

ADVISOR

Leading with Intent in a Remote/Hybrid World

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I often train and work with senior leaders in organizations that have moved or are moving to a remote/hybrid way of working. One question always presents itself when we talk about how this has affected their leadership style:

“ Everyone from executives to consultants and coaches keeps telling me I need to change my style of leadership now that we are in a remote or hybrid work environment, where my team members are not physically present in the same location. That’s great, but what does that actually mean and what do I need to do?

In this *Advisor*, I have distilled some of the “how” from leadership workshops that I have run and have been useful to others so that you, as leaders, may find something that assists you in your journey.

Leading with Intent

Moving to “leading with intent” is one of the key changes that I see in leaders and organizations that are successfully riding the wave of change that remote/hybrid work has brought about.

Leading with intent is a style of leadership that focuses on facilitating the development and success of team members by creating a collaborative and supportive environment. In a remote or hybrid work environment, where team members may not be physically present in the same location, it is even more important for leaders to adopt a “leading with intent”-based leadership style in order to foster a sense of connection and collaboration among team members.

Eight key elements of leading with intent are particularly relevant in a remote or hybrid workplace:

1. **Communication.** In a remote or hybrid work environment, effective communication is crucial for ensuring that team members are able to stay connected and collaborate effectively. Leaders must make an effort to ensure that all team members have the information they need to do their jobs and to stay informed about what is happening within the team. They must also create space and opportunities for team members to communicate and share ideas (e.g., through regular meetings devoted solely to this activity or virtual team-building activities).
2. **Trust.** Trust is a fundamental foundation for any team, but it can be especially challenging to establish and maintain in a remote or hybrid work environment. Leading with intent requires leaders to work on building trust by being transparent, reliable, and consistent in their communication and actions. They must also give team members the freedom to take ownership of their work and make decisions, while also providing guidance and support as needed.
3. **Flexibility.** In a remote or hybrid work environment, it is important for leaders to be flexible and adaptable in order to accommodate the needs of team members. This may mean allowing team members to work at different times or from different locations or being open to new ways of working that may be more effective in this environment. To do so, leaders must be open to exploring new approaches and technologies that can help support collaborative and productive teams.

4. Empathy. Empathy is an important quality for any leader, but it is particularly important in a remote or hybrid work environment where team members may feel isolated or disconnected from one another. Leaders need to make an effort to understand and respond to the needs and concerns of their team members and to create a supportive and inclusive environment. To do so requires a real intention to create an enabling environment rather than simply providing support when support is needed.
5. Community. In a remote or hybrid work environment, it can be easy for team members to feel isolated or disconnected from one another. Leaders can foster a sense of community within their team by promoting regular communication and connection and by organizing virtual team-building activities or social events.
6. Collaboration. Leaders recognize that collaboration is key to the success of any team, and they work to create opportunities for team members to collaborate and share ideas. This may involve using more interactive collaboration tools than the usual corporate platforms — virtual whiteboards, instant messaging applications, virtual brainstorming sessions, and so on. Leaders must also look beyond the tools and harness the power of simply encouraging team members to work together and support one another.
7. Clear expectations and goals. It is important when leading with intent to set clear expectations and goals for team members and to provide the resources and support they need to achieve these goals.
8. Be asynchronous. Effective leaders identify what can be communicated and reported asynchronously and understand that they do not need to be in every meeting or interaction. While it may seem counterintuitive, asynchronous working actually improves collaboration among team members. Interactions become more focused, shorter, less frenzied, and more value-oriented.

This is a small window into a much larger conversation that can start the move to “how might we?” I hope that you find this useful.