

LEADING VIRTUAL TEAMS



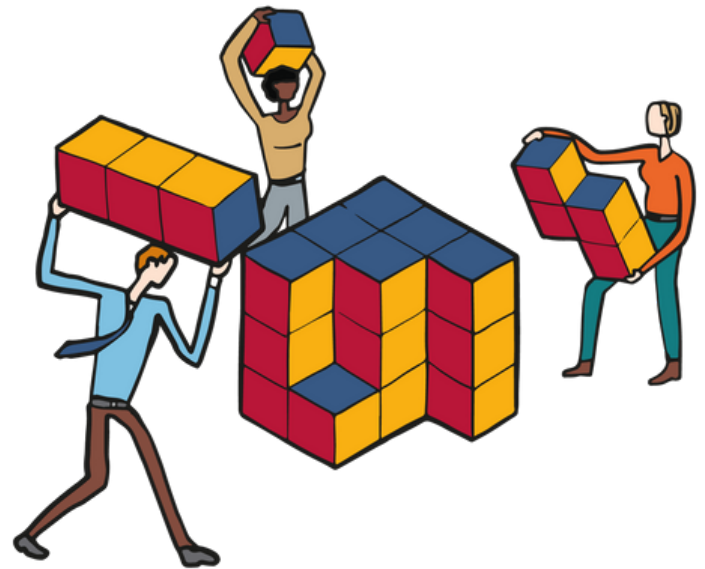
CONTENT

Here to stay: working from home and hybrid working

“How do we work together in a good, motivated, meaningful, productive and value-adding way?” This question has always been a challenge for managers and their teams. Now the new work situation for many people caught between working from home and going to the office with constant digital collaboration and only a few face-to-face contacts present each individual and manager with new, unfamiliar areas of competence and action, especially in their professional role. And in the meantime it has become clear: there will never be a return to full-time office working life.

It has become clear that this new way of working has a profound influence on people’s psychological well-being. Digital stress, the need for digital fitness, the merging of private and professional life all cause an increase in psycho-social stress. So how to deal with it? This is one of the core questions we deal with in our daily work with teams and managers.

This is the trigger and reason for us to provide a collection of practical tips and implementation aids here. Maybe not all of our ideas are directly suited to your situation. Try out what works well for you, exchange your impressions and change what you find useful so that you can find your own individual way of dealing with the ‘new’ world of work.



