



CUTTINGS...

Number 146 April 2020

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

How times change. When I wrote the February newsletter (which with a bit of prescience included an article on the difficulty of having to work from home) there was the beginnings of a virus threat, two months later we are in lockdown and trying to make sense of the extraordinary living, employment and economic pressures.

So, this time I am focusing on some highlights on remote working and other subjects from the current rush of articles and previous editions of Cuttings that might be supportive and helpful.

And PLEASE use the term 'physical distancing' not 'social distancing' - it's at times like these we need to be more socially close whilst keeping a physical distance for safety.

Enjoy...

Geof Cox

In this edition

A guide to managing your (newly) remote workers - some topical thinking from a recent HBR article

7 top tips on remote working - the key findings from my current research when presenting a webinar for a client.

Hire the first person who applies... - if you are needing to recruit quickly, some interesting results from The Body Shop on 'open hiring'

Plus details of **Public Courses, Book Sales**, and a collection of **Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection. *New low prices on books, so you can take advantage of the extra 'home time' to continue learning...*

A Guide to Managing Your (Newly) Remote Workers

The response to the uncertainties presented by Covid-19, have led to new policies leave many employees — and their managers — working out of the office and separated from each other for the first time, often with little or no preparation. This article from HBR, brings together some of their learning and research to highlight not just the challenges, but also the ways that newly remote managers can provide support.

Common Challenges of Remote Work

- **Lack of face-to-face supervision:** Both managers and their employees often express concerns - supervisors worry that employees will not work as hard or as efficiently (though research indicates otherwise). Many employees struggle with reduced access to support and communication and that remote managers are out of touch with their needs.
- **Lack of access to information:** Newly remote workers are often surprised by the added time and effort needed to locate

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"There is a difference between offering a service and being willing to serve. They may both include giving but only one is generous."

Simon Sinek

"We cannot teach people anything. We can only help them discover it themselves."

Galileo Galilei

"Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

information which extends beyond task-related work to interpersonal challenges. This lack of “mutual knowledge” among remote workers translates to a lower willingness to give co-workers the benefit of the doubt in difficult situations, so we tend to misunderstand and take offence easily.

- **Isolation:** Loneliness is one of the most common complaints about remote work, with employees missing the informal social interaction of an office setting. Isolation can cause any employee to feel less “belonging” to their organisation, and can even result in increased intention to leave the company.
- **Distractions at home:** In ‘normal times’ employers should ensure that their remote workers have both dedicated workspace and adequate childcare before allowing them to work remotely. In the current situation of a sudden transition to virtual work, there is a much greater chance that employees will be contending with suboptimal workspaces and unexpected parenting responsibilities. So, managers should expect these distractions to be greater during this unplanned work-from-home transition.

How Managers Can Support Remote Employees

- **Establish structured daily check-ins:** This could take the form of a series of one-on-one calls, or a team call if 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. There are other circumstances when quick collaboration is more important than visual detail. For these situations, mobile-enabled individual messaging (like Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) is ideal for simpler, less formal conversations, as well as time-sensitive communication.
- **Establish some “rules of engagement”:** 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, let your staff know the best way and time to reach you during the workday. Finally, encourage communication among team members to ensure that they are sharing information as needed.
- **Provide opportunities for remote social interaction:** Promote and structure ways for employees to interact socially - have informal conversations about non-work topics. E.g., leave some time at the beginning of team calls just for non-work items, organise virtual coffee breaks or pizza parties. While these types of events may sound artificial or forced, they do help reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Offer encouragement and emotional support:** Especially in the context of an abrupt shift to remote work, it is important for managers to acknowledge stress, listen to employees’ anxieties

“Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose.”

Bill Gates

“Some people learn from experience. Some people never recover from it.”

Anonymous

“Organisation is patterned sound; and music, patterned sound in time”

Rik Spann and Simon Martin

“The trouble is, you think you have time.”

Buddha

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud.”

Maya Angelou

“I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”

Thomas Edison

“The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.”

Charles Du Bos

“An idea isn't responsible for the people who believe in it.”

Don Marquis

“The world is but a school of enquiry.”

Michel de Montaigne

“When there are hurricanes, build windmills.”

Ancient proverb

“There is no security in this life. There is only opportunity.”

Douglas Macarthur

“You can do anything in this world if you are prepared to take the consequences”

W. Somerset Maugham

and concerns, and empathise with their struggles. Be pro-active and ask them how they're doing rather than wait for an issue to surface. Research on emotional intelligence and emotional contagion tells us that employees look to their managers for cues about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If a manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will have what Daniel Goleman calls a "trickle-down" effect on employees. Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete article in HBR

New Directions offer workshops and webinars on supervision and team management. For more information [Click here](#)

"The greatest difficulty lies not in persuading people to accept new ideas, but in persuading them to abandon old ones."

John Maynard Keynes

"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life; it goes on."

Robert Frost

"One of the many lessons one learns in prison is, that things are what they are and will be what they will be."

