Leading Remotely Worksheet

# Direction – Clarity and Focus

**How clear are you on the destination you want to take your people to and why it is important?**

What will be happening? Who/what/where/how….? How will you know you have got there?

Why is it important?

If you are not clear, what do you need to gain clarity on the direction to provide as a leader? Also see the later section on systems and solutions focus thinking.

**Potential resources/tools:**

Goal setting tools - SMARTER, well-formed outcomes, vision board.

Facing the brutal facts: – listening tools: Active listening. De Bono 6 Hats: listening and decision making with 6 different perspectives.

## Communicating your direction: consistent messages during uncertainty

Plan to give consistent messages while dynamically responding to changing circumstances – using the ocean sailing analogy instead of a road map. Transparency on the core basis of decision making.

### Staying True to our Core

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| **Core principles /**  **Core Values** | **How these help us get through the situation?** |
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### Recognising what we do still have

This inspires confidence WE CAN DO THIS and makes people feel valued.

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| **Our people** |  |
| **Strengths** |  |
| **Expertise** |  |
| **Knowledge** |  |
| **Other…** |  |
| **Other…** |  |
| **Other**  **resources** |  |

## What is our core basis for decision making?

What information do we need? Where can we get it? How can we get it?

(Recognising this is incomplete, but adds to our core strengths, expertise and knowledge)

How do we use that information?

What is the context and how does that shape what is a good decision for us?

What do other people need to know in order to understand how we are making decisions? What do they need explained to see the consistency in our decision making?

What information do we already have?

How do we recognise it is incomplete?

What other sources of information do we need to follow up or find?

How do we assess that information?

What is our assessment?

## Looking over the horizon

What possibilities can we anticipate happening? Positive or negative. Desired or otherwise. A bit like a risk assessment. How likely is it? 5 = very likely, 1 = unlikely. What level of impact will it have if it does happen? 5 = high impact. `1 = low impact. Your priority goes to highest score- a very likely high impact possibility is one you need to prepare for with top priority. + / - Positive = something you would like to happen / make happen. Negative = an outcome you need to take action to avoid / prevent happening.

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| **Anticipated possibility** | **How**  **Likely?** | **Impact** | **Priority** | **+ / -** | **Actions** |
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How context dependent (or not) are your priorities and actions?

What are the signals you need to look for about the context / situation changing that influence your decision making?

## Experimental approach

Learning from the outcomes of your actions.

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| **Actions** | **Assumptions?** | **impact** | **Priority** | **+ / -** | **Actions** |
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# Systems and solutions focus approach

**What system are you looking at?**

What could be relevant parts of the system that can affect your organisation or the challenges you are facing?

What other levels might affect you, which are less obvious?

## Recognising wicked problems and paradoxes

A wicked problem is a complex issue dependent on many factors that is difficult or impossible to solve or fix because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise and it is hard to grasp what exactly the problem is, or how to tackle it. "Wicked" denotes resistance to resolution, not evil.

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| **Challenge** | **Contributing factors & requirements** |
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Wicket problems are often paradoxes with no single solution and more than one viable and necessary outcome that you need to consider e.g. short term and long term. You can’t focus on just one or the other as you won’t survive if you focus at one end rather than the other. Start getting used to thinking AND not or.

How are your challenges paradoxes? What viable and necessary outcomes do you need to consider? E.g. 1) Short term and 2) Long term. E.g. 1) Managing and 2) Leading.

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| **Challenge** | **Outcome 1** | **Outcome 2** |
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## Turning challenge & problem focus to solutions focus

What are your challenges? For each challenge, reframe this to what is the solution or outcome you are looking to achieve? (I.e. the destination you want to get to.) Identify to what extent you are focusing on concerns that are not within your control or things that you can do/control.

(e.g.: challenge – lack of funding. Desired outcome – government raises funding levels per student. This is NOT within your control to decide. What IS within your control? What actions can you influence? What savings can you make elsewhere if available spending is the balance of income and costs?

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| **Challenge** | **Reframe to desired outcome** | **What is in my control?** | **Potential opportunity** |
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### Where are we now?

**1) The environment** – what is happening around us that we can’t affect but which does/will affect us. **What affects us that we can’t control?**

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| **My perspective** | **Other perspectives – Who + where are they in the system?** |
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2) Where are we right now? How do we deal with the hand we’ve been dealt?

What do we have that is working?

What resources do we still have?

Who do we need to consult to get granular details? People at all levels of your organisation.

## What does our language reveal about how we are thinking about the current situation?

Are we focusing on concerns that we can’t directly control, change or influence, or are we focusing on concerns that we can actively do something about, and thereby change the context? If language is ‘they, them, we can’t’ then look to reframe for actions you can take that might more indirectly influence concerns over which others have control.

