocazione

Figure 2 - Example of production tab

2. Load list

it is the document used to load vans and check if all materials are in. It lists not only productions, but also all instruments that could be useful for setting and installation.

Load list is fundamental because, if the event is far from Louder warehouse, forget something would be an error for which solution will be costly or absolutely impossible.

The excel document is filled by the account or the operative project manager, shared through the server and checked by production manager; for loading activity, it is sent to Louder warehouseman, who will prepare materials to be loaded.

It lists what has to be loaded, in which quantity and related notes. Reale Group load list was divided in different sections, one for each location and in the note we wrote from where to where each material has to go.

REALE GROUP		
QUANTITA'	COSA	NOTE
ALLESTIMENTO SPACE ADVENTURE		
8	BUSTE A4 PER PIASTRELLA	Già IN UFFICIO - SU FURGONE DOPO IL KITTAGGIO DEL 21 POMERIGGIO
3	SCATOLE COIN	ALLESTITORE - PORTARE IN UFFICIO GIORNO 21 PER KITTAGGIO - SU FURGONE
150	LANYARD	MAGAZZINO - PORTARE IN UFFICIO

Figure 3 - Example of loading list

3. Gantt Chart

It was prepared during tender phase to make client understand Louder timing and schedule of the activities, highlighting deadlines and milestones. It was created with an excel format and, at the end, when the project was effectively assigned, it was not often used or consulted.

Deadlines were transferred on production tab and reminded via mail, it was not share with other departments then the account one, even though it was on the server folder dedicated to the project.¹⁸

4. Louder Server

The server is not only used as documents storage, but also as sharing place. There is a folder for each client and, inside it, a folder for each project. So, to make every team member see what you have done, you will upload the files on which you worked on the specific folder.

What can wrongly happen is to modify locally on a computer the document and forget to upload it again on server, so that other team members do not see the changes or the additional information inserted, opening the older version of the file.

It could happen, having a great number of documents to upload, to modify more of them together or receive via mail an updated one and confusing the new one to upload with an old version.

Moreover, it is not possible for two users to open and modify together the same file; so, if one teammates is working on the file on his laptop, I will open on my computer the older version of the document and I could not see the changes that he is making nor modify it as well, until he will finish to edit it, save and close it.

5. Google Keep

For Reale project, art department created a google keep list to summarize all visibility material to be personalized by them. Even though each team member was

¹⁸ Gantt chart at chapter 2.b.v page 42

invited to collaborate to it, the sharing document remained unused by all the other departments and used just as a double check for production tabs.

This is an evidence of inertia with respect to new technologies, characteristic for sure accentuated by time constraints: there was no time to prove something different from classical tools.

6. Google calendar

The tool is used to schedule meeting, so, the event on shared calendar is created by the account and the invitation is sent to team members, involved on the topic to be discussed, to have everyone informed about date and hour of the meeting.

7. Email

Every information about work performed, work scheduled, time constraints, meetings, milestones, deadlines, urgencies, new decisions are communicated via mail.

In some moment, it is a very long process to write detailed mails about a project, taking into consideration different departments and resources involved in the team.

Moreover, even though you could be as accurate as possible in transferring information, you will never be sure about the fact that each receiver has read carefully all the information, even more so if the mail is too long.

It has to be mentioned the most powerful tool used inside the agency: the communication in person. Even though, most of the information are transferred via mail, in particular, when time is running out, voice communications and decisions are the most used.

There is no doubt about the fact that it is the easiest and fastest way and it is favoured by Louder office structure and number of workers: having a big open space for each department and being less than thirty people in the whole agency, it is more direct to come and tell you something, a task assignment, a new deadline, a change in the project, with respect to use structured tools.

On the other end, voice communications entail a great number of problems: you can forgot something that you just listen one time, you have no proof about what was assigned to you and nobody can check the veracity of the information; if you need to leave the project to someone else, it would be impossible to make the new resource understand how the project is going on just using document.

Moreover, voice communications are completely canceled when someone is not physically in the office and there is a lack of information for the absent person. As an example, we can take the moment in which I came back from Christmas holyday; not having a summarizing document with all new project features, a team member had to spend at least one hour to explain me what happened during my absence.

Knowledge and information are incorporated in people, so, they are not codified and it is difficult to transfer them. Moreover, control and monitoring are difficult to be performed because there is not a real work schedule, from which tasks done can be flagged as done and to do can be highlighted with their deadlines.

Most of the time “to do” tasks are listed on a A3 sheet of paper and flagged on it with a pen; it was one of my tasks to update to do sheet adding new request, canceling tasks finished, highlighting critical tasks.

The document was not shared with other departments or team member, but only used by me to keep in mind what to do and to remind to other team members if they missed something; it was periodically consulted by the account of the project to check if everything is running and to allocate new tasks to resources.

As it can be imagined, there can be find more secure and sharable way to visualize tasks list, integrating Gantt chart, production tab, team assignments, making control and monitoring easier to be perform and avoiding missing tasks, resources overlapping and information gaps inside the team.

3. Remote project management

On March 9th, Louder switched to complete smart working due to Covid-19 health emergency and it started to face problems usually faced by international teams who cannot physically meet. This situation gave me the idea to study how project management could change and could be improved thanks to a crisis moment.

Fortunately, there are already the tools to face it; in fact, even though Louder have never had the need to use it, having a single office where every employer meet, we know that there is in act a digital revolution, thanks to which teams are completely delocalized and team members can work together, also taking part to meeting or collaborate on the same document from all over the World, thanks to new software and technologies.

The very important thing to overcome the problems related to complete smart working is to start innovating and improve company digital skills, trying to implement new technologies, prepare yourself as a company to change your routines and overcome inertia.

Highlighting the three most important tasks to be performed to carry out a communication project, I tried to find three different software with which remote project management could be performed.

My idea is that studying and applying software for remote collaboration will be extremely helpful to think again about how projects are managed inside the company, overcoming problems, shortening and crashing completion time, improving monitoring and reporting.

In particular, I will analyze the usage of:

1. **Miro** for visual brainstorming phase;
2. **Trello** for task management;
3. **Monday.com** for project tracking, task assignment, monitoring.

I will also analyze the use of drive storage, concerning document sharing, in order to propose an alternative to server storage, that could also overcome problems related to it.

Moreover, I will evaluate how to integrate the different software, to make easier collaboration and tasks management.

To explain the usage of the tools, I will retrace the management of a communication project and I will use as example Reale Group convention project, taking into consideration an exclusive use of online supports for each phase.

a. Miro – Visual Brainstorming for brief taking

As I explained in chapter 2, brief internal presentation is one of the crucial steps of project start. In fact, the first stage is to be contacted by the client to deal with the new request, to organize a meeting thanks to an online platform selected by them and follow their presentation showed sharing the screen.

Conducting brief taking phase remotely would not require something more than videocall software such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom or any other videoconferencing platform, that where immediately spread exponentially during the lockdown.

What is completely revolutionized is the transmission of the brief at the internal team, selected for the project, and the phase of brainstorming. Usually the meeting is performed inside a meeting room, the account or the sale manager who took the brief, shows it to the selected team, thanks to client's presentation.

Each team member starts to take notes, ask questions, prepare his own idea about the project and then opinions are shared and brainstorming starts in order to plot and select possible road to be walked to face the project.

In a phase of complete smart working, conducting brief sharing will be made by videoconferencing tool as well as taking, but soon after the start it will be the time to discuss about how to perform the project, ideas will emerge and a simple videocall will not be able to make every team members focused on the goals and to collect properly what is emerging.

I propose the use Miro: it “is a collaborative online whiteboard platform designed for remote and distributed teams”¹⁹ and, studying its functionalities, I think it is perfectly suitable for agency brainstorming and creative meetings.

¹⁹ <https://miro.com/>

The best thing to do using Miro for an internal meeting is to prepare the whiteboard before the meeting and it could be done by the project account, setting it taking into consideration project requirements, client's requests and type of event.

The very first step is to create an account: this could be done using Gmail authentication, taking into consideration that all Louder mail are created using a Google account, and invite all team members to create their own account too and join the Miro team.

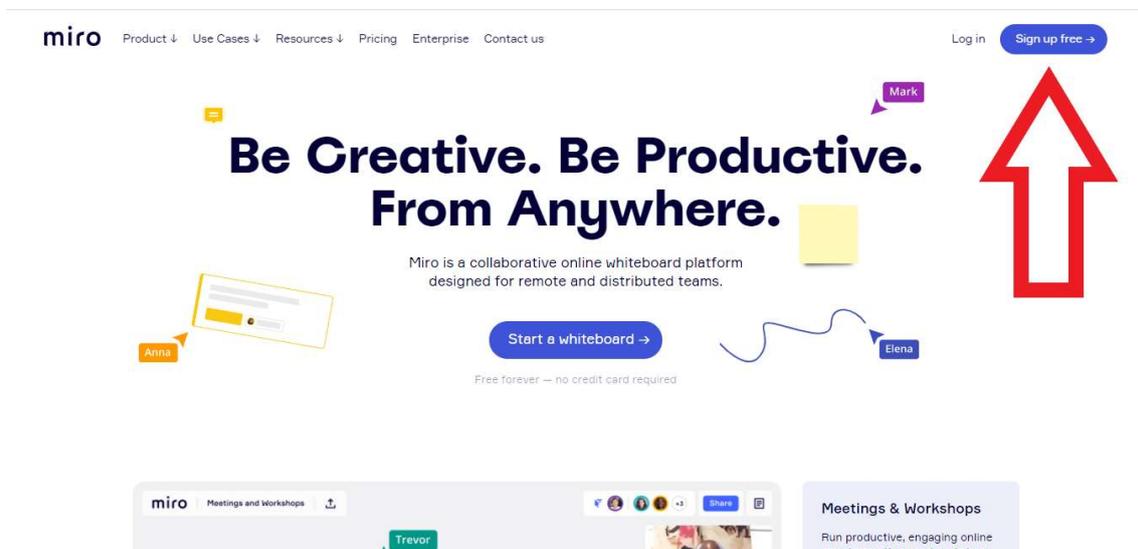


Figure 4 - Miro's home page - <https://miro.com/index/>

Get started free today

No credit card required

<input type="text" value="Name"/>
<input type="text" value="Work email"/>
<input type="password" value="Password 8+ characters"/>

- I agree to Miro [Terms](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).
- I agree to receive Miro news and updates.

Get started now



Figure 5 - Miro's sign up page - <https://miro.com/signup/>

Getting started you will create your first team, assigning it a name, adding your role from the ones proposed by Miro, and company size that, in Louder case, is 2-50. As it can be seen, the platform is suitable for every kind of company sizes.

Set up your team

<input type="text" value="Enter your team name"/>
<input type="text" value="Choose your role in a company"/>

What's your company size?

