

# A Toolkit to Successfully Lead in Lockdown

*Even if you pick up just one idea to lead yourself and others,  
this article is worth a read!*

*Feel free to pass on to friends and colleagues*

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August 2021

## WHAT COVID HAS TAUGHT US ABOUT WORKING FROM HOME:

### Top 3 Lessons for Employers:

#### 1. Accountability Falls Away

Because the natural interaction and team rhythm is absent due to working remotely, the casual and informal prompts and follow ups between team members does not occur, therefore the dynamics that naturally takes place to solve problems, prompt follow ups, or reminders to complete a task falls away. The casualty is accountability.

#### 2. Discipline & Transparency

In lockdown, both the formal and informal team dynamics will need to be replaced with a new set of team dynamics to ensure team discipline and performance transparency is maintained. It is insufficient to just pick up what works when everyone is onsite. A new set of disciplines & rituals will need to be adopted.

#### 3. Communicate to Engage

A shift in communication is required from a **“communication to inform”** to a **“communication to engage.”** This is an important subtle shift to ensure there is a meaningful connection with all team members on both a work and personal basis. Managing COVID fatigue is a very real issue for leaders to understand.

### Top 3 Lessons for Employees:

#### 1. Their World Has Shrunk

Staying inside in the one location shrinks everyone’s World – no matter how good digital and social media connections are. Humans are social beings and pick up most of their learning and information through interactions and conversations with others. Typically, anyone in isolation or lockdown will focus on personal thoughts and needs, as distinct from thoughts about the teams they serve.

#### 2. Personal Burnout

People tend to work longer in lock down and find it difficult to “switch off” and navigate a natural cadence to when they are at work and when they are not. In lockdown people find it difficult to separate time between work and personal time. This leads to fatigue and burnout. Balancing work and personal time is key.

#### 3. Mental Health & The Attitude of Indifference

Mental health issues rise sharply in extended and ongoing lockdowns. This can often accentuate an **“attitude of indifference”** with their personal circumstances, such as where they are living, the type of work they are doing, and whom they are working for. As lockdown times lengthen, mental health issues are tested and indeed deteriorate, feeding any negative attitudes towards their status quo.

## **RULE 1: COVID AFFECTS EVERYONE:**

**COVID Fatigue is real.** As the World experiences its 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> COVID Waves, the impact on each person will depend on what has transpired in the previous waves. A leader must understand and appreciate:

- **COVID Impacts people differently** – based on both home and personal circumstances
- **The COVID “tail” is longer than first anticipated** – it will linger in all our lives for at least the foreseeable future; hence resilience and optimism are important skills to endorse.
- **The Effects of COVID will be around for a long time (Economic – Personal)** – A snap return to business as usual is not possible. There will be a new normal
- **The World is at an inflection point.** The World has been shaped by inflection points in the past – no one knows what this may entail – so it is critical for organisations to be **Agile – Aligned – Adaptable** to the new and emerging trends, opportunities, and inevitable threats.
- **The next few years will be uncertain and unpredictable.** The World is now experiencing a 4<sup>th</sup> COVID Wave – Expect more will come – Building the Resilience and Optimism in a team in an important Leader responsibility

## **10 WORKING FROM HOME COVID LESSONS: Advantages & Drawbacks**

**COVID has accelerated our ability and need to Work from home (flexibility) & fast-tracked digital connection – What follows are ten lessons we have learnt:**

**LESSON 1:** The novelty is embraced at the start – *but falls away rapidly*

**LESSON 2:** It can offer better work/life balance opportunities – *but needs discipline*

**LESSON 3:** People can be more productive – *but hard to “switch off” causing burnout & fatigue*

**LESSON 4:** Remote workers need to feel included – *meaningfully*

**LESSON 5:** Accountability, discipline, performance effectiveness *falls away over time*

**LESSON 6:** People’s view of the World has shrunk – *to “their world”*

**LESSON 7:** The quality of the home environment - *effects a person’s work & mental health*

**LESSON 8:** Video call fatigue and etiquette - *needs to be managed*

**LESSON 9:** Team COLLABORATION TIME V FOCUS TIME - *need to be clear, understood, and enforced*

**LESSON 10:** Team rituals, disciplines, and communications cadence - *Requires Leadership*

## IN LOCKDOWN – COMMUNICATION MUST BE DISCIPLINED & EFFECTIVE:

To start with, “Regular Communication” needs a re-definition and a new set of disciplines.

