



# The ultimate guide to frontline team huddles

*How to inspire and align your staff  
(in only 10 minutes a day!)*



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# The secret to operational consistency? Huddles.

Looking to streamline processes and drive operational consistency? Reduce the strain on your managers? Drive profitability and expansion? Help communication flow? Keep customer experience top of mind? The answer is simple: pre-shift team huddles.

While team huddles have been the secret weapon of some frontline organizations for decades, these mini meetings are gaining more traction in recent years as alignment and agility are becoming increasingly critical to frontlines looking to grow and thrive.

Morning huddles can help your team stay informed and focused on your organization's goings-on and core goals – if you do them right.

That's where we come in. This guide will help you understand why top-performing frontlines use pre-shift team huddles and how to effectively bring these ten-minute miracles to your organization. Plus, we'll share tried-and-true tips and tricks from our CS team.

**So, let's get started.**

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# What are pre-shift team huddles?

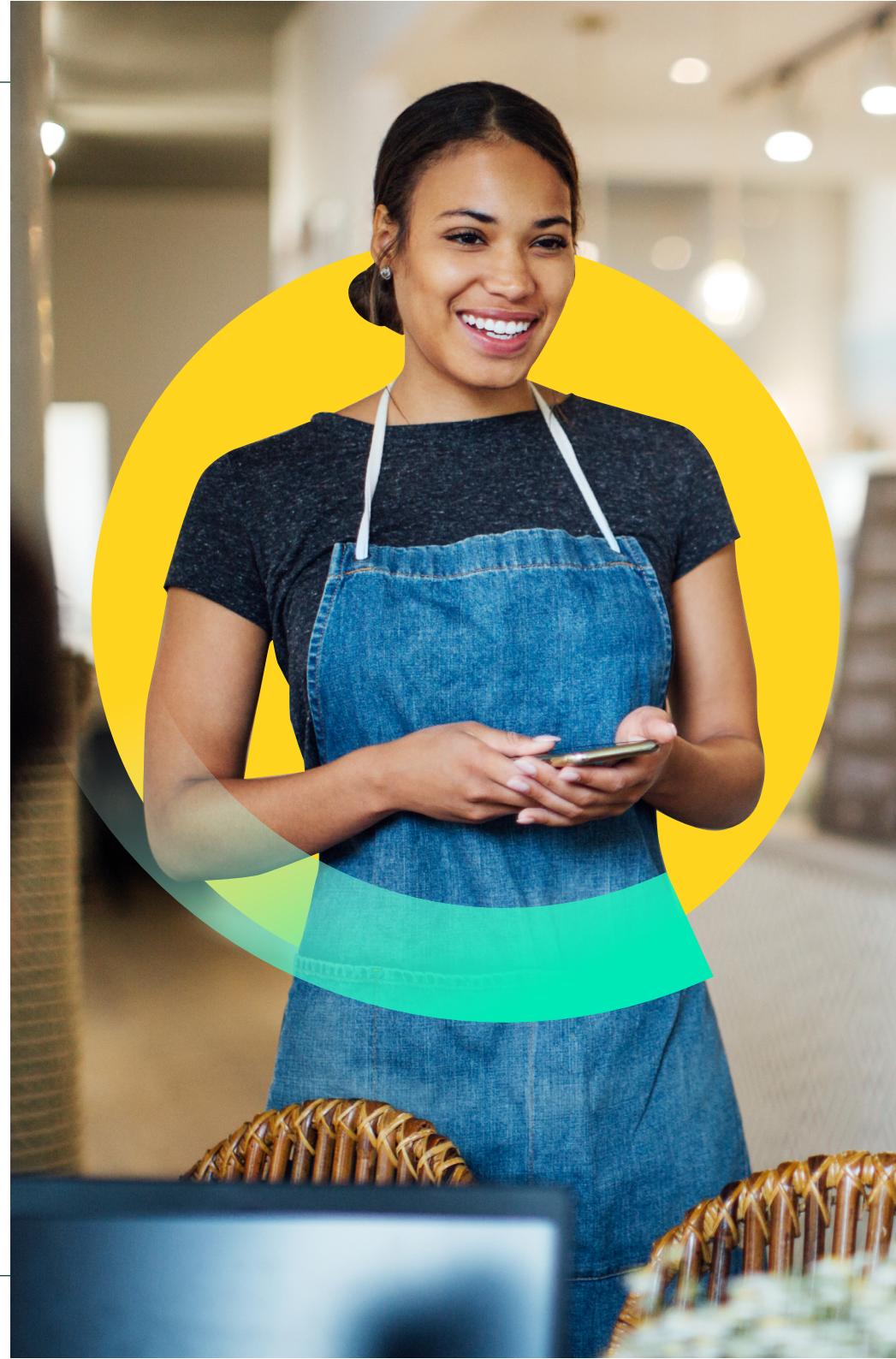
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# What are team huddles?

