



# CUTTINGS...

Number 148 June 2020

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Welcome to another monthly edition of Cuttings - I am publishing more often than usual to reflect the current environment where we are all physically distancing and working through lock-down and working from home restrictions, and to share the vast amount of supportive writings that come from the HR and L&D journals and e-zines. Many countries are now relaxing their lock-downs but we are still nowhere near back to the 'old normal', and probably never will, so the need to adapt and change to meet the current reality is just as critical as at the start of the emergency.

Three issues to focus on: challenging the gender equality bias in policies and attitudes regarding male home and child care provision; re-engaging teams around changes in purpose and ways of working; and a plea to not overlook the increase in mental health issues that the crisis has highlighted - and will continue even after a lifting of restrictions.

Enjoy...

*Geof Cox*

## COVID-19 and Gender Equality

The coronavirus pandemic could have a profound effect on gender equality — if businesses learn the right lesson, according to an article in **strategy+business** by Josh Levs.

One of the biggest forces holding back gender equality in the workplace is the set of structures, policies and attitudes that are left over from the traditional view of a male parent as the main breadwinner and the female parent doing most of the at home caregiving. But the data suggests that in the most dads actually put in as many total caring hours as moms do, and surveys show men want to spend more time at home. Globally, as many as 85 percent of men say they would like to be more involved at home after having a child - but they feel that their jobs are at risk because of the stigma placed on that flexibility. Many executives and company policies still assume caregiving responsibilities as women's work, and punish men who seek flexibility.

The coronavirus pandemic may help to break down this flexibility stigma and the sexism it entails — if business leaders learn the right lessons from it. Millions of people are stuck at home. Men and women are in this predicament together. And businesses may finally come to see certain facts about remote work. People in power who have never before tried working full days from home are discovering what many have long known: flexibility can increase productivity.

OK, teleworking during the pandemic is nothing like teleworking in general. Teleworking without warning or preparation, having to home school children and

### In this edition

**COVID-19 and gender equality** The crisis may have a positive benefit if businesses recognise the opportunity to check their biases

**Engage one team at a time** Don't forget the intact work team when involved with multiple parallel change

**Mental health issues** Many people are experiencing mental health issues for the first time

Plus details of **Public Courses**, **Book Sales**, and a collection of **Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection.

## Snippets

*A collection of thought provokers and quotations...*

“It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first rate performance to excellence”

*Peter Drucker*

You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”

*Maya Angelou*

“Great leaders believe they work for their team. Average leaders believe their team works for them.”

*Alexander Den Heijer*

“Opportunities don't happen. You create them.”

*Chris Grosser*

care for loved ones at a time of increased stress and anxiety, reduces productivity. But business have survived the crisis, and in more peaceful times, they will reap the benefits of male and female employees working from home without the current drawbacks.

It is clear from the current crisis that men and women are equally capable of accomplishing work and taking care of their children any assumptions that men should be more available than women at this time must finally be put to rest, and a future world should be more gender equal in terms of flexible working and caring responsibilities.

Unfortunately, this pandemic could also damage gender equality efforts. A preliminary paper from the universities of Northwestern, Mannheim, and California-San Diego identifies drops in employment are disproportionately affecting sectors with many women workers and that “massively increased childcare needs” have a “particularly large impact on working mothers.” So, not all business or executives are able to remove their gender bias lenses, but the speed that other business are rolling out flexible work arrangements, and the fact that many fathers are suddenly at home during traditional work hours gives everyone a chance to stand up for equality.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete article in **strategy+business**

**New Directions** offer consultancy and training on remote working and leadership. For more information [Click here](#)

"Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not."

*Oprah Winfrey*

"We don't need a title to lead. We just need to care. People would rather follow a leader with a heart than a leader with a title."

*Craig Groeschel*

"Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start."

*Nido Qubein*

"Remember that though gender bias is a fact of life, it's your job as the boss not to advise women how to navigate around it, but instead to help your entire team recognise it and eliminate it."

*Kim Malone Scott*

"I'm absolutely confident that if for two years every nation on earth was run by women, you would see a significant improvement across the board on just about everything."

*Barack Obama*

## Engage One Team at a Time

Now, as the coronavirus global health emergency continues to unfold, leaders are likely managing multiple changes in parallel: training employees to work remotely, adopting new safety and social distancing measures, installing new equipment and software, revising budgets and forecasts, and figuring out how to keep customers or spin up new products and services. Although it is important to communicate openly with all employees, the place where changes come together is in the intact work team. The message from Elizabeth Doty, in another **strategy+business** article, is don't let these teams become an afterthought. She identifies five strategies that will help intact work teams evolve and adjust in a coherent, integrated way.

**Support one another as people.** Because team members typically interact more with one another than with outsiders, teams are a natural place to deepen relationships, trust, and mutual support — but the process sometimes needs a boost. Encourage team members to check in with one another and discuss strengths and weaknesses, individual needs, and how each person can contribute more effectively.

**Agree on guiding principles and new ways of working.** Teams are more likely to be able to make decisions as a unit so invite them to make a joint decision about how they will revise their ways of working.

## Mental Health Issues

The return to work planning will be keeping those in HR busy – and there is a real danger that mental wellbeing may be overlooked.

In a recent survey, over a third of respondents feel the pandemic has been damaging to their mental wellbeing and was causing over 1 in 10 to suffer from poor mental wellbeing for the first time. More than half of respondents with children under 16, whose reported that their mental wellbeing had been negatively affected, said that balancing working from home and childcare was a key trigger. Sadly, over a third of individuals reported that more support from their employer would help. So what should employers be doing?

The fundamental step is to adopt open communication. Proactively ask

**Revisit shared purpose.** As teams in your organisation gain some stability in the 'new normal', invite them to consider the compelling purpose that binds them and how they can most contribute as a unit over the next months.

**Realign priorities.** Rather than repeatedly revising detailed timelines or abandoning planning altogether, it is better to maintain a short list of critical priorities that continuously evolve in the light of their newly clarified sense of purpose.

**Continuously learn and improve.** Borrowing from agile methodology, use regular check-ins to check what is working and reinforce it, and to deep dive into areas to improve.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from **strategy+business**

**New Directions** offers consultancy and workshops on remote team working. For more information [Click here](#)

employees how they are, actively listen, be attuned to changes in behaviour which may signal mental ill health, communicate transparently about changes around furlough and redundancy, make reasonable adjustments where possible, and signpost help.

Secondly, consider training managers in how to spot changes in behaviour and recognise that a combination of stress triggers such as the illness itself, bereavement, financial and job worries, caring responsibilities, accommodation problems, alcohol and drug use, lack of sleep, or relationship problems, may push colleagues into mental illness.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to download the Benenden report

[Click here](#) to read an article from HRZone

## 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!

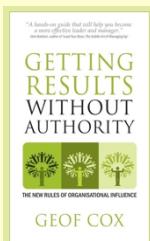
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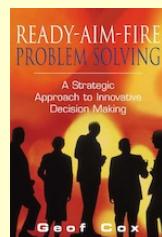
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## Cuttings

**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.

It has been published continuously for more than 20 years by *New Directions*, an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Past issues of Cuttings](#)

[New Directions website](#)

[Getting Results Without Authority](#)

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