As a leader

- ✓ **Resist email bombardments** and all staff communication “blitzkriegs” – this is a lazy form of communication. Instead, focus on what is important and the key messages that matter. Importantly start any communication with key themes that need to be constantly repeated. These may include:
  - Personal well-being is not just important – but everything
  - It is OK not to be OK – key is to talk and communicate how people are feeling
  - Key reminders about personal wellbeing – mental health – business balance
  - The three things important for the business
- ✓ **Communication Rituals must be more often:**

These must be more than just sharing home cooking recipes – but keeping the disciplines around team dynamics, business priorities, socialisation of the team, and active listening posts

  - If you have a weekly team meet – have a daily meeting
  - Change MBWA (Managing by Walking Around) to MBZA (Zoom) or MBCA (Call)
  - Insist on camera on! It is important to see people – that way you can check nonverbal cues, facial expressions and body language
  - Monthly 1:1’s with team members should be weekly 1:1’s. These can be short sharp sessions but provides the avenue and thoroughfare for a Leader to check in and LISTEN to the team members narrative and tone of voice.
- ✓ **Informal regular “how are you going check ins” are remembered and build trust –** *People will remember the little things their leader does and DOES NOT DO*
- ✓ **Look to SEE – Listen to HEAR** – make the time to do this. Ask a staff member to virtually walk you through where they are working and **assess their Liveability and Workability** environment – not to change it but to understand it, so as to inform any key coaching and support messages.

***What a leader does & role models during lockdown will be remembered – it plays a key role in how people return to work***

## SIX TIPS FOR LEADERS TO CONSIDER DURING COVID LOCKDOWNS:

1. **It is an opportunity to role model and drive the desired culture** (key behaviours and mindsets)
2. **Accountability is a casualty** of working from home (People often default “to do lists” – not outcomes). Keep a focus on desired outcomes and key priorities and make clear accountabilities and gain collective buy in for timelines.
3. **Team Disciplines, Rituals and Communications** are everything to foster team engagement. Think about the following:
  - ✓ **Start of week and end of week team meetings.** The start of the week to switch on the team as to key priorities for the week. The end of the week to reflect on achievements and learnings, and set the scene for the following week
  - ✓ **Start and end of day 15-minute team town hall meetings.** Purely to check in on everyone – share and discuss any key news themes / observations and make sure everyone knows what they have on for the day
  - ✓ **Weekly or Fortnightly Team socialisation** – Keep informal – 30 minutes is a good time – just for people to check in, talk, share what is happening in their world, discuss topical matters and build team familiarity. Avoid work topics if possible. Make the session about the team.
  - ✓ **Regular formal and informal 1:1** with each team member. This should be both planned and impromptu where the wellbeing of the staff member and their family is the central theme
4. **Break each day into FOCUS TIME V COLLABORATION TIME** as a team. Discuss and agree when time should be allocated to when everyone is getting on with their work (**Focus Time**), and when the team should formally come together and meet (**Collaboration Time**). The easy option and habit to form is to fill a day with meetings. Finding a balance is key. **To prevent Silos Forming** – work out times to meet with colleagues from other areas of the organisation, and TALK
5. **Beware of and stamp out “can you do this syndrome”** - Those who are working remotely may ask their colleagues working onsite to do things – just because it might be more convenient. Important to stamp out any bad habits forming early that would otherwise not be acceptable if everyone was working onsite. Also work out agreed communication etiquette – when to email – when to call colleagues
6. **Recalibrate and agree what success looks like** – This is important. The team needs to know, agree and set what success will look like, especially in the near term. **Set some clear goals, and implement, monitor, and track the measures that matter.**

## **YOUR FIRST DUTY IS TO YOURSELF - LEAD YOUR OWN SELFCARE:**

### ***IF YOU ARE NOT OK – YOU CANNOT HELP ANYONE ELSE***

- **Balance Is Key: Balance Your Front Yard & Back Yard** (Work & Personal Needs)
- **Have a designated workspace** with good lighting.
- **Use headsets when in meetings** – helps concentration & distractions
- **Have a start & end of day discipline & ritual** + times. Eat meals away from desk
- **Manage your diary between FOCUS V COLLABORATION Times**
- **Break Day into a structure:**
  - First 20 minutes to prepare, think and plan the day
  - Morning Session
  - Lunch Break (*away from desk*)
  - Afternoon Session
  - Final 20 Minutes to wrap the day
- **Adopt the 3x3 Model:** Top three priorities for the week – Top 3 Actions for the day
- **Attend the meetings that matter** – rather than be in everything!
- **Time Out is Time Out** – Switch off – Free of all electronic devices
- **Dress for Work** – Helps switch on the mind. Avoid working in “trackies and uggies”
- **Exercise daily** – walk – get out of home
- **Call x 2 colleagues a day** – just to check in on them and talk
- **It is OK not to be OK** – TALK & REACH out to people. This is good personal leadership to role model
- **Focus on the things that Matter** – Family – Personal Health & Mental Well Being – Friends and Colleagues – Work
- **Make Dinner Time – Family Connection Time** – Talk – Connect with the Family both physically and virtually
- **Adopt a one small thing policy** – each day do something for yourself (Eg: morning cuppa at local café)
- **Express gratitude** – say thank you – smile – be positive & upbeat
- **Work by a window** – helps keep things in perspective
- **Adopt a 5 past / 5 to the hour** start and end time for meetings – avoid back to backs

## THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR ALL TEAMS:

### ALIGNMENT – AGILITY – ADAPTABILITY

**COVID is ever changing** – keep adapting to the circumstances by talking and responding as a team – make a time to talk about what is happening with COVID and what this means for BUSINESS – have an inclusive – whole of team approach – so everyone is hearing it at the same time – not via the grapevine!

