

# Effectively leading through COVID-19: Leader Toolkit

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This toolkit is designed to help leaders develop the mindset and behaviours to navigate uncertainty, and manage themselves and their teams to deliver business outcomes. It contains a series of top tips and resources on how to effectively lead through COVID-19.

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**Updated  
June 2020**  
with return to  
the workplace  
guidance

# Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the role of a leader has never been more important. This toolkit provides top tips and resources to help leaders develop the mindset and behaviours to navigate uncertainty, choose the most effective response to lead a team and to look ahead to the future, so we can all come out stronger on the other side.



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## How to use this toolkit

Every leader experiences unprecedented challenges to personal and working conditions in their own way. This toolkit contains some resources that will help you connect with what you might need.

Think about what might help you most from the topics included and revisit the toolkit for more guidance and inspiration as and when you need it.

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## How to navigate around the toolkit



Click the green link icon to jump to the relevant page or resource

Connect

Click on the underlined text to jump to the appropriate page



Click on the home icon to return to the summary page

# Critical stages

## Pre-pandemic workplace

## Post-pandemic workplace

1

### ➤ Prepare get the basics right first

In order to lead your team effectively it's important to take the time to set yourself up to be as effective as possible. That includes your mindset, environment and wellbeing. Help your team to do the same. Time spent getting things right now will ensure that the new habits being formed are as positive as possible.

2

### ➤ Transition to remote working

This transition raises many challenges, from navigating new technologies to establishing boundaries and managing distractions. Resilience and both physical and mental wellbeing are paramount, as is maintaining a sense of connection across the team.

3

### ➤ Embed and sustain remote working

With the right support, people and productivity can thrive in a remote working environment. Once you have adjusted your leadership approach and established a sense of trust across your team, you can continue to coach, engage your team and collaborate effectively.

4

### ➤ Manage a full or partial return to the workplace

Returning to work on a rotational, gradual or full time basis requires compassionate leadership and change management skills to understand what this means for individuals in your team. Keeping our colleagues safe remains at the heart of decision making. Continued virtual collaboration will help to promote a feeling of inclusion.

5

### ➤ Embrace new working conditions

The future of the world of work is uncertain, and we should expect to experience ongoing changes before we can define 'the new normal'. We will all need to adapt to new safety measures and to using a blend of virtual and in-person communication.

# Key topics

As and when you need to access key topics, you can use the quick links below for top tips and key resources

- Prepare: Get the basics right first
- Transitioning to remote work
- Embedding and sustaining remote working
- Managing a full or partial return to the workplace
- Embracing new working conditions

## Mindset

- Resilience & positivity
- Looking after your physical wellbeing
- Looking after your mental wellbeing
- Looking after your financial wellbeing
- Returning to the workplace
- Building empathy
- Agile mindset: Test and learn
- The future of work
- Network leadership

## Knowledge

- Working from home
- Managing temporary working arrangements
- Technology
- Communicating through COVID-19
- Prepare for the unexpected

## Skills

- Leading through change
- Inclusion
- Compassionate leadership
- Building trust and productive relationships
- Virtual collaboration
- Virtual coaching
- Holding challenging conversations
- Engaging your team
- Virtual interviewing
- Virtual onboarding
- Developing others

## Pause and reflect

- Pause and reflect
- Ongoing development

# Prepare: Get the basics right first



## Top Tips

1. Make a commitment to maintaining your physical and mental wellbeing
2. Reflect on times when you have been resilient, what helped you to bounce back?
3. When working from home create a space to work that is as free from distractions as possible
4. Get up to date with the technologies that support remote working
5. Set boundaries for yourself (Eg. establish a daily routine with consistent start times to your day, dress for work, take structured breaks away from the computer)
6. Set boundaries with others (Eg. resist distractions from colleagues and at home)
7. Make use of your 'usual commuting time' for development (Eg. read, exercise or listen to a podcast)
8. Set realistic goals each day and make them visible - write them down and tick them off
9. Connect with your team, set up a similar plan to ensure they start off with positive habits

## Key Resources

-  [5 ways to lead through crisis](#)
-  [Rapid response checklist](#)
-  [7 time management mistakes](#)
-  [Coronavirus: How to “be the calm in the chaos”](#)
-  [Tips for working from home](#)

## Further Resources

-  [How to be your best self in times of crisis](#)
-  [Making time to reflect](#)

## Self-evaluation

-  [How productive are you?](#)

# Transitioning to remote work

## Top Tips

- 1 Increase connection through multiple touchpoints. Don't over-rely on email - pick up the phone and have regular meetings
- 2 Go on video during meetings
- 3 Agree with your team how and when you will stay in touch and which technology platforms you will use, including 'watercooler' time to catch up socially
- 4 Be flexible, allow team members to get work done at different times than they normally would when working from home
- 5 Practice compassion and kindness, lead with empathy and show you care
- 6 Create psychological safety for the team
- 7 Discuss your expectations with your team
- 8 Schedule virtual coffee breaks with colleagues
- 9 Share and celebrate personal and team successes
- 10 Empower your team, showing trust and allowing diversity of thought is critical when leading in times of change



## Key Resources

-  [Practical workforce strategies that put your people first](#)
-  [How to run effective virtual meetings](#)
-  [How leaders can provide assurance during COVID-19 podcast](#)
-  [Using digital tools effectively](#)
-  [How to fuel a positive culture for remote workers](#)
-  [Inclusive leadership fluidbook](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Connected, but alone?](#)
-  [How co-workers are staying connected while working from home](#)
-  [How to create psychological safety](#)
-  [Managing virtual teams fluidbook](#)

# Embedding and sustaining remote working



## Top Tips

- 1 Continue to prioritise your own physical and mental wellbeing as well as your teams. Acknowledge people will be at different points on the change curve and may need varying degrees of support
- 2 Reinforce the purpose of your team and review goals and priorities. This is important to continue to engage and motivate your team
- 3 Continue to prepare for the evolving situation by scenario planning and effective prioritisation
- 4 Set the pace - take time to pause and assess to avoid burn-out for you and your team. Build in time for physical and mental wellbeing
- 5 Don't stop delegating or collaborating. It's important to keep a sense of team cohesion while working remotely
- 6 Prioritise development – provide regular feedback and coaching, encourage your team to keep learning
- 7 Leverage the opportunities which often come out of adversity. Work with your team to understand what opportunities can be identified
- 8 Identify what you have learned - developing yourself and others will be useful in future crises

