

CUTTINGS...

Number 149 July 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. But as we enter the holiday season, and we are seeing a slow lifting of a lot of restrictions as we enter a 'new normal', I will revert to my normal two-monthly pattern from this edition. The next Cuttings will therefore be in September.

This edition has some useful tips from Harvard research on addressing the mental health issues we are experiencing as a result of the crisis; some thoughts for the 'new normal' for HR policy and leadership; and a timely reminder that too much communication may be as bad as too little when it comes to rushing to use tools such as Teams or Slack.

If you would like a downloadable pdf of this edition, it is published on my website, along with copies of all past editions, [click here](#).

Happy holidays - Stay healthy and safe...

Geof Cox

Post-COVID HR Leadership

Whilst we can't predict what the 'new normal' will look like, 'back to work' will not be the same as before and will mean that large parts of the workforce, at least on a rotation basis, will continue to work flexibly in terms of location and timing, probably for the foreseeable future. In this environment, HRZone identify five trends that should be influencing HR leaders' current planning for the post-pandemic workplace where approximately half of the world's population is either in, or emerging from some form of pandemic lockdown.

1. Reinforcing agile execution

Various forms of intermittent lockdowns, and uneven implementation of plans to return to physical workplaces, can be expected. Firms therefore need agile execution, better resilience, and flexibility to maintain productivity. This means investing in, and realigning technology, processes, structures and management policies to create sustainable new ways of working.

2. Empathy, authenticity, and transparency

People's values and motivations are shifting towards protection of their families, colleagues, customers and communities. These could create permanent behavioural change that looks for more empathy, authenticity

In this edition

Post-COVID HR Leadership - some thoughts for the 'new normal' for HR strategy

Beating the Blues - Harvard happiness and well-being researchers apply their thinking to the current situation

Isolation can have benefits - beware of the impact of too much collaboration (either remotely or face to face) which tends to 'level down' outcomes to the more mediocre.

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...

"Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans."
Peter F. Drucker

"The time is always right to do what is right."
Martin Luther King Jr.

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."
Maya Angelou

"What's working here and who cares?"
Marvin Weisbord

and transparency from leaders, which will also need to be executed virtually. Mental wellbeing will become mainstream.

3. Greater degrees of remote and flexible work

This period of enforced home working has proved what we have always known: flexible working does not need to come at the expense of productivity. This can have very positive implications for diversity employment policies, particularly for those with caring responsibilities. At the same time, forced isolation has highlighted the importance of regular face-to-face contact. HR needs to influence corporate policy and spending decisions to reflect the balance required in their workforce.

4. Investment in digital HR infrastructure

HR professionals can also expect to see a shift in how they recruit, hire, and retain employees, with HR operating virtually throughout the talent lifecycle, with new employees joining and working with colleagues without meeting anyone in person, possibly for months. So, investment in the journey to digital HR will need to accelerate.

5. Digital labour markets

Labour legislation is likely to change from the underlying conceptual frameworks that have remained firmly rooted in a traditional, analogue view of work to aligning facilitate 'future work' thinking and the prevalence of remote working and the new policy adaptations and initiatives precipitated by this crisis.

HR has an opportunity to not just react to the crisis, but also to transform and reimagine the physical workplace and the relationships with their people. Taking the opportunity to look at areas such as talent management, onboarding, recruitment, training, and re-skilling.

USEFUL LINKS

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

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

Beating the Blues

Almost half of adults are reporting that worry and stress related to the coronavirus and the resulting economic downturn is hurting their mental health. Here's what five Harvard experts in wellness and stress management recommend we do:

Put on your own oxygen mask first

Focus on the here and now. Rather than worrying about the virus and replaying possible future outcomes in our minds, it's best to accept that no-one can control the COVID-19 fallout and instead focus on today. There is an opportunity to take stock of your own life. Does your work reflect your values? Have you let some important relationships languish? When we focus our energy on our strengths, we feel more authentic—and that increases resilience and happiness, improves relationships, and reduces stress. Rather than fighting to get back to our usual routine or even just waiting for this crisis

"If you hang out with chickens, you're going to cluck and if you hang out with eagles, you're going to fly."

Steve Maraboli

"It is always too soon, until it's too late."

Ellen Goodman

"Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will."

Zig Ziglar

"You think that because you understand 'one' that you must, therefore, understand that one and one make two. But you forget that you must also understand 'and'."

Sufi saying

"You're not going to be a good leader unless you know how to lead yourself."

Arthur C. Brooks

"Companies need to invest in their people. That's how many companies will survive this crisis and become stronger."

Carol Stubbings

"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back."