- A Regular Communique to all staff that answers FAQ's
- Be transparent on what the organisation is doing, prioritising, focused on, and needing everyone to do.
- Emphasise the need for health, safety, and wellbeing as a priority
- Share successes and key wins (focusing on what matters in the short term – helps provide context on what a success looks like)
- Role model & recognise the desired behaviours and mindsets

**Redefine what success looks like** in the short to near term as an organisation

**Macro & Micro Team Rituals are key:**

- Role model and enforce whole of organisation communication disciplines, desired behaviours, and mindsets, and recognise key achievements
- Enforce local team disciplines, rituals, and protocols
- Communication etiquette and expectations starts with the leadership team

**Set decision making boundaries**, practices, and expectations – to ensure there is no ambiguity on what is expected and what staff are responsible for

**Openly discuss new and emerging trends, issues, opportunities, and threats.** This helps shape thinking and mindsets as the World evolves out of COVID

***Encourage all staff to see issues and act on them – Don't just report problems – solve them!***

## COMMUNICATE BY DESIGN:

**Zoom Communication Etiquette must be enforced**

- ✓ **Start meetings 5 past the hour and conclude 5 to the hour** (gives people time to prepare – have a comfort break)
- ✓ **Clear purpose / outcomes / agenda** for any meeting (start & wrap time)
- ✓ **Camera On** – Use of Mute Button Feature – Chair the Meeting
- ✓ **Ensure Everyone** gets to talk

- ✓ **Adopt the same zoom / teams protocols for 1:1** catch ups
- ✓ **Insist on and enforce Dress Standards / Language Standards**

***NB: Zoom Fatigue + Email Lethargy are Real – Maybe CALL Instead***

**Socialisation of the Local Team Important** (Twilight drinks / Friday Morning Cuppa) to look – listen – learn – share how people are faring and what they are observing

**Whilst** Managing by talking around (Call – Zoom – Teams – Facetime – What’s App)

- ✓ Ask Open Ended Questions
- ✓ Enquire about their Back Yard and Front Yard equally (how are they)
- ✓ Share some of your observations of the World – to compare and explore how they are viewing the world
- ✓ Touch everyone regularly (some planned – others impromptu)
- ✓ Stay close to those who you sense are struggling. If a leader has an inkling someone is struggling – assume that they are – do not ignore it!

## **10 LOCKDOWN THOUGHTS FOR EVERY TEAM LEADER:**

1. **Align communication schedules as a Team** – so there is a collective weekly pulse / team cadence for everyone to adopt
2. **Repeat – Reaffirm – Recognise** important messages – mindsets & behaviours
3. **Check in with team members** – ask them to visually walk you through their house so you can visualise how they are working (LOOK TO SEE) - ***Understand their personal circumstances***
4. **Ensure home workstations are safe**, and ergonomically sound (as far as practical)
5. **Focus on here and now** – and not get ahead of any future return to work
6. **Contact and Check x 2-3 colleagues a day** (Staff – Peer – Customer – Supplier... remember the little guys – sandwich shops – coffee carts etc)... ***It is the little things you do which they remember / make an impact***
7. **Jump on any tendency to “report problems” rather than act on them**
8. **Have some fun with the team** (Thursday Twilight Drinks, Competitions, Meal Sharing, Recipe’s, Quiz’s, and Check In’s, COVIDIOT of the Week
9. **Don’t Preach or Lecture** – Talk Less – Listen More – Ask Questions
10. **Keep meetings to 25 or 50 minutes** (shorter – sharper – disciplined) – More meets – less time – More regular

## PERSONAL LEADERSHIP TIPS TO ADOPT IN LOCKDOWN:

- **Role Model the desired behaviours** – disciplines – protocols is key (both Work & Personal)
- Enforce & Role Model **FOCUS Time V COLLABORATION Time** (Resist Meeting Overkill)
- Enforce, Observe and Respect Team **Switch ON & OFF Times** (no late-night emails)
- **Ensure people feel included** – not excluded
- **Fill Communication Gaps:** Understand - In the absence of communication – people will fill form their own interpretations and conclusions in for themselves (rightly or wrongly)
- **Show your team you trust them** (encourage them to act / solve issues)
- **Be Familiar with & Empathetic To** the individual needs of each team member
- Hone your **relationship building skills**
- **Be INTENTIONAL & CONTROLLED** about the things you do & don't say and do
- **Stress that working longer hours does not translate** to being more productive or efficient – this is an easy trap to fall into.
- **Do not stop Learning & Development.** Indeed, use the time to explore what you team need to know, do, be, experience, and learn in order to be a more effective team members (start by learning each other's roles)
- **Don't be a seagull** – fly in – squark a bit – flap around – leave a mess – and fly off

## FAMILY COVID FATIGUE BUSTER:

A fun way to engage the family and kick start some mealtime conversations free of devices and distractions

Click on link below and download the Chatter Box Dinner Time Sheets for **FREE**

[CLICK HERE](#)

Use the code: **LockdownLove**  
at the checkout

