

LEADERSHIP and ENGAGEMENT

Covid19 editions

May 2020

(Established 2006)

Welcome to this month's edition.

I hope you and your families are safe and well as we continue to navigate our way through Covid19.

I always look forward to receiving posts from Damian Piper and Meike Beckford who kindly contribute to our 'Leadership & Engagement'. This month they bring to us: **'Managing your information borders'** and **'Highlights from an MBA... Systems Leadership'** respectively.

A new post from Roger Whalley, a Non-Executive from Aspire a company within the Group, an important insight on Leadership. I look forward to a new series of posts from Roger.

A follow up from me to last month's post : 'This Too, Shall Pass' – The Lockdown'

<https://leadershipintheraw.org/2020/04/08/being-bettinas-dad-this-too-shall-pass-the-lockdown/>

which I specifically wrote to help parent and carers and was adopted by Mencap for their families.

This new update shares more tips and experiences as we support Bettina to continue to thrive:

'...This too shall pass – Staying Happy while Staying Alert'

Also featuring in this month's edition:

- 6 Ways to Keep Your Attitude Up When Life Tries to Bring You Down
- Waking Up a Leader: 5 Relationships You Must Manage for Success
- Working life after lockdown – will your organisational culture survive?
- HOW ONE EX-GOOGLER COPEd WITH WORK-INDUCED BURNOUT

There are lots more articles, blog posts, tips, links to presentations and information in this month's edition and I put them together in one publication just for you.

Take Care and Stay Well

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It's not about how good you are,

It's how Good You want to be

Managing your information borders

I hope you are as good as you possibly can be in these challenging times.

I have been using the time of lockdown to experiment with a few things. One is being more conscious and actively managing my 'information borders'. Like many people over the last decade the amount of information, and in particular digital content I consume and create has grown exponentially. There have been many benefits to this but also some downsides. The more I read and understand about the way our brains work the more I'm convinced this is a topic we need to take seriously.

Having done some research, like all topics, there are varying schools of thought about the positive and negative impacts of information in our lives. There are certainly extreme views in both the for and against camps.

I've adopted an approach which is to challenge myself to answer the question 'does this help or hinder my energy level' and in some cases following that up with understanding why. I've found the why element important as sometimes information that initially dips my energy is actually beneficial in the medium to long-term. Here's a flavour of three of the areas I've been applying this too.

- 1) Radically reducing social media interaction. I haven't completely switched off from SM. I have however stopped creating content. In terms of consuming content, I like many people have found myself more than I'd like checking my feeds. Whilst many can appear positive it can also mean that I end up thinking I need to do more of something or less of something. Which can in some circumstances sap energy. As an aside, I suspect many of my own posts have the potential to generate this feeling in others. Part of my personal approach has been to overhaul who I follow. I've found that harder than I imagined. Hitting the unfollow button somehow feels like I've in some way subbed the person or organisation. I suspect that's a clever design feature of the apps.
- 2) Change my interaction with the inbox. There are two elements I've done here. The first is to limit the time and frequency of the Inbox interaction. The second is to unsubscribe from the majority of emails I receive from organisations. The second element helps the first. After an initial challenge of thoughts like 'I wonder what I'm missing out on?' this has been liberating.
- 3) Catch up with the news a maximum once per day. Particularly at the moment, the news is dominated by the Coronavirus. It's a fast-moving situation. That said, I've found checking in with the news just once per day has felt fine.

My experiment has definitely been interesting and I'm learning lots. It's not over yet. I guess so far there are two key takeaways. The first is that my energy/happiness level is up. The second is I don't intend going back to the old way of operating. My instinct is that this will take some action to ensure my information borders are appropriate in the future.

All the best,

Damian

Damian Piper



Being Bettina's Dad – This too shall pass – Staying Happy while Staying Alert

“Thank you Mummy” Joyce has just made a cup of tea for Bettina. The plumber is fixing our loo and Joyce notices the plumber smiling at Bettina's reaction, who then offers to fix



something extra we had not originally agreed on when the job was booked.

Yesterday when Bettina approached the entrance to the supermarket, one of the regular assistants we see offered to sanitise our shopping trolley. Bettina thanked her and the assistant said how much she admired her bag. A short while later when paying for our purchases, the staff member comments on Bettina's '101 Dalmatians' DVD, reaches into her pocket for her smartphone to show Bettina a picture of her Dalmatians, and Bettina is thrilled.

