



Leadership

Leadership Development & Remote Working

A practical companion to support your growth, reflection and action as a leader.

Designed to help you explore core leadership concepts, capture insights and apply learning in real time - one step, one decision, one conversation at a time.



CoachStation

Leadership. People. Business Development.

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Reflect

Greater confidence in communicating with remote team members

Greater confidence on how to structure their leadership style for remote leadership

Consistency across the leadership population so that all are following the same basic way of leading with their remote teams

Reflect and Respond:

What are the biggest challenges you currently face when leading teams remotely?

Remote or virtual working has a lot of benefits and potential risks for you and your employees. The knowledge, capability and skill to maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks makes a significant difference to overall success of each employee and the team overall.

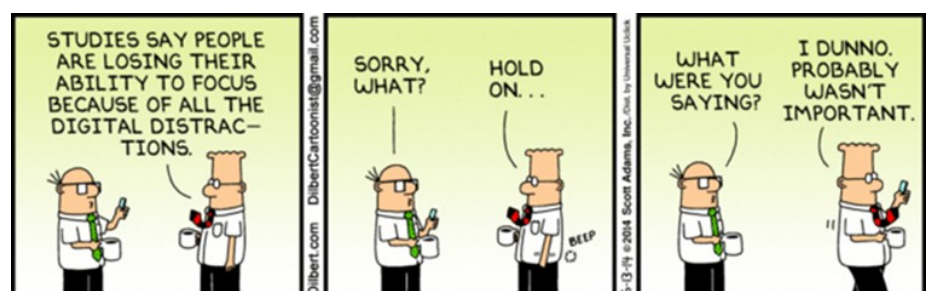
Managers need to understand the contributing factors that can make remote working particularly demanding. Otherwise high-performing employees may experience declines in job performance and engagement when they begin working remotely, especially in the absence of preparation and training.

To maximise productivity and experience consistent growth, leaders and teams need to overcome the various obstacles presented in a remote working environment and discover better ways of doing business. There are various strategies you can utilise to improve remote teamwork and create a more ideal work environment among your team members.

should be measured by our performance, not the number of hours we spend at work. Productivity and effectiveness are the key measurements that outline the business case. However, there are a series of personal factors at play also. Remote working may be a suitable alternative for you or your team, but it is an individual decision. It does take additional effort, specific skills, new systems and strong communication, but remote work can add value. It is not for everyone or every role. Yet it can be a positive avenue for increased engagement, flexibility and productivity.

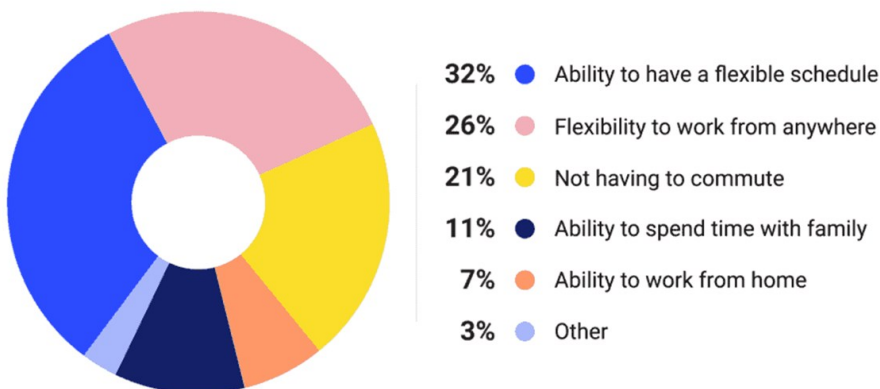
What is Remote Management and Virtual Leadership?

To use information technology (IT) and effective leadership principles to replace work-related travel. Remote working environments allow employees to work at home or at a local co-location space one or more days per week.



Using communication tools, such as Zoom, MS Teams, teleconferencing, or Instant Messaging, to perform work duties from a remote location provides greater flexibility in the modern world. Remote working often forms part of a broader flexible working policy in most organisations, large or small.

What's the biggest benefit you see to working remotely?



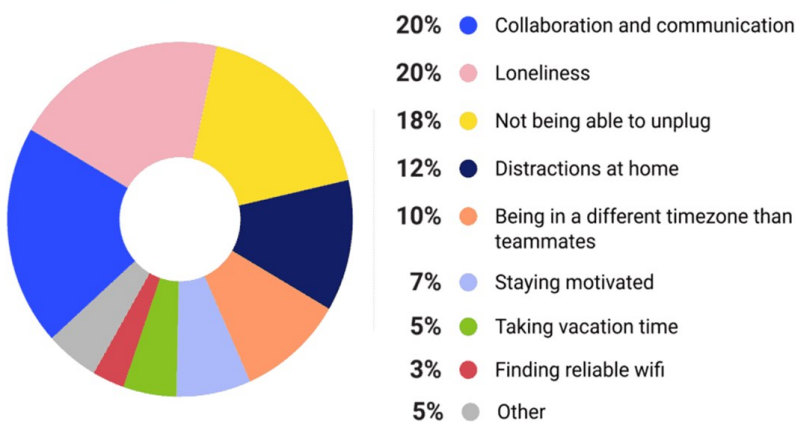
One of the biggest challenges is for managers to develop and maintain the capability to lead remote employees.

