# Virtual Teams

## How to lead remote working, remotely.

Many leaders and virtual management teams won't have been affected by the enforced remote working requirements thrust on companies over the last couple of weeks.

But for those who are undertaking it for the first time, they will be facing the challenge of how to create a thriving and productive company culture when their team doesn't share an office space.

As a leader, there is huge potential for negative outcomes when it comes to productivity and working relationships. If you are unused to remote working, it presents a set of unique concerns and challenges.

However, there are many ways you can adapt your leadership style and company culture to overcome these challenges and prosper in the environment of remote working.

Firstly, we would suggest **you focus on being agile, curious and open to the advantages this new experience creates.** Why not even discuss them with your team? Transitioning to a remote working environment isn't easy but most businesses can excel if they follow certain work practices.

**Honesty and transparency will help** in this initial transition period and as the company goes forward. If you can create conditions of mutual trust you will help keep your team motivated and effective.

Before you expect your employees to resume any semblance of their working routine, check what their concerns are about remote working. Ask whether they have trouble setting their own schedule and staying disciplined. If they are self-motivated, they should adapt easily but be mindful and help those who struggle with this. **Give your team time to settle into their new 'normal'** and keep communicating and reassuring them as they do.

Remember, trust is often the thing that is top of the list when it comes to teams and workplaces that excel and succeed. Your team will need to trust you now, more than they ever have, and the same applies to you trusting them. If you demonstrate this to them, they will remain committed and will settle in quickly to the new way of working life.

It's interesting to pause and contemplate how human beings tend to react in times of crisis and uncertainty. Generally, our brains like to be 'in control'. In a work environment, a perceived lack of control can lead employees to start assuming the worse.

There is a balance to be played here. If you are too overbearing and controlling, you will send out the wrong message indicating there is a lack of trust in their ability to get the job done. By so doing, you will erode trust and remove any empathy you have developed with your team.

**The aim is to be the right level of curious.** Mutually agree on clear guidelines around communication and expectations around responsiveness and you will empower your team to work from home effectively.

In these times, technology is definitely your friend as it helps teams to stay connected while working remotely. **Ensure your employees can stay connected to you and the wider team.** Video conferencing such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, and Skype, and project-management tools such as Slack and Asana, will help facilitate this.

In order for you to stay connected, **video is imperative**. Conduct as many of your communications as you can over video rather than phone, and your team will remain engaged, personally connected and invested in the success of the team and company.

Impress upon your team that there will be a focus on 'output' rather than 'time worked'. This will be particularly important as employees deal with the challenges of home-schooling, self isolation and family commitments.

Some studies have indicated that we are only productive for less than three hours a day, while other studies put this at six. Whatever the true amount, it will be different per person and per team. However, be mindful that **'time spent' doing something isn't as important as 'output achieved'.**

By focusing your team on output rather than time worked, you will relieve the pressure many will feel that they have to be at their desks for the whole working day.

Remember that some tasks will likely be more difficult to conduct when isolated, so **take the time to reassess priorities** and, as we are doing at CLP, take advantage of these calmer times at home to **evaluate improvement points for your team and company.**

Finally, the leaders who will thrive during this seismic change to the working environment are the ones who focus on their **teams' personal resilience, wellbeing and mental health.**

Sitting isolated at home all day will affect many adversely, mentally and physically. So, encourage your team to move around in the day. Get them to take regular breaks and insist they go outside if they can, or exercise at home and spend quality time cooking or starting off that hobby they've been putting off for a while.

You must **encourage the sharing of nourishing personal resilience discussions**, so your team feel they have the permission to make positive choices when it comes to their own wellbeing. Let them share their unique experience as it might find resonance among other team members and **help identify best practices to improve your team dynamics and output**.

Your role as leader is to help your team thrive in these unprecedented times. If you adopt the right attitude and approach, your skilled leadership will help you harness this moment in time and turn it into a force for good.

Here at CLP we are still open for business. If you need to talk through your own leadership challenges, please contact us and we will see how we can help. **Change is all around but change doesn't need to hold you back.** We have been working effectively with leaders to help them embrace change.

Yours,
**Dr. Marcus Gottschalk**
CEO at CLP