Bettina's smiles are truly infectious, and Bettina does infect her world with joy, no matter what we are currently facing with Covid19.

Smiling Is Infectious by Spike Milligan

Smiling is infectious,
you catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.
I passed around the corner
and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled I realized
I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile,
then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine
could travel round the earth.
So, if you feel a smile begin,
don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick,
and get the world infected!

(Bettina is a woman who copes with a learning disability, autism and epilepsy, those conditions do not define her, her character and personality does.)

Have you noticed that people are more polite and show courtesies towards each other, perhaps as never before? We have certainly observed this on our daily walks together, here in Colchester. We hope Bettina has made a small contribution to the way people behave towards each other.

In the UK, we are past the peak of Covid19 although we do have a long way before we are on the other side of this terrible contagion. It is 6 weeks since I wrote 'Being Bettina's Dad: 'This Too, Shall Pass' – The Lockdown' <https://leadershipintheraw.org/2020/04/08/being-bettinas-dad-this-too->

[shall-pass-the-lockdown/](#) this piece was designed to help and support carers with tips and share how Bettina and her family plan to continue to thrive.

This blog post: '....Staying Happy while Staying Alert' is an update on how we are determined to continue to thrive and are thriving. Sharing with you, how we will continue to support Bettina through this difficult period. Some of these tips, I hope, will again resonate with you.

Five things we are doing to maintain a semblance of normality for Bettina:

1. We always plan a positive day for Bettina. We do this during the evening, going through the programme together with Bettina, with what we have in mind and seeking out her response. Are we getting a thumbs up for a walk to the nature reserve tomorrow morning, near our home?
2. Joyce updates Bettina's programmes on her notice board in her bedroom, so B can anticipate what is coming next.
3. Where possible keeping to our routines pre-Covid19, so at 6pm, work permitting, Bettina and I sit down to watch her favourite YouTube Videos.
4. Doing what is important for Bettina. This includes having her nails done. Joyce has created her own salon which Bettina loves. (Joyce also cuts our hair too)
5. As a family we sit down together at the dining table for our evening meal. It is a time for family conversation, reflections on our day and as always lots of laughter.

Five things we continue to do for Bettina to maintain her Wellness and her Mental Health

1. **Acknowledging her emotions** and not judging them, rather each of us support her through those emotions, particularly when she is anxious.
2. **Positive Affirmations.** Bettina is good at making these: simple, positive statements declaring specific goals in their completed states. Bettina repeats them (often in a loop) to each of us checking our response. It is important that we always respond positively, both verbally and with our body language. For Bettina this confirms something to be true. An example of an affirmation for Bettina is reminding her that she is smart, kind and funny or that we have ordered a DVD or book on her wish list.
3. **Creating a calm home**, practicing daily solitude. It is important to Bettina that she has time to enjoy the peace and quiet in her day, in a small corner where she can think. She does this either in her bedroom with her favourite books and music or on her comfy chair in our sitting room. I make sure I do not disturb her first thing in the morning while she is waiting for her PA to come and support her, otherwise I will get a 'flea in my ear' from Bettina.
4. **Realising Bettina's Validity. More so than ever, it is important to support her with her self-esteem**, how she thinks about herself. As a family we know the more positive your thoughts and feelings are, the healthier your self-esteem will be. It is important to us that Bettina feels she has control of her life.
5. **Opportunities for Achievements.** Bettina's look of triumph when she completed her latest (big) jigsaw receiving a double thumbs up. I have a 1000-piece 'Beatles Album cover' jigsaw I am hoping she will do for me. (I wouldn't know where to start)

As a Family here are Five things, we will do to maintain our Discipline.

1. Maintaining our family's core principles of: Politeness, Respect and Privacy towards each other.
2. Keeping to our family traditions and rituals (we have a lot!) and creating some new ones.
3. Talking about what we have learned as a family and about ourselves during this time.

4. We will look ahead of Covid19 with the end in mind. We have started making our 'wish lists' for the things we would like to do together as a family – the list is growing, and we will endeavour to do them all.
5. Keeping at the forefront of our minds that this too shall pass



As I type this blog post in our kitchen early this morning, I can hear murmuring and giggles coming from Bettina's bedroom. Soon she will launch herself into her day with all her life affirming enthusiasm, which she generously shares with all who encounter her. Today we go again.