<input type="radio"/> Only me	<input type="radio"/> 2-50	<input type="radio"/> 51-250
<input type="radio"/> 251-1k	<input type="radio"/> 1k-5k	<input type="radio"/> 5k+

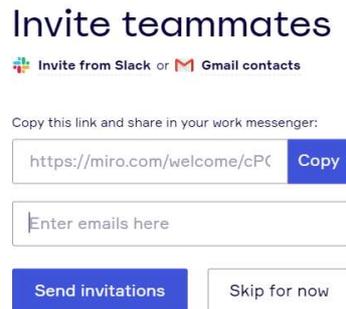
Set up and continue →



Figure 6 - Set up team page

Next step will be invite teammates using Gmail again or Slack, a channel-based messaging platform already used in Louder office, or you can copy and paste invitation link and share it in the way that you prefer.

miro



Invite teammates

Invite from Slack or Gmail contacts

Copy this link and share in your work messenger:

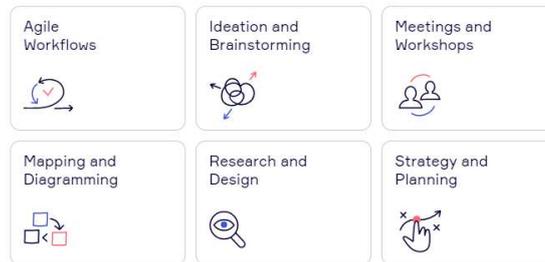
Figure 7 - Invite teammates page

At the end of sign in procedure, you can choose the area in which you will work in, so Miro will present you the templates related to that particular area; I choose “Ideation and Brainstorming” because, as I said, I consider the platform usage for brainstorming activities.

miro

What do you want to do?

Choose the area you want to work in and we'll help get you started.



Didn't find what you wanted to get started with? Start from scratch →

Figure 8 - Area selection page

Templates can help in choosing how to structure the whiteboard, taking into consideration that you will have a space bigger and bigger, almost infinite, than a physical board. There could be created frames that will appear like presentation slide.

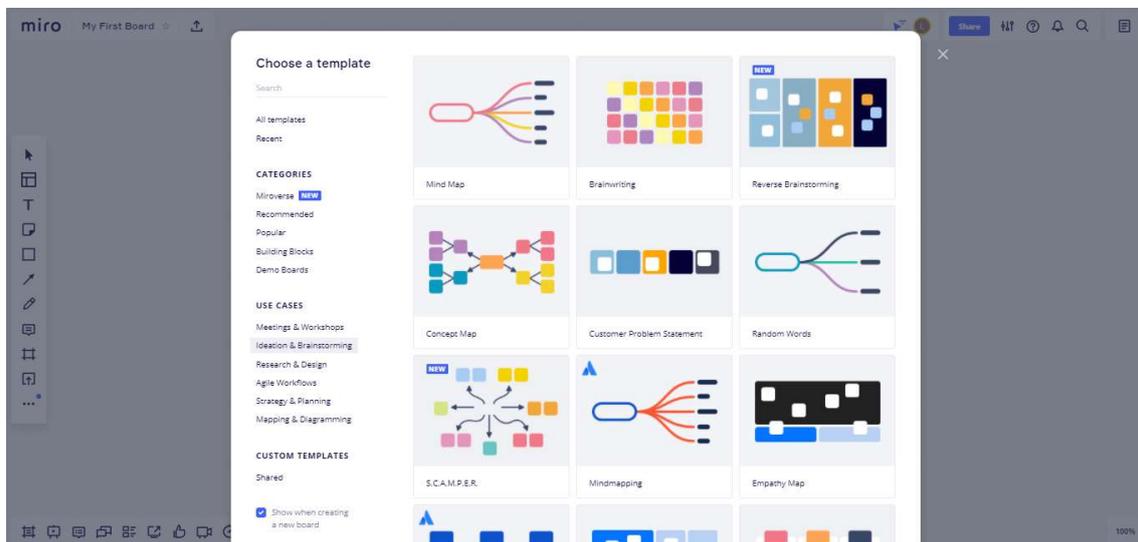


Figure 9 - Template page

As an example, I have created two frames to show how Reale Group brief taking meeting could have been prepared thanks to Miro: the first one is created thanks to sticky

notes and summarize brief contents in order to make the team focused on the most important characteristics of the event that will drive creative ideas.

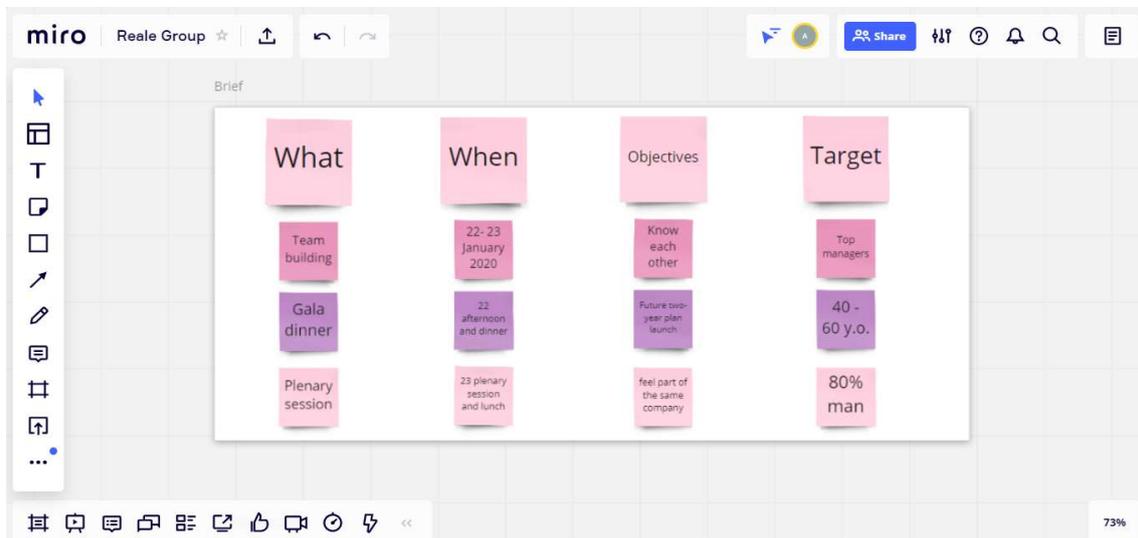


Figure 10 - Example of Miro's frame with sticky notes – application on Reale Group project

The second one is created thanks to one of brainstorming templates, showing main client's requests, and it could be used as a starting point for dividing tasks in the very first step and summarize researches for partner and suppliers and creative idea proposed during the first meeting.

So, firsts arches are the ones prepared before the meeting by the account of the project; then, during the meeting, discussing about the possible realization of the event and searching for possible team building experiences and locations, the second arches are filled by each participant with their proposals.

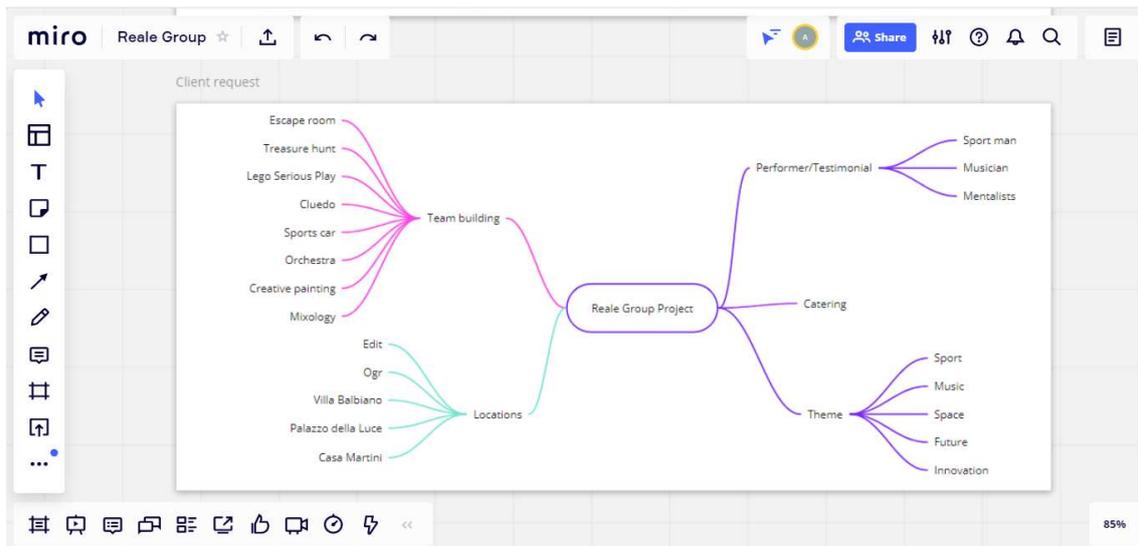


Figure 11 - Example of brainstorming template usage – application on Reale Group project

The remote meeting could be performed thanks to Miro itself; in fact, as you can see from the screenshot, in the bottom left tool bar, the collaboration one, there is a video camera icon, that makes you open a video chat with team members.

Moreover, a timer could be set to respect meeting scheduling (timer icon) and selection of the best idea will be eased thanks to voting feature (thumb up icon).

On the left vertical toll bar you can find instruments to enrich you board, adding (in top down order) templates, texts, sticky notes, shapes, connection lines, drawing something using a pen, comments, frames, uploading files and connecting with integrated apps.

Apps could be installed and added to the bar that is completely customizable: among the most useful, Google Image to add graphical suggestions or to fill moodboard, Grid, Kanban, Tables and Charts, Slack.

Moreover, uploading files could be a perfect way to share documents connected with the project and this could be done also thanks to Google Drive integration, with which you can upload shared files and have them connected with the board too.

The pen is one of the most important features for Louder because, using this tools, graphic designers can immediately add their graphic suggestion about the project, proposing their views.

It happened very often during online meeting that graphics tried to make meeting members see their sketches on a paper sheet through their webcam and it was very difficult to effectively see that and understand what they wanted to show.

So, using Miro this problem is completely overcome because they have the possibility to draw directly on the shared board.

Everyone participating to board creation will have its own cursor on it and everyone can decide to see each cursor or to hide them; moreover, if someone is presenting or you want to follow someone's navigation inside the board, you can decide and select the specific personal cursor to follow during the meeting.

If you cannot follow the live meeting during which the other team members edit the board or if someone worked on his own, when all teammates are offline, when you will open again Miro, the changes will be highlighted to make you understand the work flow.

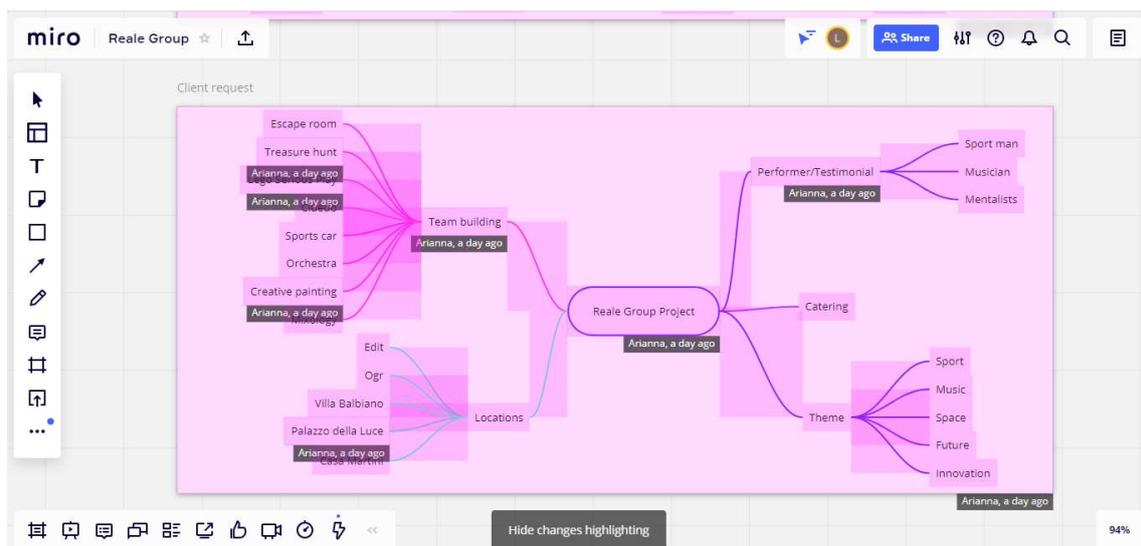


Figure 12 - Highlighted changes in a board modified by another user.