Oscar Wilde

7 Top Tips on Remote Team Working

At the start of the recent major restrictions in Europe I produced a webinar on remote team working for a client. From my research and from the vast amount of advice on on-line forums, I summarised these 7 Top Tips for newly remote workers:

- **Organise your home work space:** It will be an unfamiliar environment, and working on the kitchen table is not necessarily conducive to focus on work – there are a lot of other distractions. You may have your children around. So find somewhere where you can try to concentrate and be not too distracted by other things. If you do not have a dedicated home office, it will be a compromise, but choose the best you can to separate home and work. It will help in structuring and in being productive.
- **Set up a work schedule:** Plan your day: what you are going to do and when. What are your deliverables. What is your objective for the day. set yourself a routine or series of routines to manage your day. It will be different to your office routine, and needs to be integrated with your other responsibilities that are not usually around – children off school, caring duties... Being able to set your own work times to suit your other responsibilities is one of the major attractions for flexible working, but it does need to be planned and organised. Set yourself a start and finish time for your work.
- **Chunk your time – get up and move around:** Work in chunks of time – 45 - 50 minutes is about right. Then get up, walk around, get some fresh air. Having these short sessions also helps to manage your home interruptions – with children being off school, they have lost their routine, and it is important for them too. So work out something that works for your situation – communicate that with your colleagues so they know when and how to best contact you.
- **Have a communication routine with your colleagues:** When will you speak with each other, how will you coordinate. Set up a routine of regular contact that works

Hire the first person who applies...

With the lockdown on travel and business activity associated with trying to control the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some sectors of vital activity - care homes, health and welfare services, food production, supermarkets - where there has been a surge in demand for people to join. Some interesting thinking from The Body Shop and others reported in Fast Company in February might help these sectors to recruit:

Hire the first person who applies - no interviews, no background checks, no tests - just answer some simple yes-or-no questions and the job is yours...

This open hiring movement was started by Greyston Bakery, whose slogan "We don't hire people to bake brownies, we bake brownies to hire people".

The Body Shop studied what was happening at Greystone Bakery and decided open hiring represented a management move that fit their values and that sweet spot of how

for everyone – morning catch up? Afternoon plan? Daily progress check? Weekly project meeting? Make your contact – whether by phone, messaging or email more frequent and shorter rather than less frequent and longer. Social contact is maintained more by having 10 x 5 minute phone calls in a day rather than a 45 minute meeting once a day.

- **Keep the social and informal contact alive.** Technology and distance can push a remote or virtual team into focusing on tasks above all else. A colleague's research has identified that remote teams need five times the amount of social communication than face to face teams in order to deliver the same level of relationship. So, it is not just about having forced discussions about the weather, family and the (lack of) soccer match. It is having discussions you have on a daily basis with people you see face to face. You discuss how people are, general task stuff, informal general news stuff, expand on some messages, discuss an email someone sent... as well as the weather and the weekend. If you are messaging, emailing, telephoning, or conference calling - include time for informal and social chat as well as the work agenda. Think about creating a remote coffee or lunch break with your friends and colleagues.
- **Don't overwork - get some fresh air and exercise:** In a remote environment it is easy to get 'locked-in' to work as there are not the usual distractions and routines. So - get some fresh air and exercise as well. Create a new routine.
- **Check your understanding:** In the remote environment we do not have the visual clues that create the majority of the understanding of the message. In the absence of this information, the brain has only the words to interpret meaning, so we can be easily misunderstood - hence the use of emojis and emoticons to highlight meaning in emails. To overcome this tendency to jump to the - possibly wrong - conclusion, we need to check and double check understanding.

USEFUL LINKS

New Directions offer webinars on remote working. For more information [Click here](#)

Public Courses in SE Asia

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in Kuala Lumpur in association with petroEDGE. Click on the course date for further details. Hopefully we will be back in some form of 'normality' by then!

Human Competency & Capability Development [13-16 October](#)

A 4 day course in human resource development strategy for the oil and gas sector.

Moving from Engineer to Manager [19-21 October](#)

A 3 day programme to help engineers and those from a technical background take the first steps into management.

doing good enriches doing well. Their results were striking: Monthly turnover in the distribution center dropped by 60%. In 2018, the Body Shop's distribution centre in the US saw turnover rates of 38% in November and 43% in December. In 2019, after they began using open hiring, that decreased to 14% in November and 16% in December.

The company only had to work with one temp agency instead of three. Supervisors reported staff were approaching them to share their stories. "They said things like, 'I've been struggling to find a job. This is one of the only places that would hire me, and I'm not going to mess this up.'" It seems that when you give people access to something that they're struggling to find, they're very committed to working hard and keeping it.

So, if you are needing to recruit, you might want to think about using 'open hiring' - it seems to deliver results and avoid the lengthy processes of screening and interviewing, so putting people in place a lot quicker and with more motivation and enthusiasm.

USEFUL LINKS

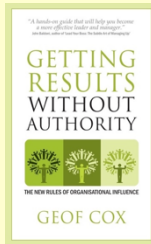
[Click here](#) to see the full article from Fast Company

Cuttings

Cuttings is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months. It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free.

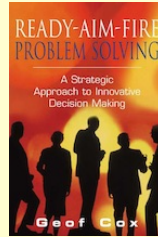
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