TABLE 8.2 | Enhancing Task and Relationship Functions Through the Use of Technology

TECHNOLOGY	TASK	RELATIONSHIP
Electronic meeting systems	Allows group to work together on any number of tasks. The strength is that participants have free flow of input and data, and, if desired, comments can be anonymous. Suggestions or ideas can be added at will.	In some nations and economies, technology has been used in face-to-face settings for a while. It is now being used in disbursed teams to enable collaboration with people in different locations.
Teleconference	This can be helpful in bringing people together to exchange viewpoints, give or get feedback, share ideas and think through different approaches.	When relationships have already had face-to-face contact and some trust exists where people say what they really think and feel, enabling a group to reach agreement.
Video conference	This is a commonly used tool but the effectiveness of it depends a lot on the quality of the video transmissions. Often, time zone differences and uneven quality of the technology limit usefulness.	It is a good tool for discussing opinions and, because it is video, participants can see one another, and get nonverbal information in real time.
E-mail	This is certainly the most used computer-mediated technology for people working together over distances. It is readily available, easy to use, and can be both relational and task-focused. It is quick and efficient, but still allows people time to reflect and get back to one another. You can send attachments and it is an easy, cost-effective way to communicate.	Ground rules on the "what and how" of e-mail are helpful for a team. Communication styles differ, and from written communication one can even infer, in addition to national styles, generational styles. People reared on technology are more staccato in style while those 50ish and older who wrote letters have more solutions and formal closures. If there is enough privacy in e-mail, team members can be real and truthful with their ideas, thereby resolving differences. See suggestions for Netiquette below.
Company's Intranet	If a company has its own Intranet, a new division/section /area could be added specifically for teams working on a specific project. There could even be separate areas for each team. Communication is enhanced with worldwide accessibility, posting of questions/ answers and questionnaires. Similar to e-mail but can be shared (not required) by all.	As in use of e-mail, ground rules are important as is the role of the webmaster in being responsive to the needs of the various teams.
Internet Newsgroups	When a company does not have an Intranet in operation, the members of teams can form a newsgroup where all can share the contributions of team members. This method is not as flexible, especially in the use of questionnaires, nor as private as an Intranet location, nevertheless it can be a useful tool. Most newsgroups are shared with others from all over the world. As such, it can be a plus for those reaching out and looking for similar experiences and possible outcomes.	Same as e-mail and company's Intranet. See below for suggested Netiquette.