When the board usage is finished and it can be considered complete or if you want to show or share it in an external context from Miro, it could be exported (top left icon) and shared as a pdf, as an image, saved as a customized template, duplicated, attached to JIRA.

On the main page, you will find on the left side all the teams with which you are collaborating and on the center all the board on which you are working; each team member could create its own board and share it with colleagues.

Selecting a team, you will see the main page related to it and the related boards created.

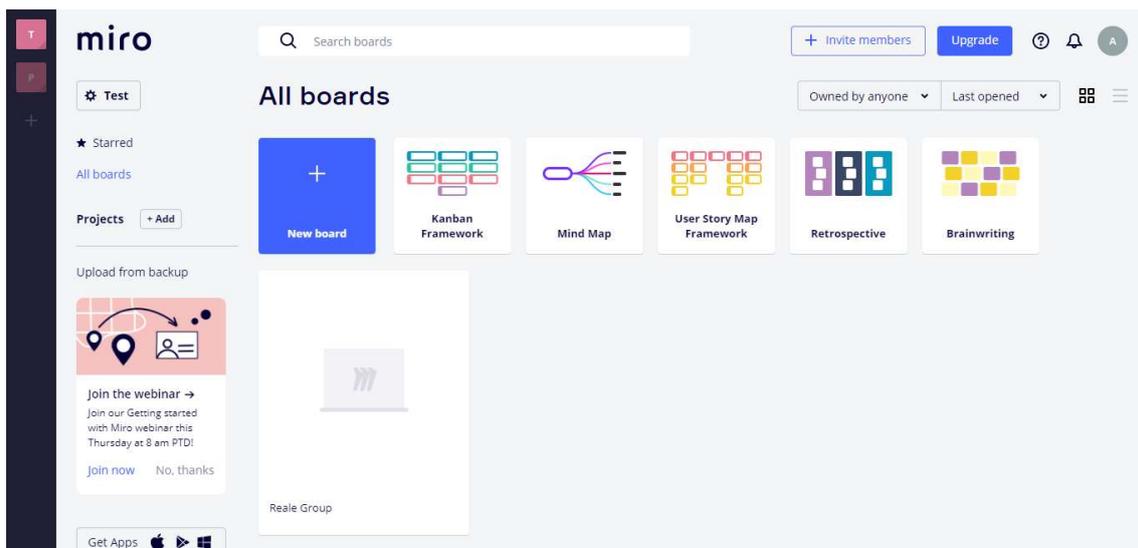


Figure 13 - Miro's main page for user

b. Trello and task management

Trello is a collaboration tool based on boards, thanks to which teams can list, assign and monitor tasks of specific projects.

It is free, with a limitation of ten boards, very intuitive and easy to use and it has both desktop and mobile applications, so it can be easily used also when team members cannot have access to their computers.

I will describe and analyse desktop version, taking into consideration that mobile one works exactly in the same way.

Accessing to the home page, you can easily sign up and immediately start working on your board.

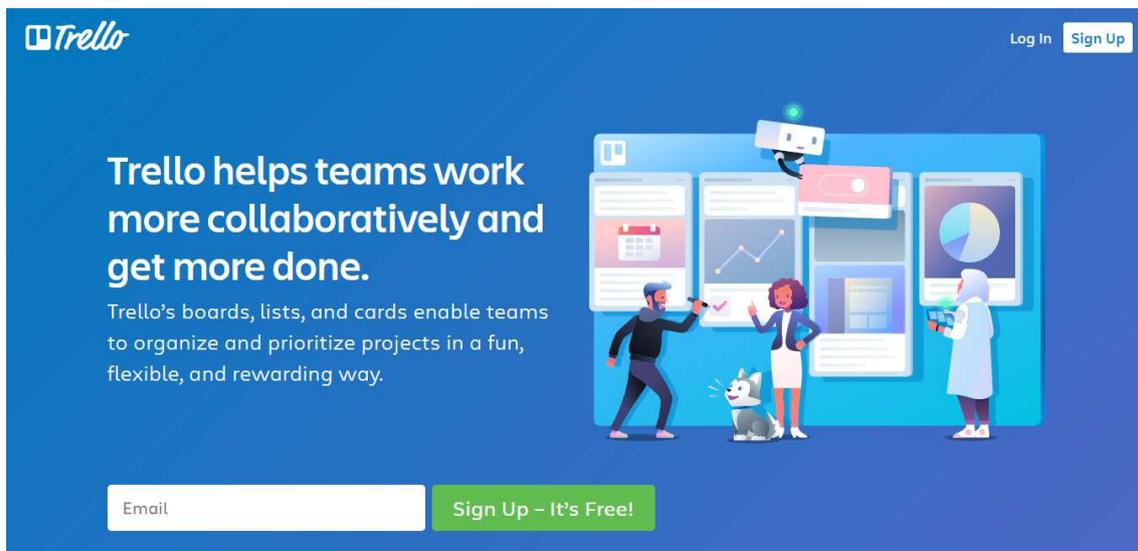


Figure 14 - Trello home page - <https://trello.com/en-GB/home>

In Trello too there is Gmail integration, so, Loudier managers can use their Google account to easily create a new Trello one.

It is not something to be neglected, the possibility to have just one account for multiple platforms and the facility to log in a new one.

Spending few times in getting started with new tools will make users more willing to work with it and study its functionalities, taking into consideration its speediness, integrability, immediacy and easiness of use.

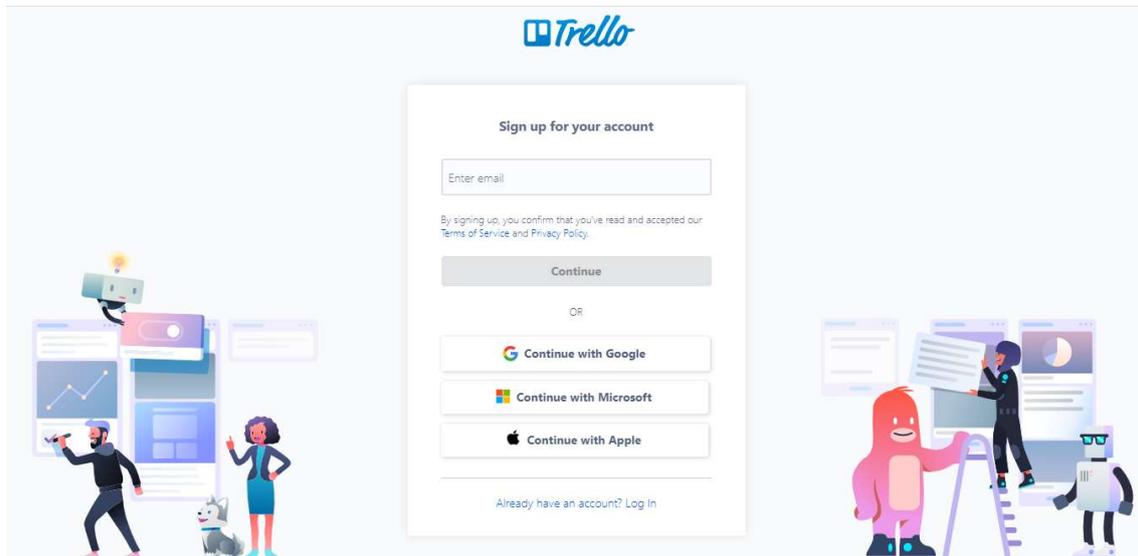


Figure 15 - Trello sign up page - <https://trello.com/signup>

Creating a new account, Trello provide you a simple guide made of four steps to get you started your work experience with the platform.

It makes you create your first board, assigning it a name, as showed below; I will take again Reale Group project as an example for usage.

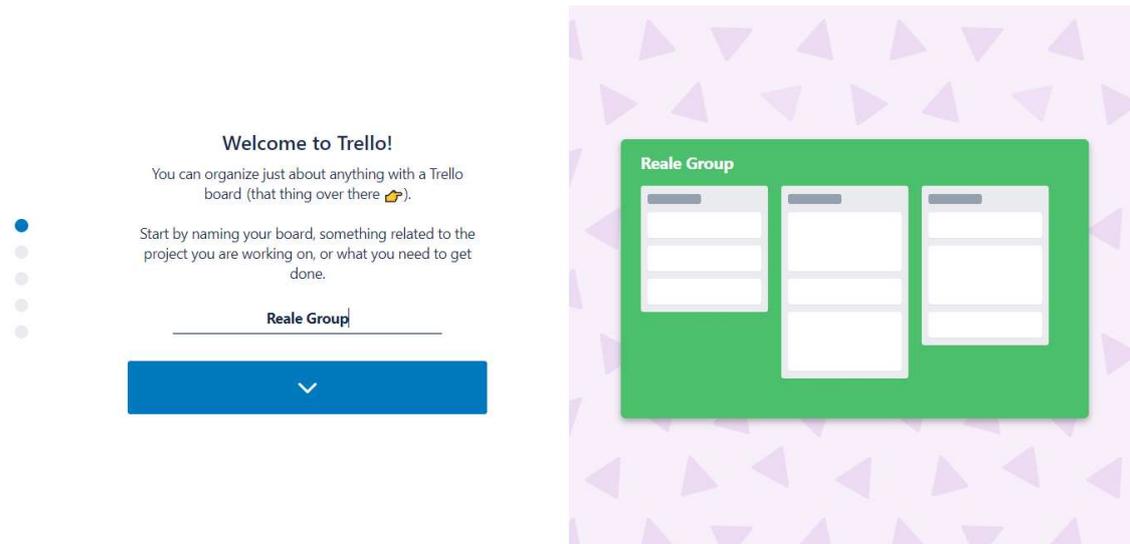


Figure 16 - Welcome to Trello page

The second step is to structure the board creating your own lists: they could be considered collection of steps, called cards, that will make you realize and complete the project.

You can name lists any way you want, but Trello guide suggests you to create three of them with consecutive steps name “Things to do” – “Doing” – “Done”.

In this way, you will always have a panoramic view about the project and a roughly percentage of work performed and done, together with the actual workload in progress in “Doing” list.

Create structure with lists

A list is a collection of cards. It can be a set of ideas, a group of tasks, or a stage in a project. You'll add cards to your list next.

A lot of people like to start with:

Things To Do

Doing

Done

and

Go ahead and rename your lists if you'd like!

▼



Figure 17 - Structure creation page

Lists are filled with cards that can be considered the different tasks to be performed in each step; the initial guide makes you enter cards in the first list, “Things to do”, in this case.

When you will start working on the board, you can add more cards in each list and move them between lists, dragging from one and dropping into another one.

Take a load off with cards

Make cards for things you need to do, organize, or just get out of your head.