As with all leadership competency, these attributes and skills can be learned.

A key aspect of remote management and virtual leadership is the ability to measure results and outputs of each individual team member and the team. In fact, this is one of the keys to effective leadership in general.

Acknowledging the challenges and developing the skills to help your team members overcome these, or at least minimise them, can be the difference between success and failure.

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?



Why has remote working become so attractive to so many?

Organisations, are trying to reduce costs in difficult economic times. This includes real estate costs and reducing the business physical footprint. As a result of globalisation, organisations are also becoming more distributed, and the actual locations of their employees and team members is not as important as it once was. In fact, some government organisations mandate a certain number of employees to work remotely as part of the organisation's recovery planning. The Covid pandemic exaggerated and in some cases, fast-tracked this movement.

These are the financial and policy reasons. Of course, we have all been working through the recent Covid-19 pandemic too. This has encouraged and/or forced many managers and organisations to reassess their view of the effectiveness of remote working.

As organisations continue to grow, the practice of remote management will play a progressively more important role in influencing overall organisational effectiveness.

Benefits and Risks

What should you focus on to minimise the risks of remote working?

A recent study and subsequent report, *Managing The Virtual Workforce*, highlighted six main areas of focus:

1. Working apart impacts team dynamics, the frequency and quality of communications, levels of consensus and conflict, and the amount and quality of social interaction. All of these impact the performance of teams and the outcomes they generate.
2. Successful virtual work requires an understanding of the differences that people experience, compared to being co-located. To avoid damage to team and community performance, people need to respond to the differences and find alternative ways to operate.
3. Effective virtual teams are determined by the strength of their social and cognitive states – i.e. the degree to which they are socially cohesive, trust each other, operate within a psychologically safe climate and share skills, experience and knowledge freely.
4. While all factors interconnect, trust and communication lie at the foundation of cohesion, supervision, communication, the sharing of skills and knowledge, work relationships and the performance of virtual teams.
5. Trust, social cohesion and information sharing seem to be the most potentially vulnerable to damage when people work virtually and must be consciously understood and actively managed – they can't be left to chance.
6. In virtual teams there is potential for everyone to be a leader – home based employees respond well to more transformational management styles. This involves creating a strong team structure, empowering and guiding the team, involving them in the development of group goals and supporting them in actively reflecting on decision making and outcomes. Source: www.workplaceinsight.net



There are various combinations of remote teams. In our experience, the optimum arrangement is the balance between remote and office-based work. This is often represented as a 3:2 or 2:3 remote/office-based days per week commitment.



Remote Management & Leadership

To lead remotely, is to reinforce many of the leadership skills that are required in any business situation. But, the need to master them is enhanced.

Most businesses are now faced with the reality that safely opening offices may not be possible for the foreseeable future, and as a result, need to plan long-term to manage their remote employees effectively.

Leadership always matters, especially so in remote working settings.

Discussion Point:

What does 'good and effective leadership' look like?

Is that different when leading remote teams? If so, in what way?

According to the *2020 State of Remote Work* report issued by Buffer, there's one statistic that remains unequivocal each year: remote workers almost unanimously want to continue to work remotely (at least for some of the time) for the rest of their careers. This year, 98 percent of respondents agreed with this statement. Also, it seems that once someone gets a taste of working remotely, they tend to recommend it: 97 percent stated they would recommend remote work to others.

There are always challenges that come with remote work, though they vary from person to person. Over the past three years of putting out this report, two unique struggles remain in the top three: the difficulties with collaboration/communication, and with loneliness. The primary benefit of remote work has remained the same for the past three years straight in the report: flexibility!

The increased scale and profile of remote working has changed organisations forever. In what way and how sustainably...that is yet to be seen. Without doubt the role of the leader is critical in the success of remote working environments.

Learning to be an effective leader in this environment is no longer a 'nice-to-have' – so, what is required and how can you develop these skills?

Discussion Point:

To what degree has the Covid pandemic and subsequent impacts changed your views on remote working?

