

OUR INSIGHTS

Practical advice on common business challenges
direct from our International team of business experts

CULTURE, INSIGHTS, LEADERSHIP



3 steps to keep your organisation's performance healthy through the next 6 months

2020 has been tough. But I think the next 6 months will be even harder, especially for those of us in the northern hemisphere.

I'm getting asked how can businesses and teams thrive as we continue with mainly remote working, second COVID waves hit, the days get shorter and the weather gets less inviting.

And I think the challenge has already started. I am seeing symptoms of a new creeping infection at the moment, much less obvious than COVID, but I am starting to see it everywhere. A CEO described it to me last week as "culture drift". He described how there just seems slightly less innovation, slightly less sparkle, slightly less uniqueness to his business. It is hard to nail down and for that reason it is dangerous.

This is definitely a case where prevention is better than cure – if you wait for full blown culture drift symptoms then they will not arrive before this time next year and by then it may take drastic surgery to repair the damage. I suspect you have to act now to beat the infection, because it is already in your organisation.

So, what should leaders do?

Here are three simple ideas that you can take that will help to immunise your organisation:

1. Feedback: Invest at least 2 hours a week in getting feedback on your team

People aren't always good at noticing they are getting stressed or losing motivation, and they can be even worse at telling you. So, get super curious about your team and the impact

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they are having on others. TOP TIP: quite often other departments will see changes in your people before you do. Team members are on their “best” behaviour with you, so take time to ask other people for feedback on team members. And if the first piece of feedback is, “oh, I haven’t spoken to her in weeks” then you already have a problem!

2. Energy: Wind yourself up to 11

I know that for most of you 2020 has been exhausting. And, unfortunately, this second remedy is therefore not going to taste good. But when teams are struggling for motivation and belief then your energy as their leader becomes hugely important. You are going to have to pay particular attention to how you are feeling and the impact you make on people. Yes, you do really need to build in those breaks during the day. And then you have to consciously make sure that you maintain an air of “realistic optimism”. You want people around you to feel optimistic without denying the reality of what is going on. That takes energy from you and that energy needs transmitting into everyone else. We are leaders, it is what we signed up for.

3. Collaboration: Create multiple opportunities each week for people to mix outside your team

You’ve probably done a great job of keeping your team connected through team calls, daily stand ups, Zoom quizzes and the like. One thing that has gone missing this year is bumping into people from other teams. If there were signs of silo mentality before 2020, then they are everywhere right now in your organisation. And we all know that getting the silos to work together is the key to creating new ideas, solving problems and getting stuff done. So, in the coming months be incredibly proactive, planned and purposeful about setting up connections between your team and other teams. Here are some simple ideas: ask each team member to identify 3 people they will go and have a virtual coffee with in the next two weeks; have each team member just go and sit in on two team meetings from other departments by a week on Tuesday; arrange socials with other teams. If you have any chance of being in a physical location, by all means take that chance for these interactions, if not, then online it is.

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Take these three pills with a glass of water or something stronger and come back to see me in four weeks if the symptoms persist! I am sure you can think of a hundred other ideas too, so please share them in the comments with everyone. We have never been here before and we all need help.