

Blended working – optimise performance when your team isn't in the office full time

Written by Karen Gately on August 5, 2020



One thing is certain right now, the future instant certain. As communities around Australia and the world respond to the threat of COVID-19, leaders everywhere are faced with the challenge of enabling success while driving largely blind. For many that includes having to influence the performance of people who aren't working in the office every day, writes [Karen Gately](#)

Many of the conventional wisdoms strongly held by some leaders, about how to influence productivity and engagement are being challenged through these times. Those who for example hold firm to the belief that people can't be trusted to work if not supervised, are especially struggling to adapt.

As any leader who has been at the helm of a team distributed around the country or globe can attest, these are not new challenges, just new to many leaders. HR people have an essential role to play in guiding leaders to confront the realities of the circumstances we face and find new ways of working and achieving the business outcomes that are needed.

Get back to basics

There is no magic wand that can make the job of leading teams simple, at the best of times, let alone these. Now is a good time for a back to basics strategy that has leaders focused on clarity, coaching and accountability. Clarity means that people understand what is expected of them and where the key priorities lie. It also means they have some insight to what leaders are thinking the future might hold and how they intend to respond.

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Irrespective of whether leaders are leading remotely 100% of the time, or through a blended model that includes some in person interactions, the fundamentals of success remain unchanged. Connection and communication are key to optimal performance.

Enable connection

Start by working with leaders to identify the routines that will ensure their team continue to feel a sense of belonging and connection. Its essential that leaders deliberately influence collaboration, and a well-planned and facilitated team meeting can go a long way toward ensuring people remain focused on collective success and shared accountability.

Help leaders to appreciate the more they understand their people the more effective they are likely to be in influencing their engagement and performance.

The most obvious mistake leaders make when managing remotely is failing to engage in regular, and meaningful dialogue about what is expected, how things are going and what needs to improve. Adopting a coaching is key to staying close to people and keeping the lines of communication wide open. Help leaders to appreciate the more they understand their people the more effective they are likely to be in influencing their engagement and performance.

Strengthen communication skills

Of course, it can be more challenging to have some conversations via technology, but that is no reason not to engage in them. HR are wise to dedicate time supporting leaders to strengthen their communication skills particularly when it comes to building confidence in a highly uncertain environment and having tough love conversations about performance or engagement.

HR can play an important role in helping leaders to determine how best to enable the performance of their team, and each person on it.

Reflect for a moment on how well most of the leaders you support tend to communicate. If you work for a business that is like most others, who will have leaders at every level of your organisations structure who struggle to communicate well when stakes are high, or emotions are charged. Help these leaders to recognise what stands in their way of having honest conversations with respect and sensitivity, and to move past them.

There is no denying that the goal posts are constantly shifting and like anyone else, leaders need to be agile in the ways in which they approach their job. HR can play an important role in helping leaders to determine how best to enable the performance of their team, and each person on it. Leaders can benefit greatly from HR advice that helps them to see how success is possible even though they can't ask people to get back to their desk.

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