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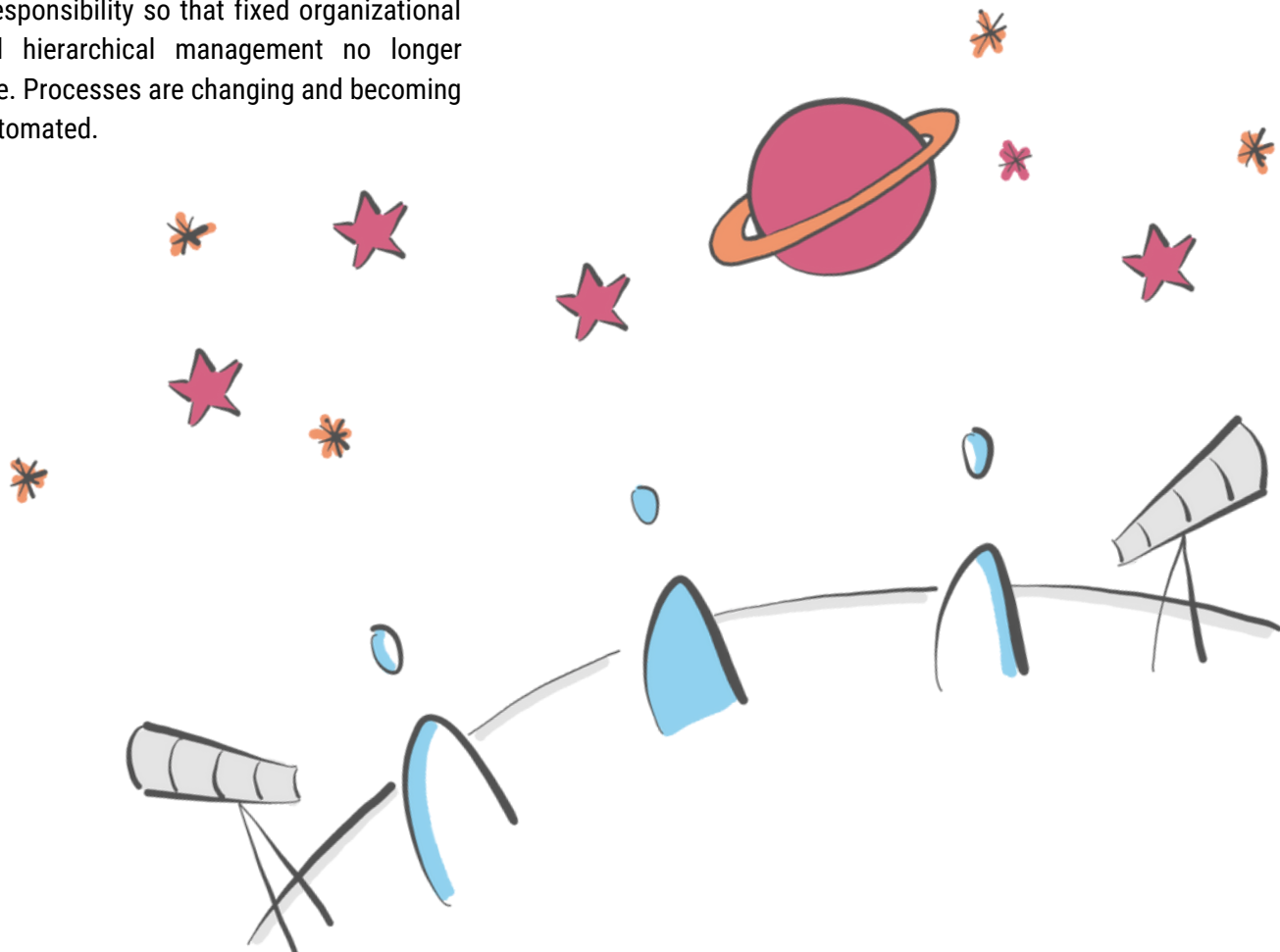
COLLABORATION AND MEETING CULTURE

1 THE CHALLENGES OF THE WORLD OF WORK 4.0

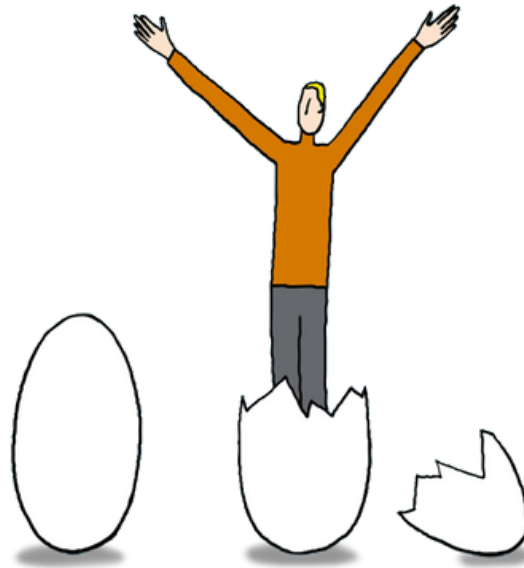
In the past two years, the world of work has supposedly been turned upside down. Covid-19 and the related pandemic have imposed an experiment on all of us that has posed major challenges for individuals and organizations as a whole. The status quo in terms of workplace digitization, the hostile attitude of some companies to working from home and the lack of experience of many managers and team members in working remotely have contributed to the fact that, at first, it seemed inconceivable that this situation could be mastered.

This is only too understandable because a significant change was on its way. The digital workplace means that working can be made independent of time and location restraints and thus shakes up the '9 to 5' working model. Individual employees are given more freedom and responsibility so that fixed organizational structures and hierarchical management no longer seem up to date. Processes are changing and becoming increasingly automated.

