



Thrive as You Work from
Home

How To Be a Leader from Home

Coaching and Support for you and your
business leaders



Leading from Home – part 1

In this article we offer some suggestions for how you can lead during this period of 'containedness'. We know and understand that the last few weeks have been challenging to say the least but as we would be wise to connect with the facts that this could be the norm for some weeks to come.

The approach to **virtual leadership** has been around for some time due to the evolution of on-line technology. Now more than ever we need to tap into perspectives, approaches and attitudes of those who already lead virtually and have learnt the lessons we can adopt.

As with face-to-face teams, leadership of virtual teams is a crucial element in the effectiveness of the team, and delivery of business results.

However, compared to leaders of face-to-face teams, virtual team leaders face the following additional challenges:

(a) logistical problems, including coordinating work across different time zones and physical distances.

(b) technological difficulties, including finding and learning to use appropriate technology. In global virtual teams, there is the added dimension of cultural differences which impact on a virtual team's functioning.

and

(c) interpersonal issues, including an ability to establish effective working relationships in the absence of frequent face-to-face communication

For the purpose of this article we will focus on the latter point (c).

How do we establish effective and relational connections with our team members in the absence of frequent face-to-face communications?





Be Self-Aware

Before we even consider how a leader works through others virtually, we must discuss the subject of Self Awareness:

- What is influencing my thoughts right now?
 - Do I have clarity of my thoughts and attitudes?
 - What is the underlying motivation for the way I am thinking?
 - **What would the best choice be for my thoughts right now, in order to lead this team effectively?**

When we are able to choose the thoughts required to help us operate at our best, we therefore become more effective as virtual leaders.

- What is influencing the way I feel right now?
 - How easily can I connect to how I feel?
 - What is the underlying root cause for the way I am feeling?
 - **What would the best choice be for my feelings right now, in order for me to lead this team effectively?**

When we are able to choose the feelings required to support us to operate at our best, we therefore become more relational as virtual leaders.

When we become attuned to noticing our 'self' we are able to become more agile in our choice of what the team require of us. This may require leaving some 'thoughts' and 'feelings' to one side for the overall benefit of the team.

Knowing our aim and overall objective for the virtual connection allows us to consider which thought and feelings will be required to support the outcome. This leads us into the next point...

Set Clear Intentions

Prior to attending any virtual (or face-face) meeting it is wise to get clear on what you want the intention of the meeting to be.

- **What action(s) do I want the individual/team to take forward following our connection?**
 - How to I create a call to action?
- **What feeling(s) do I want the individual/team to feel following our connection?**
 - What do I NOT want them to feel? How can I help them replace feelings they may already have?

When we set clear intentions, we direct our energy to deliver those intentions and we stay focussed on what we do want. Virtual leadership requires the focus on making the connections add-value. Unlike office working the people who work for you won't see you from a distance through out the day, or bump into you at the





water cooler. This time on-line is where your personality must shine through. When we click 'end meeting' how do we want our team members to feel about having time with you?

Will they feel that you have empowered them clearly in an action focussed way?
Will they have felt listen to?

Knowing how to listen is equally as important as talking. This leads us to our next point.

Listen

Unsurprisingly there are many ways we can listen to an individual. As humans our default listening style is to listen to respond. This means that as a person is talking we are already preparing our response – which means some of what they are saying maybe lost as we prepare.

- What are the facts and data I am hearing?
 - Listen for the content, the theme, the subject?
 - As questions for clarity where needed
 - Paraphrase back what you have heard and what you think they need from you.
 - In a face-face meeting we have the luxury of reading total body language. We see nuance in peoples faces and posture. Unfortunately during on-line meetings a large proportion is lost.
 - Due to quality of internet connections some times we may not have heard everything that is being said.
- Listen to what is not being said?
 - How do you think our team member is feeling?
 - What personal values are showing up in their language?
 - What do they need from your leadership to support how they feel?
 - What can they influence in the way they feel?
- **What might get in the way, whilst online, that would stop me listening beyond facts and data?**
 - How will I overcome those barriers?

How do I ensure everyone is listened to? Using a *paper tally* that lists all call participants can ensure you pull everyone into the discussion. This leads us to the next and final point of this article.

Participation

For a virtual team to succeed, the leader must schedule meetings to ensure participation. Due to the difficulties of communicating in a virtual team, it is imperative that team members attend meetings and know what is expected of them.





- Be explicit about how you expect people to show up on virtual calls.
 - **Set grounds rules and ways of working early on. Ensure this are agreed to by all team members**
 - Include use of chat rooms, avoiding distractions, how to manage interruptions or multiple desires to speak.
 - Will you use badges/flagging signals available on virtual software. 🙋🕒🔇🗣️
 - Allow the fun in trying to move to virtual teams? Accept that there will be a period of trial and error. Allow this to motivate the team and pull them towards the calls rather than demotivate and switch them off.

Consider how will you approach low participation in group meetings during and after the meeting. Again, considering how this will motivate as apposed to demotivate a team member to achieve business success. How will you monitor each team members goal achievement during and outside the on-line touch points.

This leads us into the final point for this article.

Objective Achievement

For a virtual team to succeed, the lead must create a way of monitoring the progress of goals and objectives. As you would in the face to face world, how are you checking in with goal achievement.

- Create visuals of team objectives and action lists (i.e. excel, weekly PowerPoint of a team 'dashboard')
 - **Using a shared area create a way of allowing everyone to see updates and progress**
 - Create rules/owners for regular updating of the data
 - Understand the need to create versions of documents
- Create visual of individual objectives and action lists
 - Using a shared area create a way of an individual to provide updates and progress
 - **Create rules for regular updating of the data**
 - As with teams understand the need to create versions of documents
 - Follow organisational consistent and shared approaches to this.
 - Allow for spaces for leader comments
- **How will the team share updates?** What is the agreed way(s) of communicating – i.e. calls/whats app/when is email appropriate

Fundamentally the leader carries across the same responsibilities they would have in a face-face world. This includes driving, supporting and reporting on objective achievement.





In this article we have offered some suggestions for how you can lead during this period of 'containedness'. This included:

- **Be Self-Aware**
- **Set Clear Intentions**
- **Listen**
- **Participation**
- **Objective Achievement**

These all support the question "How do we establish effective and relational connections with our team members in the absence of frequent face-to-face communications?"

In the next article we will discuss more around how we maintain social contact and ensure our teams develop through virtual leadership.

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