



# A Fresh Take on Team Building

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- As COVID-19 ushers in a new world of work, organisations need to adopt effective ways to connect with their teams.
- A sharper focus on leading management and employees through uncertainty and business-critical change is just as necessary.

In a short but turbulent timespan, COVID-19 has become a global game changer that will significantly impact our work and social lives for the long haul. Not only has it unleashed a global health crisis, battered economies and rearranged work processes, it is also responsible for redesigning how

individuals and teams communicate and collaborate with one another.

As COVID-19's disruptions unfold, attitudes toward where and how people work are morphing. With remote work becoming a staple for many organisations, fostering an open culture

focusing on wellness, is essential to retaining key employees and attracting the best talent out there. COVID-19 has also heightened employee awareness of the importance of wellbeing, resulting in empathy's emergence as a must-have quality for effective leadership and team building.

In the new normal, organisations will need to apply new leadership models and team structures that encourage constructive debate. The cultural transformation and realignment of values in the post COVID-19 environment will entail a greater emphasis on inclusion, sustainability and integration. Designing new career structures and jobs in response to the pervasiveness of technology will necessitate a new perspective on team building.

### Trust is vital for collaboration

In today's unpredictable environment, organisations and their employees must quickly adapt to new policies for navigating remote working. An essential part of effective team management – especially for teams transitioning to remote work – involves trusting employees to accomplish their tasks. There is abundant research evidence to indicate organisations which develop trust-building strategies, will achieve stronger work relationships and reliable performance.

When trust is low, employee morale can suffer and performance can be erratic. While this is widely understood, the sudden transition from having employees physically in the office to working remotely has resulted in some managers finding it difficult to trust that their direct reports are actually working.

With assistance from the HR function, managers can reset the clock on the correlation between time spent working and performance. As long as employees are delivering results conscientiously, it doesn't matter what time of the day employees are performing their job duties. Instead of questioning their work ethic, managers can focus on their mentoring role by offering advice and support to their direct reports, who are themselves adjusting to the new normal. To do this successfully, managers need to connect with employees in a genuine way to understand their experiences and, where possible, provide meaningful solutions.

### Trends reshaping the workplace

The past months have shown how priorities can change in an instant. Given the changes induced by COVID-19, it is easy to overlook the trends and issues that were priority topics on the agendas of organisations. Before COVID-19 brushed aside the "old" normal and brought the impetus for the "new" normal, industry 4.0 trends were already in place, requiring a new approach to people strategies. *The Deep Shift: 21 Ways Software Will Transform Global Society* report from the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Software & Society, defines six key megatrends or "tipping points" predicted to result in profound shifts across all industries. The tipping points encompass people and the internet, artificial intelligence and big data, the sharing economy and distributed trust, computing,





communications and storage everywhere, the digitisation of matter, and the internet of things. While industry 4.0 might not possess the immediate business adjustment requirements warranted by the new normal, it nonetheless features factors impacting the world of work.

### Organised communication

Going forward, a key strength for both individuals and companies will be the ability to work across new disciplines. Possessing good people skills to leverage them for persuasive communication will be critical. Virtual collaboration and social intelligence will also become increasingly important. These skills will become imperative as organisations harness the ability to not only work virtually across boundaries, but also assemble virtual teams that channel technology into deep collaboration.

In the new normal, clear, concise and consistent communication from all levels of the organisation is essential. Promoting open dialogues and installing direct communication channels across the board help to keep management informed of employee concerns. Organisations can't afford to have employees missing out on important information such as company updates or the latest changes made to projects they are working on.

As the touchpoint between management and employees, the HR function needs to help managers implement effective communication strategies, which can be challenging when employees are physically disconnected. HR practitioners can facilitate this by helping managers to reassure employees about what their role is, where their responsibilities lie and why they are a crucial part of the team.



### Balancing technology with the human touch

While communication is a deeply rooted human attribute, in the new normal, technology is, and will increasingly be, the facilitator for these interpersonal connections. However, the proliferation of communication platforms and the choices they offer should enhance, instead of complicate, the way managers and employees collaborate with and respond to each other. Everyone should be able to feel at ease with the platforms they use.

When deciding which digital tools work best for a team, it is important to determine the needs of the team first. It is essential to focus on the right skills mix with fit-for-purpose technology, rather than acquire technology in the race towards digitisation. Remote working doesn't mean employees have to be disconnected from the rest of

the team. The implementation of the right technology can help to create an engaging, human experience, enhancing the potential of employees to co-create as they strive together toward shared goals. 