Go Bettina!



Bettina outside her favourite nature reserve

Here are some pictures of our daily walk together this morning:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CASWtkCJ-4p/>

Steve Raw www.leadershipintheraw.org

Highlights from an MBA... Systems Leadership

I am currently learning about Systems Thinking. A fascinating, and huge(!), topic and approach to thinking about not just specific problem solving, but understanding the whole system and all its interrelated parts. The idea is that rather than assuming a simple 'A causes B' process and therefore assuming that if you stop A, you'll fix B, you look at the web of factors that influence B and how changes in one part of the system affect other areas. It's great for those tricky problems where you try seemingly logical 'solutions' and yet the same problem keeps rearing its head again.

Anyone who works in health and social care, or indeed has ever listened to the news, will probably immediately recognise its relevance to this sector. Managing the complexities of delivering healthcare and how this relates to wider public health concerns, social care, social deprivation and inequality, education, economics, public finances... you get the idea! I'm sure you can equally think of many other areas in your own experience where this sort of thinking could apply.

I won't go into all the tools and methods just yet (I'm still getting my head around them!), but wanted to share some thoughts from leaders already practicing Systems Thinking in the sector. I found these inspiring and encouraging to see how they are already being used by leaders in different arenas. These are taken from the [King's Fund's 2015 report on Systems Leadership](#), but they are applicable in our wider practice as leaders too. Perhaps one or two will speak to you.

Making change

'It all starts with the case for change. What is wrong with what we are doing at the moment? Who is prepared to stand up and say that... both on the basis of the evidence but with an emotional compulsion as well? (Ruth Carnall)

Build momentum

'You clearly see system leadership – the ability to attract the willing, work with the willing, and grow that with the team of the willing so that it impacts on the system.

Finding people who want to be more ... and who will make this appealing to a wider audience, so people get excited about the superordinate goal – improving health for their populations' (Victor Adebawale)

Clarity and flexibility

'If you go in with too fixed a view you can get nowhere ... you've got to be sure that you can listen to people and flex to their needs... you need constancy of purpose and resilience, and you need to recognise that it takes longer than people want it to take. We are much too keen to say something hasn't worked when it never stood a chance of working within that timescale.' (Thirza Sawtel)

Leadership: 'You can achieve almost anything if you don't want to take the credit'

'Longevity of leaders and leadership in organisations is important. ... It is important because you learn as much by failing as by succeeding, and you have to be there long enough to do the learning.' (Victor Adebawale)

'Do you want to claim the credit, or do you want others to do that and stick to the values we are talking about, and deliver? You have to have a frame that excites people, and you have to co-create and develop it with them, not tell them it's yours and will they now take it on? So it is more like helping create a social movement.' (David Fish)

'I should be the person in the background that people at the end of the day forget about – because you've facilitated the change, but they have actually done the work. You've disappeared. But you have left them with the skills to carry on.'

'You have to persuade people. You have to bring them along and make them think it is their idea – because they have got to own it. They don't like people telling them what to do.' (Jan Vaughan)

With thanks,

Meike Beckford - [@MeikeB88](#)

Lead Director, Dosh Ltd – for more on Dosh visit www.dosh.org and [@DoshTweets](#)

My thanks again to [Lancaster University Management School](#), in particular in this piece to Dr Ian Cammack.

“ Take a reset; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop” Ovid
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6 Ways to Keep Your Attitude Up When Life Tries to Bring You Down

By Chris Widener

A positive attitude is key to a successful life, so what happens when things go wrong? We have a tendency to let our attitudes take a dive along with our state of affairs. But life is going to deal setbacks, both minor and major, on a regular basis, and if we are going to be successful, we need to know how to keep our attitudes intact.

We need practical tools to help us understand how we can keep our attitudes up when the circumstances are down. Here are some thoughts to help us do so:

1. Take some time away.

You know what happens. You're going about your day and everything seems to be going well, when out of nowhere, disaster strikes. All of your best laid plans begin to tumble.

Sometimes circumstances surprise us and we react—and, unfortunately, this often compounds the problem, because by reacting, we tend to operate out of our weaknesses instead of our strengths. We make decisions that are not well thought out. We function with a bad attitude that says, “I can't believe this is happening!”