*Also known as pre-shift meetings, morning huddles, lineups, and myriad other names, team huddles are gatherings that provide a chance for frontline teams to quickly connect on the day's tasks, company updates, team goals or hurdles, and more. Even the deskbound world has begun tapping into these valuable check-ins by utilizing standups and scrums.*

Team huddles are more than just a staff meeting. They're a place for consistent, regular discussion in which employees at all levels communicate, share, and address key performance indicators and areas of improvement. The purpose is to provide an open channel where team members can safely voice any questions or concerns they may have. They should rarely last longer than a few minutes, and are usually led by a location manager.

Huddles are particularly valuable in uncertain times (we see you, global pandemic) or periods of rapid change at an organization, such as during an expansion. But even during "normal" times, every organization can benefit from these bite-sized meetings every day.





# Why every frontline needs team huddles

According to our annual research, **The Deskless Report**, frontline workers are desperate for more on-the-job information. In fact, one of the top reasons that 36% of deskless workers currently want to quit their job is “poor communication.” But information is not always easy to share. Our research also found that according to deskless leaders, the #1 barrier between head office and frontline workers is (you guessed it!) communication.

That’s where team huddles come in. Do they replace your employee communication tools? Nope. But they’re part of your frontline enablement ecosystem, reinforcing timely updates and foundational information, like brand values, while also providing space for real-time feedback and recognition.

Here are a few more reasons every frontline needs team huddles:

## They boost team-building

Even when a location only employs a few staff members, teams can become siloed very quickly. The simplest explanation? People aren’t talking to one another. An obvious benefit of a regular touchpoint in the form of a pre-shift huddle can be simple open communication. This leads to a place where employees grow to trust one another and are empowered to work together rather than separately. Pre-shift team huddles are an especially excellent mechanism for team-building between front-of-house and back-of-house staff in the restaurant and hospitality industries.

## They create brand advocates

There’s also an employee advocacy play here, too. Employees who feel confident that they have their basic needs met to reach their full potential (things like a safe workplace, fair pay, and the tools to do the job) can become staunch advocates of the brand and company they work for. Ultimately, team huddles lead to engaged, empowered employees ready to collaborate and contribute – and tell the world why they’re proud to be a part of your brand.



### They foster a feedback culture

These meetings are the perfect place to foster a sense of safety, share best practices, and allow upward feedback. According to LinkedIn's **Global Talent Trends Report 2020**, it's crucial that employers tap into and act upon employee feedback. By doing this, you are not only engaging your employees but involving them in decision-making. When given the space to share consumer insights, employees can even help increase your organization's competitive edge.

### They promote in-the-moment recognition

All employee recognition is good – but it's even better when a worker's hard work is acknowledged in near real time, rather than at the end of the month (or longer!). Team huddles provide the perfect space to share and celebrate. For example, employees at many Enterprise Rent-A-Car locations **vote on who delivered the best service** during the past week, helping increase connection and add a spirit of friendly competition to their workdays.

### They drive consistent task execution

When employees don't have a good line of sight into what everyone else is working on, there is a danger of duplicating tasks. These redundancies are inefficient and can be significantly negative for your brand if they involve your customers. Pre-shift team huddles allow you to quickly and efficiently create systems that help your business flow better. Taking the time each day, even for as little as ten minutes, to go over priorities and goals can drive consistency and task execution and can increase team cohesion and efficiency. Team huddles also give leaders a chance to act and mobilize their teams to make adjustments that improve customer and employee experience. Quickly sharing bottlenecks and identifying blockers with your team can get more employees focused on a problem so that it can be solved in real time.

### They align on company goals

Goals and KPIs are the best way to tell you if you're on target and let you course-correct to get back on track. And your daily pre-shift huddle is an ideal place for reviewing metric updates, short-term priorities, and overall company goals. Managers can even use huddles to align their teams on priorities and drive performance in a fun way by tying your employees' successes back to the company's values and goals.



