

# Leading virtual teams through uncertainty

2020

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# Leading virtual teams through uncertainty

2020

02

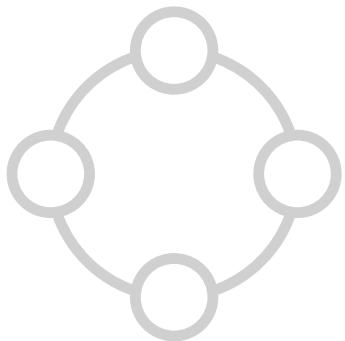
Leading virtual teams through uncertainty 2020

Working from home is not a new concept – but managing teams which are largely (or even entirely) based remotely pushes virtual working to another level.

This presents leaders and employees with new challenges on a daily basis – but these challenges can be overcome with effective planning and leadership.

Here are four key areas leaders should focus on to ensure their team thrive in a virtual set-up through challenging circumstances.

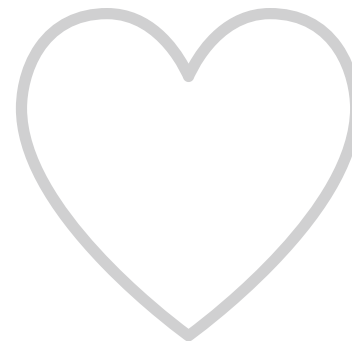
**Maintain relationships**



**Use technology to support you**



**Focus on wellbeing**

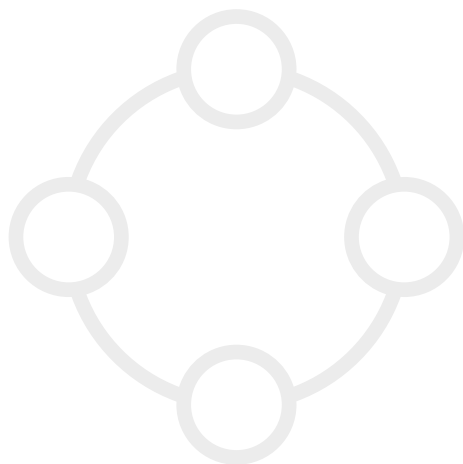


**Use support available to you**



# Maintaining relationships. What can I do?

## Maintain relationships



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**Be flexible** – employees may need more flexibility than normal as they deal with changes in their working patterns and family commitments.

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**Make time to be personal** – recognising that employees will be dealing with these challenges in different ways. Some employees may have family or friends personally affected or be particularly anxious. Flex your style to support employees as needed. Keep your diary up to date and visible so people know when you are contactable.

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**Connect with those on long term sick / parental leave** – make contact to check in on how they are and how they want to keep in touch during this time recognising that they may be feeling particularly vulnerable.

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**Find a pattern** for staying in touch with employees that works – making sure employees feel connected but not micro-managed. It's important people are clear what they are working on and expected standards. Prioritise tasks and deliverables not the time that is worked.

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**Trust** your employees to deliver. Continue to have 1:1's to track progress and check-in – and make time for team interaction too so that teams are working efficiently and keeping social interactions with each-other.

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Ensure yourself and your employees have the **tools to work remotely** – ensuring people have laptops, charging cables, and headsets to create their own home working situation. Discuss with employees the challenges they may be finding as they work remotely.

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**Celebrate achievements** – in a crisis, it's easy to think negatively. Take time to celebrate achievements in the team and bring positive thinking into interactions with people.

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# Use technology to support you. What can I do?

## Use technology to support you



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**Create technology-enabled meetings** – Webex and Skype both allow for screen-sharing and video-audio enabled meetings.

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**Use online resources to build confidence** – encourage teams to make use of materials available to become more confident using tools such as Webex and Skype. Lead by example with this.

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**Encourage employees to switch on cameras** to enhance virtual meetings.

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**Keep meetings sharp and focused** – stick to meeting basics and try to send agendas where possible.