Technological change requires lifelong learning to keep up with processes and demands. Digitalization is being greatly accelerated. This creates many opportunities for the whole of industry and the economy but there are also many challenges for the whole workforce. In our experience, many managers struggle with these challenges and ask themselves questions such as: "What does it take to seize these opportunities and what role will I have as a leader?" - "How can I design my work to meet the needs of my employees?".



2 NEW DEMANDS ON LEADERSHIP?



Now we are talking about a new world of work. A world of work 4.0, driven by a global crisis. The characteristics of this new world of work are not all that new because comprehensive changes in the forms of work and working conditions have become a major topic both in the industrial sector and in the wider world of work as a whole, at the very latest with the introduction of the approaches of New Work. In essence, it is about changes and how to approach them sustainably. No matter whether leading virtually, remotely or at a distance - it is always about leadership. Leadership as a function and a shared mental model. It's more about the interactions with people than about the leader her/himself. It is important to consciously design the framework for successful collaborative work and then to make use of the possibilities of virtual interaction to this end.

When do we communicate asynchronously and exclusively by e-mail, when do we communicate asynchronously and inclusively by chat function in a collaborative environment, which topics are tackled with each other in video conferences, how do we create agenda-free exchange with each other and how do we ensure that emotions find enough space in the team and nobody gets left behind in virtual nirvana or the home office?

Together with the much-vaunted efficiency of virtual work, the human need for closeness, contact and relationships must also be brought into balance and trust must be created and maintained as the basis of successful team performance through virtual interactions.