# How to bring team huddles to your organization

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## Implementing team huddles

*Team huddles have the power to drive employee engagement and operational consistency... but to make that happen, you have to be consistent about it.*

Telling your managers to have a quick ten-minute sync-up each day isn't enough. You need to implement the right processes and tools to ensure that every location is using huddles the same way. The information shared doesn't need to be the same across the organization, but the process should be.

Here's how to implement team huddles at scale:



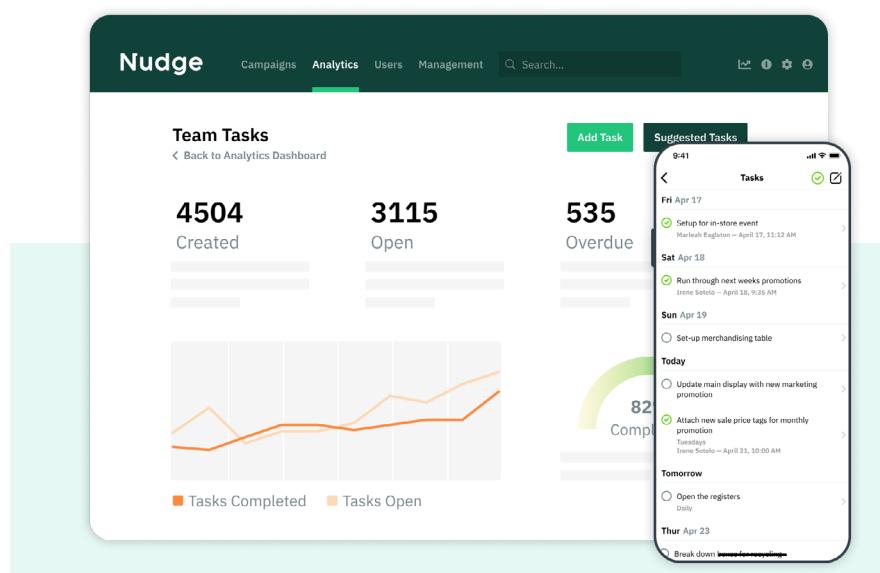
## Step 1: Identify the “why”

If there's one thing we love here at Nudge, it's the “why.” When implementing any initiative, sharing the “why” with your staff is the best chance at widespread adoption. But before you can share it with them, you have to identify the “why.” So, why are you implementing team huddles? Which of the business drivers we already explored is most critical to your organization? Are you looking to drive consistent task execution? Are you hoping to open up more channels for upward feedback? Is the business going through a period of growth and you want to keep staff in the know? Thinking about this will help you provide extra context to your staff in a later step.

## Step 2: Get the right tech in place

For team huddles to work at scale, you need the right technology and tools in place. Keep in mind: To achieve organizational consistency, you want to standardize the process across locations and regions, while allowing for a certain amount of personalization from managers. Our recommendation? An agenda. More specifically, a frontline enablement solution that combines task management and internal communication. Having your huddle meeting agenda baked right into your existing solution keeps everything in the same place.

Think about it: Let's say one day's pre-shift team huddle includes a review of SOP for end-of-day closing. When your agenda is baked into your frontline enablement solution, staff can access the closing checklist – as well as access additional training and learning resources – all in one place. Plus, if a staff member misses the meeting, they can access the talking points and even check off that they have read the information.



### Looking for the technology that makes scaling up team huddles a breeze?

**Meet Nudge**, the frontline enablement solution that empowers workers with the knowledge, tools and resources they need to execute consistently and confidently every day. Nudge's mobile-first platform combines two-way communications and guided task execution to help deskless organizations enable their frontline across every location in real time.



### Step 3: Get your managers on board

Once you have the “why” and your tech ready to go, you’re prepped to get your manager buy-in. Without your managers, your team huddles will fall flat, fast. It’s critical that you take the time to educate them on the value of these mini meetings – not just for the company as a whole, but for the managers themselves. After all, managers are the ones up against it. Now more than ever, they’re wearing many hats, so finding ways to standardize and simplify processes and protocols is win-win. Share with them the benefits of team huddles and the value of regular, consistent information sharing.

