

# WORDS OF WISDOM

HOW TO BE AT YOUR BEST IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

THE  
GROSSMAN  
GROUP

In this unprecedented time, the way we stay connected, engaged and motivated professionally is changing. We polled some clients and other smart folks in our network, and here are some of their tips on how to embrace a new way of working:



## Communicate consistently

- "Daily emails to all staff and weekday phone calls with all directors."
- "I have kept a constant open line of communication and actually probably talking to my people even more now than I was...trying to keep a handle on the 'pulse' of how they are doing."
- "If one person is brave enough to ask the question, there are four or forty other people with the same question, who didn't ask."
- "Increase communication, hold informal coffee breaks online where colleagues and peers can drop in for an informal chat 15 minutes at least once per day."
- "A 15-20-minute daily huddle with the team by video...allows time to share key messages or answer questions that popped up over the last 24 hours."
- "Recently I got the advice to over communicate. Basically, if they (staff, volunteers, board) haven't heard something 7 times, it's not enough. At a time like this, someone in my position can't communicate enough."
- "Initiated a weekly newsletter mainly put together by staff. Also incorporated a weekly video message from myself to the team."



## Be empathetic and demonstrate your human side

- "Acknowledge the feelings that are present for you while also considering how others are feeling."
- "Reaching out to other team members when you hear/observe someone 'down.' Be an authentic and empathetic leader."
- "Ask with the intention of hearing...not of speaking."
- "I've tried to use humor to show how we are all going through this together. Also, I've attempted to emphasize my personal caring for teammates safety."
- "I think it is important to acknowledge the anxiety that people are feeling and also that we are in uncharted territory and so no one knows what the future holds."
- "I've established a weekly 'Engagement' meeting with the team where we come together to connect as humans – no work talk allowed. The 45 minute meeting begins with a quick emotional check-in and then we participate in a variety of light-hearted topic discussions or activities...This can range from a few rounds of 20 Questions to a colleague-led cooking demo, and even a group discussion about a previously assigned book or movie. We've 'branded' these meetings as our 'Boomerang Meetings' because you get back what you are willing to put in."
- "At the end of each day week, ask each team member to share what they Loved, Learned and Lamented about that week. Organic way to build psychological safety while learning what's really going on with them."
- "I have been sending handwritten notes to employees recognizing the challenges they are facing and thanking them for something work related. These seem to be very well received by most. While it is old school in this digital rich world, it is nice to receive something that feels a little more personal every once in a while."



## Embrace different virtual platforms to stay connected

- "Weekly all-employee WebEx town halls to provide updates and allow people to ask questions."
- "Every Digital meeting > video on."
- "Find time for 'virtual lunch/coffee break' to create natural flow of information outside of scheduled business meetings; turn off various channels to control time."
- "Hosting 'Ask Us Anything' sessions using Pigeonhole (anonymous and questions can be voted up so we're answering what's on the most employees' minds); hosting small group, virtual coffees with our president has been a ray of sunshine/great way for cross-pollination between sites while most people are working remotely."
- "Using Google Drive for the documents."

If you're looking to elevate how your leaders lead with heart and get results during these times of significant change and uncertainty, contact us:



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## Be honest and transparent

- "Lots of knowledge sharing and willingness to say, 'I have no idea how this will work, let's try it!'"
- "For the things that I cannot be sure about, I specify that what I communicate is how I foresee the development of the situation and I ask colleagues for comments and suggestions."
- "Be honest with people. Don't just repeat the Company Line. Share your personal concerns and look for opportunities to be optimistic."
- "Transparency helps keep employees on the same side as the company."
- "Answer questions we do know, and ask for time for the ones we are not ready to answer."



## Help manage information overload

- "I learned a long time ago that people can absorb and react appropriately to bad news if the content and the messenger are credible. Tell the truth. Be consistent. Rely on experts. Deal with facts. It's really not complicated. It starts with doing and saying what's right."
- "Connect any communication with why - with the vision - make ourselves aware of it before any task, meeting, mail, call..."
- "Short, bullet-pointed, well thought out emails are best. Stay focused, don't share stuff that doesn't matter right now."



## Keep it light, focus on the positive when appropriate

- "Emails with links to uplifting stories and videos during the crisis."
- "Generate posts with positive content on social media about what is the academia, the public and private sector doing to assist the emergency."
- "Virtual happy hours: end of day Friday, we have happy hour by video with drinks of choice in hand."
- "The power of positive self-talk. If we ourselves are not in a positive frame of mind, it is very difficult to communicate in a positive, caring way with the people around us."
- "Celebrate success!"
- "Performance & Recognition emails every Monday morning."



## Leverage your leadership

- "Leaders who are relatable and compassionate help us to feel more connected and less fearful. A dose of appropriate humor is also appreciated."
- "Increasing executive engagement on social media: commenting/sharing on work from home posts, and being part of the conversation."
- "Lead, do not manage."
- "Our CEO is writing brief all-employee messages 2-3 times a week, updating about the business side and also providing thanks and encouragement. These are included along with tips/tricks for work/life balance both from outside resources and employees sharing with each other."
- "Leadership perspectives - ability for small cross functional teams to hear from different leaders across the organization."



## Check attitude & assumptions at the (video chat) door

- "On Skype calls, I have tried to adjust my questioning style to be exception-based. For example, instead of saying, 'does everyone agree?' I say, 'does anyone not agree?' This seems to help."
- "Don't be overly directive and don't be a know it all. If you have an idea of exactly how something should be done, communicate it as an option. Solicit team member input."



## Take advantage of new time to get through your to-do list and learn

- "My team is utilizing this time to get trained on their technical & non-technical skills. We made a list of training programs that were part of their own development plan and are reaching out to internal & external experts to conduct short training sessions for the team."