## Key Resources

-  [A blueprint for working remotely: Lessons from China](#)
-  [COVID-19 economic cases: Scenarios for business leaders](#)
-  [Looking after your mental health while working during the coronavirus](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Leadership in a crisis: Responding to the coronavirus outbreak and future challenges](#)
-  [Resources to effectively lead amid COVID-19](#)



# Managing a full or partial return to the workplace



## Top Tips

- 1 Put your people first - focus on workforce protection and demonstrate empathy
- 2 Be a role model and follow the safety guidance. As a leader, it's important you keep up to date with any changes to ensure you keep yourself safe and role model safety behaviours to your team
- 3 Give your team the opportunity to understand what the 'new normal' will look like and how personal and work priorities may have shifted
- 4 Remember, each employee will have different and often challenging situations they need to continue to deal with. Actively listen to your team's concerns without judgement and take a compassionate approach, seeking to understand concerns before jumping to conclusions
- 5 Consider how you could embrace agile working to enable fluid cross-functional team members working together to deliver focussed outcomes
- 6 Agree to regularly review working arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate. Ensure you take a fair and consistent approach across your team
- 7 Consider how you'll keep your team engaged during this change and ensure you're taking an inclusive approach with all those in your team working remotely or in the workplace
- 8 Continue to think beyond the current situation and plan for the future. This could include scenario planning and carrying out premortems on your plans

## Key Resources

-  [Be a flexible leader](#)
-  [Tuning in, turning outward: Cultivating compassionate leadership in a crisis](#)
-  [Carrying out premortems](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Leading with confidence and strength for building our new normal](#)
-  [Psychological safety first: building trust among teams](#)
-  [Gain anonymised team insight using tools like Mentimeter](#)
-  [Scenario planning and strategic forecasting](#)

# Embracing new working conditions



## Top Tips

- 1 Whether you and your team have remained in the workplace or are transitioning from the home to the workplace, it's likely there will be new measures aimed at keeping people safe which everyone will need to get used to. As a leader it is your responsibility to role model embracing these new measures and to ensure your team are also compliant
- 2 Keep up to date with local guidelines and understand what these new measures mean for you and your team
- 3 Ensure your team know how to raise any concerns or to provide feedback. Promote a culture where your team feel confident in sharing any concerns
- 4 A disruption of this scale will create a shift in the preferences and expectations of individuals. Work with your team to agree how you use technology, collaborate and adapt in order to thrive
- 5 Draw on the resilience you have built throughout the situation so far, build a positive vision of the future and review your priorities and goals as they may have evolved
- 6 Reflect on what you have learned through this time and think about how you can share your learnings with your team and network
- 7 Consider the capabilities within your team and identify any gaps which, if addressed, may help you deal with any future disruptions

## Key Resources

-  [How to grow and shape the emerging opportunities from COVID-19](#)
-  [Beyond Coronavirus: The path to the next normal](#)
-  [Strategic decision making fluidbook](#)
-  [Building business agility fluidbook](#)

## Further Resources

-  **[Duke Corporate Education Leadership series](#)**  
*A series of talks exploring challenges and solutions to navigate a world of exponential change and complexity.*
-  [How to lead like the great conductors](#)

## Self-evaluation

-  [Are you a positive or negative thinker?](#)



# Mindset

- Resilience & positivity
- Looking after your physical wellbeing
- Looking after your mental wellbeing
- Looking after your financial wellbeing
- Returning to the workplace
- Building empathy
- Agile mindset: Test and learn
- The future of work
- Network leadership

# Resilience & positivity

## Top Tips

- 1 Look after your [physical wellbeing](#) as this helps manage stress
- 2 Practice thought awareness. Don't let negative thoughts derail your efforts
- 3 Learn from your challenges and setbacks, practice an [agile approach](#)
- 4 Choose your response: we all experience bad days in times of crisis. We have a choice in how we respond
- 5 Maintain a balanced perspective, focus on the positives as well as the challenges
- 6 Set SMART, effective personal goals
- 7 Build your self-confidence: Be confident that you will succeed despite setbacks
- 8 Develop strong relationships with your colleagues. Treating people with compassion and [empathy](#) is very important in times of crisis
- 9 Focus on being flexible. Things change, carefully-made plans may need to be amended or scrapped



## Key Resources

- [Managing conflicting priorities](#)
- [Positive thinking, thought awareness and rational thinking](#)
- [Building resilience fluidbook](#)
- [Reorganising priorities in changing times](#)
- [Empowerment and delegation](#)

## Further Resources

- [20 tips on how to prioritise work and meet deadlines](#)
- [Be a flexible leader](#)
- [21st century resilience](#)
- [8 Ways to manage team overload](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [How resilient are you?](#)

# Looking after your physical wellbeing

## Top Tips

Physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing are linked. Doing a little in each area is key

### Nutrition:

- 1 Cook healthy meals – cooking can also become a hobby or area of interest
- 2 Ramp up your immune system – take vitamins, eat vitamin dense foods, get outside for vitamin D (in line with local guidance)
- 3 Drink water – aim for 8 glasses or 2 litres a day

### Movement:

- 1 Get some exercise - Eg. workouts, gardening, dancing, walking, just move your body!
- 2 Stand up - at least once per hour
- 3 Make sure your work space is appropriate – follow ergonomic experts' advice

### Recovery:

- 1 Sleep - aim to get 7-9 hours of sleep each night
- 2 Take regular breaks - schedule time for lunch and breaks each day
- 3 Take time-off – disconnect completely to recharge