#### SUCCESS TIP ☀️

*If you have a frontline enablement solution in place, you might even be able to back up this information with data, showing how locations that participate in recognition and feedback programs have higher revenue numbers or lower turnover.*

### Step 4: Share the “why” with your staff

Next, it’s time to loop in your workforce. To encourage widespread adoption of this daily ritual, you’ll want to make sure your workers know the value of these meetings. Here’s where the “why” comes into play again – don’t just explain the new process, explain the reason. So, that message might look like this:

“

*We’re always looking for ways to improve communication and alignment across the organization and provide additional channels to acknowledge and celebrate your hard work. That’s why we’re excited to announce that we’re implementing pre-shift team huddles at every location. These daily meetings will last no longer than ten minutes and will provide an opportunity for teams to quickly review company announcements and monthly goals, address hurdles or issues, and celebrate staff members who have gone above and beyond.*



## Step 5: Standardize the process

The most successful team huddles focus on consistency. To drive operational efficiency, you'll want to standardize the process, while leaving room for managers to drive their own tactical and engagement initiatives. But how can you ensure that 170 locations across the country (or the world!) are sharing the same information at their huddles?

Here's where getting the right technology in place pays off. When you execute your huddles through your communication or enablement solution, you'll be deploying the same agenda items to every location. With Nudge, head office can share mandatory and suggested items with links to relevant resources. Managers can then supplement that agenda with their own custom topics, like star performer call-outs, regional updates, or even add in additional "approved" topics from a head office-populated list.

In the team huddle, managers and employees open up the agenda and review the items for the day, checking them off as they go. This helps huddles to run faster and more effectively, because managers can spend more time on team building and addressing issues versus simply relaying information. The checklist also ensures managers can track who has received the updates, ensuring full, consistent visibility across your workforce (no matter how big!), while still avoiding duplication of information.

## Step 6: Monitor at scale

One more reason to deploy your team huddles using a frontline enablement solution: the analytics! Sure, you could leave your managers to conduct these meetings old-school. But leveraging technology ensures that every team huddle can be easily tracked, so you can see at a glance what's being added to agendas and what topics need more attention – so you can steer the conversation accordingly. You can even see what items are getting checked off and when, allowing you to get full visibility on how information is getting disseminated. Pair this with a resource hub and knowledge-testing questions, and you'll have the ability to check the confidence and preparedness of your entire workforce. Magical, right?

### SUCCESS TIP ☀️

*Monitoring at scale can also help to drive company-wide adoption. If you know which locations are consistently doing team huddles (and which are lagging), you can celebrate the behavior you want to drive. Acknowledge the teams that are making team huddles a daily ritual as a way to encourage other locations to follow suit.*

# Structuring your huddles

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# The anatomy of a perfect team huddle

*You've got your tools – check! You've prepped your staff – check! You've got buy-in from your managers – check!*

Now it's time to start running your huddles. But what goes onto the agenda? These meetings are ten-minute miracles for a reason. Anything beyond a few minutes starts to have diminishing returns. So, how do you make those few minutes count?

Your agenda can be highly structured, like these examples:

- Quick refresher of a SOP (like handling a customer complaint)
- Safety tip
- Menu of the day
- Outstanding service recognition
- Special occasions/milestones

- Customer feedback
- Food-handling guidelines review
- Safety tip
- Review weekly and daily sales targets
- Menu recommendations
- Team news and recognition

Or, your agenda could be geared toward a different topic each day, like this example:

- Monday: How to handle chemicals
- Tuesday: The nutritional value of overnight oats
- Wednesday: Celebrating Chinese New Year
- Thursday: Introducing a new cocktail
- Friday: Explaining the rules of a new staff competition

Don't forget: The best huddles pair mandatory agenda items shared across the organization (to drive consistency and standardized protocol adoption) with tactical additions from managers (like reminders about regional events or seasonal ingredients).

Your huddles can also go beyond the standard menu updates, safety announcements, and general housekeeping. Here are a few other agenda items to consider including in your team huddles to boost engagement and build community:

## 1. Icebreakers

Encouraging staff to take a few minutes at the top of your huddle to get to know one another helps to energize them and build a sense of community. This is particularly valuable during growth periods or seasonal hiring surges. Over time, your team will find commonalities that help build empathy. Here are some examples of questions you can ask to get started:

- *What are you most looking forward to this week? (personally or professionally)*
- *What's a win you had last week? (personally or professionally)*
- *What's your favorite place you've traveled to?*
- *What's your favorite book?*

## 2. Company mandate and purpose

Your team huddle is a good time to remind your team what they're working toward – today and also in the long term. And if you're starting to feel like a broken record, you're doing it right.

