RemotePROLeader

REMOTE VS. OFFICE WORK

How is remote leadership potentially different from office work for each of these competencies?

Communication

The extent to which a leader conveys relevant information with impact, influences others, and networks across the organization while maintaining rapport.

- It can be difficult to determine the ideal balance of the amount of communication in a virtual environment—too much detail can lead to information overload; and a desire to be efficient can lead to under-communication. Both can be timewasters.
- Effective remote leaders think about what needs to be communicated to who and choose the most appropriate tool (i.e., email versus chat versus a phone call).
- A virtual leader recognizes that remote employees can sometimes feel detached from the organization; in order to mitigate this, they give team members an appropriate amount of notice that a change is coming which may impact them.
- A virtual leader needs to consider the communication needs of all team members and model respectful behavior (for example, by not emailing at late hours, or scheduling calls at lunch hour).

Collaboration

The extent to which a leader clearly communicates through different channels, leverages new technology to share a vision, fosters business interrelationships, inspires others and builds a team spirit of common effort, and works with others towards common goals.

- It is harder to celebrate victories, or "the team" in a remote environment, shared experiences which lay the foundation for close-knit future collaboration.
- To be successful in a virtual environment, a leader needs to be able to effectively use collaboration software and other technology tools.
- An effective virtual leader makes themselves available to employees, clearly communicating their preferred method of interaction.
- Inspiring team members to strive toward a common vision can be more difficult in a remote environment; virtual leaders may need to use multiple methods to share and reinforce their vision.

Empowerment

Trust

- A virtual leader needs to strive for consistency in offering development opportunities to team members, regardless of their virtual or in-office status.
- The leader of a virtual team needs to work at providing employees an appropriate level of career development guidance and support —avoiding the extremes of micro-managing and "out of sight, out of mind."
- An effective leader recognizes individual differences in their employees and understands that some may need more encouragement in pursuing self-development; this level of insight can be more difficult to attain in a virtual environment.
- A virtual leader may need to be more thoughtful and creative in identifying resources and support for a remote employee's development, to ensure they are not disadvantaged by their remote status.

- The remote leader is not able to observe employees at work, so styles such as "management by walking around" are not possible.
- Building and maintaining relationships with (and between) team members can be more difficult in a virtual environment; a leader's willingness to open up and share personally (and encourage others to do so) can help compensate for the lack of personal interaction.
- Effective virtual leaders focus on output and results, not time spent. This may mean adapting goals and expectations based on the work context. It's not about how the work gets done, but rather that the work gets done.
- Virtual leaders need to be clear and direct in their communications, so as to avoid the misunderstandings that can more easily arise in the absence of face-to-face interactions.

"Success in a hybrid work environment requires employers to move beyond viewing remote or hybrid environments as a temporary or short-term strategy and to treat it as an opportunity."
George Penn, VP at Gartner

Empathy

The extent to which a leader takes an active interest in employees' concerns, possesses a high degree of emotional intelligence, listens attentively and understands various points of view, and communicates effectively.

- A virtual leader needs to make a concerted effort to seek out and solicit feedback from their employees regarding projects and work processes, as the virtual environment does not provide as many opportunities for ad hoc conversations.
- A virtual leader needs to be skilled at active listening under less than ideal circumstances; extra effort is required to ensure meaning isn't being lost (for example, on a phone call).
- A virtual leader may need to build into their schedule one-on-one check-ins to ensure they don't lose touch with each employee's personal situation and circumstances, the type of interaction that strengthens relationships.
- A virtual leader may sometimes need to temper their immediate reaction to a problem or issue that arises, understanding that delayed or asynchronous communication can lead to misunderstandings that will eventually work themselves out.

Accountability

The extent to which a leader takes responsibility for assigned tasks, follows through on commitments, completes tasks in a timely manner, accepts responsibility for actions, implements policies, and ensures team members do the same.

- A virtual leader needs to ensure that deadlines are clearly communicated and respected. In a virtual environment, it is easier for deadlines to slip as remote employees don't have the in-person contact that can keep an impending deadline top-of-mind.
- The virtual leader needs to create and enforce team guidelines for sharing information and goal progress that do not rely on face-to-face interaction.
- It is especially important in a virtual environment for a leader to take responsibility for team set-backs or lack of progress, as disbursed team members may perceive mixed or disingenuous messages as finger-pointing or blame-shifting directed at themselves.
- The virtual leader needs to be able to share a vision with team members--with respect to what work needs to be done and how—that is consistent across modes of communication (formal presentations, email, chat, one-on-one calls).

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