## Key Resources

- [!\[\]\(4c281551b63c5d7414985d9c274e5335\_img.jpg\) Apps to look after your physical wellbeing](#)
- [!\[\]\(562fa6ec86ba528c07f5176102f0bf82\_img.jpg\) Join Virgin Pulse Challenge](#)
- [!\[\]\(fd1e89fd2f6ceade0fd7368617d7a34a\_img.jpg\) How we take care of ourselves](#)

## Further Resources

- [!\[\]\(22ea30a9dcdf54f02cec33e619cd7df6\_img.jpg\) Improving your physical wellbeing at work](#)
- [!\[\]\(4b1da6c86999afdb9ea4feee534e0a18\_img.jpg\) Physical relaxation techniques](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [!\[\]\(82969a2f1732d8b2ada5da26e1e6a13d\_img.jpg\) Check yourself for signs of burnout](#)

# Looking after your mental wellbeing

## Top Tips

### Mindset:

- 1 Find what inspires you – music, reading, gardening, crafting, whatever gives you joy!
- 2 Practice gratitude – recognise one good thing that happened today
- 3 Practice mindfulness/meditation – and limit the amount of news you consume

### Social Contact:

- 1 Keep in touch and connect – with friends, family, colleagues each day
- 2 Ask for help – reach out and ask for support, ignoring stress doesn't make it go away
- 3 Help others - doing good for others makes you feel good too!



## Key Resources

- [!\[\]\(8921b9bbc3de43cb85a13fb42fc1a97f\_img.jpg\) Apps that look after your mental wellbeing](#)
- [!\[\]\(57182bf1233a9d206e5dd14bac4814af\_img.jpg\) The Science of Wellbeing \(free class through Yale University\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(b3116c22816aed19b916026f12ba7151\_img.jpg\) Managing your relationship with stress](#)
- [!\[\]\(10fd6e0f0a036322994a19b415140b7a\_img.jpg\) What is resilience and why is it important?](#)

## Further Resources

- [!\[\]\(6124eb8417e4274bba024eb35c0e9124\_img.jpg\) Mental health fluidbook](#)
- [!\[\]\(0c7e05c0da93df1c4f11b9172caaac4b\_img.jpg\) Ways to stay social while in isolation](#)
- [!\[\]\(be48d9eb2f223206d40d6279039406e6\_img.jpg\) Supporting colleagues to stay mentally healthy](#)

# Looking after your financial wellbeing



## Top Tips

- 1 Worrying about finances can cause stress which will impact your physical and mental wellbeing. Therefore it's important you spend time planning for this area of your life
- 2 Take the time to review your current financial situation – including areas such as your savings, retirement, will and life insurance – and create a plan if you do not have one
- 3 Use a budgeting tool to understand your monthly spending – what is critical and where could you make savings?
- 4 If you are spending less during the COVID-19 pandemic, carefully consider what you should do with the extra money – this may be a chance to save more for the future
- 5 If you need to borrow money, take the time to consider your options
- 6 Pay attention to local financial benefits information to understand what may be available to support you personally



## Key Resources

- [30 steps to financial wellness](#)
- [The economic impact of COVID-19](#)
- [Mercer's guide to money in the time of coronavirus \(UK\)](#)
- [Finance, housing and unemployment worries during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

# Returning to the workplace

## Top Tips

- 1 When considering returning to the workplace, resilience will be important both for you as a leader and your team. This is another change you will need to adjust to with your team, so continuing to focus on both physical and mental wellbeing is important
- 2 Give yourself and your team opportunity to determine together what your collective 'new normal' will look like and how personal and work priorities have shifted
- 3 Remember, each employee will have different and often challenging situations they need to continue to deal with – make sure you understand them in-depth, take a compassionate approach and ensure you continue to check in with your team members frequently to maintain a feedback loop
- 4 Physical wellbeing and employee safety is paramount. If you or your team members are feeling unwell, check your local or company guidelines before returning to the workplace
- 5 Understand and role model the changes that have been made to the working environment
- 6 Stay educated on wellbeing benefits that impact you and your team so you can use them if the need arises

## Key Resources

-  [Ted Talk: A radical experiment in empathy](#)
-  [Leading with confidence and strength for building our new normal](#)



# Building empathy

## Top Tips

- 1 Remember that empathy is not agreeing or disagreeing with someone - it is understanding their thoughts and feelings through connecting
- 2 Get in the habit of asking more questions than you usually would - [coaching skills](#) will help with this
- 3 Use active listening skills to really focus on what people are telling you
- 4 Use the technique: repeat, paraphrase, reflect
- 5 Always validate other peoples' emotions – if they weren't valid, they wouldn't be experiencing them
- 6 Practice empathetic acknowledgement: showing someone that you are aware of and understand their emotions, without judging, pitying or advising
- 7 Avoid making assumptions or drawing your own conclusions about how people feel
- 8 Share how you are feeling as well, without making it all about you



## Key Resources

- [Why empathy is a critical skill](#)
- [Developing the skills to understand people](#)
- [Emotional intelligence fluidbook](#)
- [Working in an emotionally demanding role](#)
- [Go beyond active listening](#)

## Further Resources

- [Compassion and the true meaning of empathy](#)
- [Habits that will increase your empathy](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [How good are your listening skills?](#)

# Agile mindset: test and learn

## Top Tips

- 1 Focus on improving how you do what you do every day
- 2 With support, actively seek out new experiences and challenges, with the aim or making sense of them and learning from them
- 3 Apply critical thinking – look for patterns and make connections and help develop your team to have an inquisitive mindset
- 4 Look for different ways of approaching familiar problems
- 5 Be curious
- 6 Try out new approaches and experiment with new ideas, make sure you are inclusively listening to all of the ideas in your team
- 7 Look for “stretch assignments”, where the probability of success isn’t a given
- 8 Build resilience to acknowledge failures and capture the lessons learned from them
- 9 Seek out feedback and focus on how you can do things better



## Key Resources

-  [Flexibility & agility animation](#)
-  [Building business agility fluidbook](#)
-  [Key elements of an agile mindset?](#)
-  [Flexibility in the workplace](#)
-  [Becoming an agile organisation](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Understanding the agile mindset](#)
-  [What is the agile mindset?](#)
-  [Why growth mindset matters for organisational agility](#)