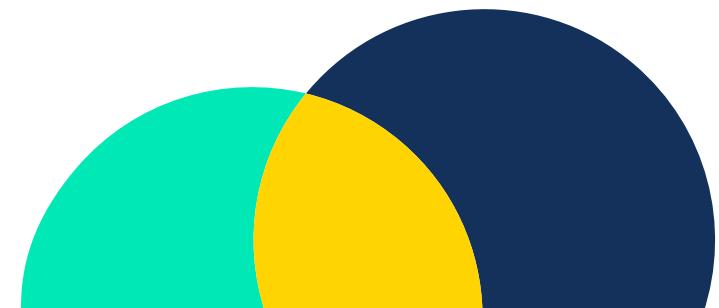
According to the forgetting curve theory, we start forgetting things just hours after we learn them. As quick as a day after you've learned something, you already forget 40% of the new information. The next day? 60%. And so it continues.

### SUCCESS TIP ☀️

*Take a page from Ritz Carlton's playbook by baking your mandate and mission into huddles with themed agendas that each focus on a core value.*

## 3. Questions

Even though these meetings are pint-sized, managers can still try to save a bit of time for questions from the team. Likely, if one person has a particular question, there are more people who are wondering about the same thing. Instead of repeatedly fielding the same questions throughout the day, answer questions at a time when everyone is present. Bonus points for adding the answer into your meeting agenda checklist, to ensure team members not present also get the question answered.



# Optimizing your huddles

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# Tips for getting the most out of your pre-shift team huddles

Once you've got your huddles up and running, you can find opportunities to optimize or improve the process. Here are a few tried-and-tested tactics from our CS team!

## Be descriptive, but clear

Think about the last time you made an elevator pitch: simplicity is your friend. Whether you're adding huddle items to your checklist at the head-office level, or working with your location managers to add their own items, focus on being clear and concise. That said, don't leave out too much detail. After all, if there's one thing The Deskless Report taught us, it's that you can't over-share with your staff. Ensure your teams know exactly what they need to do – but keep it focused.

### SUCCESS TIP ☀️

*A great way to ensure your team huddles are on track is to focus on driving an outcome, not a theoretical idea. Staying outcome-oriented will keep your team huddles short and sweet.*





## Find the right mix of operations and engagement

The best huddles have a good mix of operations (company announcements, menu updates, health and safety protocols) and engagement (team member shout-outs, anniversaries, feedback). In other words, ensure the business needs are being met, but don't be afraid to encourage your location managers to have some fun and create some micro-engagement moments with their staff.

## Keep it short and sweet

More than 10 or 15 minutes for a huddle isn't sustainable over time. That means you need to be strict about staying on schedule and not veer off topic. When the meeting starts to bleed over, it can throw off the entire day, and that's the exact opposite of what a huddle's supposed to do.

## Make it mandatory – and consistent

To be an effective team, *everyone* needs to be in the loop. That means making your team huddles mandatory to all workers on-shift – and also making the agenda and updates available to those who aren't on-site for the meeting. It's also crucial that managers stick to the same team huddle routine every single day. Encourage your manager to use the same agenda structure and never cancel.

# Team huddle mistakes to avoid

As with any employee communication, there are pitfalls to avoid. Anytime an organization is communicating down to the location level, you're at risk of the information getting reinterpreted or filtered – or the updates getting missed altogether. Here are a few common mistakes to avoid when implementing team huddles at your organization:



## Going low-tech

Can you run team huddles without any technology or tools? Yes. Will they operationalize processes at an organizational level? Likely not. Without a way for head office and managers to collaborate on the meeting agenda items, you're way more at risk for inconsistencies. Also, it can be hard for managers or head office to track who knows what, and whether every location has covered the critical updates they need to share.



## Auditing instead of empowering

While scaling up your team huddles with a frontline enablement solution allows for head office to have greater visibility on what's being discussed, it's important to use this oversight properly. It's not about auditing individual locations or managers on how they're running their team huddles or calling out teams for not checking off tasks, it's about streamlining the process to ensure the right information is getting to the right people. If you add a crucial item to team huddles and the majority of locations don't check it off, it's an opportunity to learn more. Were teams confused by the update? Do they have questions? Is the organization sharing too much information?



