

ICP LEADER'S SOLUTIONS

Practical psychological and leadership support for organisations

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Leading through COVID-19



Leading the Team Remotely

Matt Dale BA MA Psych MAPS, Principal ICP Human Solutions

Many teams are adapting to different working arrangements, such as working from home or from remote locations and facing resourcing and logistical challenges that have not been seen before. With this comes a sense of confusion and some concern about how to best lead your teams through this period of instability and unrest? At ICP we have pulled together some reminders, tips and techniques especially designed for leaders, that may provide you with guidance and direction during this time. Many of you are already leading a team from remote locations and/or preparing for this possibility, therefore we hope this practical article will help you with this obstacle and benefit your team.

TO SET UP

- Clarify and set guidelines – your people will respond well to having more clarity through a time of change, rather than less. It is better to offer extra guidance and then step back as you observe what is required, than to try to go the other way. For example, have more regular meetings when you are setting up and then read the tempo of the team and adjust as needed.
- Purpose – your team will appreciate being reminded of the team's purpose and 'bigger picture' goals, as it helps them connect with why we do what we do.
- Make sure your people have the right technology, it works and they know how to use it.

COMMUNICATION FOR EMPOWERMENT

- Over-communicate – if you think you have communicated enough, then go again ...
- Have a communication strategy – plan out how often you are going to get sub-teams on a teleconference & then how often you will get broader teams together – go for more regular in the first instance and then review how that is working.
- Run meetings, teleconferences and video conferences really well; these become some of your most important leadership tools; see the other guidelines for tips and techniques on running these meetings well.
- Allow time for social banter in the team and accept it as part of how the meetings work.
- Make the communication as personal as it can be; call before an email, can you do a video conference over a teleconference, can some of your teams join up and work together when they are working remotely.
- One-on-one conversations are still important – check in on all of your team-members regularly.
- Feedback from our recent remote working teams' survey highlighted this as an important leadership tool.

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RELATIONSHIPS & TEAM CULTURE

- Set up and promote a buddying programme to make sure the connections within and across the team as strong as they can be. Some people find working remotely a challenge and somewhat isolating.
- Stay focused on goals and not activity. Your team-members are goal oriented and will be motivated by being engaged on that level, not a time sheet.
- When your team is working remotely, keep as much of the regular and business as usual items going, such as training and briefing sessions.
- Help your team-members set boundaries and use as much structure as they can, it leads to better outcomes as well as better well-being. An example of this is using a diary plan and scheduling a timetable as close to regular as possible.
- With respect to boundaries, make sure that they are appropriately in-place, so that working from home does not overtake family and personal time, and in the other way, productivity is not limited by the working environment.
- Check that the team members have a good working environment and that the tech works for them and that they are briefed and trained in how to use the tools to work remotely.

CHECK YOURSELF

Keep in mind that leading through a time of change, whilst rewarding, is emotionally draining and can feel that extra bit isolating on occasions. You need to make sure that your well-being and energy levels are maintained so you can lead your team. Some of the following points are from Martin Seligman's PERMA model, where he shares his research into building resilience:

- Get your own buddy, someone who you can share ideas with and use as a sounding board and mutually support.
- Get your own routine and structure to your working routine.
- Break the day & week up so that you can recharge and get some positive emotions in there as well.
- Make sure are doing some things that are uplifting and engaging, something fun and a bit of an outlet; otherwise you are giving energy to everyone else and not replenishing yours.
- Invest in your relationships; work and your most important personal relationships have some of the highest contribution to our resilience and well-being.
- Connect with your meaning and keep reminded of why you do what you do; this connection with meaning helps our resilience in the most challenging situations, and it also makes it easier for your team to attach to your message and direction.
- Track and be mindful of your achievements; leading a remote team can be devoid of feedback and markers of what you achieve, so sometimes you need to 'be your own cheerleader' and note the things you have achieved through your leadership.

FURTHER SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

Incorporate Psychology (ICP) is continuing to work with organisations throughout this unprecedented period. We are available for phone and Skype consultations with leaders, executive teams and broader organisations.

Should you, or your leaders, require support, guidance, further tips and training, please contact us at info@incorporatepsychology.com.au or contact Matt Dale directly on 0411 113 617 or 07 3852 2441.