The next time life turns against you, take some time to just step back from the problem and think. This will enable you to rationally deal with the issue at hand, instead of emotionally reacting. It will allow you to put your state of mind back in its proper place. It will give you the opportunity to choose your attitude as you face the circumstances at hand. Remember that you don't have to do something right now. Go grab a cup of coffee and relax. *You* are in control—not the circumstances.

2. Keep your eye on the goal.

One of the biggest problems with trouble is that it gets your focus off where it should be. When racecar drivers get into trouble, they keep their eyes straight ahead and do not move them away. There is too much chance of wrecking otherwise. Instead, their eyes are on the goal—and this keeps them out of trouble.

If you find yourself getting down about circumstances, sit down and write out what your goal is, and give some thought to how you can achieve it. Make sure you're keeping the important things important.

A man was asked how he was doing and he responded, “Pretty well, under the circumstances.” The other man asked, “What are you doing under the circumstances?” Good question. We shouldn't be under the circumstances. We should be focused on the goal and moving forward.

3. Focus on solutions, not problems.

“The squeaky wheel gets the grease,” the old saying goes. Negative circumstances don’t sit idly by—they scream for our attention. When we face difficult circumstances, we tend to dwell on them. We talk about them, fret about them and give them way too much attention.

Instead of talking about problems, talk about solutions. Instead of spending your time thinking about how bad things are, think about how good they will be! Don’t have family or staff meetings about the problems and how big they are; have meetings on the solutions and how you will implement them. Don’t let yourself or other team members complain; encourage them to solve, with an emphasis on the positive results that will come from doing so. Then take some time to put these solutions down on paper so you can monitor your progress.

4. Get some positive input.

The mind tends to build on itself, so when we begin to go in one direction (like worrying), it can be a slippery slope. One thing we must do is get our thoughts back on track with positive ideas.

When circumstances have you against the emotional wall, meet with a friend who can encourage you. Pick up a good book and read. Whatever external influence you can get to put your attitude back on the positive side of the tracks—do it! It must be one of our first goals to start plugging good things into our minds to power our attitudes.

5. Tell yourself the good.

One of the greatest internal powers we have is the power to control our thoughts.

Spend time dwelling on the good things about your life or career instead of the problems. Think about positive things—things that you enjoy and that give you a sense of happiness and peace. There is an old childhood song that says, “Count your blessings—name them one by one.” That’s great advice! Let your positive attitude develop from within as well as from without. This makes all the difference!

6. Remember that circumstances are not forever.

Sometimes it seems like we are going to be up to our eyeballs in the situation forever, when in reality, “this too shall pass.” There will be a time in the future when circumstances will change and you will be on the mountain instead of in the valley. This will give you a sense of hope as you live and work that will change your attitude, make you feel better and put you on the fast track for growth.

Source: https://www.success.com/6-ways-to-keep-your-attitude-up-when-life-tries-to-bring-you-down/?utm_source=Maropost&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Q?&mpweb=574-8847442-742481119

“Failure is not falling down. Failure is falling down and not getting up again to continue life’s race”
Richard Nixon

Leadership is a strange skill to write about, it seems that the people who want to read about it already have it and the ones who don’t want to read about it will never have it. It would be impossible for us all to be leaders, if we were then who would we lead? I’ve always been a close follower but in my following I have seen what the skills there are in the person who is leading me

I’ve never really wanted to be a leader. There’s probably more responsibility than I need, I’m more content being just a watcher. Watching and learning and hoping secretly that nothing happens to my leader.

I've done a lot of deep-water ocean sailing and in every boat, ship, submarine or vessel of any type there has to be a leader. He's the Captain, the Skipper, the boss man and I've always wanted to be his number two. It's strange but in the Royal Navy the second in command is called Number One, or sometimes Jimmy the one. Someone has to have responsibility; to take the fall as it were; to guide the way. This person is always the Captain, the boss.

There are also Captains in sport. Soccer teams have them; rugby teams have them; cricket teams have them in fact in every team game there is a Captain of the team. But it's cricket in particular that I want to write about.

The role of the cricket team captain is a very interesting one. Because although he is the captain, he has two different roles to play. Cricket is a complex game and it seems that only the Commonwealth countries play it. The British influence has been the catalyst which brought the love of cricket to those countries. But I digress, I was writing about the role of the captain. Cricket is a game of two parts and those parts require different skills from the captain.