Add titles for a few cards in your **Things To Do** list:

Brief Taking

Brief Sharing

and e.g. Call dogsitter

▼

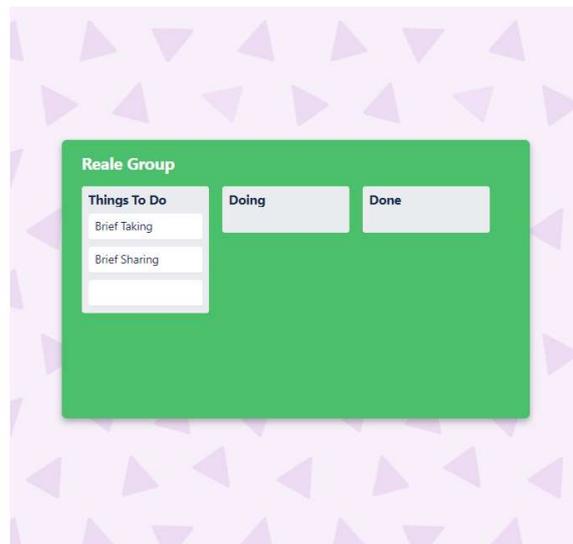


Figure 18 - Creation of cards page

Cards could be enriched with more and more details that are briefly showed in the guide, the most important one is the checklist that could be considered an ulterior subtasks division of the card.

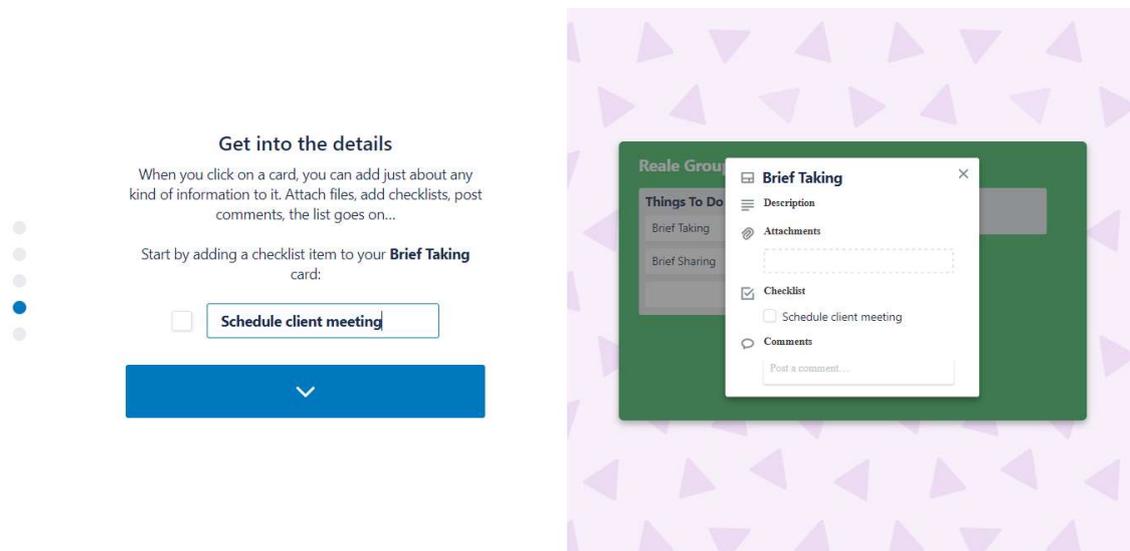


Figure 19 - Details about cards page

Thanks to Trello initial guide, you can get started in boards creation, having basic notions about how to structure lists and cards, but, to understand its potential, I will go deeper in cards description, teams creation, tasks assignment.

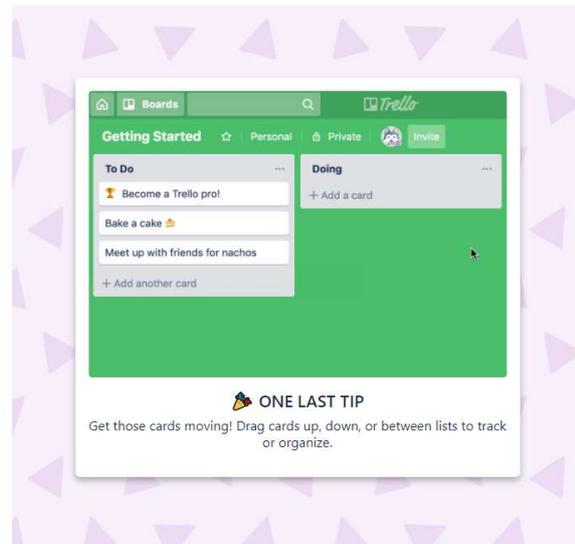


Figure 20 - End of the guide

At the end of the guide, your first board is displayed and you can start customizing it adding lists (top right icon) and adding cards to each list (at the bottom of each one).

Using the button “Invite” – “Create a team” you can assign a name to your team, select a team type (choosing among Marketing, Small Business, Human Resources, etc.) and at the end you can add team members’ emails or decided to generate a link for board sharing.

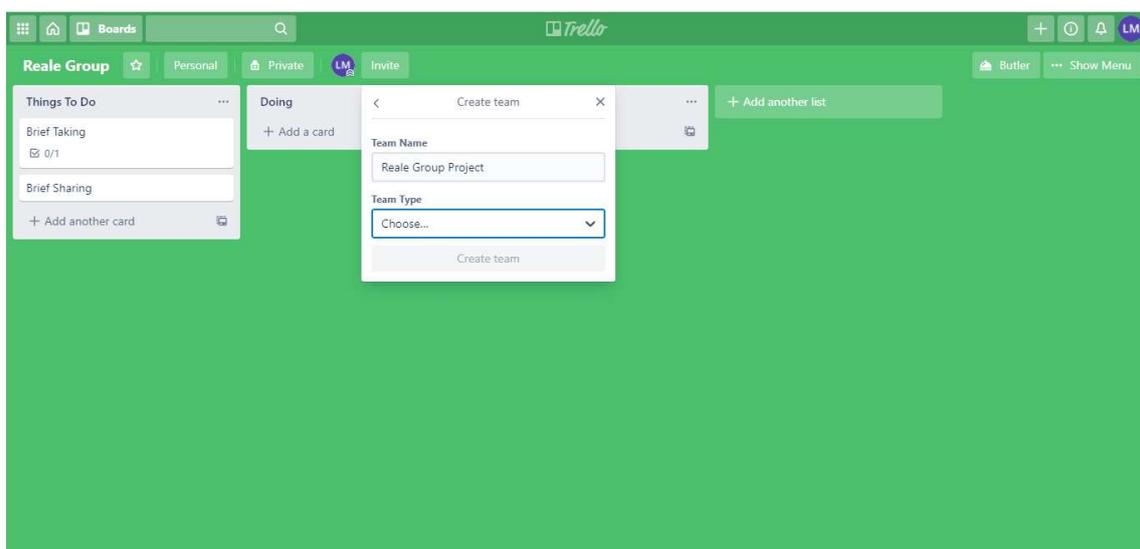


Figure 21 – Create a team

Board creator can decide whether the board is:

- Private and just who is directly invited to collaborate to it can see and edit it;
- Team board, so it is shared with all team members;
- Organization board that can be created having a premium account where the whole company collaborate using Trello;
- Public and everyone on internet can see it, but just board members can edit it.

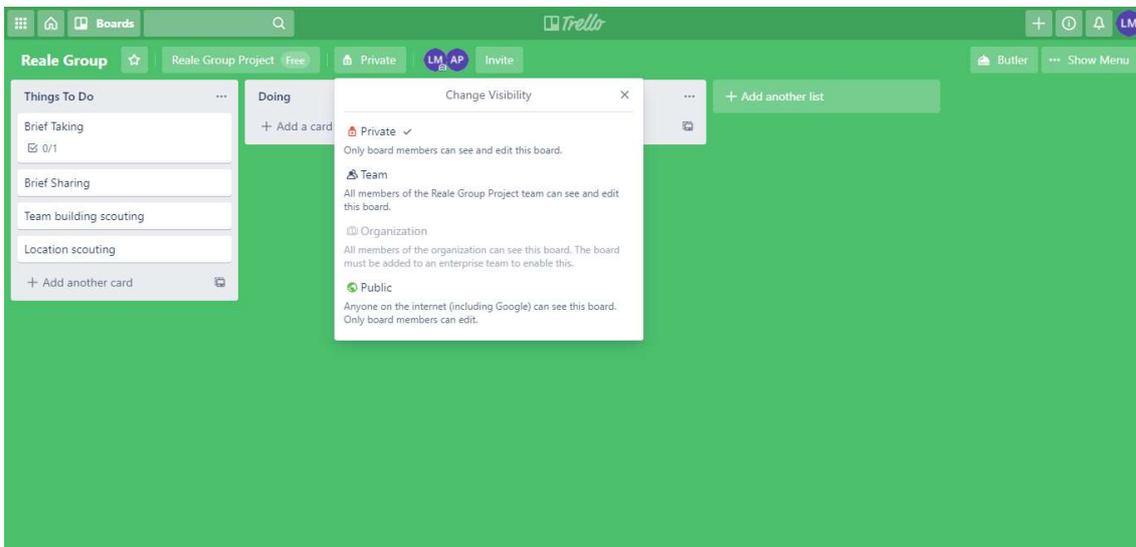


Figure 22 - Visibility options

Using menu (top right icon) you can edit the board, adding a description, changing background, adding stickers; in “More” there are useful options as exporting, printing, sending it by mail, copying the link to share it.

The Power Ups sections collected all the integrated apps that you can add to your Trello board.

Among the most useful, Calendar to organize the board in a calendar view, Google Drive to add shared documents directly on the card, Slack to connect cards and communication tool, Custom Fields to add more information on your cards.

At the bottom of the Menu, there is the Activity section in which you can see what each board member did on the board.

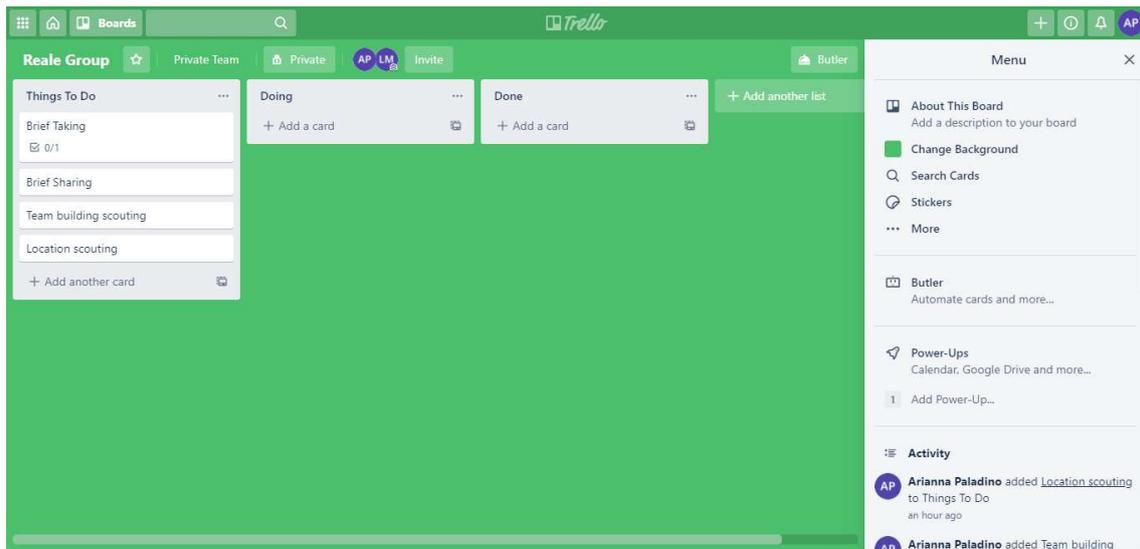


Figure 23 - Trello Board Menu

Now, we will go deeper in cards description: clicking on it, its general page will be displayed, in which you can completely customize the task.

In particular, looking at the right column, you can assign the task to someone in a group clicking on “Members” and selecting the one to which the card has to be assigned.

