

Learning and development online courses for employees and managers in the Covid-19 era

Overview

The advent of Covid-19 has placed significant pressure on colleagues in all organisations. A key feature of the crisis is that more people find themselves working from home with little certainty about when, how and if, they will return to some sort of 'office life'.

Working remotely from colleagues presents all kinds challenges - for employees, for managers and for teams.

The three online workshops described below have drawn on the latest available evidence and thinking about what helps home-workers to be productive, effective and to protect their well-being.

For managers getting used to supervising staff remotely, there are tips and strategies to create the conditions for individuals to their best, and let go of management 'by observation'.

Maintaining the integrity, purpose and identify of a team is covered in the third workshop, recognising that a team is much more than the sum of its parts.

The content of these workshops is continually updated to take account of new, emerging research themes and the frequently changing Covid-19 restrictions.

An interactive and engaging approach

Every effort is made to ensure that the workshops are lively and interactive, and as much like being 'together in real life' as possible. That's partly style and approach but also the use of technology to maximum effect.

We use a secure Zoom room because it provides an intuitive and versatile delivery platform (there is no need to download the app to access Zoom.)

To keep participants engaged we used a mix of plenary discussions (all parties are visible to each other), virtual breakout rooms, presentation slides and videos, participatory polls and other online participation tools.

Sessions are 2.5 hours long and include a ten minute break during which participants are encouraged to move about, stretch, and to break away from their screens.

A few days before the workshop, participants receive an email direct from the trainer which includes a reminder of the date, time and Zoom hyperlink, prompts for thinking about the subject in advance, and guidance about online workshop protocols.

Anyone unfamiliar with Zoom is offered a quick tutorial 5 minutes before the start of the session, so that they can familiarise themselves.

Following each session, participants receive a follow up email with a pdf copy of the session slides, along with additional links and materials. Sessions are designed for a maximum of 18 people.

As people find themselves remote from colleagues, especially those outside their direct team or service, a key benefit identified by participants is the opportunity to meet new people and hear how others are managing in these unusual times.

Working From Home: How to be effective, productive and resilient

This 2.5 hour, interactive online course looks at how we are adapting (or not) to the home-working revolution that is a consequence of Covid-19.

We'll look at the research evidence about home working and productivity, the impact of practical challenges such as isolation, and the important role that trust plays between colleagues.

By understanding the conditions that you need to do your best work, you'll take away personalised tips about productivity, focus and maintaining the vital psychological boundary between work and home.

By the end of this session you will:

- Identify the main benefits and challenges of working from home
- Know how to maintain relationships, stay up-to-date and improve collaboration with remote colleagues
- Recognise what is unique about your working from home experience and how to create the conditions that enable you to do your best work
- Know how to unlock your motivation, and increase your productivity and focus
- Take action to look after physical and mental wellbeing away from the workplace
- Create your personal working from home strategy

Leading and managing staff remotely (leading individuals)

Managers face particular challenges in the home-working / Covid-19 era,. Research shows that the quality of communication between managers and their direct reports correlates with increased productivity and lower rates of burnout.

The so-called 'soft skills' of people management are more important than ever but these don't come naturally to all.

This two-hour, interactive online course helps managers to appreciate and acquire a constructive mindset and key skills for successful remote management, along with tips for supporting individuals to be productive and resilient.

At the end of this session you will:

- Be alert to the diversity of experience that individuals can have when working from home
- Know how to help individual team members feel connected, included, informed and valued when working remotely
- Learn how to improve the clarity and impact of your instructions, work requests and feedback
- Create the conditions that help your staff to maintain their personal resilience

Leading and managing dispersed teams

A key challenge for remote leadership and management is how to maintain an effective team culture and identity, and enable constructive collaboration between team members who are physically separated.

Dispersed teams are a relatively new phenomenon in the UK public sector, but global corporations have worked this way (with international teams) for some years, leading to an abundance of learning about what works.

Effective team leaders are alert to the potential implications of the team not being together face to face: silo-working, unhelpful competition, in-fighting, and anxiety can develop. Team leaders need strategies to reassure and motivate their staff, and 'up their game' when it comes to communication and sharing of information so that everyone feels included and heard.

Well-planned and managed online meetings are a fundamental aspect. By attending to team cohesion and resilience, leaders of remote teams ensure that everyone is able to give their best and share in the positive outcomes.

By the end of this session you will:

- Know what organisations with experience of dispersed teams do well
- Understand the impact that remote working can have on team dynamics and relationships
- Adopt some key principles and actions that will help your team members to feel included, informed and valued
- Develop your toolkit for running enjoyable, efficient and productive online meetings
- Be alert to the factors that keep teams resilient and how to work together to maintain team performance and wellbeing

Testimonials and feedback

"I found the session more engaging than I expected and I liked the variety of the tools you used rather than simply breaking us out into rooms for every exercise. The content and speed were just right for me. Thanks again and hope to be able to book on to other sessions soon."

H.C., North East local authority

"Thanks for yesterday. It was one of the most useful training sessions I have attended in a long time. [...] it was really informative and the content and cross-teams discussion were really useful. I have put a few things in to practice already and shared how useful it was with colleagues."

M.B, North East local authority

"I would recommend this course for anyone who isn't a regular home worker, even if you have found home working a positive experience, as it's a great opportunity to share experiences with others."

T.S., North East local authority

ABOUT EMILY SWEETMAN

I'm an independent Organisation Development consultant and executive coach, working mostly in the UK public and Third Sector, and with other social-purpose organisations. Over the last ten years, I've helped organisational leaders to clarify and achieve their goals through increased self-awareness, focus, drive and resilience.



WHAT I OFFER

I provide one-to-one and team coaching, design and deliver leadership development programmes and a range of other Organisation Development interventions. I help in-house OD / HR managers and teams to lead transformation projects and develop their own capabilities and impact.

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