# The future of work



## Top Tips

- 1 Create a more more human-centric workplace:** The meaning of work, our relationship to it and our relationship with our employer, all may have changed. Your ability to demonstrate empathy, compassion, a willingness to be vulnerable, learning agility and adaptiveness will help you to thrive in a more human-centric workplace
- 2 Focus on people and technology:** Consider how people may have started to use technology differently and what that may mean for the future. Has this disruption accelerated the use of technology in your business area and how does that affect the way you lead?
- 3 Reflect on how work gets completed and by who:** Use this as an opportunity to evolve or review processes, technology, capabilities, behaviour and culture to adapt to the changing environment
- 4 Adopt a more dynamic leadership model:** Connecting employees around a common purpose is becoming more important in order to empower teams to continually adapt to changing environments
- 5 Encourage agile working:** To enable cross-functional team members to work together to deliver focussed outcomes, encourage your team to challenge the status quo and to think and act differently
- 6 Be Inclusive and compassionate:** The future of work will mean different things to customers, suppliers and employees, depending on their situation
- 7 Build new capabilities and skills:** Consider any capability gaps this situation may have highlighted within your team and think about how you can address this
- 8 Embrace continuous learning:** Continuing to learn has never been more important in order to keep up with the speed of change. Embrace continuous learning, share ideas and knowledge and learn from failures as well as successes. As a leader, it's important to role model and encourage the behaviour within your team

## Key Resources

-  [Connecting work and learning: Seek, sense, share](#)
-  [McKinsey: The future is not what it used to be](#)
-  [Deloitte: What is the future of work?](#)
-  [Workforce strategies for post COVID-19 recovery](#)
-  [Korn Ferry: Accelerating through the turn](#)
-  [Future of Work Report: Making the Future Work 2015 - 2020](#)

# Network leadership

## Top Tips

- 1 Enterprise leadership thinking: Think beyond your immediate team and consider your wider global network to share resources such as information, services and access
- 2 Tap into existing capabilities across silos: Use social networks and communities of practice to find experts, seek feedback, gain insights to emerging topics to address challenges
- 3 Leverage diversity of thought: Use your network to invite broader perspectives in brainstorming or problem solving activities
- 4 Develop communities of practice: Where members share expertise and collectively generate new knowledge to address complex issues across siloes
- 5 Establish an online presence: Consider how broad your internal and external network is, develop an online presence to build connections
- 6 Sharing knowledge is power: Make your skills and expertise visible for others to discover
- 7 Scan the environment for valuable connections: Make use of existing communities of practice or networks you would benefit from joining
- 8 Be sincere: Networking needs to be two way, if you only take and don't give or you break trust or confidence, your network will shut down
- 9 Develop your communication skills: You need to build awareness of your needs and your assets and you can do this through how you communicate with your network



## Key Resources

-  [The most vital digital management skill is network leadership](#)
-  [Connecting work and learning: Seek, Sense, Share](#)
-  [What is Wirearchy \(vs Hierarchy\)](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Working out loud circles: peer-to-peer support guides](#)



# Knowledge

- Working from home
- Managing temporary working arrangements
- Technology
- Communicating through COVID-19
- Prepare for the unexpected

# Working from home

## Top Tips

- 1 Maintain your usual morning routine to put yourself in the right frame of mind
- 2 If possible, find a dedicated space for working. A spot with minimal distractions and comfortable seating is best. Make sure you utilise [technology](#) to work efficiently
- 3 If possible, structure your day the same way you would in the office. If you devote your mornings to project work and use the afternoons for meetings, do that at home
- 4 Build breaks into your work - they are key for [mental wellbeing](#)
- 5 Don't forget two of the most important factors in your productivity when transitioning to remote work - your [physical wellbeing](#) and [mental wellbeing](#)
- 6 Create a [virtual collaboration contract](#). What were your norms and how might they change now that you're working from home?
- 7 Increase virtual touchpoints but decrease the length of these meetings. [Communicating](#) is key
- 8 Maintain the [social connections](#) you've built with your teammates. Use video calls for impromptu discussions whenever possible
- 9 Know your goals. Along with short-term, task-related goals, make sure that you're also clear about the wider career goals and purpose you're striving to achieve. Keeping these in mind will motivate you to do your best work



## Key Resources

- [Running effective virtual meetings](#)
- [Balancing working from home with family responsibilities](#)
- [The future of remote working](#)
- [COVID-19 remote work toolkit](#)
- [Using digital tools effectively](#)

## Further Resources

- [Virtual team building ideas](#)
- [Working from home with kids](#)
- [New to remote working?](#)

# Managing temporary working arrangements



## Top Tips

- 1 Talk to all team members about their current working arrangement, not just those that have raised concerns. Take a compassionate approach, seeking to understand different perspectives and work out a plan together to set team members up for success
- 2 If you recognise signs that a team member may be struggling, signpost them to the wellbeing resources available and ask how you can help them
- 3 Ensure that you provide clarity on goals and expectations, as these may have evolved
- 4 Your team may be more dispersed than usual, potentially working different hours. Therefore effective collaboration is vital in order to effectively manage workloads and reallocate work where necessary. Consider how you can best foster this collaboration through how you work as a team
- 5 Ensure you are taking a consistent and fair approach across your team
- 6 Agree to regularly review working arrangements to ensure continued suitability and ensure your team understand where working arrangements are temporary to manage this disruption, for example working remotely
- 7 Don't forget to recognise and say 'Thank you' to employees
- 8 Stay in touch regularly with all team members, keeping them updated on plans to return to the workplace

