

Building a Virtual Culture

The techniques and mindset leaders require to successfully build a strong culture in their organisation when people are working virtually.



People



Be more human

Building a virtual culture takes a more deliberately human-centric approach than you need to in a traditional setting. Leaders need to ask fundamental, almost basic, questions that have far-reaching impacts. How can people become friends (including outside their team) in this virtual organisation? To do this, leaders need to expand out the areas where socialisation occurs – and become involved themselves.



Make it personal

When a person is working remotely, they need more deliberate attention calibrated to their needs. Rather than simply rolling out blanket wellness programmes and online activities, have someone (outside of their line manager) contact individuals to see how they are doing and what they need. Without this deliberate attention, problems will go unnoticed and grow.



Coaching and mentoring

Internal coaching and mentoring programmes are an excellent way of connecting people, particularly when senior leaders become involved and can demonstrate how they live the values of the organisation. Use the virtual environment to your advantage by expanding the potential network an individual can connect with – digital mentors can be based anywhere.



Process



Revisit your values

How does a virtual environment affect your values? How can you bring them to life in a virtual environment? Don't answer in the abstract; find stories, from all levels of the organisation, of how living the values of the organisation was affected by the virtual environment. These stories make it real for others and allow them to behave accordingly.



Write it down

Designing a virtual culture is a deliberative, and iterative, process. Consult with other senior leaders and reimagine what your organisation will look like in a year's time and beyond. What elements of these will be virtual, what will you lose, and what will grow? Write down your conclusions in simple, concise language; this will give a base point in which to work from.



People liaison officer

As we move towards more hybrid ways of working, we will need to shift our thinking when it comes to human resources, facilities and IT. The overlap between the three in a virtual context will create new challenges (and opportunities) that are easily missed if there is no co-ordinating force.



In a virtual, or semi-virtual, environment leaders can use the pillars of **People, Process and Place** to examine, build and sustain their organisation's culture.



Place



Make the office magical

One change being accelerated by COVID-19 is that we will see the number of people in the office on any one day reduce. This leaves the possibility of both imagining what your office space looks like, but also how it is used and what people do when they are there. You could add more greenery for a nicer working environment, have no computer days to stimulate collaboration, create brainstorming spaces for innovation etc.



Make the home magical

Many temporary workspaces will have been set-up in the early months of 2020, but many of these arrangements will be unsustainable. Organisations are already allocating budget to employees to create a better working environment at home, and getting this right is crucial. Are there ways you can create a shared identity through peoples workspaces without impinging on their individuality?



Trust and transparency

Moving to a fully virtual or hybrid working environment will be full of difficulties, from technology issues to individuals having personal problems working from home. Leaders need to build trust and lead with authenticity and honesty through this period. Creating a culture of connectively requires leaders to build trust throughout the organisation through authenticity and honesty. When this mindset is taken, those difficulties soon become opportunities.

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Sources:

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