You can label it selecting a colour and assign a name to it; in this case, I select a red label, calling it “Urgent”.

You can add checklists, a due date, setting also a reminder to be sent to all members before it, attachments (for example, in “brief taking” you can attach the client’s brief) and a cover image.

Next section is dedicated to Power-Ups that could be added directly to the cards and, at the end, the last section is the one related to the action that you can perform on the card, like moving it to another list, copy it, use it as a template for future cards.

As it can be seen, in the checklist you can add a list of tasks to be performed; then, checking the one already done, Trello will displayed the percentage of work performed, make you graphically see what is already done and how much of the work is still to do.

This could be helpful to roughly understand the tasks status and monitor completion and execution.

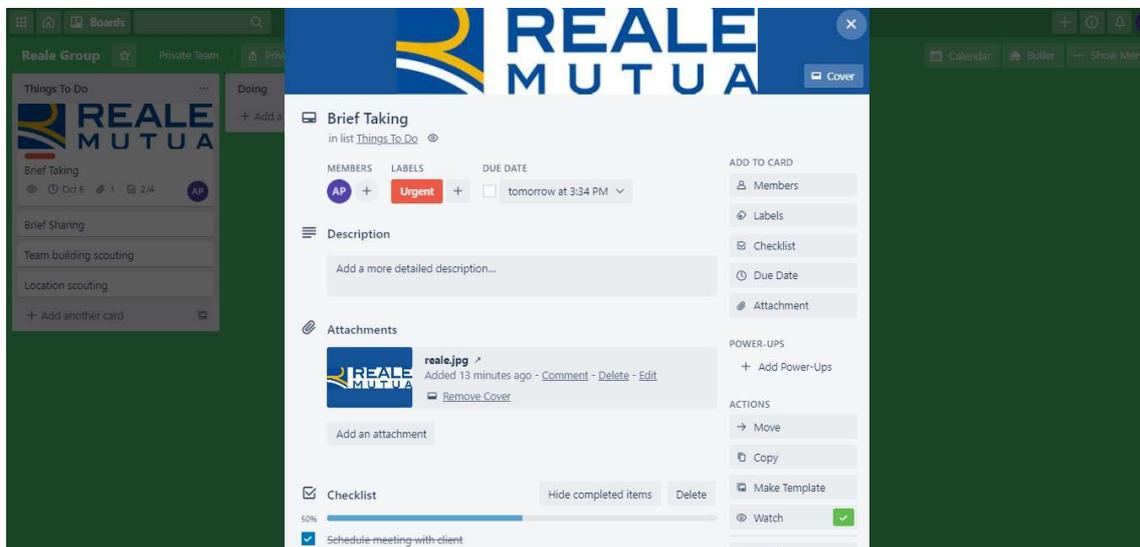


Figure 24 - Card setting page

Starting the execution of the tasks, we can move the card from “To Do” to “Doing” and at the end we will have all cards in “Done” and we can archive them.

Trello can be used by all team members to take track of project progress, for tasks assignment, to check if all tasks have been assigned, to set deadlines and related reminder, to have always and easily the complete control of the whole project management.

The management of the board will be assigned to account department, that could involve production managers and art department to set production deadlines, share documents, set meetings, control their tasks.

Even though each team member will work by himself, having an always updated board in which you can list your tasks and its progression will be fundamental in a moment in which voice communications are impossible to be performed and the team is not in the same physical place.

This practice, applied also in office context, will help the team to have always track of the project, it will reduce the needs for alignment meetings, because, if everyone always updates his work performed, you will need just to open Trello to understand how it is going on.

c. Monday.com – Task assignment, project tracking and monitoring

With Trello we have a visualization of how project is going on, it is simple and easy to use and it can be used jointly with team members of other departments than the account one.

But a complex and articulate project will require a deep analysis to specifically track progress and deal with milestones and deadlines, a work that will be completely assign to account managers.

For these reasons, I propose to support Trello usage with a new software: Monday.com. it is a “Work Operating System (Work OS) that powers teams to run projects and workflows with confidence.

It is a simple, but intuitive, Work OS for teams to shape workflows, adjust to shifting needs, create transparency, connect collaboratively, and stop doing manual grunt work. monday.com makes teamwork click.”²⁰

As for the previously mentioned software, the very first step is to create your account, connecting to its website. Monday too is an online platform so you will not need to download anything on your pc.

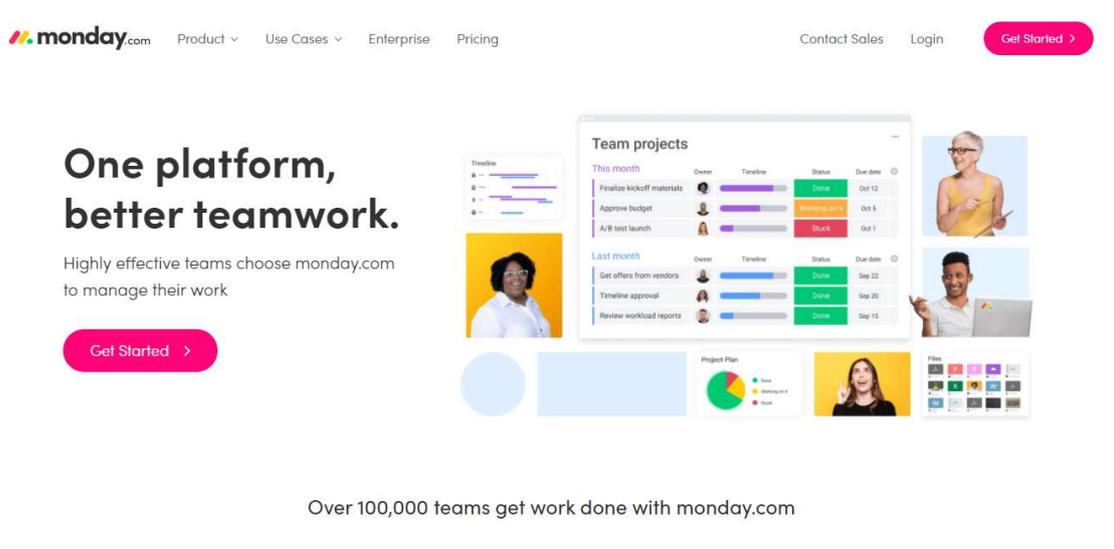


Figure 25 - Monday.com homepage - <https://monday.com/>

Again, team members can use their Google account to create a new Monday one, in fact it is integrated too with Gmail, but also with Slack and LinkedIn for log in procedures.

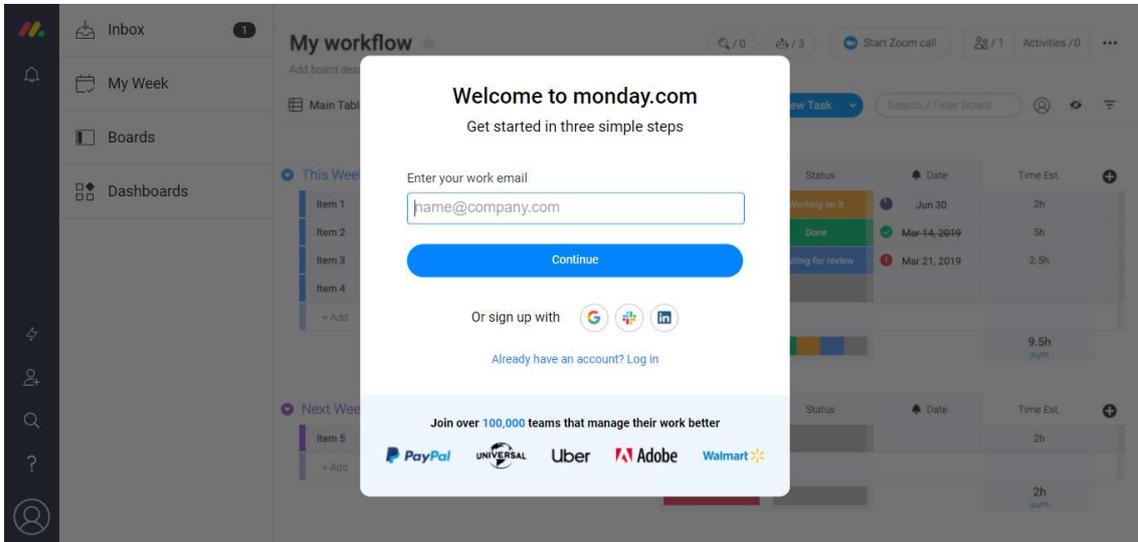


Figure 26 - Sign up page - https://auth.monday.com/users/sign_up_new?source=web_main&origin=hp_fullbg_page_header#soft_signup_from_step

Every new user will be guided to add basic information about himself, his work, his team. First step is to add your full name and team name, again we will take as example Reale Group project.

²⁰ <https://support.monday.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005310945-What-is-monday-com->

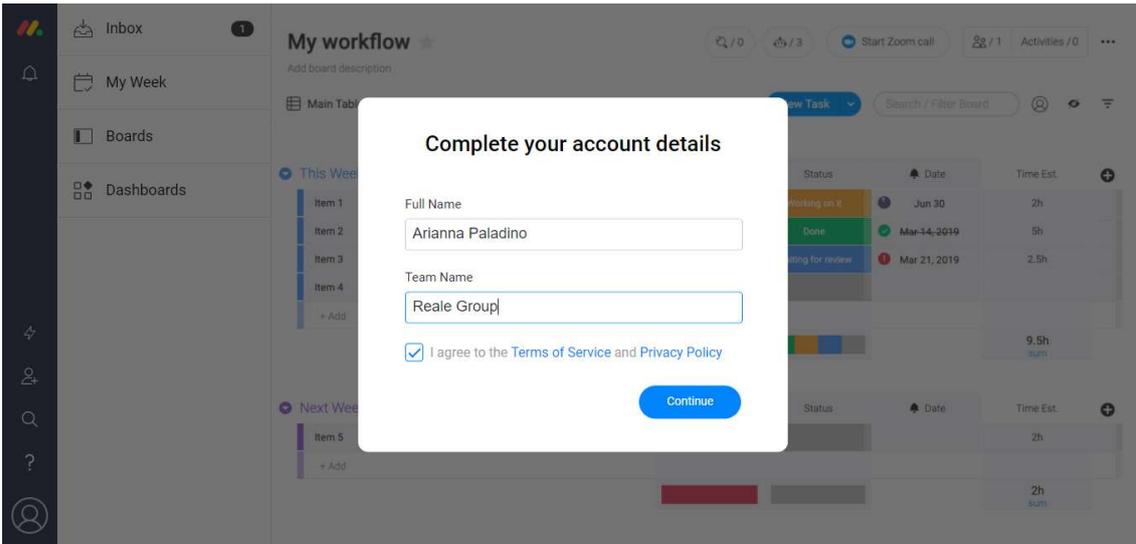


Figure 27 - Account details page

Selecting a work usage, it will be asked something more about your team and company, in particular, which is your role and you can choose between business owner, team leader, team member, freelancer, director/C-level/VP.

Then you can select team and company size and what things will you manage in order to set the platform in the most suitable way for your kind of activities.