Maya Angelou

Isolation can have benefits

The recent enforced remote working has seen an exponential growth in collaborative applications such as Teams and Slack as we worry about loss of facetime with our team. Yet the latest psychological research suggests that less communication might actually be more: constant collaboration can reduce 'collective intelligence' (a team's joint problem-solving ability). So, instead of always staying in touch with colleagues with continual chats, we should aim to concentrate group communication to short, intermittent

to end, a better approach is to embrace this time and find new routines and activities that we appreciate more.

Make work more manageable

Structure: Many parents are caring for and home schooling their children as well as trying to do their own jobs remotely—and feeling like they're failing on all fronts. Thoughts about unfinished work tasks encroach on relaxation time, making people feel as though they're always working. The answer is to schedule the day, organising everything you need or want to do, whether it's finishing a presentation or talking a walk, then sticking to the schedule to restore some work-life balance and freeing up mental bandwidth.

Focus on the important: When people get stressed, they often look to finish tasks that seem to be urgent, but are also unimportant. Instead, people would benefit by setting aside blocks of time to focus on the important projects—whether personal or work-related. Say 'no' to colleagues who try to schedule meetings during that time, and turn off alerts so you're not getting pinged with messages while trying to focus.

Bow out of extraneous activities: Don't add too many virtual coffee breaks, lunch gatherings, and happy hours to your already-full day, even if their intention is to relieve stress. Take time off to recharge and then be more engaged on return. Build in mini-mental health breaks to take a walk outdoors or enjoy a coffee.

Turn your energy outward

Put your family first. Be mindful about how we spend our time—spending time together is much more precious than many trivial work tasks or a phone call you don't need to take. Life is inherently uncontrollable, but say 'yes' to the things we can control, like how we spend our time. To relieve the tensions that build up in lock down, 'hug it out!': brain research shows that a 20 second hug boosts levels of oxytocin—the so-called love hormone—to peak levels. However, connecting on social media doesn't offer the same boost of oxytocin, so it's best to limit social browsing time. Continuing with longtime rituals, like making a partner's coffee or reading storybooks to children before bed, helps couples and families bond and provide comfort. And, according to new research, creating new rituals also seem to help families cope.

Share your money and time with others. Material purchases are less satisfying than buying experiences. So, with vacations, pubs and restaurant outings not viable think about spending money in ways that foster shared experiences with loved ones like buying a ping-pong table or movie subscription for the family. Research shows spending money on other people makes us happier than spending it on ourselves.

Hang in there

While life might have seemed simpler and more predictable prior to the coronavirus invading our world, that's probably an illusion. So hang in there: eventually, people will return to work, whether at their old jobs or new positions, children will go back to school and catch up on missed lessons, the economy will stabilise.

bursts – a single daily video call, for example – to boost team problem solving and creativity. And, even if we are in a face to face (whilst properly distanced!) team, we might also benefit from having a bit more 'me' time and a bit less 'team' time.

Boston University research has identified that a lot of connectivity tends to lead to teams quickly converging on a consensus without really exploring the other possibilities, so they 'level down' to a mediocre solution. Whereas less well-connected groups develop lots of individual variations, with some brilliant solutions, but then have greater difficulty in converging on a single solution.

Carnegie Mellon compliment these findings by showing that teams working with short "bursts" of communication, followed by longer periods of silence, performed better than where there was less intense conversations stretched out over a long time. This short but intense communication reduces distraction and also creates a feeling of enthusiasm, which is not present in a slow, steady drip feed of emails.

There is no hard-and-fast rule for the optimal level of communication, so the exact ratio of active collaboration and solitude depends on the task at hand and the media available. Leaders and teams need to judge their own team dynamics - whether a daily Zoom call is necessary - whether Slack or Teams should be limited to certain stages of the project - or whether you are better sending a single round-up email rather than a stream of one-line messages.

What is clear is that we probably don't need to be connected to each other all the time. Whether we are working remotely or in the office, it's good to talk – but sometimes our interactions with others are best taken in short doses.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from **Harvard Business Review**

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 to access further details. Hopefully we will be back in some form of 'normality' by then - if not they may be available as virtual classrooms!

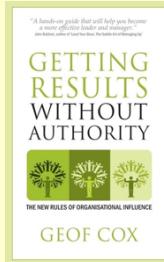
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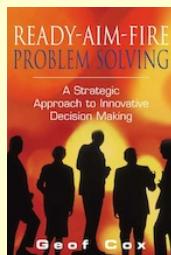


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[Click here](#) to read the full article from **the BBC**

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.

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Contact details

T: +44 (0)117 968 1451

M: +44 (0)7753 626284

Skype: GeofCox.NewDirections

E: geofcox@newdirections.uk.com

P: 26a Downleaze, Bristol BS9 1LZ, UK

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