

Leadership Bites: Virtual Leadership - Strategies

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

NHS

Leadership Academy

South East

Introduction

It's not uncommon for leaders to worry about managing remote workers. Without seeing them in the office every day, it's easy to make assumptions, but did you know that research shows that remote workers often keep longer hours and are more productive than in-office workers?

Too often managers equate low face time with low work ethic or output. To avoid this unconscious bias and the damage it can do to your leadership legacy, try the following tips for a few quick wins:

- *Focus on what your remote workers have accomplished, not on whether you can see them accomplishing it.*
- *Build trust with your remote workers during your one-on-ones. Take the first five minutes to get to know them personally, inquire about non-work issues, and ask them for feedback on how you can communicate better.*
- *Remote workers can't just drop in for helpful feedback, so clarify your performance expectations frequently.*
- *Make your check-ins more interactive. Screen-share slide decks and spreadsheets so that you both see what's going on.*

Key Insight: How your team sees the current situation will have a huge impact on their behaviour and their results.

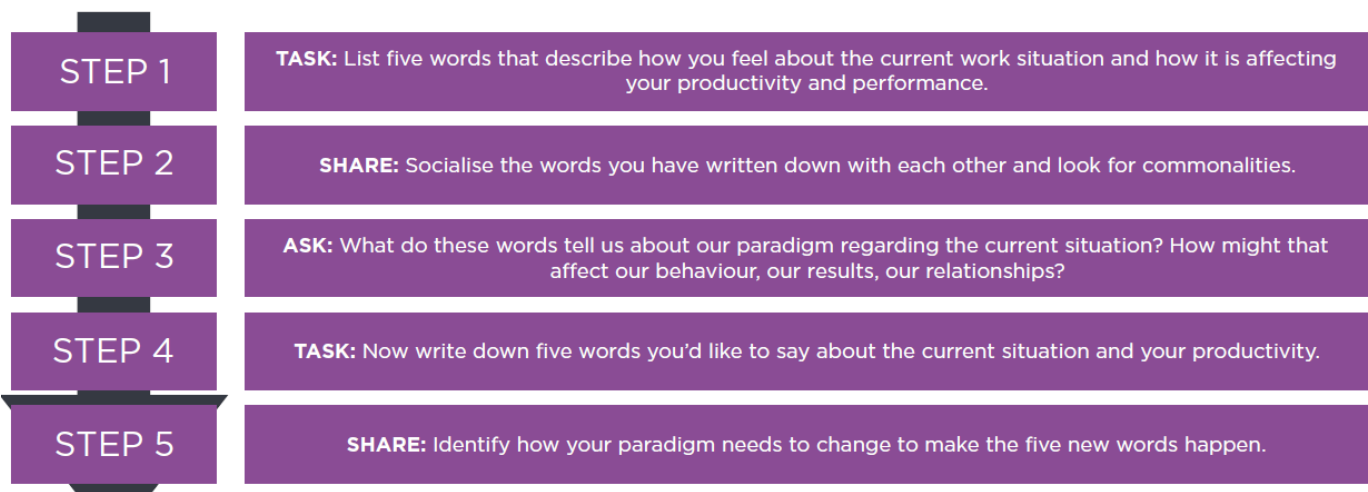
Considerations for leading your team virtually

Here are a few strategies you can adopt when leading virtually.

Paradigms

Paradigms are the way we see, understand, and interpret the world—our mental map.

Arrange for your team to get together on a virtual meeting and ask them to do some pre-thinking beforehand (step one below).



Introduce the activity as an opportunity to change your mindset about the current situation and work together as a team to help challenge and support each other during difficult times.

Team and individual rituals

Here are 6 suggested rituals that can be discussed as a team or with individuals, all of which will help when working from home and leading virtually.

Transition rituals

Transition rituals – specific tasks which help you ‘switch on’ and ‘switch off’ from your working day

Dedicated space – having a set environment for your workspace will also help you be more disciplined and keeping your ‘workspace’ and ‘home environment’ separate will help.

Dedicated space

Personal discipline

Personal discipline – many people experience an ‘always on’ culture, so having set work times and lunch times and sticking to them (and not feeling selfish for it!!) is an example of a personal discipline.

No-go zones – if you are working from home with children who may also be at home, contracting some no-go zones, or work times is a fun and great way to try and have some uninterrupted time. A traffic light system is a great example – a sign on the door with red/amber/green – red means ‘do not disturb’, ‘amber means ‘please knock first’ and ‘green’ or ‘door open’ means feel free to interrupt!!

No-Go zones

Commute to work

Commute to work – simply by replicating a commute to work (even if it’s a walk around the garden) can help set you up in the right mindset for the day ahead.

Look the part – This is a simple one - butget dressed! We’ve all been there when we’ve sat in our pyjamas or wore loungewear, and sometimes this doesn’t help us get in the right mindset or ‘set us up’ well for the day ahead. So, get up, get dressed into smart/casual wear – you’ll be surprised at how this can help you feel better!

Look the part

Contracting

Contracting is a process you and a new team could go through to:

Discuss management styles, discuss each other’s expectations, discuss direction with personal developments, agree a basis for communication and plan the frequency of 1-1s

Buddies

One of the most important aspects of an individual’s development is having a support mechanism available to them for any queries or guidance that they may need as they work through aspects of their development. This is the role of a buddy.

Communication

Not all meetings or communications with your team require face to face contact. There are a variety of technologies that can be used effectively in different situations to communicate the required information:

- **Face to face:** Meet face to face early on when building a relationship or when repairing trust. It is important in this time to schedule in 'social' time as well as 'formal' time into your agenda. If you are meeting with all your team, which potentially only rarely meet collectively, try and incorporate team-builds or energisers to motivate the team and ease the atmosphere.
- **E-mail/Outlook:** A quick and efficient method of communicating important business information or sending documents to the whole team, or individually tailored. E-mail is instant and time effective, and even if the recipient is not available, they will have the message or document on their return.
- **Videoconferencing/Teams/Zoom:** This method of communication can be effective if members of your team are all based collectively. Videoconferencing is instant and like face to face communication, your behaviour can be interpreted through its content, tone and physical expression.
- **Phoning:** Phoning is an effective method of communicating on a one to one basis. It is instant and is an effective means of communicating informally or formally and gives the recipient your full attention. You can communicate through your words and 'music' (tone).

Give it a go

Now you have some insights into strategies for virtual leadership, think about how this relates to your team.

Consider:

- What is the balance of knowledge and skill?
- How are people feeling, no – how are the reaaaally feeling?
- What does the team need to be successful (basic needs/human needs)?
- What do you need from the team? What do they need from you?
- How do they like to work?

Would a contracting session be useful to delve deeper into these questions? If so, how can you create the time and space to do this justice? Perhaps one-to-one conversation with each team member is the best way to get this information? Then you can group together any themes and invite the whole team to form a contract on how to best move each item forward.

Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the [People.NHS.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



Time to reflect...



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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

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