I'm sure you all know the confusion that this causes in folk who don't understand the game. There is one team who are in but are out in the field. When that team is out then the other team goes in but actually go out to be in. Confused? Well many of our American friends and colleagues are totally confused at this stage.

I digress again, the role of the Captain differs depending on whether his side are in, that is batting until 10 batters are out, or in the field trying to get the 10 batters of the other side out so they can be in. I've confused myself now. Anyway, back to the role of the captain.

When his team are batting his role is one of encouragement, guiding and coaching. Once the two players have taken their places in the field his possibility of intervention has gone. You could say that his role in this stage of the game is strategic. He can alter the order in which they play; he can give them encouragement but he can't intervene.

On the other hand, when his side are in the field his role changes. Now he can speak directly to his players he can move them around the field like a game of chess; he can tell his bowlers where he wants them to pitch the ball and how fast or slow they should bowl to be effective. This role is now that of a tactician not a strategist.

The same differences apply to any leader, there are times when they need to be a strategist; a long term planner; to consider the opposition; to make long term staffing decisions, these are all activities that a strategist should carry out. There are also times when they need to be a tactician; daily planning; face to face meetings; short term staff re-deployment and have a hands-on role. A simplification is to see the strategist as looking out and the tactician as looking in.

It sometime seems that it is impossible to expect one person to carry out both roles and if the size of the organisation allows there might indeed be two people, one taking strategy, the other being the tactician. However, this is not the norm, usually one person has to be adaptable and take the load of both roles. This can place an unbearable burden on the one person and because they cannot cope, they end up being either one or the other which can result in either the lack of long-term planning or problems with day to day management. I have seen many folk fall into this trap and although they believe they are good managers they fail in the long term.

So, the moral of this tale is to be like a cricket captain and take on both the roles of a strategist and a tactician. Learn to apportion your time to allow for both of these activities to be carried out; allow time for planning for the future and allow time with your team to encourage and motivate.

"I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking" Joan Didion quoted in the New York Times

Waking Up a Leader: 5 Relationships You Must Manage For Success

By [Dr. Daphne Scott](#) | Mar 22, 2020

There are five key relationships that require your attention if you want to thrive as a leader: time, money, the self, friendships, and the unknown. How you manage these relationships dictates your well-being. Leaders make decisions that impact the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of other people. That's a huge responsibility. Learning to manage these five key relationships from a place of trust instead of fear will decrease your stress and anxiety, improve your well-being, and enable you to make the best decisions for yourself and your team.

No matter where you are on the leadership spectrum, you can wake up to a new way of leading. Mindfulness is not reserved for the chosen few. It's a skill you can learn and practice daily. Doing so will transform the way you relate to your thoughts, emotions, co-workers, and the difficulties of life. When you stay present, you can see what's happening, talk to yourself about how you're relating, and bring yourself back to the facts.

You have the power to choose how you respond. You can manage your relationships with time, money, the self, friendships, and the unknown from a place of trust. As a result, you will lead more effectively and with less suffering for yourself and others.

1. Time

We go after the short-term solution rather than what is most beneficial in the long run. Author and educator Stephen Covey talks about this idea and how we spend time on things that seem urgent (e.g., answering the phone when we're in the middle of a conversation, responding to a text while we are driving with our kids in the car), but are mostly unimportant. Instead, he suggests that we focus on what is most important: building relationships, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep. When we are constricted around the idea of time, everything seems important and urgent. The first step is to take responsibility for your relationship with time. This is a choice. Moment by moment, you need to pay attention to how you're relating to time.

2. Money

Valuing our time in relation to money is tricky. It's easier to measure the value of \$10,000 than an extra 30 or 60 minutes. However, when we realize that how we use our time impacts our well-being, we can more easily see the value of paying for a service that will free time for stargazing or mountain climbing or whatever gives us joy and positive emotion.

Many leaders come to me bewildered by the stark reality that they have worked many years to earn a lot of money only to find themselves no happier, and, often, less happy than they have ever been. Gratefulness is one of the keys to unhooking yourself from a fear-based relationship to money. Be grateful for the resources you have right now because right now is all there is. Focus on what you have available in the present, not what you're missing or what you think you won't have in the future. When we're not grateful, it seems like nothing will meet our needs. Everything is a black hole, so we keep striving for more.