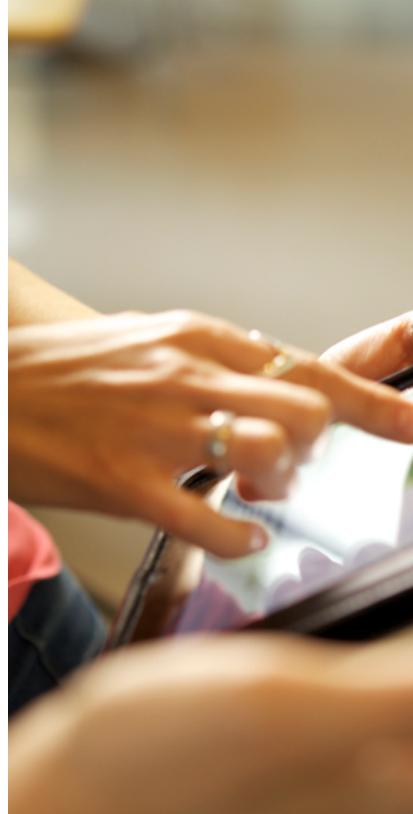


## Key Resources

-  [How to be flexible in the workplace](#)
-  [5 ways to strengthen communication and team cohesion in the workplace](#)

## Top Tips

- 1 Reduce additional load on your home broadband (Eg. Netflix streaming) to maximise your connection to work
- 2 Ensure you are still working securely when out of the office, always lock your device and keep apps and software up to date
- 3 Performing a 'regular restart' of your computer is something we all need to be doing to ensure we benefit from updates of improved performance and features, security and protection for our computers from vulnerabilities
- 4 Connect using VPN whenever accessing via a public WIFI network
- 5 Report suspicious emails / SMS / phone calls using your company's IT security process
- 6 Use tools like [Microsoft Teams](#) to connect and collaborate with your team and colleagues
- 7 Remember to check your workflow apps (HR, Finance etc) for approvals
- 8 Check for company updates and stay connected through your usual IT communication channels



## Key Resources

- [Getting started with Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Microsoft Teams platform walkthrough](#)
- [Working remotely FAQ](#)
- [Getting started with Zoom](#)
- [Using digital tools effectively](#)

## Further Resources

- [Microsoft Teams Community](#)
- [Zoom Support](#)

# Communicating through COVID-19

## Top Tips

With many governments recommending or even enforcing self-isolation, many employees will now be working from home. As a leader, the way in which you deliver communications and engage with your team may therefore have changed. Here are some top tips to help you effectively communicate with your team through this uncertain time:

- 1 Be in the know on COVID-19. To effectively support and answer questions from your team, keep up to date with the global and local guidance for wherever you have team members. Familiarise yourself with the latest guidance on the [World Health Organization](#) website, local government guidance for wherever you have team members and your company's own guidance
- 2 Get to grips with video conferencing tools like [Microsoft \(MS\) Teams](#) or [Zoom\\*](#) and use social collaboration tools you have available, like [Workplace](#) for on-going engagement with colleagues – now is the time to increase your digital presence
- 3 Stay connected and show you care. To stay [connected](#) and visible with your team while working remotely, follow these simple steps:
  - ✓ At least once a week connect with your team, as a group and on a 1:1 basis, to provide an opportunity for questions and discussions
  - ✓ In all virtual meetings, go on video and encourage team members to do the same
  - ✓ Have social interactions with team members too and check in on their well-being and [mental health](#)

\*use your in-house video conferencing and social collaboration tools



## Key Resources

- ✓ [Support your people, sustain your organisation](#)
- ✓ [Actions for strong leadership during a pandemic podcast](#)
- ✓ [The leader's guide to managing COVID-19 panic](#)

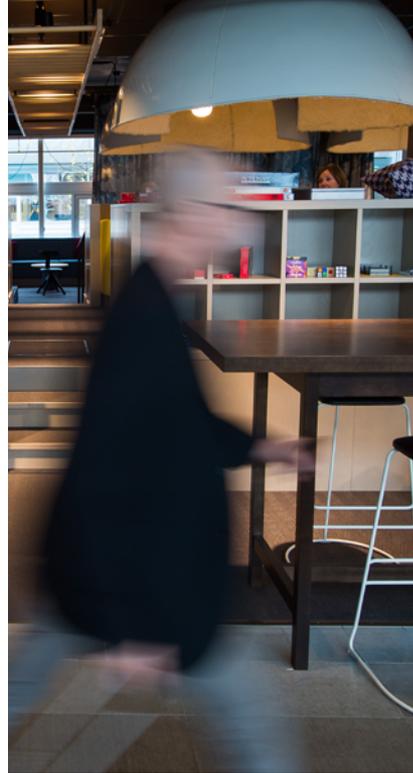
## Further Resources

- ✓ [Communications fluidbook](#)

# Prepare for the unexpected

## Top Tips

- 1 Expect the unexpected:** be alert to changes in your team. Increasing connection will help you recognise issues early and address things before they become overwhelming
- 2 Don't panic:** your ability to stay calm is instrumental to your success in managing the unexpected. Take a deep breath and spend a moment evaluating the situation and thinking about what you need to do next. To be in the best position to remain calm, make sure to actively work on your mental wellbeing
- 3 Prepare solutions in advance:** it is not possible to plan for every worst-case scenario, but try to have a strategy for dealing with things that are most likely to happen
- 4 Use your critical thinking skills:** take a systematic approach to solving both small complications and significant crises
- 5 Keep a list of resources at your fingertips:** when situations arise, and you need outside help to resolve them, know where you can go for help



## Key Resources

-  [Guidance from the World Health Organization](#)
-  [Responding to team members in distress](#)
-  [Giving bad news](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Getting the best from solitary team members](#)
-  [Don't let frustration get the better of you](#)



## Skills

- Leading through change
- Inclusion
- Compassionate leadership
- Building trust and productive relationships
- Virtual collaboration
- Virtual coaching
- Holding challenging conversations
- Engaging your team
- Virtual interviewing
- Virtual onboarding
- Developing others

