How to lead your team from a distance

If you're leading a team from a distance, you'll know how tough it can be sometimes. You and your team may be working longer hours, with more complexity and with more isolation than ever before and there's only so much that skype and conference calls can achieve. When the screen closes and the call ends how can you be confident that your presence and influence as a leader lasts?

Here are 3 important steps to help you develop your leadership from a distance:

1. Have a strong and shared sense of purpose

This isn't about statement on a wall or a glossy brochure in a desk, it's about your team's sense of purpose, their **reason for being.** Strong enough and important enough to guide day to day actions and decisions; it's the reference point when a tough decision needs to be made or a course of action chosen. Think about it as a critical prompt which asks **"Is this in line with our purpose? Does this move us closer to it or further away?"**

K
Kickstart
DEVELOPMENT

Examples might include - 'we encourage people to think differently' 'we help a patient feel like they're being cared for by a relative' 'we make spaces safe and clean for people to walk through' 'we help people shop quickly and easily'

A strong reference point like this, can connect your team and help develop the speed, confidence and consistency with which they take action in your absence.

2. Bring clarity and context

Good decisions happen when people have clarity and context - an understanding of how it all fits together - the company, their team and their day to day actions (if it's been a particularly turbulent time or you're new in role you may need to get this clear in your own mind first!).

This isn't an organisation chart or a business plan, but where all the need to know stuff about your team sits. Keep it to 1 page, keep it simple and upload it so you can all view and use daily.

Here's what I'd include:

- Who we are and how we fit into the wider company
- What our purpose is
- What we do day to day and who's responsible
- What you'll notice when you work with us
- What our big goals are for this year
- How we'll know we've got there

3. Stay in touch, purposefully and regularly

When you lead remotely you lose the everyday opportunities to make your presence felt. So get used to regularly communicating in a more purposeful and expansive way. Remember, if you're in the same room you'd just nod your head, but remotely it's about calling/emailing to share the same praise. If you're frustrated, don't let it fester – call and share why, offering support to help improvement.

By doing this, regularly, you help your team get to know how you think and respond to situations, what you find helpful and important, and what you don't. It's about

Kickstart
DEVELOPMENT

offering encouragement and support so that when they have to make an important decision or the unexpected crops up <u>they act with you in mind.</u>

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **when you see good work give feedback; when someone has made a positive contribution, notice it and say thanks (before you get distracted)**
- **when the team has made good progress (however small) – celebrate face to face to face (skype or Blue Jeans work well)**
- **look for and share moments when great collaboration has occurred**
- **ask people to share what they're most pleased with this week.**
- **ask people what they need most from you this week to be effective.**

Let me know what's working for you or how you're dealing with leading from a distance

Kirsten

Learning & Development Specialist
Kickstart Development