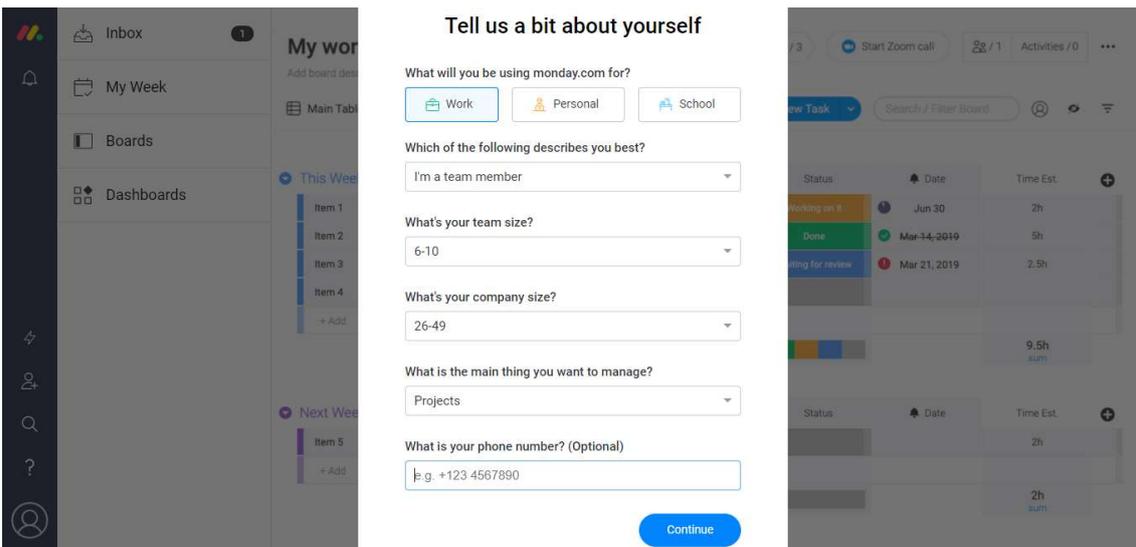


Figure 28 - Team and company settings page

Last step will be inviting your teammates to join the platform, adding their email addresses and sending them an invitation to collaborate in the project thanks to Monday.com.

In this case, account department team members will be the ones involved in the usage, in fact, I suggest it with project management, monitoring and controlling purposes.

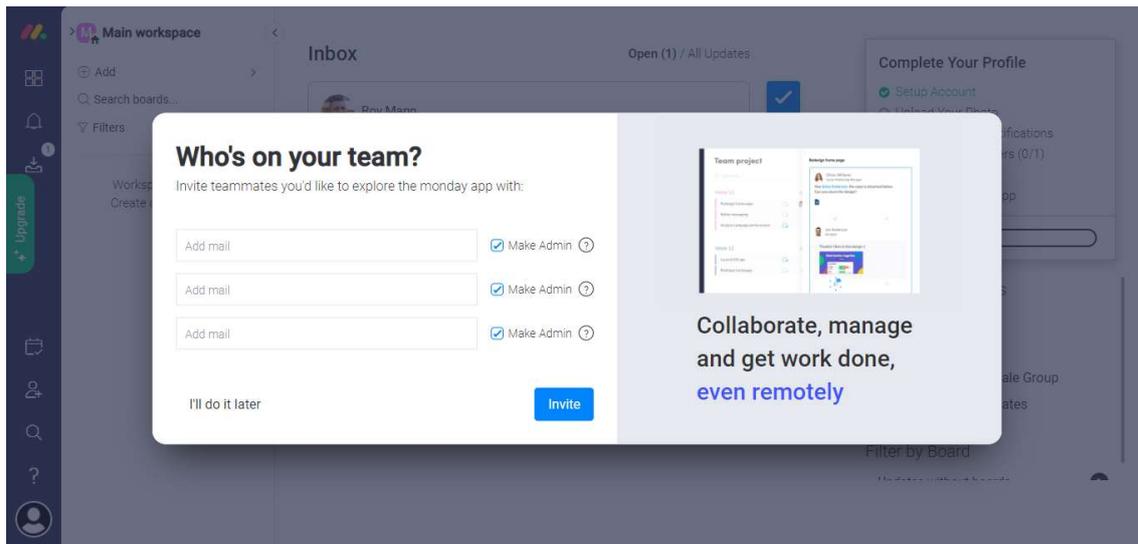


Figure 29 - Invite your team page

The first things you will be suggested to do by Monday's guide will be to add a new board to start working, but, knowing that it is integrated with Trello, we will not create a new blank board, but we will choose to import data for our first board from Trello board.

As you can see, it is possible to import data also from Excel and Google Sheets that are both currently used in Louder.

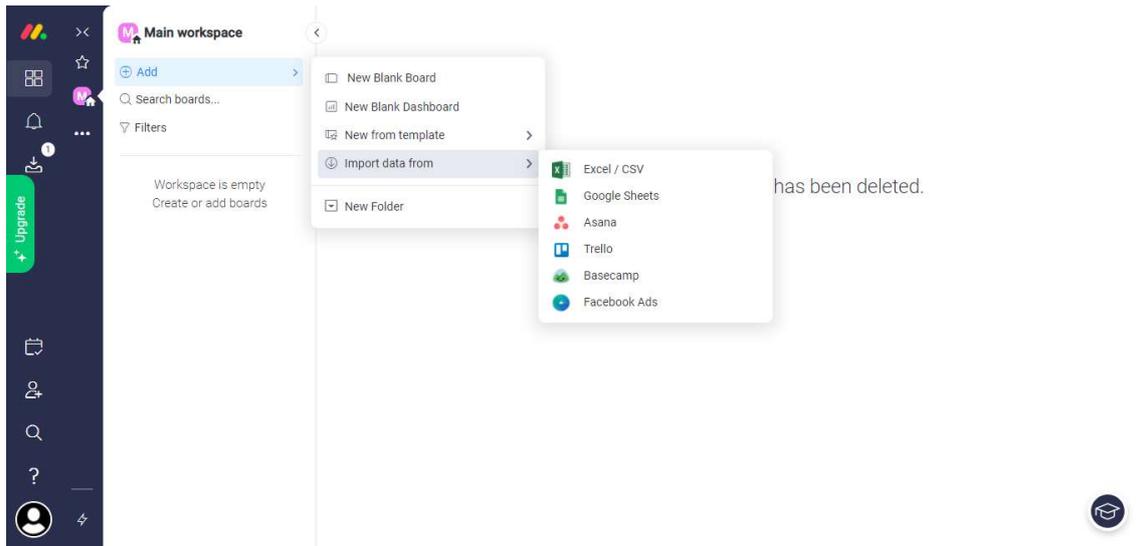


Figure 30 - Add a new board in monday.com

Importing data from Trello, Monday.com will make you choose which Trello board select and the related setting to be applied on the new platform. The most suitable one for Reale Group project will be the “To-do list” layout.

From Trello board we will import cards with related:

- **Status**

It will take the list name in which the card is placed in the board; working on Monday you will be able to select and change the status according to the one already set in Trello.

- **Labels**

The column will represent the label created and assigned to that card in Trello; in the same way as for status, we will have the list of label already created and, moreover, we can add on it a symbol that will make it clearer label significant (green check, red x, red or green clock, etc.).

- **Due date**

So, we will have already set calendar.

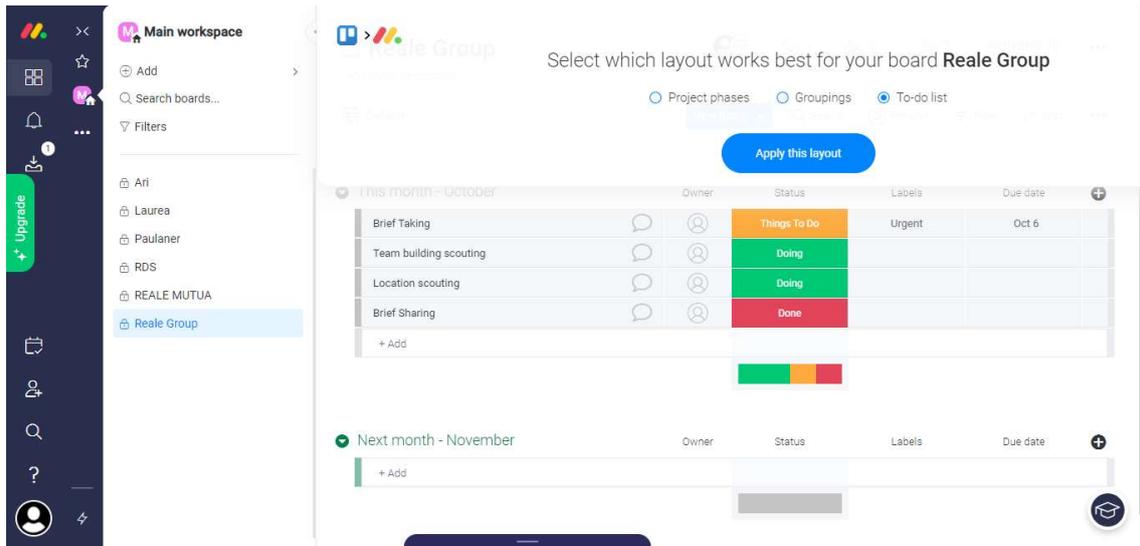


Figure 31 - Importing data from Trello to Monday and choosing setting

Moreover, thanks to Monday's Integrations Center, it is possible to set an additional integration with Trello, together with hundreds of other possible ones, with multiple application.

In fact, clicking on the integration icon on top right section of the board, it will be open the complete set of possible application with which the board can be enriched.

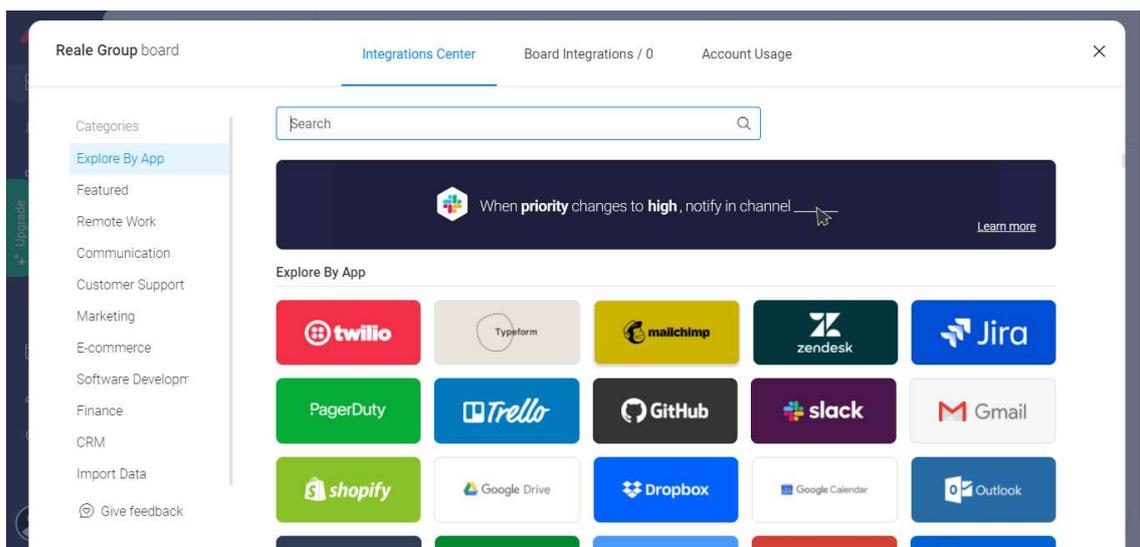


Figure 32 - Monday.com Integrations Center

Selecting Trello icon, it is possible to add the integration related to it: in particular, the activity that you can perform is set and it is possible for user to change the underlined words that are referred respectively the first one to which Trello board you want to integrate with, the second one to the item you want to create on Monday.