3. The Self

We all see ourselves a certain way and are reluctant to change, even when that way creates a lot of suffering for ourselves and others. It takes great courage, an ability to pay attention, and a willingness to let go to begin to choose something different. This is the moment of waking up.

Gaining a flexible sense of self starts with paying attention. First, we need to notice when we slip into thinking the self is permanent. Notice when you start focusing on my project, my team, and my money. Notice when you start to justify yourself or feel judged by others. Both are evidence of trying to prop up or defend something you believe is inherently, constantly, permanently you.

Second, we need to pay attention to where we get caught in the world of shoulds: life should be different, this shouldn't be happening to me, and so on. One way to show generosity is by using our strengths to support others.

Strengths can be seen as the gifts we've been given, like a sense of humour or the ability to edit grammar and writing. Choose to be generous with these gifts and use them to benefit others.

4. Friendships

We sometimes view people as being a glass we can see through. We think we know everything about them. There's nothing new for us to know about their personality or capabilities. In other words, we view them as static, unchanging things. We tell ourselves that "Tim is like that" or "Stacey is like this." We don't see how they are always changing right in front of us. If we view people as static objects, we won't be curious to know more.

A key part of friendship is curiosity, and curiosity is linked to appreciation and caring. It drives us to see the uniqueness and nuance in the most mundane things. If you've worked with someone for a while, you might think you've reached the end of what you can know about her. Not true. You've simply stopped being curious and appreciative.

5. The Unknown

Sometimes, it's good to think about the future. We need to plan, use a calendar, set goals, and so on. However, in thinking about the future, we tend to think we can control all the causes and conditions that make an outcome possible. Thinking this way brings a false sense of security and more anxiety. We cannot control all of the causes and conditions that make our lives function well.

We cannot control the future. Finding pleasure in the unknown is an adventure that makes us human. It's enjoying the mystery that is life rather than trying to solve the mysteries of life. The key idea is not getting caught up in the past, beating yourself up, ruminating, and so on. Let the past inform the present and the future so that you can act more skilfully.

This is an abridged script from Dr. Daphne Scott's new book [Waking Up a Leader: Five Relationships of Success](#).



Dr. Daphne Scott

Dr. Daphne Scott is founder of DS Leadership Life and chief culture officer for Confluent Health. She holds a Master's of Applied Positive Psychology and is also a certified mindfulness meditation teacher.

Source: <https://real-leaders.com/waking-up-a-leader-5-relationships-you-must-manage-for-success/>

My Top 5 Presentation Picks for May

1. **The three secrets of resilient people** | Lucy Hone | TEDxChristchurch
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWH8N-BvhAw>
2. **3 Components Of Connectedness - Fighting Loneliness During COVID-19 Coronavirus Social Distancing** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVEtKAY45Rw>
3. **Working From Home? 5 Tips to Boost Productivity in the Coronavirus Pandemic**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-wXhTccZFQ>
4. **How to turn off work thoughts during your free time – Guy Winch**
https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_how_to_turn_off_work_thoughts_during_your_free_time
5. **Some Good News with John Krasinski Ep. 1**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5pgG1M_h_U

<p>“A true friend is one who likes you despite your achievements” Arnold Bennett</p>
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Working life after lockdown – will your organisational culture survive?

By Yvonne Smyth, Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Hays

With many of us now having become accustomed to 'lockdown-life' and working remotely, the big challenge facing organisations will be how to manage the evolution of working practices as social distancing measures are gradually eased. This 'new era' of work is unlikely to immediately constitute a complete transition back to life as we knew it before, with many teams likely to be working to different schedules and in different locations for the foreseeable future.

A key challenge for employers as they navigate the transition into this new era will be how to retain the strong organisational culture that they have built amidst a 'hybrid' way of working.

With this in mind, here are some tips for keeping your culture strong as the lockdown lifts:

1. **Reiterate your values**

It's possible that amidst all the hurried transition to remote working, the logistics of grappling with video calls and the myriad of emails, that the purpose and values of your organisation have been somewhat lost in translation. With your staff potentially operating from separate locations as we move into this new era – some working from home, at least on a part-time basis, and others in the workplace, checking in and reiterating your mission and what everyone is striving towards as a cohesive workforce is crucial.