3

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

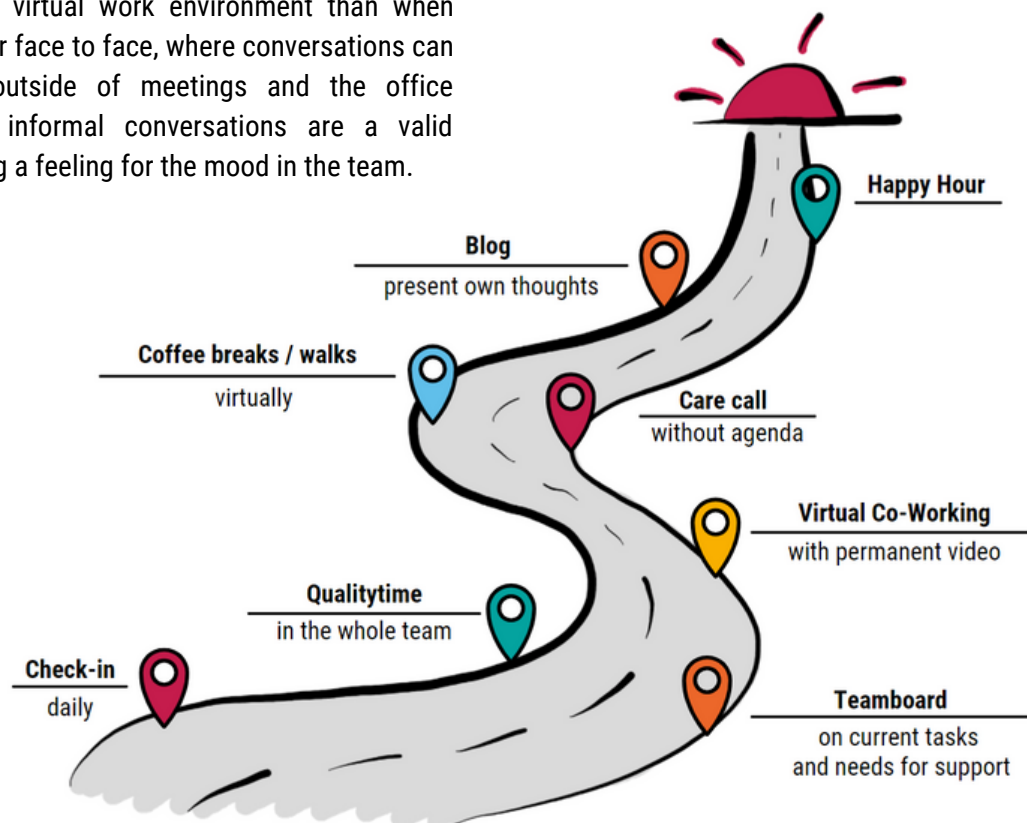
LEADING AT A DISTANCE

As a leader, you are responsible for facing the challenges of your work environment and taking preventive measures to counteract the possible negative consequences of physical separation both for yourself and your team.

Stay visible and actively shape the framework.

One of the biggest challenges for leaders when it comes to remote leadership is the lack of direct contact with their employees. The idea of 'staying visible and approachable' is also more difficult to implement in a virtual work environment than when working together face to face, where conversations can also be had outside of meetings and the office grapevine and informal conversations are a valid means of getting a feeling for the mood in the team.

In your role as a manager, you are always a change facilitator by supporting your employees and taking them with you on the development journey. As paradoxical as it may sound, it is important to provide orientation in the face of these changes. The following tips are intended to help you find your way by providing suggestions as to which specific activities you can use to ensure good conditions in a changing world of work and to be not only effective in your leadership role in a virtual environment, but also visible.



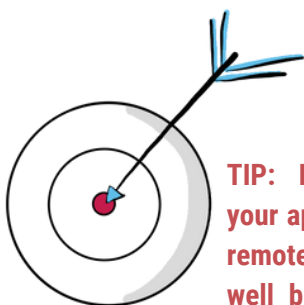
"How do I remain visible as a leader?"

YOUR VIRTUAL STAGE

Leadership also takes place outside of meetings. Especially when you are leading a remote team – with the lack of chance meetings - it is crucial to remain present outside of official meetings. This is also to ensure that the thoughts and plans of the leader are understandable for the team.

This is what you need:

- Awareness of the fact that that you are always on stage and being watched. Paying attention to your leadership presence is crucial.
- Awareness of the power of your language - even small comments have an impact and there are few opportunities to correct comments when interacting virtually with your team.
- Feedback from your team on how your presence is perceived there.
- Time to think and develop ideas.



TIP: Plan and design your appearances on the remote leadership stage well because not much happens spontaneously here.

Ideas for your stage as a leader:

Use the idea of the 'open door' as a guide. A calendar with free times when there is the possibility to speak to you spontaneously by video or audio call.

Use internal or public blogs and chat channels as communication channels to express your ideas, concerns and feelings.

Have regular one-on-ones with your team to stay in touch concerning individual work processes but also to ask people to give you feedback.

Communicate your objectives clearly and unambiguously so that the team can understand your activities.

Develop and communicate basic principles that guide your leadership actions.

Employees also interpret silence, disappearance or hiding as leadership behavior. So make sure you make the implicit explicit.

Pay attention to the general tone of e-mail and chat messages and communicate in a considered way yourself.

If you receive irritating signals, assume that the person concerned did not intend to hurt you.

If an e-mail unsettles you, ask for a telephone call to clear things up.

Ask questions and listen carefully to understand the other person's needs, e.g. "Tell me how you came to this conclusion so that I can understand it."

“How do I hear all the voices and perspectives in my team?”

ACTIVE LISTENING

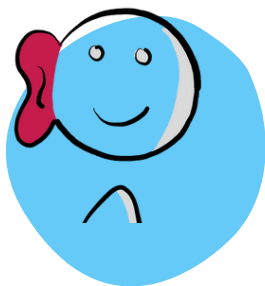
“Seek first to understand before you make yourself understood.” Active listening helps you to really find out what the people in the team have to say.

Show your employees that they are heard. It will encourage them to share ideas and feedback openly. Start right away in your next conversation or meeting. Take your time and be present in the moment.

Meet your counterpart with a spirit of inquiry. Clear your head of your own ideas and thoughts. Be curious about what others know and perceive.