# Leading through change

## Top Tips

- 1 Change is complex and can at times be very disruptive for people
- 2 [Build trust](#) to help manage change effectively
- 3 You are able to encourage and influence teams to change how they perform their roles, in order for change to land successfully and embed and sustain over time
- 4 You have a critical role in how people experience change. Great [coaching](#) from you can help your team embrace the change. Use the [reflection workshop guide](#)
- 5 Take time to understand the changes being introduced and what this means for the people in your team
- 6 Involve your team in helping you to understand what the changes mean for them – no doubt they'll come up with some things you won't have considered. Using a [facilitation guide](#) can be helpful when discussing change
- 7 Familiarise yourself with the [Agile](#) approach. This will feel very different as solutions will develop over time – making it more challenging to fully understand change impacts for your team
- 8 Take time to surface resistance and use multiple approaches – team meetings, 1:1 discussions, smaller groups. You can use the [virtual coaching](#) to do this
- 9 Keep reviewing how the changes are impacting your team and how they are responding. Try using this [learn & reflect exercise](#)
- 10 During any change it's critical that the people most impacted feel engaged and informed, effective [communication](#) is critical



## Key Resources

- [Leading change toolkit: help people land and embed change in your team](#)
- [Change curve animation](#)

## Further Resources

- [Leading Change: Dialogue and reflection workshop guide](#)
- [Learn & reflect exercise: Understand my change journey and build resilience](#)
- [Making sense of the complex world together: Facilitation guide](#)
- [Leading through change fluidbook](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [How good are your change management skills?](#)

## Top Tips

- 1 Be aware that different groups of people will have been affected in diverse ways, according to their job role and individual circumstances. Seek to understand what this disruption means for them
- 2 Be alert to the specific needs and styles of every individual, resist making assumptions
- 3 Involve your team on how and when to run meetings, given your team is likely to be more dispersed. Listening to individual considerations will help avoid anyone feeling excluded
- 4 Listen to and be prepared to learn from a range of perspectives and viewpoints
- 5 Empower individuals to grow and thrive by encouraging them to solve problems and develop new skills. Coaching can help this
- 6 Notice and enhance the unique value that each individual brings to the team
- 7 Offer 1:1 support, show individual interest and listen with empathy
- 8 Promote a culture where individuals feel they can speak up and raise concerns or share ideas
- 9 Develop an active awareness of your unconscious biases, preconceived views and related micro messages



## Key Resources

-  [6 ways to foster belonging in the workplace](#)
-  [The key to inclusive leadership](#)

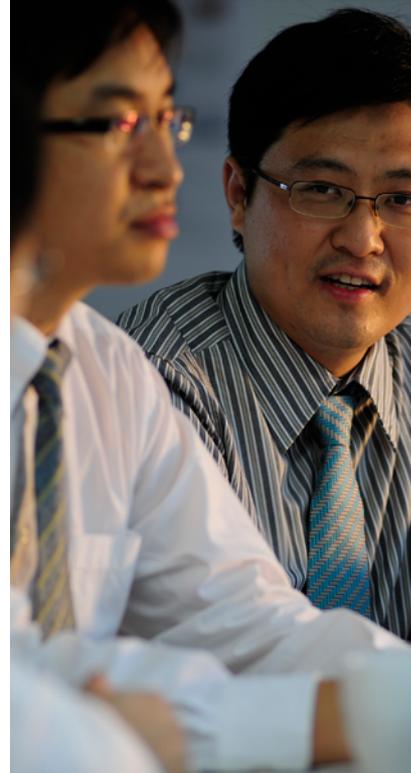
## Further Resources

-  [Inclusive leadership research report](#)
-  [Inclusive leadership: will a hug do?](#)

# Compassionate leadership

## Top Tips

- 1 Research shows compassionate leadership results in greater productivity, better engagement and improved wellbeing
- 2 During a crisis the feeling that **leaders are looking out for the employees' best interests** helps to reduce stress and increase confidence
- 3 The first step to compassionate leadership is to **tune effectively inward**, creating time for your own self awareness. Mindfulness and other physical and mental wellbeing activities can help with this
- 4 **Seek to understand other views** and then work together to remove potential barriers or concerns
- 5 **Practice mindful listening** when communicating with your team
- 6 **Empathise** and demonstrate you care how others feel
- 7 **Demonstrate integrity** and ethical principles
- 8 **Be open to learning** and taking on other perspectives
- 9 **Leverage the combined skill, talent, insights and commitment from your team to problem solve together** – you don't need to have all the answers
- 10 **Compassionate leadership is not about shying away from tough or challenging conversations**, but approaching these conversations in a compassionate way, seeking to understand before acting



## Key Resources

-  [Tuning in, turning outward: Cultivating compassionate leadership in a crisis](#)
-  [Ted Talk: Compassionate Management – using compassion as business tool](#)
-  [Human resilience: What your people need during COVID19](#)

## Further Resources

-  [Compassionate leadership: A mindful call to lead from both head and heart](#)
-  [How to be more compassionate during the coronavirus crisis](#)

## Self-evaluation

-  [Assessment: Are you a compassionate leader?](#)

# Building trust and productive relationships



## Top Tips

- 1 Remember that trust can be destroyed very quickly, and once broken is difficult to rebuild
- 2 Trust builds trust; so if you want people to trust you, first show that you trust them
- 3 Keep your word about the little things as well as the big things. Communication can be key in this
- 4 Be consistent in what you say, what you do, and how you present yourself online
- 5 Set and follow through on performance expectations and accountabilities
- 6 Clearly state any implied accountabilities to avoid misunderstanding
- 7 Discuss and air differences before they start to fester and impact on productivity
- 8 Show support for people, even when they make mistakes. Demonstrate empathy and understanding
- 9 Be honest and fair when giving feedback
- 10 Coaching can help people work through problems and can lead to improvements in the working relationship

## Key Resources

-  [Building trust](#)
-  [Building great work relationships - making work enjoyable and productive](#)
-  [Psychological safety first: building trust among teams](#)

## Further Resources

-  [How to build \(and rebuild\) trust](#)
-  [What we don't understand about trust](#)
-  [The 13 behaviours of high-trust leaders](#)

## Self-evaluation

-  [How approachable are you?](#)



## Top Tips

With the need to work as virtual teams, we need to take extra care to treat one another as human beings with emotions and feelings, and to respect and celebrate diversity of thoughts/preference.

