



Keeping the Rope Tight:

Innovative ways to implement and improve remote management

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Keeping the rope tight is a phrase coined by Lean Thinker and innovator Paul Akers. As an innovator, Paul is passionate about delivering value and removing waste in systems. It is appropriate that this current disrupter gives us the chance to re-jig the benefits of remote working and to question just how much system "junk" is present.

Curiosity...where
it all starts
Paul Akers

Conventional wisdom, status, power plays and a lack of trust have meant the office is the place so many organisations expect their people to turn up to daily, on time and work (and be seen to be working). And, being tribal, the office is also a social place, a hub where we gather around the coffee machine and share stories about events or other people.



So, is this the death of the office?

No, the office is important and is here to stay. However, as The Economist points out, there has been a slow adjustment in thinking about the conventional office for some time. With over 60% of employees in the US working remotely at least part of the time, a recent Gallup

survey showed 55% of managers have indicated, post Covid-19, they will change their office workplace policies to provide increased flexibility for remote working. These could be things like more days for working from home, greater emphasis on staggered in-office times to reduce frustration with crowded roads and public transport, etc. The survey also found over half the employees surveyed would like the freedom to work from home more often. Of course, there are some industries where working from home is just not possible.

Agile firms will use this disrupter to accelerate the shift and do so in more innovative ways. Large firms having high cost inner city buildings with increasingly longer employee commute times and the vast majority of employees having no customer interface makes no sense at all with modern digital technology and the increased desire for more flexible working arrangements.



The Right Mind



The office of the future

Already some of our clients are evaluating localised “hubs” where there is access to high quality digital facilities such a virtual training and meeting rooms with multiple screens, etc. These “hubs” will be in suburban and regional business centres reducing travel time, rents and inner-city congestion.

Communicating remotely

However, the big change will come from how we communicate. This is the heart of success or failure. This means overcoming one of the great barriers: a lack of trust. Global leader, Stephen M.R. Covey (and author of “The Speed of Trust”) suggests we build trust through four keystone principles. These are:

1. Address the current reality – whatever that may be;
2. Be absolute in your transparency;
3. Talk straight – be truthful and deal with the facts; and
4. Extend trust.

For example, our work over the past 30 years has consistently demonstrated there is an embedded lack of trust in having a Head of a Division or other senior staff not based in Head Office. Our coaching work has verified this lack of trust time and time again.

Sure, poor technologies in the past have frustrated these attempts, however in today’s world these are no longer barriers.

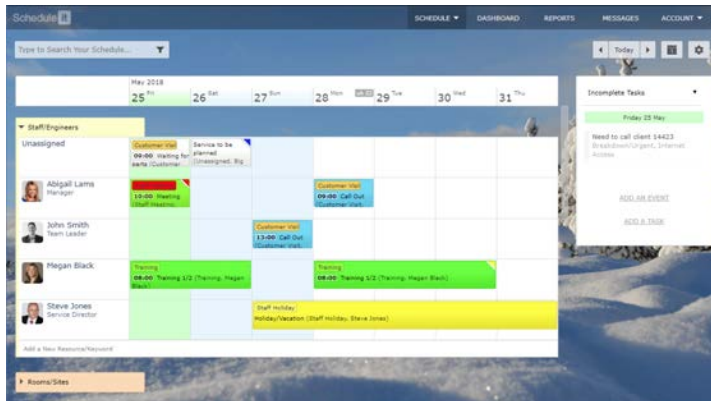
Establishing the pulse of deep communication and connection

First, be open and available for deep communication with your team. The five fundamentals that we find work exceptionally well are shown below.

Excellence in Communication: The Big Five		
	Do more	Do less
1. Timing	Ensuring the time is right for the particular conversation	Avoiding conversations Saying it because it suits you
2. Be Present	Being truly present to the person	Pretending your listening
3. No Judgement	Listen with curiosity	Interrupting
4. Acknowledgement	Acknowledging their points of view	Jumping straight into your view
5. Questions	Ask more engaging questions	Making statements



The Right Mind



Structure to win

Three of the biggest barriers to effective remote organisational management are:

1. **No regular time for scheduled meetings.** Far too many people double-book, cancel, turn up late or just don't turn up at all to meetings. The average meeting starts about 5-10 minutes late and then runs over time or worse rushes

through the latter items on the agenda with poor evaluation and discussion.

2. **Poor execution of meetings.** A Bain & Co survey showed most managers spend at least 20 hours a week in meetings. Over the course of a lifetime that amounts to nearly five full years. If we were to do a collective ROI on people's investment in these meeting time inputs, we can guarantee the Board would want a substantive improvement! And if face-to-face meetings are bad enough, virtual meetings can be a lot worse and this is the fear of many people. To keep people's attention in virtual meetings, sharpness, focus, relevance and progress are key fundamentals. Continually questioning the effectiveness of meetings assists in improvements. What is the purpose of this meeting? What can I contribute? Did we achieve the outcome we set? Was the meeting well chaired? Did we stick to the agenda? Was the agenda relevant? Etc.

If the effectiveness of meetings were to be monitored as rigorously as ROI, the outcome would be pretty dismal.

3. **Lack of consistent and effective follow-through.** Lax follow-up communication results in a loose system. We are seeing the rise and effective use of interactive Workflow platforms (like Confluence, Miro, Asana, Monday, Riddle, etc.) that incorporates good planning, tracking of deliverables, completion and team inputs with live chats etc.

4. **Not focusing on how to close the gap.** To change this mindset, execution specialists focus on what we have to do to catch up. Debriefing is essential. What we see is far less time being spent on getting the team to develop their own catch up strategies, taking ownership and generating what we call team leadership (where each member is responsible for and leads the outcomes). We have teams develop their 90-day, monthly, weekly priorities and establish clarity in monitoring progress.

In conclusion

Managing remote teams requires a different mindset by leaders. When done effectively it is very rewarding for both leaders and team members. As we enter the world of increased remoteness, organisations who adapt to the new leadership style and have the discipline to integrate effective workplace technologies and tools will be the winners.

TRM specialises in working with remote teams. Our *Excellence in Execution*TM program is used by many clients with great success.

Please contact us, if you are curious about knowing more about how we do this – info@therightmind.com.au