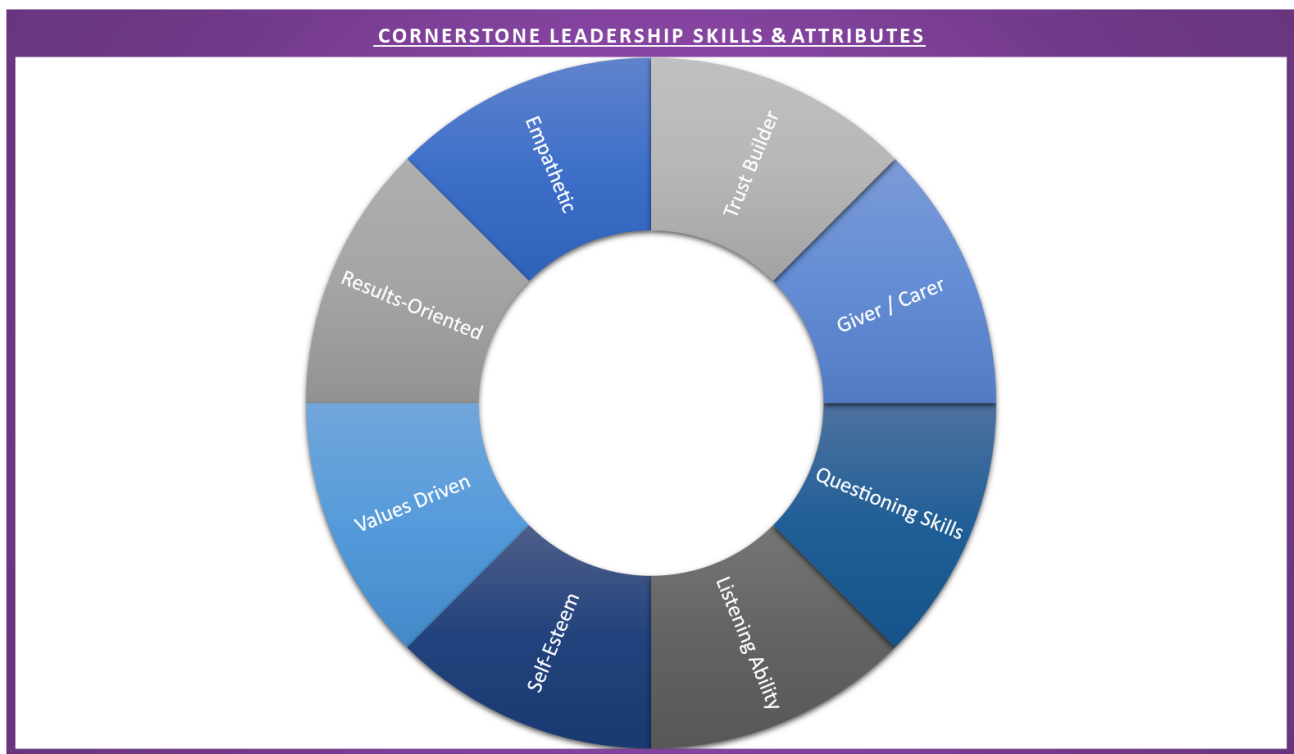
What do you think will change even more in your organisation regarding how you and your teams work and where?

Managing remote teams requires effective leadership, often at a higher level of competence than face-to-face contact.

Leadership Essentials

As already highlighted, remote management exaggerates the need for effective and deliberate leadership. This influences how managers operate and develop new skills within this modern work environment.

Managers are often challenged by expectations of meeting and exceeding goals; achieving KPI's; leading teams and many other aspects of creating and sustaining successful business. Consistently, evidence and research suggests that the biggest challenge for managers is leading and influencing people. Influencing others is core to the leadership component of the role and the single greatest influence on achieving team/business goals and outcomes. Let's look at 8 of the fundamental skills of effective leadership.



Reflect and Respond:

What would you consider are your strengths and opportunities for development when leading teams remotely?

Mark yourself out of 10 for each of the attributes above.

Leadership Skills and Attributes

There are dozens of additional leadership skills and attributes that we could focus on here, beyond those on page 8. However, I have found the following to be of particular value and are worth discussing, focusing on and looking to develop further.

1) Establishing Trusted Relationships

To be trusted and trusting is the cornerstone of leadership, relationships, accountability and influence – without trust leading teams successfully is virtually impossible.

2) Empowerment

Knowing how to delegate tasks and empowering employees is essential to the success of a business - *especially* when many employees are working remotely. Part of this process is resisting the urge to micro-manage employees who have demonstrated the ability to perform their job responsibilities well. The most accomplished managers delegate tasks well and provide guidance without being overbearing or impeding the employee's natural motivation to succeed.

3) Creativity

Successfully managing remote employees requires creativity and innovation. Creativity is critical for companies that seek to maintain a competitive edge in a business world that is increasingly being driven by technological wizardry and automation.