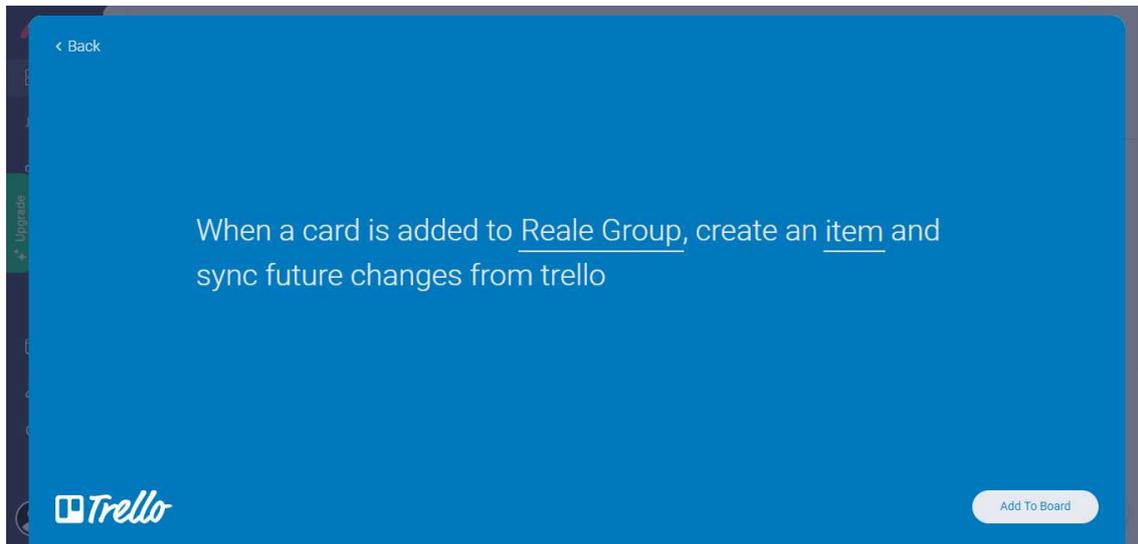


Figure 33 - Trello integration page

Clicking on “item”, it will be displayed the kind of personalization that you can perform: what will happen setting the authentication is the creation of a new row (the item itself), in “This month group”, with Item Update equal to Trello card description, name equal to card name, status equal to list in which is inserted, labels and due date equal to Trello ones.

Trello column contains the card ID to which the item is referred and owner one the person who is created it. You can also add more columns, selecting which Trello information adding in.

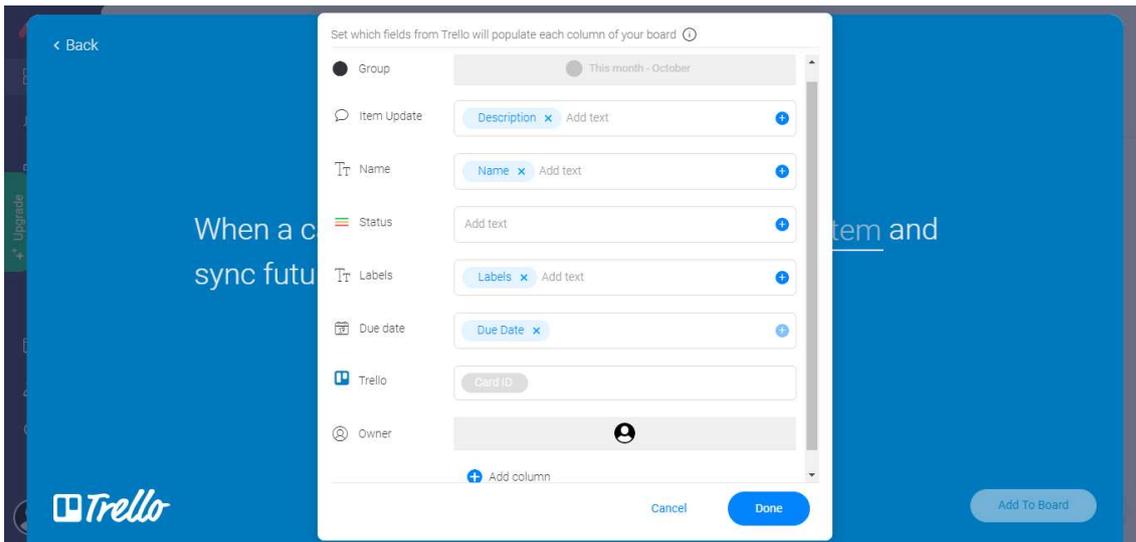


Figure 34 - Trello integration customization page

Moreover, it will be particularly useful to set integration with Slack, taking into consideration that is already used by Louder staffs.

Concerning the communication platform, it is possible to integrate it in several way, avoiding to communicate project changes or tasks progress, because, as it can be seen from the examples below, it is possible to set automatic messages directly sent into the project Slack channel or directly to the users that deal with that particular feature.

It is possible to notifying due date arrival, items creation or modification, status or column changes, updates posting; all the integration are extremely customizable and could be added to the board according to project requirements and team needs.

This integration will make easier project monitoring and will make internal communication process simpler and faster, it will avoid the needs for mailing and updating colleagues about project changes and, thanks to automatic reminder, it will be impossible to miss a deadline.

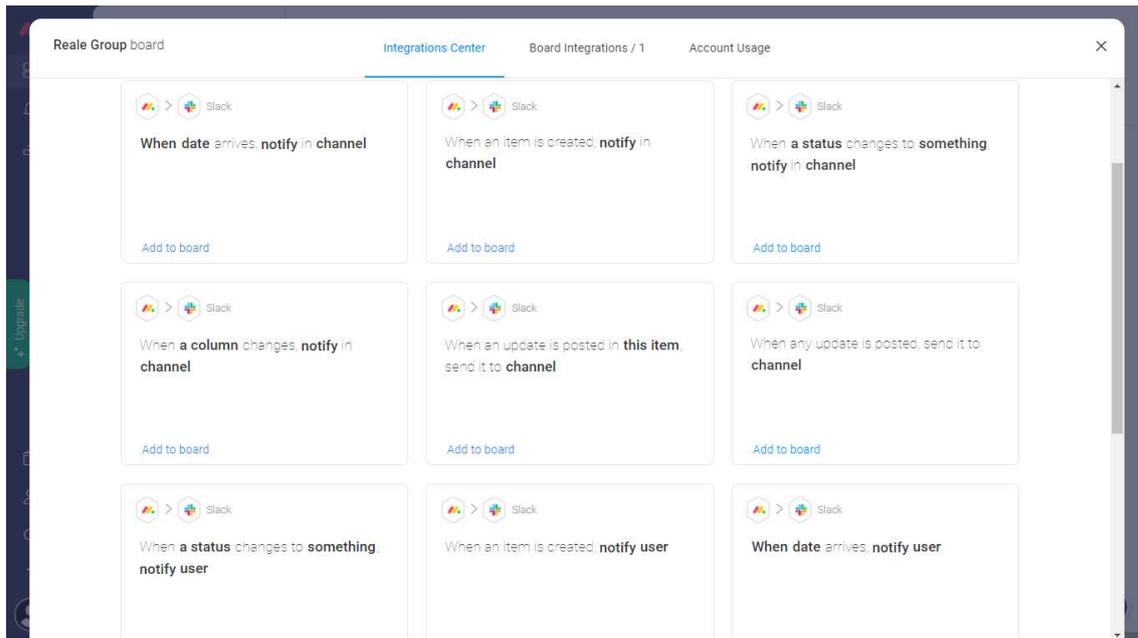


Figure 35 - Slack possible integration with Monday

The last important integration that I want to mentioned is the one with Google Drive files; in fact, it is possible to attach to a specific task the related files.

For example, in brief taking we can attach the brief from Google Drive, clicking on the task and adding the file as shown in the figure below.

In this way, we will have in a unique platform also the documents related to the project and it will be faster and easier to find information and useful files; time devoted to communicate to each teammates document location and to send mail to share files will be completely cut and crashed.

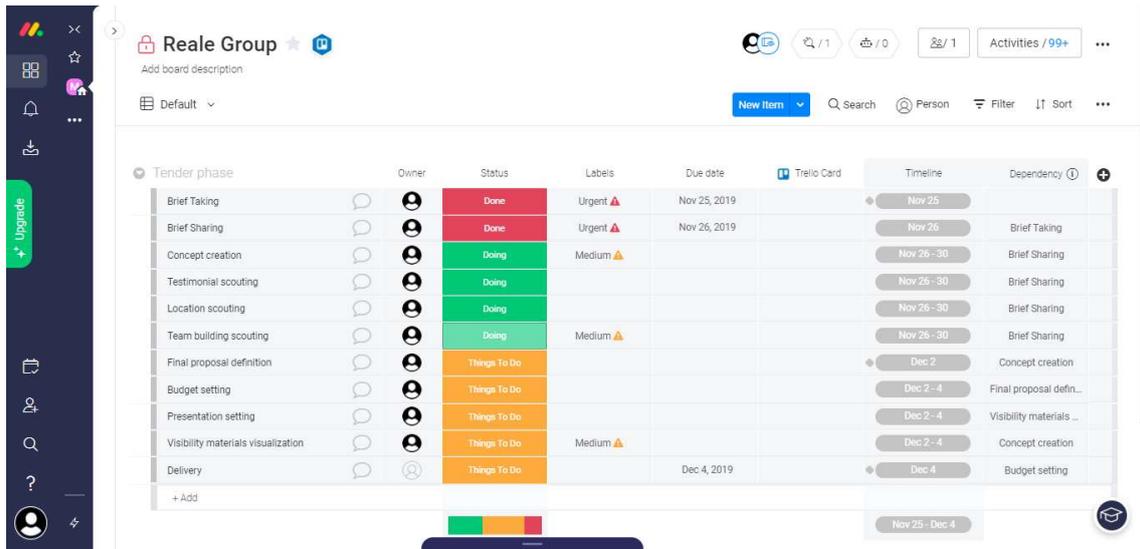


Figure 37 - Reale Group complete board

It is then possible to switch to a Gantt chart view, selecting “Default” on top left section and choosing “Gantt”; it can be also exported as an excel file and shared with client, as shown below.

In this way the chart will be always updated, following project changes and progresses, and, moreover, it will be avoided the creation of the Gantt just as a file available for eventual consultation.