- 1 Slow Down to Speed Up - take the time to set expectations, to focus, to create processes on how the team will interact, and to put the appropriate tools in place. Review by asking: Do we need some new agreements or to adjust some existing ones? Use the [collaboration contract](#)
- 2 Respect time zone differences: Rotate the role of early riser on a weekly or monthly basis
- 3 Put extra time and extra planning effort to host virtual meetings, ensure everyone has a voice, promote mental/emotional connection with one another. Create psychological safety by [building trust](#) and encourage team members to speak up. Use the [facilitation guide](#)
- 4 Maximise opportunity to express non-verbal cues: turn on video, explicitly check-in on the sentiment of the participants. [Communication](#) is key
- 5 Make people feel like they are physically together: invite people to share where they are, what do they see outside the window. Talking about physical spaces creates “togetherness”
- 6 Choose from a range of [collaboration technologies](#) to keep the virtual team connected. Consider both live and asynchronous collaboration tools. Eg. keep a chat room open for team members to hang out anytime
- 7 Make feedback more frequent and less formal. Set expectation with the team that it is something you all deliberately practice. Consider meetings with a celebration section on both work and personal milestones

## Key Resources

- [7 Habits to virtual collaboration - Workplace post](#)
- [Collaboration contract](#)
- [Making sense of the complex world together: Facilitation guide](#)
- [Stakeholder mapping](#)
- [Meeting design](#)

## Further Resources

- [How to run a great virtual meeting](#)
- [How to be a virtual meeting hero](#)
- [An alternative way to approach and design how people work together](#)



## Top Tips

- 1 [Establish trust](#) and a personal connection
- 2 Keep your questions focused and concise
- 3 Allow time for thinking and reflection, don't be tempted to fill every silence
- 4 Develop peer coaching skills within your team to build capacity in others by [developing your team](#)
- 5 Use a range of media and [technology](#) for formal and informal coaching: it is possible to coach in two minutes over instant messenger
- 6 Don't dictate the medium; be [empathetic](#) and let people choose the method they prefer
- 7 Minimise distractions and do not multi-task during a coaching session
- 8 Have a clear structure and manage the time closely
- 9 Use 'nudges' to reinforce desired behaviours; for example sharing recommended articles, videos and podcasts

## Key Resources

- [Coaching infographic](#)
- [Push/pull continuum animation](#)
- [Coaching fluidbook](#)
- [I need to become better at coaching - Thrive in Five](#)

## Further Resources

- [Want to get great at something? Get a coach](#)
- [The virtues of virtual coaching](#)
- [Six skills for virtual group coaching](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [How good are your coaching skills?](#)

# Holding challenging conversations



## Top Tips

- 1 Prepare yourself for the conversation, clarify in your own mind the purpose and remember to consider how you deliver the message. For example ensuring it's private and enough time has been scheduled
- 2 Actively listen to your team's concerns without judgement and take a compassionate approach seeking to understand concerns before jumping to conclusions
- 3 Expect emotions to be heightened, staying calm will help you manage the situation
- 4 Team members may need more time than usual to reflect or process information you give them, so be patient and allow cooling off time following emotional reactions
- 5 Recognise changes in behaviour and signpost employees to appropriate support
- 6 If a team member is struggling to understand an action or decision, ensure they have all the facts by keeping them up to date with relevant communications
- 7 Move towards the end of the conversation with empathy and clarity on what happens next
- 8 Support yourself - ensure you have enough time to reflect after the conversation



## Key Resources

- [The COIN conversation model](#)
- [Dealing with anger](#)
- [Dealing with difficulty](#)
- [Coping with loss in a virtual team](#)

## Further Resources

- [Ted Talk: Empathy - the heart of difficult conversations](#)

# Engaging your team

## Top Tips

- 1 Take the opportunity to pause and reflect on how you and your team might adapt to the next phase of returning to the workplace or sustaining remote working? What needs to stay the same? What needs to change?
- 2 Consider and ask your team about team dynamics. Show empathy and encourage your team to share thoughts, feelings and concerns – your team will highly value this and you will likely get lots of valuable insights too. Tools like Mentimeter can help gather these insights anonymously
- 3 Consider what the team and individuals might need to be set up for success. These may be tactical and immediate or may be more strategic and medium-longer term
- 4 Consider development opportunities for your team
- 5 If some of your team will be returning to the workplace and some of your team will remain working remotely, think about how you will maintain team cohesion and collaboration
- 6 Think “Big Chat Little Chat” – what are the top 3 key messages you want to share with the whole team (Big Chat)? What are the conversations you might save for smaller groups or one to ones (Little Chat)?
- 7 Maintain integrity and deliver on your promises
- 8 Show you appreciate the work your team are doing by saying thank you



## Key Resources

-  [Gain anonymised team insight using tools like Mentimeter](#)
-  [Re-engage your team members](#)
-  [The four enablers of employee engagement](#)

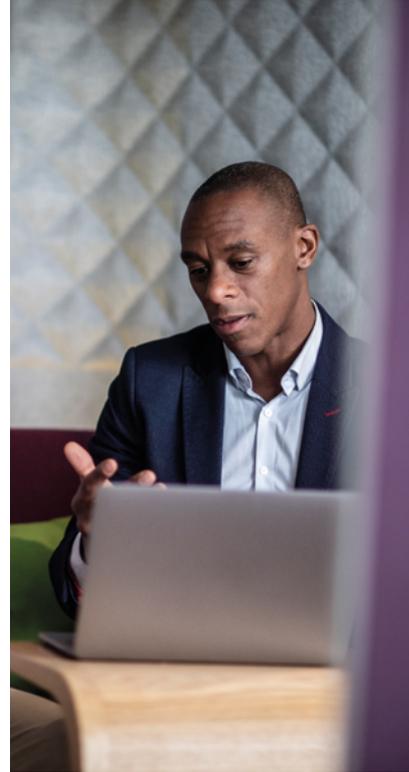
## Further Resources

-  [HBR article and resources: Leading through anxiety](#)