4) Regular Communication in Practice

The most accomplished managers of remote employees communicate on a regular basis with their teams. They are accessible, open, and responsive to phone calls and written communication from workers. Some specific ways that effective managers communicate regularly include the following:

- Establish a regular meeting schedule (even if meetings are held via conference call) and do not deviate from it
- Be accessible by striving to respond to phone calls and emails as quickly as possible
- Display transparency by relaying any upcoming company news to remote team members immediately upon receipt
- Strive to meet in person at least two to four times per year to solidify working relationships

5) Coaching and 1:1's - Recognise and create the opportunities to influence, communicate and understand others

The formal and informal nature of communicating with your team need to be both deliberately and consistently sought and reinforced. Effective leaders are also effective coaches. Regular 1:1 sessions are a very useful tool to learn and provide more to your team members, whilst developing your coaching skills. The 'gold' are the conversations and moments in between!

6) Flexibility

Each day brings about fresh challenges for evolving businesses. From changing regulations to expansion into emerging markets, managers of remote employees must be prepared to tackle those challenges head-on. Effective managers encourage their remote teams to embrace challenges and change. Additionally, managers who are able to adapt well to change serve as a positive role model for remote workers.

7) Technologically Savvy

Effective use of technology is the cornerstone of success for leaders who manage remote employees. Technology can be used to build an employee community and keep workers engaged with managers and colleagues. It is also imperative to maximise the time provided; communicate well; and build credible relationships.

By building on the skills listed above you will earn the right to lead others. Too many of us fail to challenge our comfort zones and follow through on what we believe and who we are. This sort of compromise leads to a lack of contribution and fulfilment.



Communication and Remote Leadership

How Managers Can Support Remote Employees

As much as remote work can be fraught with challenges, there are also relatively quick and inexpensive things that managers can do to ease the transition. Actions that you can take today include:

Establish structured daily check-ins: Many successful remote managers establish a daily call with their remote employees. This could take the form of a series of one-on-one calls, if your employees work more independently from each other, or a team call, if their work is highly collaborative. The important feature is that the calls are regular and predictable, and that they are a forum in which employees know that they can consult with you, and that their concerns and questions will be heard.

Provide several different communication technology options: Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from having a “richer” technology, such as video conferencing, that gives participants many of the visual cues that they would have if they were face-to-face. Video conferencing has many advantages, especially for smaller groups: Visual cues allow for increased “mutual knowledge” about coworkers and also help reduce the sense of isolation among teams. Video is also particularly useful for complex or sensitive conversations, as it feels more personal than written or audio-only communication.

There are other circumstances when quick collaboration is more important than visual detail. For these situations, provide mobile-enabled individual messaging functionality (like Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) which can be used for simpler, less formal conversations, as well as time-sensitive communication.

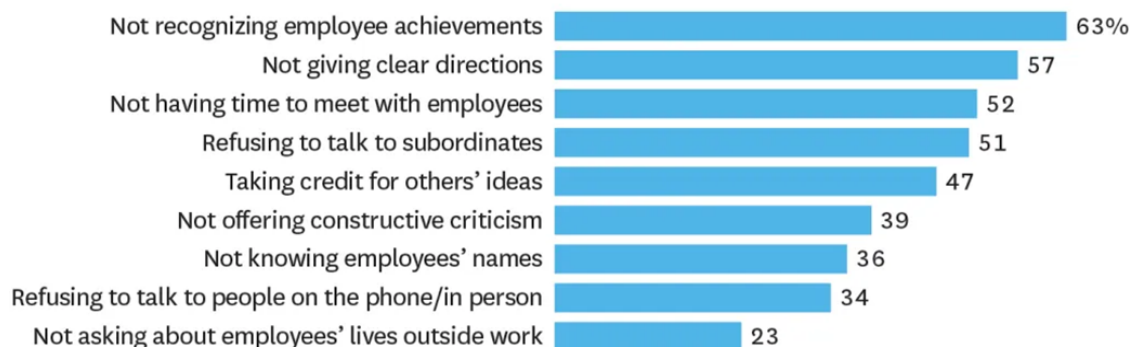
And then establish “rules of engagement” and communication norms: Remote work becomes more efficient and satisfying when managers set expectations for the frequency, means, and ideal timing of communication for their teams. For example, “We use videoconferencing for daily check-in meetings, but we use IM when something is urgent.” Also, if you can, let your employees know the best way and time to reach you during the workday (e.g., “I tend to be more available late in the day for ad hoc phone or video conversations, but if there’s an emergency earlier in the day, send me a text.”) Finally, keep an eye on communication among team members (to the extent appropriate), to ensure that they are sharing information as needed.

We recommend that managers establish these “rules of engagement” with employees as soon as possible, ideally during the first online check-in meeting. While some choices about specific expectations may be better than others, the most important factor is that all employees share the same set of expectations for communication.

Creating opportunities for both formal and informal conversations is critical, but not as common as it should be.

Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/a-guide-to-managing-your-newly-remote-workers>

The Communication Issues That Prevent Effective Leadership



SOURCE INTERACT/HARRIS POLL OF 1,000 U.S. WORKERS

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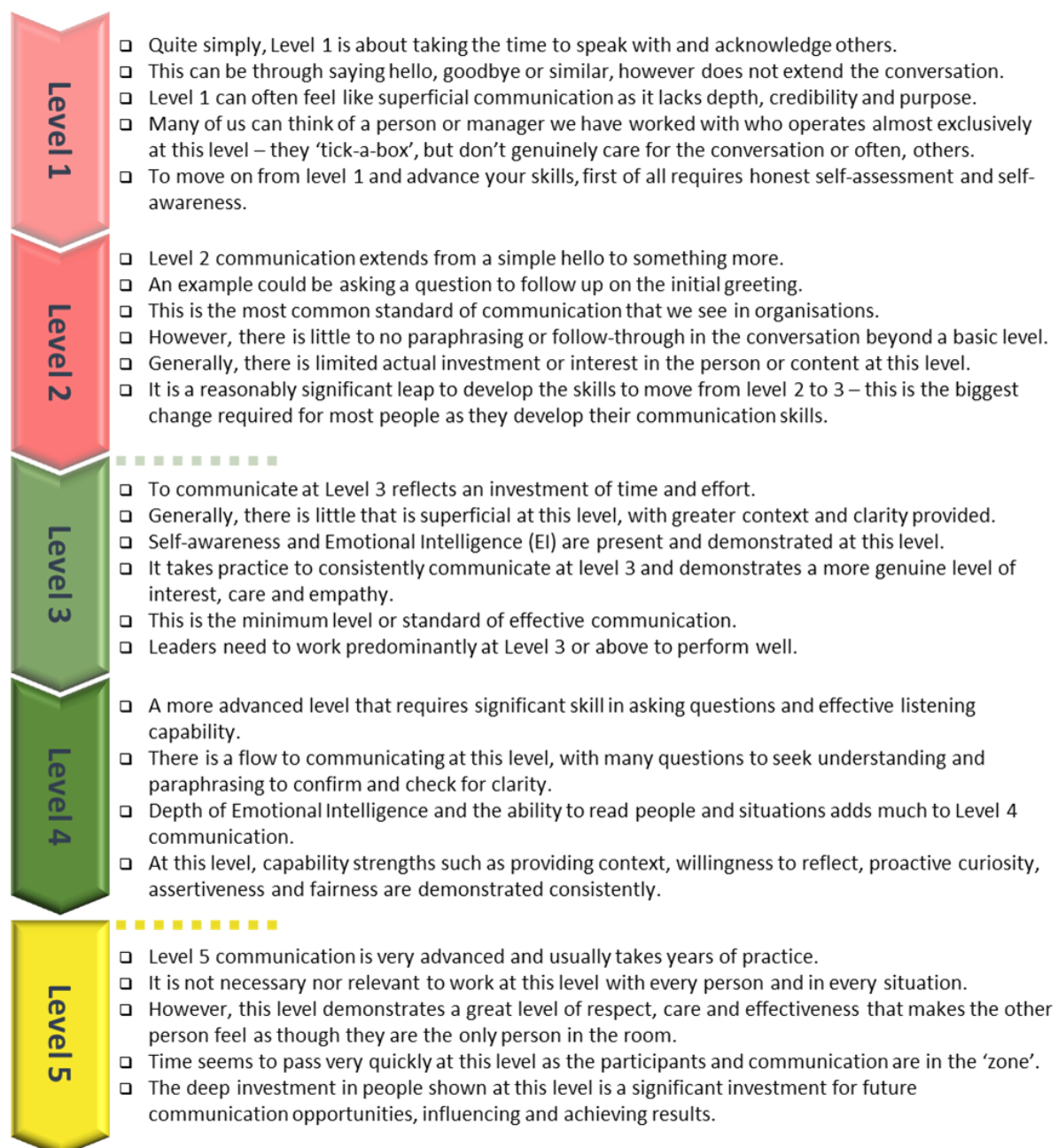
Communication and Remote Leadership

To communicate effectively we need to move beyond the superficial, to greater depths.

This is particularly important when leading people remotely. The goal is to be heard and understood. Critically, this is as important for your team member or colleague in return. This is achieved when both parties invest in gaining a mutual understanding.

The skills of asking the right question at the right time and effective listening are two of the most important leadership attributes to develop – however, there is more to communicating effectively than questioning and listening.

A significant amount of my time when coaching people focuses on their ability to communicate effectively. Effective communication is a skill, attribute and outcome. As mentioned, it matters in any relationship and when leading, however is a non-negotiable when leading remotely. Let's look at our communication model to explore this further.



Leadership Styles

Behaviour is influenced by role, in a way that's just as powerful as personality. You don't have to change your personality in order to change your behaviour.

The capability and ability to flex your leadership style depending on the employee, experience, tenure, skills, values and other factors is important to influence others successfully. Identifying your natural tendencies and style creates more conscious awareness and potential to learn to do this. Developing the knowledge and capability to flex your style to suit situational need takes influencing a step further. In remote settings, this tends to require more overt language and self-awareness, both which can be developed. What are a few of these styles?