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| **Concern** | **Language: mostly ‘us, we, can’ or ‘they, them, can’t’** | **Actions we can take - within our control** | **Desired outcome** |
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**3. Where do you want to be? What is your vision? How will you know it when you have it?** A crisis can be an opportunity to strategically reimagine your future.

If someone waved a magic wand overnight, and you woke up to your ideal future, how would you know it had happened? H ow would you recognise it? What would be happening? Who is doing what?

Make use of what you already have: What examples are there of your solution already happening? What examples do you have of when this already happens or when you are already doing that, even if by accident?

Keep doing the things you already do that take us in that direction. How can you do more of that? For example, more often or apply that approach to other situations.

Identify to STOP doing the things that are not getting you towards the desired future. What do you need to stop doing or change?

What do you need to START doing?

**Focus on Possibilities** – proactively use language that identifies and draws on possibilities. What are the possibilities in your challenges, concerns and the actions you have identified so far?

What are the important questions to ask of yourselves, colleagues and stakeholders at all levels to uncover possibilities and shape your desired/ideal future?

# Communicating – keeping people on board

**How and what are you communicating to keep people informed while you are assessing the situation and before you have made decisions?** This is vital during complex and uncertain situations so that people don’t feel the decision has come at the last minute with no time to prepare for it.

How do you manage your own sense of feeling not ready to communicate when you don’t have the answers and manage expectations for fixed plans?

How do you help people expect not all the answers but a contingent plan responding to situation? (Like sailing across an ocean, I can’t tell you the exact plan of exactly when we will tack in terms of a specific time or location each time as it depends on each moment, assessing the situation and deciding in the moment what to do. I can say what we are monitoring to assess when is the right time to turn – how far we’re moving from our desired direction, the wind direction/strength & sea conditions. If we sail too close to the wind, we lose power and the boat is at the mercy of wind and waves, which may not be safe. If we sail a bit further from the wind, we get more speed and control, but maybe at a wrong angle to the waves.)

**What message you need to communicate to inspire trust, confidence and hope?**

What and how do you need to communicate so that people feel they can get behind what you are doing, believe they will get there, and totally engage with it?

**Making your message memorable – engaging feelings and images in mind**

Discuss in pairs - Think of some case studies, examples, stories and metaphors that you can illustrate your communication with colleagues so they will more readily relate to and understand your message and/or see the value of what you are suggesting.

They can be short and brief. ☺

**Communication strategy/structure when working remotely**

What are you doing, or is your team doing, to help structure communication, and create clarity on what to communicate when, and keep everyone in the loop?

# Acknowledge

**1) Face the facts**

What facts do you need to / want to acknowledge for your situation and the team you are leading?

Try to notice any positives in the situation as well as the problems, changes, negatives which often are more noticeable/come to mind first.

What is the balance in your list between problems, barriers, issues, negatives and the positives?

**2) Listen**

How are you listening to your team, providing the space to acknowledge the emotions, concerns and thoughts during the crisis? How are you sharing your own emotions, concerns and thoughts to initiate a safe space for others to feel comfortable to openly acknowledge theirs?

## Listen with purpose

Try out listening for a specific purpose when you have a conversation – e.g. with someone in your team, colleagues, external stakeholders or also out with work situations. Try choosing one of these purposes for listening and notice what you notice – it can be helpful to record your insights. If you are working on this module with colleagues, work together to listen with purpose and discuss your insights together.

* Listening purely to listen, without fixing, judging, or interrupting
* Listening for emotions / feelings
* Listening to understand the other person's interests, motivations, commitments, aspirations, and point of view
* Listening for where the other person is stuck
* Listening for opportunities to move things forward towards results
* Listening for detail, to gather complete and accurate information
* Listening for things that you appreciate about them

# Positive culture

* How you can build your own positivity AND that for your team?
* What conversations can you have while you are working remotely and how else to support people to be more positive while separated?

**A few tips and tools for raising positivity:**

* Daily journal/record of 3 things that went well and the part you played to make it happen / the part colleagues played to make it happen. Helps you actively pay attention and look for positives that you otherwise take for granted. Helps you then give positive feedback to colleagues on what you notice and appreciate.
* Start the day with appreciation and gratitude – actively list (mentally or write down) three things you are looking forward to that day and that you appreciate and/or feel grateful for. This helps set you up in a very resourceful state to see opportunities, be positive and respond with resilience when anything is less than ideal.
* Show people appreciation in the way it is meaningful to them – see the 5 Languages of appreciation book and notes in the Managing Remotely module.
* Developing a growth mindset =- see the books/work/TED talk by Carol Dweck. Includes praising effort put in that delivers your achievements rather than specific traits which can’t be changed, regarding mistakes as learning opportunities not personal failures and more.
* Be aware of the impossibility of perfection – see work/books/TED talks by Brené Brown. The book “The Gifts of Imperfection” has useful practical tips too.
* For managers: avoid falling into the trap of micromanaging and other activities that drain people’s motivation. See the managing remotely module for tips on using a coaching approach in how you manage.