When re-communicating these to your teams, be clear, concise, and crucially, make it an employee-led exercise. Many elements of your company culture, such as collaboration, commitment and diversity and inclusion, are important to your workforce but not easy for an outside observer to quantify. It is therefore key that you get feedback from your employees (perhaps via an internal survey) to gauge insight into their experiences and understanding of your core mission as we move forward. Questions to ask include:

- What makes you proud to work at this organisation?
- What makes our workplace culture unique?
- Is taking risks encouraged, and what happens if you are not successful?
- When do you feel the most motivated?

2. Make sure all communication is inclusive

Communicating with teams working to 'hybrid' schedules and in differing locations presents a significant challenge and formulating a strategy that is both inclusive and effective will be key. This way of working will undoubtedly mean that technology will still have to be heavily involved in order to bring everyone together, which will mean [establishing processes for gauging when employees are available and what software and systems they have access to](#). Team-wide meetings should be prioritised on a regular basis so that department-wide updates are not missed and successes are celebrated.

On top of the unfamiliar way of working, personal challenges caused by the pandemic may also be creating ongoing anxiety and apprehension amongst your teams, so if you are a manager, making yourself available to staff who want to speak to you is crucial. You'll want to give them the freedom to decide when they need to do this, so consider making yourself available for an hour a day for your team to contact you, either for a private or group catch-up.

3. Find a way to facilitate workplace chats

Maintaining the fun, social aspect of work just now should be a high priority – and as social distancing is gradually reduced, this should also start to come more naturally. For those still working remotely, virtual get-togethers are still important, so try to pencil in a 'team drinks' or call once a week at a suitable time that brings together employees working in different locations.

However, whilst these organised activities are important, you should also try to galvanize as much organic interaction between your teams as possible. If you have a strong, trusting culture then this will probably not require much additional input from you, but you should make it clear that virtual replacements for 'kitchen chats' are encouraged over whatever technology you are currently using, [whether Microsoft Teams, Zoom or anything else](#).

4. Empower your staff

Trust in your team is of the utmost importance right now. As we transition to a new way of working, many will be feeling unsure of their place in the world and keen to re-establish a semblance of normality. If you don't ensure that people feel empowered to do their jobs and able to put their individual 'stamp' on their work, you risk losing them.

Whilst achieving organisational objectives is important, the emphasis right now should not be on 'how' this is achieved. Resist the urge to micro-manage – during this time your employees may be working to unusual schedules and with conflicting personal and professional priorities. If possible, adapt your expectations to these unusual circumstances – you may not be able to see people working at all times, but you will be able to recognise if your teams are pulling together in order to get the job done.

About this author



Yvonne is Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Hays, working with our clients to ensure their recruitment strategies are aligned with the latest equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) policies and initiatives. She is responsible for creating and implementing diverse recruitment strategies that effectively support the representation of more diverse staff profiles within their business.

HOW ONE EX-GOOGLER COPED WITH WORK-INDUCED BURNOUT

05 May 2020 –

https://www.managers.org.uk/insights/news/2020/may/how-one-ex-googler-coped-with-work-induced-burnout#.Xr_fpkGEaTM.twitter

A MOVING PERSONAL STORY WITH LESSONS FOR ANYONE ON THE BRINK OF WFH BURNOUT. KEY INSIGHT: "WORK IS ALL ABOUT FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE RIGHT TASKS, NOT ABOUT TRYING TO DO AS MUCH WORK AS POSSIBLE YOURSELF"

CMI Insights

Right now, nearly everyone in the world is experiencing stress. We're in the midst of a pandemic; we're concerned for our loved ones' health as well as our own; we're working in entirely new situations; and many workers have been furloughed. It is stressful. Big time.

The constant news alerts and new (usually depressing) information being released every day add to the stress.

And then there's The Working At Home Problem. For those who are homeworking, it's easy to be sucked into work at all hours and fall foul of the 'always-on' syndrome. Many of us will feel we need to be constantly contactable, to work harder than ever so that our manager knows we're not slacking off or, worse, use work as a distraction from our true feelings. It may be hard to say no to work when you know your company is struggling and colleagues are being furloughed. You feel you should pick up the slack.

It can be exhausting – and it can lead to burnout.

Anne-Laure LeCunff, a former marketing lead at Google, has been extraordinarily honest about her own confrontation with burnout. We thought this was a good time to **reshare some of her experiences**. The problems started before she even joined the company:

“The months-long [interview] process had kept my stress levels high,” Anne-Laure recalls. “And when I was offered my dream job, [I felt] I could now finally relax. But, when I started the job, I started doubting myself. So many smart, talented people.” She was experiencing the classic symptoms of Imposter Syndrome.