Explore your shared understanding of the matter by repeating what was said in your own words.

Observe your counterpart appreciatively and try to understand him or her at an emotional level.



Listen actively
With full concentration

- Avoid external disruptive factors. Leave your phone in your pocket, leave your computer on standby, and make sure the room is quiet.
- Adopt a facing posture and consciously seek eye contact.
- Signal your attention with gestures and affirmative words.



Paraphrasing
Repeat relevant content

- Repeat the key statements in your own words: “Let me summarize what I’ve understood...”
- Deepen the content that seems important: “So you mean...”
- Ask if you understood things correctly. “If I got that right now...”



Verbalize
Mirroring perceived feelings

- Reflect back your perception of your counterpart’s feelings and evaluations.
- Address feelings openly.
- Take care to word your assumptions as such: “So you’re afraid that ..”; “It sounds as if you were really annoyed...”



“How do I create clarity about goals, roles and processes in the entire team?”

GRIP Reflection

<p>GOALS</p> <p>Why does our team exist? What is our purpose and our mission? What is our vision? What are our goals? How will our performance be evaluated? By whom? Who is affected by our work? What are the interests and goals of the actors?</p>	<p>ROLES</p> <p>Who has which role in the team? Who is responsible for what? Do all team members have the same understanding of their role? Do all team members feel empowered to fulfil their role and take action? How do I understand my role as a leader? Will my understanding be seen and understood by everyone?</p>
<p>PROCESSES</p> <p>What value-adding processes do we have? How do we direct and control them? How do we ensure the appropriate flow of information? How can we make decision-making processes as effective as possible?</p>	<p>INTERACTIONS</p> <p>How do we want to deal with each other as a team? Which principles, values and rules will guide us? How do we ensure that all team members can express their views, thoughts and feelings freely? How do we make the most of our differences? How do we resolve conflicts?</p>

Provide yourself and your team a clear and shared picture of your goals, roles, interactions and processes. Reflect on the different perspectives and ideas covered by these dimensions. Discuss this constructively with your team and achieve a common understanding that is shared by everyone.

This is how you do it

Step 1: Use the GRIP model to reflect for yourself:

- How do you see the goals, roles and responsibilities, processes and interactions that make up your team?
- What picture emerges?
- In your opinion, where are there still ambiguities?
- How clear is this picture to your team?

Step 2: Find out the team's perspective. Create a common GRIP for the team. Share your point of view with the team and, if necessary, discuss open points and questions so that you develop a common understanding of the points that are important to you.

What you will need:

The visualized GRIP model

If possible: a facilitator who can guide the team through the process.



"ARE YOU OK?"

COMMUNITY AND TRUST

In the past, it was unfamiliar or even unusual to ask employees how they were feeling. There were too many reservations to enter the private sphere. Now, after many months of remote collaboration, it has become clear how important it is to be sensitive to signals of stress and tension in the team. Secluded work in a home office, often with the double burden of home schooling and family care coupled with the widespread feeling of having to be "constantly switched on" in the home office, all too often leads to overload, burnout or even depression. Straightforward questions such as "Is something bothering you?" or "How are things at home and is there anything you need to make things easier?" can then be a helpful door opener for an exchange of needs, worries and fears of individuals or of the team as a whole.

What can preventively help us in the team? So that profound imbalances do not arise in the first place, self-care and treating one another with care are important skills that can be cultivated by each individual and by entire teams. Because it is by no means impossible to maintain and build mutual trust even in remote teams and to strengthen team spirit. What you need for this is some time that you take explicitly and together to find and shape your style, your culture in your team on these aspects of cooperation. Ask yourself questions such as: "How do we get in touch and create a feeling of being connected?", "How do we stay motivated in the team?", or "What space do we have to talk to each other outside of projects and day-to-day business?" Here are a few ideas from our practical experience at Movendo to inspire you.



"How much time do we take for our team health?"