## Not enabling your managers

Team huddles are also not about going above managers' heads to share information. Populating your huddle agendas with a long list of mandatory items from head office can have a negative impact at the manager level. The best team huddles allow managers to go through updates quickly and have more time to focus on engagement, hurdles, and connections. They should empower managers to focus on truly leading their team.

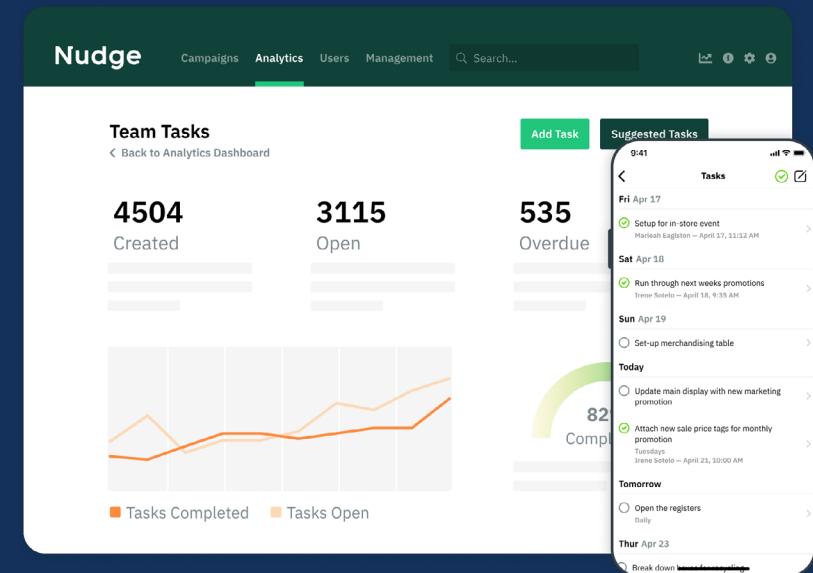
# How Nudge makes team huddles easy

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# Nudge: everything you need to run effective team huddles

*Top-performing organizations use team huddles to ensure that their frontline has the support and information they need to thrive. That's where we come in. Here's how to use Nudge for team huddles:*

- 1 Use Tasks to create team huddle checklists that every team member can access
- 2 Head office can add mandatory and suggested agenda items
- 3 Managers can add additional items, or choose from a pre-populated list of huddle topics
- 4 Agenda items can link out to supplementary resources or information
- 5 Workers can be assigned agenda items and check them off once they're covered
- 6 Nudge's analytics allow head office to track who has received updates



## Loved by our customers – and their employees

"I am excited to finally be able to communicate with every employee who helps make our customers happy."

- Steve Rothenstein,  
Dippin' Dots & Doc Popcorn

"Great reads on everything that is going on within the company. Very helpful and to-the-point easy access. I find that very refreshing."

- Patricia C., User



Apple Store



4.7 Stars  
+15k Reviews



Google Play



4.7 Stars  
+9k Reviews

The image displays the Nudge software interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Nudge' (An Axonify Company), 'Campaigns', 'Analytics', 'Users', 'Management', and a search bar. Below this is a green header bar with icons for settings and user management. The main area shows a 'Seasonal Restock' campaign timeline. It includes a 'Start (Day 0)' at 9:30 AM with an 'Announcement' icon. On 'Day 1' at 9:30 AM, there's a 'Survey → Spark Session' icon. On 'Day 2' at 10:00 AM, there's a 'Quiz' icon. A green button labeled 'Add Content' is located in the top right of the timeline area. To the right of the timeline is a smartphone displaying the Nudge mobile app. The app shows a notification for an 'Announcement' from the CEO, dated Jan. 21, 4:30 PM. The notification text reads: 'Thank you to all our employees for their continued commitment to our customers and communities over the last quarter!'. There's a 'Claim My Points!' button at the bottom of the notification. The app interface also includes a header with 'MY POINTS 1234' and 'LIFETIME 5678', and a bottom navigation bar with icons for Nudge, Read, Spark, Quiz, and Help.

# Get the top-rated frontline enablement solution every workforce *needs*.

Want to see how Nudge can help your organization?  
[Click here](#) to get in touch.