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**Flex your facilitation approach** – ensure meetings flow and everyone is able to contribute. Call on people by name for input to minimise people speaking over each other. Suggest people go on mute when not speaking to avoid background noise.

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**Consider asking team members to chair meetings** – to build their skillsets – as well as sharing the responsibility for organising.

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# Focus on wellbeing. What can I do?

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## Focus on wellbeing

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**Set your working pattern** – try to mirror your normal working pattern and dress for your day so you keep a similar mindset as if you were in the office.

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**Take regular breaks** – it's not healthy to work straight through the day. Remember to take a lunch break or other short breaks throughout the day.

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**Exercise** – standing up, stretching, going out for walks (if permitted by government guidelines), popping out to the garden, or doing something a bit more vigorous will keep your mind more alert.

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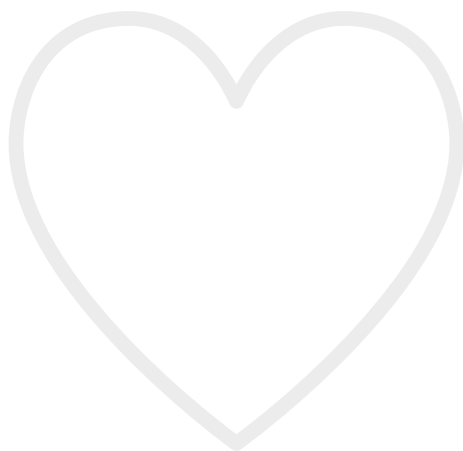
**Seize the daylight** – our exposure to sunshine is limited especially in the winter months so if you see a gap in the clouds why not be flexible with your lunch break, switch off, and get some fresh air.

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**Make the most of your 'me-time'** – the benefit of not commuting means you will have 'extra me-time'. Make sure your personal schedule allows for relaxation.

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Try to move your equipment out of sight when not working.  
**When the working day is done, switch off!**



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# Use the support available to you. What can I do?

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## Use support available to you

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**Work through challenges** – acknowledge that things may not work perfectly from day one. As a leader, it's important you encourage teams to work through any challenges and find a structure that supports them at this time. Capture what is working well and also what employees are finding more challenging. Where possible, work together to find solutions to these challenges.

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### Tools available to support you and your teams at this time:

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Encourage everyone to read direct communications and [Lloyd's COVID-19 Hub](#) for latest information

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[Leading at a Distance](#)

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[Managing Teams Virtually](#)

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[Managing stress for positive change](#)

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[Building Resilience](#)

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[Mental Health UK](#)

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[Mind](#)

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## Be aware of the impact on yourself as a leader

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As a line manager - being the one that is supposed to have the answers is stressful so be aware of this and explain to colleagues that you won't always have the answers but can work with them to find solutions.

Things are moving so quickly, we are focusing on making decisions that require both immediate answers and others that are longer term - and so some answers will come but at a later stage.

Here are some tips to look after your own wellbeing:

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**If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to your peers to support one other on what is working and what isn't.**

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**Remember to practise what you are telling others - share with your own Line Manager how you are feeling too.**

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**Recognise that this is new and challenging - and will therefore feel strange and at times uncomfortable.**

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**Stay informed so you are aware of latest views and agreed actions.**

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**Nominate someone as a deputy who can cover for you if this is needed.**

## 5 Top Tips to manage your team

- 1. Keep in touch**

Agree a regular frequency for team meetings, keep messages simple, brief and to the point.
- 2. Be flexible**

Flexibility is key - understand the flexible working patterns needed to manage home/work commitments, remember to be flexible in understanding the individual working styles of your team members.
- 3. Agree work priorities**

Help your team members break down their work into activities and tasks, that allows them to manage priorities flexibly.
- 4. Listen actively**

Take time to listen to your team, ask them for feedback and be prepared to flex.
- 5. Lighten the mood**

Keep team morale high by injecting some fun activities such as a virtual coffee morning using technology to support.