The best leader is the one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it - Theodore Roosevelt

Accountability and Setting Clear Expectations

CoachStation: Leadership, Coaching & Accountability REOWM Model

The behaviours, traits and skills required of a leader are many. Organisations should focus on developing leaders early and maintain the effort once in the role. Individual leaders must also embrace the challenge to grow and provide more to their team members and employer.

An example of the tools and models we have developed is the REOWM Accountability Model. This forms the basis for many of our conversations and coaching themes. It also helps to identify gaps in knowledge, behaviour and application.



RELATIONSHIPS

- Earn the right to have any conversation
- Meet regularly for formal and informal discussions
- Make 1:1's a regular part of your role
- Be prepared to give something of yourself
- Build self-awareness and emotional intelligence



EXPECTATIONS

- Must be understood, not just delivered
- Ensure clarity and context in expectations
- Set clear goals
- Discuss team and business standards, goals and values
- Be clear that these standards and expectations will be key to success



OBSERVATIONS

- Seek self-assessment and employee/client view
- Clearly state what you have seen or observed
- Provide feedback and examples
- Be specific in your words, language and intention
- Take ownership - rarely refer to what 'others' have observed



WHY/IMPACT

- Discuss how and why this matters?
- Explain how the discussion content/theme impacts the:
 - Employee
 - Leader
 - Team
 - Business
 - Goals & Actions
 - Future
 - Other



MEASUREMENT

- The outputs, outcomes and results must be understood
- Know what inputs and actions have contributed to the results... and what needs to be expanded, changed or removed
- Accountability is most effective, accepted and understood when there is clarity in the outcomes and results

The CoachStation REOWM Model is very effective when planning and conducting coaching sessions, in leadership and when holding people accountable. It is just as effective in developing accountability based on expectations that are sometimes viewed as subjective – an agreed expectation requires accountability, whether it is tangible or intangible.

Reflection and Discussion Point:

Which of the steps in the REOWM Model do you feel are commonly missed or minimised in practice?

Which one or more do you feel you could improve?

The best leader is the one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.

Theodore Roosevelt



In a remote environment the opportunity to meet face-to-face is limited. As a result, influencing skills, engagement, measurement, communication and all other critical leadership traits become imperative in application. Now you're going to be communicating through media as opposed to seeing someone face to face.

Trust: how do you build trust with people you don't see very often?

Relationships: as a leader, you need a good, solid working relationship with your team members - how do we build and maintain that when we don't see our people regularly? Prioritise face-to-face interactions, where possible – the communication channel matters.

Coaching: how do you know how people are doing and what they're doing and then how do you coach them and give them feedback successfully when doing this at a distance? How do you actively develop and support your team?

Even if you don't like it, the interpersonal dynamics between you and your team members are changed forever when you're leading remotely. Co-founder & CEO of Intel, Andy Grove, and his book High Output Management highlight the relevance of Task Relevant Maturity. Grove describes it in the following way:

“How often you monitor should not be based on what you believe your subordinate can do in general, but on his experience with a specific task and his prior performance with it – his task relevant maturity...as the subordinate’s work improves over time, you should respond with a corresponding reduction in the intensity of the monitoring.”

Adjust your management style to their Task Relevant Maturity (TRM):	
TRM of Subordinate:	Effective Management Style:
- Low	- Structured; task-oriented; tell What, When, and How.
- Medium	- Individual-oriented; emphasis on two-way communication, support, mutual reasoning.
- High	- Involvement by manager minimal; establishing objectives and monitoring.

Source: "High Output Management" by Andy Grove

Image by: GetLighthouse.com

Task Relevant Maturity is a framework that determines how to delegate, monitor, and manage performance. A person with high TRM must have a balance of both skill and will. If a person doesn't find the sweet spot — task-relevant maturity drops. A combination of education, training, and experience falls under personal skills. Readiness and willingness to take in responsibility, and being achievement-oriented would fall under a person's will. When a person has a high TRM, a manager can delegate more freely, thus focus on higher leverage activities. If the task is very important or urgent, even though you've delegated the task, make sure the progress is going well by monitoring it from time to time.



Effective Teams and Teamwork

Developing Teams and creating an environment where teamwork is encouraged and actioned is more difficult in a remote setting...but, it is not impossible.

It is worth remembering however, that not all roles or employees are suited to the remote environment. It has always been and will always be critical to review these opportunities on a case-by case basis, where possible, whilst acknowledging this has not been a choice for most this year.

The need to know and understand your team members well enough to assist and make these judgments can not be underestimated.

Beyond ensuring that each employee has set up a safe workspace, what other teamwork-based factors should be considered?

Teamwork is made up of many elements. Three of the most critical are relationships, collaboration and communication. We have highlighted these earlier, however it is also important to also consider distance when meeting the challenge of collaborating in remote environments.

