



Lead from a Distance

Specific Challenges



Location

- Leading people can be difficult even when your team is all located in one place. Leading people who you do not see on a regular basis, and who do not see each other frequently (indeed who may hardly know each other) creates very real obstacles. People are naturally drawn to things that happen around them at the local level, so focus may drift away from their actual team, to their local group of co-workers.



Isolation

- Just as team members can feel alone and forgotten in their corner of the business, leaders can feel very isolated too. This can result in people working alone, and not sharing knowledge, skills, ideas as well as everyone feeling a lack of support. When people feel isolated, they begin to work on their own agendas, and can lose sight of the team objective.



Culture

- Not limited to national or ethnic factors, the 'way we do things round here' can cause enormous problems for dispersed teams and their leaders. This is particularly an issue with project teams, where team members may only be together for a short period of time. Teams who do not have the opportunity to create a consistent way of working will often revert back to their comfort zones that reflect previous teams, individual preferences and local etiquette. It is almost impossible to effectively manage a team of people who all work in a different way.



Trust

- As a physically distant leader, you cannot oversee all aspects of your team's work. Business success relies on everyone doing what they are expected to do, to the right standard, at the right time and in the right way. It is difficult to trust people to perform their part of the task when we don't know them that well. Trust is something that builds up over time, and comes more easily with people that we have built a personal relationship with.



What great 'Distance' Leaders DO

- Inspire the Team
- Be a Leader of Leaders
- Focus on results, not process
- Serve the team, not yourself
- Build a sense of identity
- Develop relationships
- Maintain a constant flow of information
- Coach people to achieve their potential
- Use technology wisely
- Build trust

The Skills of Good Distance Leaders

