

Case Study: How Play Brought a Remote Team Closer Across Three Continents

Barometer XP – Client: Grow Disrupt



Executive Summary



CHALLENGE:

Grow Disrupt’s remote team spanned three continents and multiple time zones. While competent, cultural silos and uneven in-person connections left some members feeling peripheral. Following the removal of toxic team members, trust and cohesion needed rebuilding.



SOLUTION:

Barometer XP facilitated a play-based session to break down barriers, build empathy, and create a foundation for ongoing collaboration across languages, time zones, and work styles.



RESULTS:

- Increased cross-time-zone collaboration without leadership prompting
- Richer, more authentic daily interactions
- Greater group dynamics and shared problem-solving
- Ongoing team-led role-playing game sustaining connection and adaptability

Background & Challenge

Grow Disrupt operates with a lean, high-performing team that supports large-scale events and ongoing marketing initiatives. The team works entirely remotely, meeting in person only for select live events. This occasionally created “clusters” of in-person connections, leaving others feeling like outsiders.

The situation became more complex after removing toxic team members. The cultural reset left space for improvement but also risked lingering disengagement.



“We had this little cluster that knew each other really well, and these other people who felt like they were on the fringes. I really didn’t want that dynamic to stick.”

Stephanie Scheller, CEO

Language and neurodiversity differences added another layer. ESL and neurodivergent team members could feel excluded during fast-paced or highly verbal interactions, making it harder to establish trust and mutual reliance.

The Play-Based Intervention



"In the game, you have to think, 'Who on the team has the skill to solve this problem?' That mindset has carried over to our daily work."

Susannah S,
Technical Director

Barometer XP's founder, Alex Suchman, designed a game session that was accessible to all communication styles and backgrounds. The activity created a shared experience where the stakes were low, but the lessons were high-impact.

During the debrief, the team connected in-game patterns directly to workplace dynamics. While talking, the team spent time identifying different problem-solving styles and strengths, and learning when to step back or step in.

One surprising ripple effect: Technical Director Susannah created an ongoing role-playing game for the team. Each member was assigned a fictional character with traits opposite to their real-life tendencies, forcing them to think and communicate in new ways. The game included mechanics that required players to rely on teammates' unique abilities to succeed, mirroring the realities of workplace interdependence.

Impact on Team Cohesion & Collaboration

Quantitative Gains:

- > More cross-time-zone collaborations happening organically
- > Increase in group interactions without CEO facilitation

Qualitative Gains:

- > Greater comfort and connection across the team
- > More personality and authenticity showing up in meetings
- > Increased group dynamics and peer-to-peer collaboration
- > Creative partnerships emerging organically
- > Safe vulnerability leading to richer collaboration

"More cohesive. I think there is a level of comfort and connection that has been established that took a little while to break through. I feel like I saw the most personality from everyone in this last meeting than any other."

Chrissy C, Project Manager

"Yes, I think there are a lot more group dynamics now!"

Matt M, Team Member

"It really feels like you include us as a team every time... Recently, I had a really good time during the introduction for the designated team member. I was ready but also nervous at the same time, still, it was so fun and worth it. I even felt more prepared than I expected. You always look for ways to make a fun and interesting activity that everyone should be involved in!"

Vincelle S, Team Member

Takeaways for Leaders of Remote Teams



Trust must be built intentionally, it doesn't happen automatically in a remote environment.



Shared play experiences humanize colleagues and reveal strengths faster than months of traditional meetings.



Role-play fosters empathy and interdependence in a safe, low-stakes setting.



Allowing people to bring their whole selves to work fuels creativity and engagement.

Conclusion & Call to Action

In just a few months, Grow Disrupt transformed from a collection of competent individuals into a connected, collaborative team, without sacrificing productivity. Play was the catalyst for cultural change, bridging distance and difference to create lasting trust.

Barometer XP helps distributed teams overcome distance, build trust, and unlock creative collaboration through structured play. If your remote team feels disconnected, visit BarometerXP.com or contact Alex@BarometerXP.com to explore how play can bring them together.

