

Getting your communication right

LEADING AND WORKING IN VIRTUAL TEAMS – A TOOLKIT



From setting up your collaboration tool to agreeing on Checks/Check-ins



Establishing your roadmap

It's your job as a leader to ensure your organisation has these four things when it comes to remote working:

1.

The roadmap

where are you trying to get to and what are you trying to achieve as a team and an organisation? Lay out your purpose early on and make sure it's prominent on any virtual channels you choose.

2.

Agree on rules of the road

what rules do you need to establish to get people behaving in ways that achieve this goal?

3.

Driving lessons

how will you communicate this to everyone in the organisation to ensure they all have the skills and knowledge necessary?

4.

Driving test

how do you ensure your people use the technology as you intend?



Agree regular check ins

Decide how often, where and when you'd like to check in – regular communication becomes vitally important when you can't just catch up by the coffee machine. As well as more formal one to ones, consider virtual coffee time where the team can socialise and 'hang out' online, WhatsApp groups for vital messaging/fun gifs (delete as appropriate for your team culture) or even team events like watching a movie together via NetflixParty or similar. Social check ins shouldn't be overlooked.



Pick a platform – but just one

You need everyone on one platform. That's a macro rule. Whether that's Slack, Teams, Asana, Trello or any other tool, you need to agree that all core communication and conversation happens here. If it's not on the platform then it doesn't exist. Make sure that everyone is on it, has a profile picture loaded, and of course, knows how to use it.

There are lots of other practical rules you can establish, such as conversational thread etiquette, and when it's appropriate to use hashtags, emojis and pins.



Be careful with private channels

There are public and private channel settings on most collaboration platforms and being fair and transparent in using these is critical to mitigate any feelings of 'in' and 'out' group tensions. Of course, a channel where confidential financial information is being discussed will be restricted to certain individuals, but avoiding any unnecessary hierarchical restrictions will reduce the sense of 'us' and 'them' festering online, just as it did when you had the leadership team sat on one side of the office and everyone else on the other.



Use your webcams for more than meeting

One of the key skills required to inspire and lead remote teams is the ability to record and share compelling, inspiring video messages quickly. While having your webcam on in meetings is a really nice way to both stay connected and maintain attention, you can also use video technology to share thoughts, updates and team news in a much more personal format than text.



Be explicit about everything you say

In a written environment, your tone of voice and body language are no longer available to you to communicate key messages, so you need to choose your words and punctuation carefully. Every adjective, full stop and exclamation mark matters.

There might not be a 'right' style, but getting comfortable using images, emojis and gifs can help give you a broader range of communication tools and being extremely deliberate and explicit with words is critical.

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