There are three kinds of distance in remote collaboration:

- Physical (place and time)
- Operational (team size, bandwidth and skill levels)
- Affinity (values, trust, and interdependency).

The best way for managers to drive team performance is by focusing on reducing affinity distance.

Reflection and Discussion Point:

Think for a moment about how you would define teamwork.

What do you value about working in a team?

What areas of improvement could you practice and/or implement in the next 3 months that would fully enable your team?

A lack of visibility is the factor that may cause several challenges for your remote employees. When people don't know each other's availability or workload, they might find it difficult to communicate effectively. Agreed clarity and consistency regarding when people work and what they work on will save your team much uncertainty. Other important elements to focus on include:

- Establishing a clear direction
- Ensuring your structure is optimised and functional
- Establish and reinforce a 'shared mindset'
- Provide and ask for regular feedback

Teamwork has never been easy—but in recent years it has become much more complex. And the trends that make it more difficult seem likely to continue, as teams become increasingly global, virtual, and project-driven. Taking a systematic approach to analyzing how well your team is set up to succeed—and identifying where improvements are needed—can make all the difference. Source: <https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-secrets-of-great-teamwork>

Tips to Encourage Effective Teamwork

Thanks to modern technology, the global work environment has had a massive shift in the last few years and changes are accelerating faster now than ever before. So what can you do, as a manager or founder, to create an environment of positive behaviour, and then continue to grow a positive company culture with a remote team?

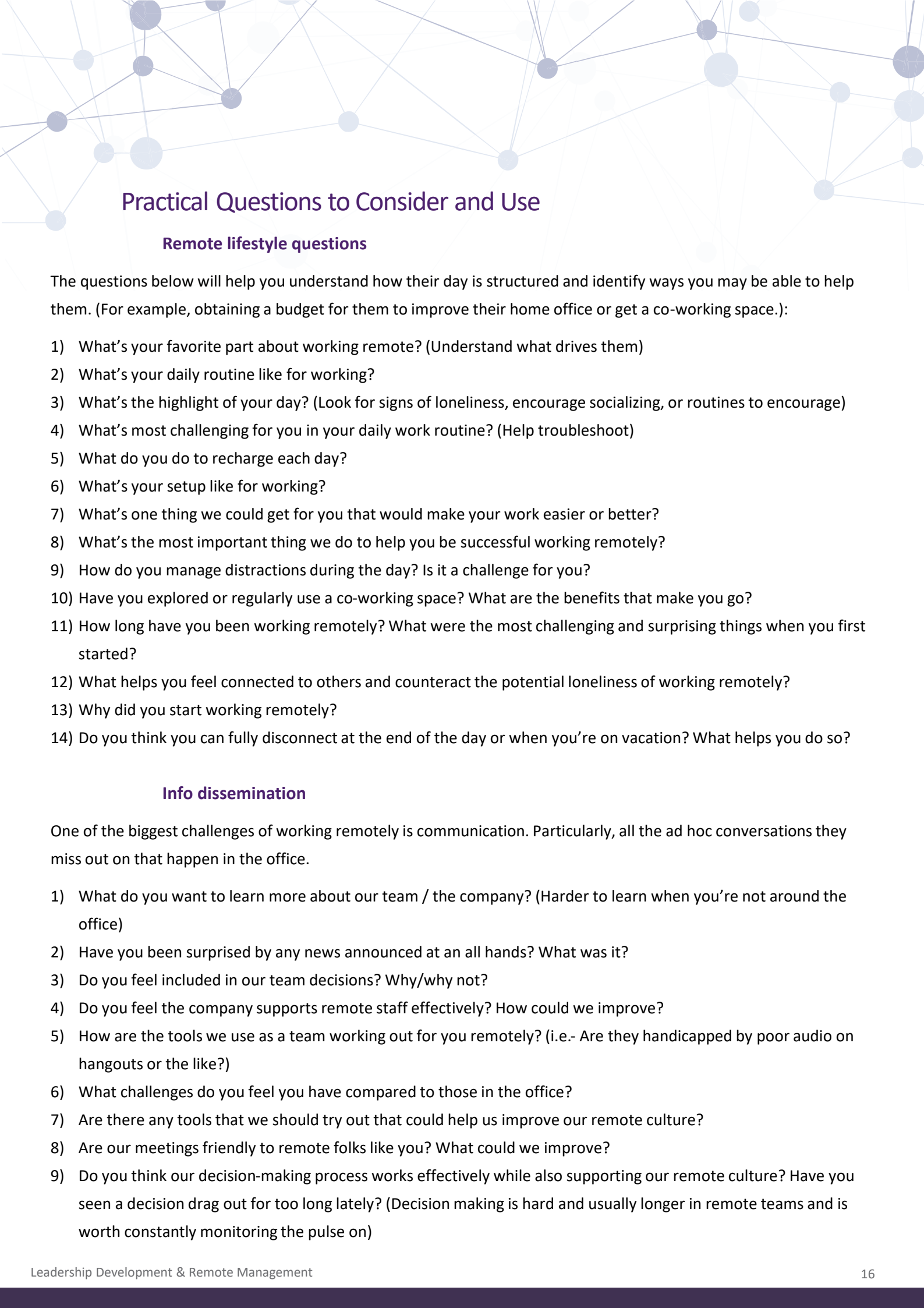
1. Pick the right people
2. Outline all expectations
3. Have a chatroom always open
4. Create a task dashboard
5. Where relevant, plan meetings around overlapping time zones
6. Track productivity
7. Set expectations on communication methods
8. Encourage an environment of open communication and feedback
9. Make in-person meetings a priority
10. Facilitate weekly check-ins
11. Promote accountability
12. Measure results, behaviours and outcomes
13. Learn to trust more
14. Be aware of the 'water cooler effect'
15. Take time to learn about everyone
16. Communicate, communicate, communicate!