“As a result, I decided to work really hard. I would say yes to everything. Someone needed a hand with a project? Of course, I was happy to help. A last minute presentation to finish? I would cancel my dinner plans... I would take calls in the middle of the night to make sure everything would run smoothly,” Anne-Laure writes.

Right now many people will be running at double their normal speed; it’s easy to imagine the same problems happening all over the world.

OPENING UP

Anne-Laure realised that she couldn’t continue working this way when she started crying during a video call. The stress of being constantly available and striving to over-achieve had left her energy stores desperately low; she felt anxious, always tired, and relied on coffee to fuel her during the day.

Fortunately she decided to talk to her colleague about it.

“I spoke to a colleague I had become close to. I said I may not be fit for the job. ‘This is burnout,’ she said. ‘I went through something similar when I started. You should talk to your manager’.”

Talking to your colleagues, friends, or partners is the first step to solving the problem of burnout. And while this might feel difficult right now, with many of us working in isolation, it’s still the right way to go.

Why not book in a virtual coffee and ask your parents for their advice, or blow off steam with your friends over Zoom? These steps will move you onto a solution-focused mindset. By contrast, when you don’t allow yourself any time off – either for self-care, exercise, or connecting with loved ones – you prevent yourself from topping up key energy reserves, instead dwelling on the problem.

EVALUATING WORKLOADS

Back to Anne-Laure.

“When I got back to London, I told [my manager] about what I was going through. She was incredibly understanding. We sat down and reviewed all of my projects together. There were things that were so new to me that they were taking me hours, whereas someone who had been at Google for years could do it with their eyes closed.”

Together, she and her manager redeployed some of Anne-Laure’s projects to other team members and spoke openly about what aspects of the role were causing undue stress. Though it’s an incredibly difficult conversation to have, there are many benefits for your mental health.

SETTING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

It’s also in your manager’s duty of care to make sure you have a safe working environment – both physically and psychologically – so you should be able to speak to them candidly. For Anne-Laure, her

manager taught her a great lesson in management: “work is all about finding the right people for the right tasks, not about trying to do as much work as possible yourself.”

“While remaining connected with your team is important, video meetings all day, every day, will not be sustainable,” says Sarah McIntosh, Director of People at **Mental Health First Aid** (MHFA) England. “Try restricting calls to core hours (10 – 4pm) and scheduling short breaks between meetings to decompress and process. Finally, know where your support resources are, such as an EAP or a Mental Health First Aider, and remember to reach out to a colleague, friend or family member if you feel overwhelmed or drained.”

ENJOYING THE RESULTS

This bit is hard but it’s vital: you must give yourself permission to feel stressed, low, and anxious. There is no shame in these feelings; accepting them is the first step to moving on from them.

Your manager will be able to help you with the day-to-day practicalities of adjusting your workload, but why not try putting in place some small rules to help? Little things, like sticking to a full lunch hour, not working late, switching off your laptop at the end of the working day, and eating well will all play a part in keeping some of the stresses at bay.

It certainly worked for Anne-Laure. “After a few weeks, I started feeling better. I would spend more time with friends, started exercising again, and fell asleep more easily. I would also enjoy work much more than before. I was lucky to have such a kind, understanding manager who genuinely cared about her team members. It allowed me to talk to her pretty early when I started experiencing the first symptoms of burning out. I wish more companies would create a culture where it is okay to reach out when struggling, so people can feel safe and can proactively take care of their mental health.”

Roger Whalley (Non Exec Director from Aspire part of the Thera Group www.thera.co.uk) shared this verse with me:

This is Timeless....

It was written in 1869 by Kathleen O’Mara:

People stayed at home and read books and listened,
they rested and did exercises and made art and played.
They learned new ways of being, and stopped and listened more deeply.
Someone meditated, someone prayed, someone met their shadow,
and people began to think differently, and people healed.
And in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways, dangerous meaningless and heartless
ways, the earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and people found themselves again
they grieved for the dead and made new choices,
and dreamed of new visions and created new ways of living.
And completely healed the earth. Just as they were healed.

Reprinted during Spanish flu
Pandemic, 1919