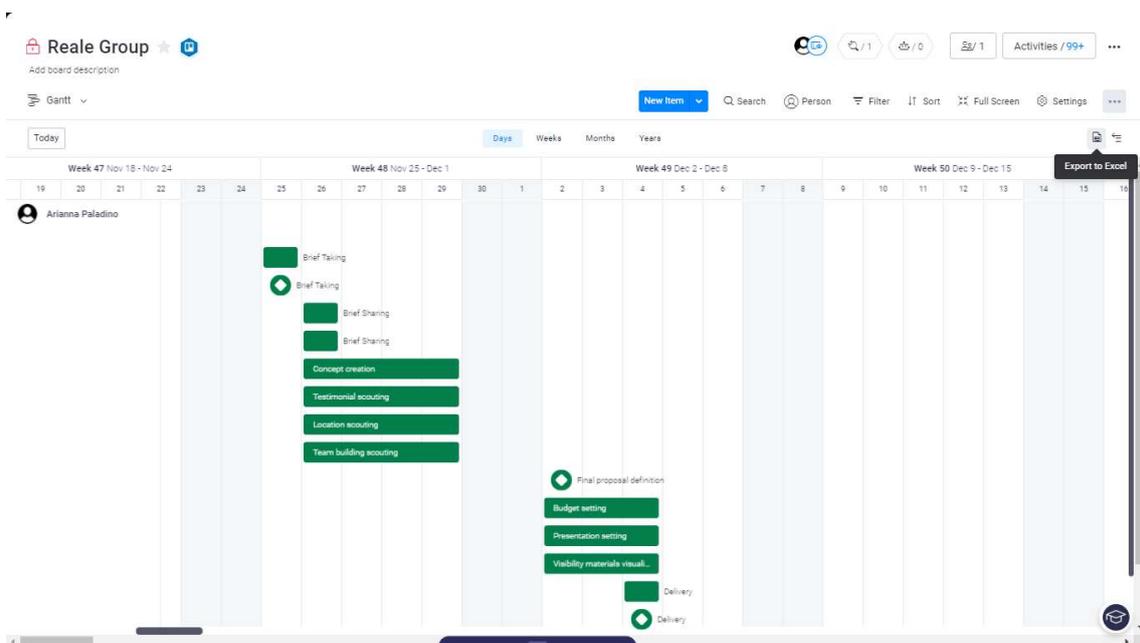


Figure 38 - Monday's Gantt chart

d. Google Drive Storage and integration

One of the critical issues during Reale Group project was document sharing and storage. In fact, using Louder server as storage and sharing place, it often happened to lose updated documents, being wrong in uploading the right file, uses an older version of a table.

This kind of problems happened because maybe someone upload a file on the server, but it was also sent via mail, so you can download it from the mail, modify it locally on your pc and then sent it again.

Nobody uploaded the file again on the server that remained with the older version of the document. Moreover, it could happen to print it and modify it with a pen, adding new features or comments, and then forget to add the changes on the digital file.

Considering that in Louder contracts were not considered the possibility for smart working, remote connection with the server has not been activated and there were no time to do it before the lockdown; so, the unique way to use server files was to save it locally on each pc and then share it with the team using just mail.

Of course, it was a difficult and long task to perform, that implied time consumptions and the need for storage space on each laptop or the usage of capacious USB drives.

Taking into consideration the previously highlighted sharing and storage problems and the need for smart working and remote access to files, my proposal is to switch to cloud storage, as Google Drive one.

This hypothesis could be taken in consideration for “in progress” project, so, in this way completed projects documents would be stored in server folders, considering that they could be used as example for future works, but there is no need to consult them daily.

The other way around, documents related to in progress projects are continuously updated, changed, consulted and storage errors will be completely avoided using just one

Google sheet shared between team members that can edit it, adding comments, see teammates modification and updates.

As I mentioned in previous chapters, it is possible to integrate Miro, Trello and Monday with Google Drive, attaching the most important and representative files to each board, connecting them with brainstorming, cards and tasks and make each team member easily find documents related to each function.

Moreover, using Google Documents and Sheets, it will be possible to add comment inside the files, avoiding to meet each other or to send a mail talking about that specific detail about the document and, considering a situation of smart working, comments can substitute voice informal communication.

Modifying the files only on Drive, there will be a unique version of them, shared with all teammates and updated in a unique place.

Another big problem will be completely overcome: it will be possible for teammates to edit the same file simultaneously, activity that is impossible to perform working on a server document.

This feature will imply the possibility to make filling a document faster and easier, taking into consideration that more than one person will collaborate to do it and all team members can see modification and updating from his own computer.

Google Drive storage and usage will be extremely helpful in particular when the team is not in the same physical room, but in a video call meeting during which they are working all together on the same file.

4. Conclusion

The study about collaboration and project management software made me clear the fact that there are hundreds of tools and platforms available to companies to run their business; they are numerous and extremely customizable to be adapted to different work needs.

Thus, concluding my thesis research I can assert, again and with greater knowledge about this field, that we already have the tools to deal with a situation of complete smart working and the absence of a physical place in which perform meeting in person.

The only thing that companies have to do is to innovate themselves, overcome inertia and start dealing with new technologies that can support and extremely push their performances.

I analysed Miro, Trello and Monday.com from the perspective of a communication agency, highlighting functionalities and features related to their kind of work, but the platforms have multiple functions that could be adapted to various type of fields and applications.

Keeping the focus on Louder case, it has to be said that the agency world is extremely characterized by uncertainty and always changing situations and requests, time is every time too short for the delivery and it is difficult to deal with client desires.

Talking about a little and young company - Louder is fourteen years old and counts less than thirty resources - it happens very often to deal with cognitive inertia and a general feeling and opinion that works have to be performed in the same way it were always performed.

Few resources are willing to innovate and change work path, but the majority did not see the need to change something that has always worked, doing it always in the same way with the same tools and the same strategy.

I think that, having dealt with the pandemic situation, it clearly appear that it is not possible to perform the same tasks as before with the same method as before; the only way to react to this completely change in how people interact and work is to find new paths and completely change the mind, as everything around us.

The very first innovation that I had the possibility to observe, being still involved in operative tasks, was conference call platform usage, so, Louder managers learned how to create meeting using Google Meet, send invitation thanks to Google Calendar, share their screen during a call.

There was also the time to try the implementation of Google Drive for a shared presentation file in which collect all team members' researches and use it as a starting point for brainstorming and then final presentation.

It is fascinating to see how workers extremely reluctant to changing were able to learn new working tools and innovate their tasks management when the external condition imposes them to do it.

In this way, it is possible to understand how inertia could be easily overcome, making employees understand that there is no way to continue working as before. It has not to be related just with extreme condition, as Coronavirus lockdown.

It has to be understood that improve and change routines is essential to progress as a company and be competitive in an always changing sector, hungry of novelty and continuously updated features.

Be innovative is not just related to what is done by the company, but it reflect in particular how work is performed; innovate internal process will make it easier to improve all corporate aspects, becoming a top player anticipating continuously new market trends.

Starting from the basic notions related to "survival activities" as organizing meeting, so, learning how to use conference call tools, the company could start to launch new challenge proposing the use of additional new instruments.

The crisis situation could be seen as an opportunity to think again about the whole organization and management; moreover, managers, that have already started to innovate

processes and learn something new, probably will be more willing to learn something more and try to add ulterior tools to the ones just discovered.

Work contraction too could be seen as an opportunity to invest the free time generated by the postponement or deleting of some projects; in a situation in which departments are full of work and there is strictly the time to finish the assigned workload, it would more and more difficult to add also a moment in which learn the usage of new platforms.

But looking at Coronavirus spread as an opportunity to invest on staff training would be a perfect way to propose innovative project management tools. Each department can spend more time in each project phase, dealing with less than a half of the workload as in a normal period.

So, there will be the opportunity to learn and innovate, taking into consideration that it would be also a way to prevent difficulties linked to the lasting situation of complete smart working and it will help in the case in which coming back in the office will not possible or some workers are forced not to be physically present due to quarantine or health problems.

I said it to highlight that the time spent in staff training would not be losing time, but it will be helpful also for future situation, during normal period.

Moreover, as I stressed during software explanations, thanks to their usage it will be possible to completely overcome problems found out also during physical management, when it was possible for the teams to work in the same office.

In particular, using Miro, Trello, Monday.com and Google Drive, it will be possible to overcome:

- **Difficulties performing conference call brainstorming**

Brainstorming process is always crucial when a new project starts, it is linked with creativity and artistic inspiration; even when the team physically meet in an office room, it could happens that find some good ideas results very difficult.

Also adding physical distance and the use of a simple conference call will result more and more difficult, deleting the usage of the board in which art director often draws his suggestion about the project and describes his idea and make it difficult for graphic designer to show their sketches.

Brainstorming process is the first one to be supported during smart working and a platform as Miro could be suitable for graphic designer to share their creative idea and for account manager to take easily track of them.

It will also represent an improvement with respect to physical brainstorming meeting, in fact, it often happens to have an idea and suddenly forgot it, but, using Miro support, you will take track of all proposal, avoiding to miss any suggestions.

- **Storage problem**

Using Google Drive, all issues related to wrong documents and error in uploading file on the server will be completely overcome, taking into consideration that it will exist just one drive file shared among team members and downloaded just in the moment in which it has to be archived on server when the project is closed.

Documents could be share directly inviting team members collaborating to project folder, sending them the invitation link, attaching the files to Miro, Trello or Monday.com boards.

- **Tasks assignment problems, as overlapping or forgot tasks**

Always keeping track of new tasks to do on Trello board, it will be less likely to forgot to do something, having it not already flagged on the board.

Moreover, taking into consideration the integration between Trello and Monday.com, each card (i.e. task) added on the first board will be immediately displayed on Monday one and, thanks to Slack integration, a message will arrive to the account of the project that will soon after consider the additional things to do assigning it to one and only of the team members.

Sharing the board with the team, everyone will know what is assign to himself and what is not of his responsibilities.

The process will be more and more secure and fast than keeping track of “to do” on a simple paper sheet that could be lost, can not be shared and is managed by a junior resource only, that could be wrong in remind something.

- **Shareability of document**

Online platform can be always consulted, from every place and also having just a smart phone, there will be no need to have someone in the workplace to maybe sent a picture of to do sheet to control it or take from the server the file that the resource that is outside the office need to consult.

Mail document sharing will be completely avoided, using just dedicated software and this will always avoid the creation of hundreds of file version shared among the company.

What will be shared is the link to participate to Miro, Trello or Monday boards or to edit and see a Google Drive file.

- **Deadline misalignment**

Deadline will be shared with all team members thanks to Trello board that, being integrated with Monday one, will be always monitored by account managers.

Setting reminder in both platforms, the team will be always aligned on time constraints and, even in this case, there will be no need to write reminder mail, avoiding the time consumption related to it.

The platform will do it for the account manager, making him less stressed about remind everyone delivery and due dates. He would have more time and focus on all the other important tasks related to his work.

- **Need for numerous meeting**

Most of the meeting organized during project completion are alignment ones and there are organized to share with all teammates the big picture about progresses.

There will not be the need to organize them if the whole project situation could be displayed just open project board and looking at task completion.

So, alignment consultation will be reduced to the one extremely necessary to take important decisions; moreover, cutting meetings will mean also cutting costs related to resources time usage: less meetings, more time to carry out operative tasks.

- **Need for continuous communications**

Integrating communication tools as Slack or Gmail, project changes will be automatically notified to team members and using comments on boards and platform chats, there will be no need to integrate with voice or mail communication.

Platform chat is present on Google Drive, but also on Monday and it can be seen as the direct substitutes of voice communications when teammates are not in the same office.

But with a crucial difference: chat communications are written and you can consult them again, checking if you miss something of what your colleagues suggested.

- **Misalignment between resources and departments**

Sharing Trello board also with arts and production managers departments, each team members, regardless the belonging departments, will be aligned on the same tasks list, deadlines, delivery date.

Everyone has the possibility to have the big picture about the project, access to Drive document, attached to the board, and consult progress carried on.

There will not be personal opinion about what is already done and what not, but there will be a univocal and unambiguous board that each team members can edit and updates, following his own tasks progresses.

Unfortunately, due to health emergency and work contractions, it was not possible for me to continue operative working inside the company and effectively applied the researches about new software to a specific project that were in Louder progress.

For this reason, it is not possible for me to show quantitative evidence about advantages in using described software.

Acting as a consultant, I showed problem faced and different hypothesis to overcome them, hoping that my work of thesis could be a starting point for the company to think again about project management and maybe take into consideration the effective usage of the tools.

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