

## BUILDING CULTURE TODAY

In the past few months the world we live and work in has completely changed. We used to refer to the phrase 'the future of work' and the catch phrase seems to be, 'the new normal'. This phrase is being met with mixed feelings - personally I hate it!

Regardless of what we call it, this is our world today. As we adapt to our new circumstances and get ready for what comes next, we know from experience that things can change very quickly. So, as leaders, what do we need to do to be prepared?

Before we look at what is next, I believe it's important to outline what we know for certain.

- We are not going back to offices to work in the way we used to.
- We can access talent and skills from anywhere around the world.
- We are going to continue to rely on virtual tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype to transact business and build relationships.
- Home and work will continue to integrate.
- Some of us will interact with our customers and teams remotely, others will have no choice.
- We are all still human and we all have different needs.

As leaders we have a responsibility to embrace, develop and energise our teams, even when we don't have all the answers. So what can we do?

**Bring people with you:** Whilst purpose will continue to be important, it needs to be continuously translated and reinforced. Purpose and strategies will continuously evolve and shift, and as leaders we need to bring our teams with us on the journey, so that we all stay focused and moving in one direction. As more change happens, this means communicating an inspirational vision and working together to deliver it.

**Recognise everyone works differently:** We are all different, and the current crisis has highlighted how we are all dealing with different circumstances. Some of us have children and are balancing home schooling and caregiving. Others have older parents who may be at risk and therefore more dependent on their children, others are single and might be grappling with loneliness. Talk to each team member, and discuss expectations to figure out how to best work together. Identify individual team members who have the same patterns and connect them through a similar project. If people have different or conflicting schedules, make sure they have the information they need from each other to be successful. Remember the importance of a personal touch: Virtual meetings can be very productive and focused, and sometimes that means you don't get the before and after meeting chat you once did. Bring this back in an authentic

way, it's an important ingredient in your teams remaining connected. It's Ok to say I am finding the week hard.

**Share personal learnings, successes and failures.** I have a weekly team meeting where we start the meeting by sharing personal recommendations and stories like our favourite books, or memories of the country we enjoyed the best when we travelled. Most important, stop long meetings - 90 minutes is the maximum time, don't do a four hour meeting with no breaks! And build in time to think so people can consider their answers and ideas.

**Listen, listen, listen:** Most of all listen. Listen to how you feel, how you are adapting and check in. Listen to your team. Sometimes, what they are not saying is as significant as what they are saying. Listen to your clients and give yourself time to process their feedback. We are in uncharted waters, we are all experiencing the 'future of work' today. Let's learn and share and build on what we are doing now to build the best 'normal-for-now' cultures that we can.