REGULAR TEAM ROUTINES

Because personal exchange is either missing in teams working remotely or can only take place at a very limited time, it is important to establish different routines in the team in order to be able to lead at a distance. These routines foster regular exchange with everyone in the team and help you to understand how the individual team members are doing at that moment. It is beneficial for the team culture that, in addition to the business or project-related points of contact, such regular meetings deliberately offer additional (free) space for the exchange of moods, emotions and needs for support, ideas, etc. First of all, reflect together on your current team situation and consider where such regular team routines can be incorporated.

Examples of possible formats:

A daily written check-in on a platform that you as a team already use. There you can post many things that you would otherwise exchange in the office with a quick 'peek through the door' - for example your current to-dos, but also feelings and relevant private topics.

Team update meetings to share information about current workload, ideas, observations, etc.

Individual exchange without an agenda. As a manager, for example, you can call your employees at regular intervals without an agenda, just to ask how they are doing.

Topics of such formats could be, for example:

- How is everyone on the team doing with their workload?
- What are the current topics?
- How is the team experiencing overall and individual collaboration at the moment?
- What is on everyone's mind personally and concerning the team?

It is important that you choose formats that suit your team. Start with one format first and simply try it out.

QUALITY TIME

Set a time window of 1 hour in your calendars each week that you will use for the agenda-free exchange of ideas in the team.

Monday morning can be a good time to start the week together after the weekend.

Please note that this time should not be used to talk about work topics but rather to share personal impressions, experience and thoughts with each other.

In addition to an open exchange, topics for Quality Time could be: How are you doing after the weekend? How was your weekend? Did you do anything special?



"How do we celebrate success and appreciate good performance?"

CASE OF PRAISE

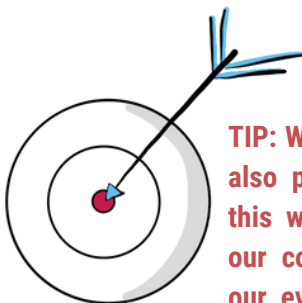
A project has come to an end. You have finally been awarded the contract after a drawn-out bidding process? Taking time for such milestones and appreciating these successes as a team strengthens the feeling of belonging and at the same time helps motivation for the next steps.

This is what you need:

It is helpful if you provide prepared kudos cards for each team member in the meeting. You can visualize these as PPT slides or on a MURAL board.

This is how you do it:

Give yourselves enough time in an online meeting to think about the best moments of a project together. Each team member then writes a special appreciation for their colleagues on a Kudos card for everyone to see on a shared slide or on a MURAL board. By taking screenshots or downloading the slides, each team member can take their personal Kudos card with them and leave the project with positive feelings and a reinforced team spirit.



TIP: What we call a 'TaDa' list has also proved valuable for us. For this we use the chat function in our collaboration tool. We share our everyday successes with the team in small posts and keep them visible and transparent for everyone along the way.