# Virtual interviewing

## Top Tips

- 1 Choose the relevant technology for interviewing, a stable connection and the ability to use video are important considerations
- 2 Pre-interview: Check the technology is working and video positions are suitable
- 3 Prepare to talk about the company, the role and introduce the interviewers and backgrounds
- 4 Turn off email notifications and ensure your status is 'do not disturb'
- 5 Make sure you put the candidate at ease. Try to limit interferences and distractions but remember to demonstrate flexibility and inclusion if pets, children or other outside interferences make an appearance
- 6 Ensure you have a back up plan and contact information should the technology fail
- 7 Explain that you will be taking notes or if recording the interview – ensure the candidate gives their consent verbally
- 8 Ensure you keep to time, allowing opportunity for the candidate to ask questions too



## Key Resources

-  [LinkedIn - 7 tips for successful virtual interviews](#)

# Virtual onboarding

## Top Tips

- 1 The principles of onboarding new team members in the virtual world remain the same, however you will need to do some extra preparation and build in time for virtual social interactions, training and opportunities for informal questions
- 2 Video call your new hire before they join to make arrangements for the first week and give them the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions they may have
- 3 Have a clear plan for their first day and week and assign a buddy to support them
- 4 Hold a welcome video call on their first day and ensure they have everything they need and know what is expected of them. Ensure you invite them to all ongoing team check-ins
- 5 Get to know the whole person, ask about hobbies and interests outside of work
- 6 Ensure you put in place any specific support and are aware of any special circumstances, health related or other that they might need support with
- 7 Book a virtual team meeting where they can meet their colleagues and schedule video calls with key stakeholders
- 8 Think about how you'll integrate new and existing team members and split work across the team
- 9 Remember that this may feel like a difficult time to join a new team or organisation, make sure you check in with them regularly, prioritising their physical and mental wellbeing
- 10 Provide opportunities for any specific training they require. Think about how you can switch training usually delivered face to face to online



## Key Resources

-  [Onboarding with STEPS](#)

# Developing others

## Top Tips

- 1 Include regular development discussions during your 1:1s
- 2 Take time to understand what motivates each individual and what their aspirations are
- 3 It is important to build trust so they can share their recent learnings
- 4 Share and celebrate successes
- 5 Provide regular feedback
- 6 Consider using a coaching style to help them find their own solutions
- 7 Actively seek learning opportunities for your team in everyday situations. Consider an agile, test and learn approach
- 8 Encourage team members to define an action plan for development and discuss progresses regularly
- 9 Consider using the 70/20/10 model as a guiding principle while discussing development opportunities



## Key Resources

- [Motivate employees to reskill for the digital age](#)
- [How to mentor someone who doesn't know what their career goals should be](#)
- [3 ways to improve performance management conversations](#)
- [Mentoring Matters: three essential elements of success](#)
- [What good feedback looks like](#)

## Further Resources

- [The 70/20/10 model](#)

## Self-evaluation

- [How well do you develop your people?](#)



## Pause and reflect

- Pause and reflect
- Ongoing Development

# Pause and reflect



As we begin to settle into the evolving workplace, we need to reflect on what we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic about ourselves, about the nature of work, how work gets completed and how we interact with our colleagues.

## Top Tips

Use these questions to reflect on your learning

### 4+1 Questions

- 1 What have you tried?
- 2 What have you learned?
- 3 What are you pleased about?
- 4 What are you concerned about?
- 5 What do you want to do next?

### Reflection through storytelling

Think of a specific moment which has proven to be a POSITIVE experience or NEGATIVE experience.

Focus on specific moments relating to that experience.

- 1 What are the high points? What are the low points?
- 2 What was enabling? What was lacking / hurting?
- 3 What happened (brilliantly) at the end because of the beginning?
- 4 What happened (badly) at the end because of the beginning?
- 5 Knowing what we know now, what do you want to tell your past self?

### Acting on the learning – Start, Stop, Sustain

- 1 What actions should be taken to improve for the future?
- 2 Who needs to know about the lessons we have learned to drive action?
- 3 What new behaviour and habits do we want to start, stop, or sustain in the future?

- 4 How might we (re)design our work to ensure we start or sustain the positive behaviours needed?
- 5 What are the opportunities and threats to innovate, streamline, exploit?

### Different ways to learn and reflect

- 1 **Self-reflection:** Allocate time to pause, reflect and learn from the past/present experiences. You may find it helpful to write these reflections down and create a journal of your learning experiences
- 2 **Learning as a team:** Invite your team to discuss the situations they are facing, the goals they want to achieve, the challenges, blockers, enablers and the help they need. Proactively listen to others' views, look for commonalities and contradictions in order to find a collective way forward
- 3 **Peer-to-peer learning and coaching**
- 4 **Learning as a global network:** Tap into the learning and insights from the internal and external social networks, communities of practice to discuss, seek feedback, gain broader insights to emerging topics
- 5 **Continuous learning in the flow of work:** Have regular lessons- learned sessions, build learning moments into team meetings, design work practices to support ongoing sensing of new data, to reflect on the emerging patterns, to look out for unintended consequences, and to act on them, guided by purpose

# Ongoing development



## Knowledge & resources

Many learning consultancies offer open source learning resources providing access to information on leadership development



## Expert insights

Many corporate education providers record live webinars and offer access for individuals to watch recordings free



## Peer to peer learning

Social media can provide a great way to connect with leaders, share experiences and discuss learnings

## Reflection

**Take time to reflect on your leadership experience during this unprecedented period:**

Capture personal and pivotal leadership moments to review in the future

Ask yourself what have been key learning insights from this experience?

What three leadership steps are you going to take as you step into the future?

This document was originally produced for AstraZeneca employees and has been repurposed so that all leaders can use and benefit from it during these challenging times. Thank you to our learning partners [hemsley fraser](#) and [MindTools](#) for generously offering their resources contained within the toolkit free to access for everyone.



**hemsleyfraser**