Sources: <https://inside.6q.io/how-to-grow-a-positive-company-culture-with-a-remote-team/>
<https://status.net/articles/effective-teamwork-remote-team/>

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Agreed clarity and consistency regarding when people work and what they work on will save your team much uncertainty.



Practical Questions to Consider and Use

Remote lifestyle questions

The questions below will help you understand how their day is structured and identify ways you may be able to help them. (For example, obtaining a budget for them to improve their home office or get a co-working space.):

- 1) What's your favorite part about working remote? (Understand what drives them)
- 2) What's your daily routine like for working?
- 3) What's the highlight of your day? (Look for signs of loneliness, encourage socializing, or routines to encourage)
- 4) What's most challenging for you in your daily work routine? (Help troubleshoot)
- 5) What do you do to recharge each day?
- 6) What's your setup like for working?
- 7) What's one thing we could get for you that would make your work easier or better?
- 8) What's the most important thing we do to help you be successful working remotely?
- 9) How do you manage distractions during the day? Is it a challenge for you?
- 10) Have you explored or regularly use a co-working space? What are the benefits that make you go?
- 11) How long have you been working remotely? What were the most challenging and surprising things when you first started?
- 12) What helps you feel connected to others and counteract the potential loneliness of working remotely?
- 13) Why did you start working remotely?
- 14) Do you think you can fully disconnect at the end of the day or when you're on vacation? What helps you do so?

Info dissemination

One of the biggest challenges of working remotely is communication. Particularly, all the ad hoc conversations they miss out on that happen in the office.

- 1) What do you want to learn more about our team / the company? (Harder to learn when you're not around the office)
- 2) Have you been surprised by any news announced at an all hands? What was it?
- 3) Do you feel included in our team decisions? Why/why not?
- 4) Do you feel the company supports remote staff effectively? How could we improve?
- 5) How are the tools we use as a team working out for you remotely? (i.e.- Are they handicapped by poor audio on hangouts or the like?)
- 6) What challenges do you feel you have compared to those in the office?
- 7) Are there any tools that we should try out that could help us improve our remote culture?
- 8) Are our meetings friendly to remote folks like you? What could we improve?
- 9) Do you think our decision-making process works effectively while also supporting our remote culture? Have you seen a decision drag out for too long lately? (Decision making is hard and usually longer in remote teams and is worth constantly monitoring the pulse on)

Connection

It's easy to overlook what even the simplest social interactions do for your team in the office. Even simple day-to-day banter can build strong bonds for teams.

- 1) How well do you feel you know your coworkers?
- 2) Which of your coworkers do you wish you had more of a connection with? How do you think that would help?
- 3) You visit the office X times a year. Do you feel like that's too much, not enough, or just right?
- 4) How could I better support remote staff like you?
- 5) When you have a creative idea or epiphany, what do you do with it? (The kinds of things that would get openly discussed in an office could be missing for them).
- 6) Do you feel like you have opportunities for "water-cooler" type discussions with the team to help you spur on ideas? What ideas do you have for how we could create more of them?
- 7) Do you feel supported by the team so that you could go to anyone asking them for help? (In remote teams, this can be a problem. Ideally, you want everyone to feel like they can go to anyone and ask them about something).
- 8) Do you feel like you're a full member of the team? What makes you feel connected/disconnected?

Source: <https://getlighthouse.com/blog/questions-remote-employees/>



Workshop Summary and Q&A





Notes:



CoachStation

Leadership. People. Business Development.

Coaching and mentoring leaders and managers.
Developing people and businesses.
Influencing organisations success.

CoachStation's track record in assisting people and organisations to get the best out of themselves, their employees and positively impact business results is exceptional.

We know this because our clients and customers tell us so.

We recognise the importance of contributing to real and sustainable improvement.

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