TAKE A HELICOPTER FLIGHT TO THE META LEVEL

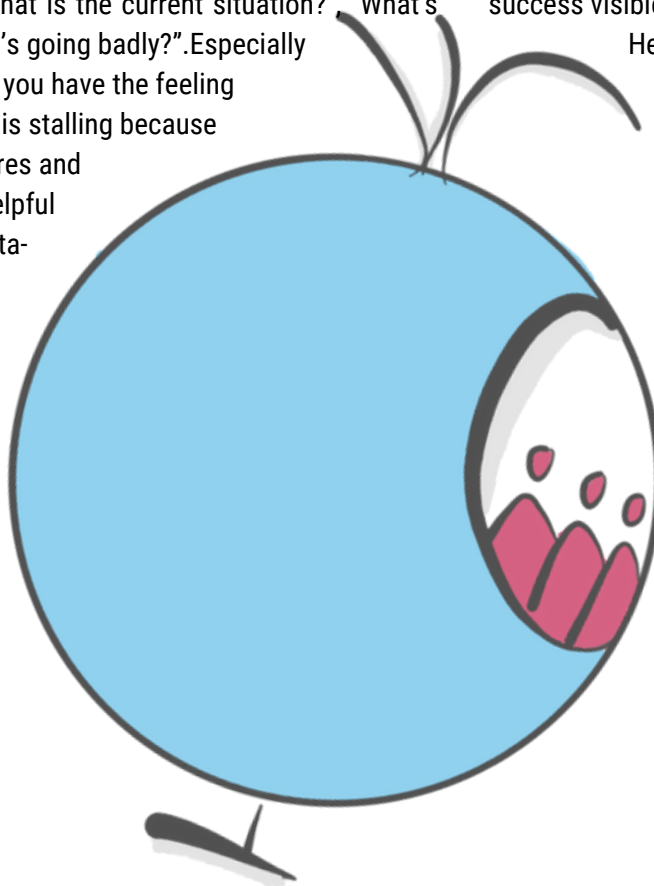
COLLABORATION AND MEETING CULTURE

In a hybrid work environment, the challenge often lies in deciding what to focus on. Do you now focus on goal setting or on creating an effective meeting structure?

It is important to take a different perspective as a team or for yourself and to reflect on your own processes and to ask yourself, "What is the current situation?" "What's going well and what's going badly?". Especially in situations where you have the feeling that work progress is stalling because of a lack of structures and agreements, it is helpful to reflect at the meta-level and to look at the whole thing from the helicopter perspective.

Communication also plays a major role in maintaining a positive meeting culture. The frequency of communication is crucial here. Constantly listening to the team and, if necessary, setting specific points of communication helps to create a rhythm or heartbeat that promotes transparency, creates trust and makes success visible.

Here, too, we have put together a few ideas from our practical experience for you..



"How do we create a good meeting culture?"

TEAM HEARTBEAT

The communication structure of a team can be understood as a heartbeat that keeps you going as a team. The rhythm of the heartbeat represents the frequency of your various touchpoints. The topics of the touchpoints determine the intensity. Establish a regular and solid communication structure for yourselves to ensure that current work processes and progress are transparent, successes and next steps remain visible to everyone involved and the sense of responsibility for everyone is strengthened. A good structure for your team communication helps to make everyone visible with their work situation, their needs, successes and worries, to reduce insecurities and to strengthen mutual trust.

Schedule a meeting to discuss and reflect on your team's heartbeat.

It is helpful if one person takes over the facilitation of the meeting. Document the results of the meeting in a digital form that can be made available to everyone.

This is what you need:

Brainstorming on the question: What touchpoints (virtual and face-to-face) do we need as a team to ensure good, solid and effective communication?

Develop and agree on a session/meeting structure that includes all the important touch points and thus reflects the heartbeat of your team.

Examples of topics of such meetings:

- Weekly status meeting
- Daily 'stand-ups'
- Group discussions
- Regular retrospectives

In any case, make use of your digital collaboration tools as an asynchronous platform; for example, for a news channel.



"How do we facilitate effective online team meetings?"

FACILITATION

Facilitation describes a special way of running meetings in which we invite, inspire, encourage and shape changes together. The metaphor of taking a flight goes very well with this.

Prepare the setting

TAKE OFF

- Schedule time for technology check
- Send tutorials for new digital tools to participants
- Set up camera at eye level
- Set up lighting from the front

Build a relationship

TAKE OFF

- Announce tools and forms of participation
- Activate participation with small tasks in advance (ideas, questions, objects).
- Start with a check-in. Suggestions for questions: <https://icebreaker.range.co>, <https://checkin.daresay.io>

Enable work readiness

TAKE OFF

- The check-in can also be used to focus on the content, e.g. with a question that sets the mood for the goal of the meeting.
- Create orientation and transparency: Agenda, times, people/roles, rules of the game, overview of the meeting process.

Methods, for more participation, goal-oriented discussions and highflyers:

- Be brief and ask everyone to be brief as well.
- Limit presentation time to max. 15 minutes; as few slides as possible; ask questions.
- Agree on a signal for requests to speak (hand signal, speaking object)
- Address silent participants directly; stop talking at length.
- Use the chat e.g., for collecting ideas or queries.
- Deal with silence confidently, 5 second rule.

FLIGHT

- Use interactive whiteboards: MIRO or MURAL.
- Use gamification, creative scales (<https://www.pinterest.de/trudywoo/mood-scales/>).
- Use polling tools, e.g., Mentimeter.
- Have people give elevator pitches on key issues.
- Appoint court jester or advocate diaboli.

FLIGHT

A pleasant landing

LANDING

- Close contents well: summarise results, give space for concluding questions, agree on next steps and clarify who does what and by when.
- Collect feedback: Wishes for next time, ask about the quality of the meeting with a survey tool.
- Say goodbye on the relationship level: "How will I leave this meeting? Variations with creative scales, symbols, metaphors



Six tried and tested recommendations for virtual meetings

1 ALWAYS turn on your camera.

Facial expression
Body language
Moods
Recognizable background
Greater attention

- ▶▶▶ Better relationship
- ▶▶▶ Easier to build trust

2 The right framing

Camera at eye level - no 'worm's eye' view
Upper body & head full screen up to just before the upper edge
Clothing contrasting with the background
Business context = business look
What can you see in the background?
Provides thought provokers and discussion starters for informal topics. What impression do you want to make?
How you frame yourself ALWAYS conveys something - think beforehand and check!

3 Check-in suggestions

Check-in questions have two functions:

- Technical check
- Create social presence & closeness



"What do you see when you look out the window?"



"How was your day so far?"
condensed into a hashtag

4 Tips to activate the group

Maintain eye contact, your conversation partner is the camera (A post-it can help you maintain the sight line)
Opening questions: "How do you see it?" "What do you think?"
Appreciative summary: "It's good that you make that clear again,"
REALLY listen (signal approval)
Edit documents together (e.g. in MS Teams)
After max. 1 hour: plan short breaks
Use polls e.g. ask about the current mood

5 Dealing with unforeseen glitches

Be prepared for the fact that things don't always work out
Keep calm and relaxed - we are all only human...
Address glitches ("Now I can't share my screen...!")
Ask the group directly for solutions
Keep your sense of humor
If nothing else works: take a short bio break

6 Concluding the meeting

Summarize next steps
Get feedback, e.g. about
- Live feedback in turn (up to 8 pax.)
- Questions for the chat ("What went well for you today?"
- What could we do differently next time?")
- #Hashtag "How am I doing?" write on a piece of paper and hold it up to the camera
Check-out (little personal small talk)
Thank you and see you soon! And be the last to leave.

"LEADERSHIP MEANS CREATING A FRAMEWORK IN WHICH OTHERS CAN PERFORM."

When we talk about leadership and leadership principles at Movendo, this statement serves as an effective guiding principle. Its added value lies above all in the request to decouple the focus of leadership from the individual person and their performance in order to take a closer look at the respective environments, i.e. the working conditions and the interactions between those involved. From this perspective, therefore, leadership actions are aimed at shaping the dynamics in the team, at creating a shared direction and at the development of an open and trusting atmosphere and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in order to maintain efficiency in teamwork. To find solutions, we have to be open to trying out thought experiments, breaking old rules and patterns and consistently focusing on what moves us forward. With Movendo you meet your specific challenges in an innovative way, you experiment with solutions and create effective scenarios for sustainable personal and entrepreneurial development.



If you would like to deal more intensively with your role and responsibility as a leader on the virtual stage, we would be pleased to support you with our coaching offer THE COACH IS IN. Here we offer you quick and easy access to coaching. If you are interested, follow this link to our website. [THE COACH IS IN](#)

Movendo is Portuguese and means “moving, being in motion”. The company name conveys the conviction that in an increasingly complex world, it is individual and organizational flexibility that has a lasting influence on success. Movendo has been getting people and organizations moving since 2011 and supporting them in projects relating to leadership development and transformation design. The Movendo team has now supported more than 50,000 managers from large and medium-sized companies in reacting flexibly and agilely to new challenges and in developing themselves further.



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