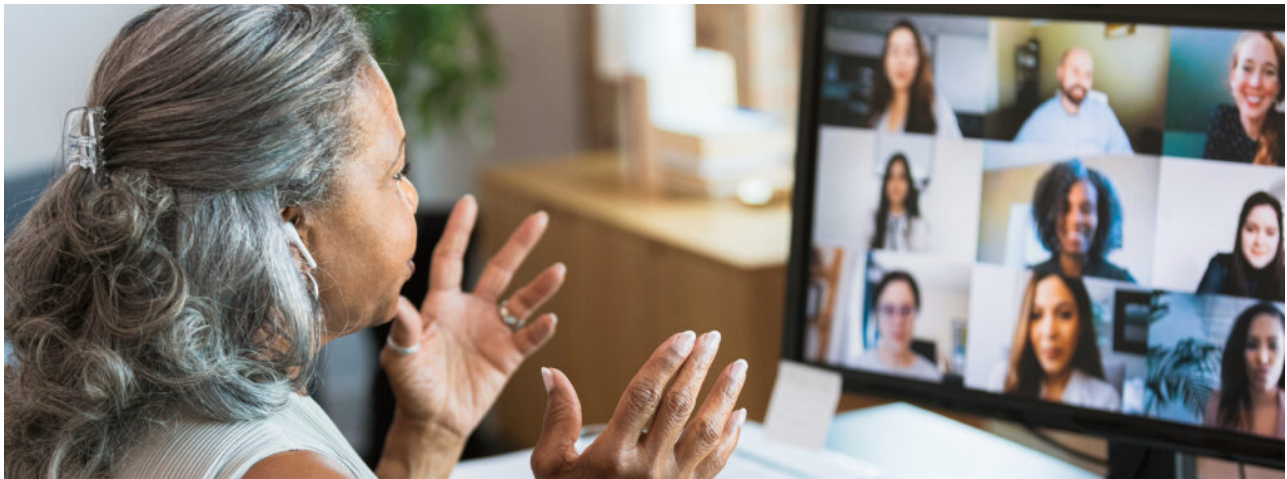


Leading Virtually



Improving our Mindset

Mindset is how we see and regard others. Why does it matter—because it matters to others how they are being seen. When we focus on our own objectives, needs, and challenges, we think of others only in terms of how they are helping us or hindering us in our day-to-day responsibilities. People are not people to us, they are objects—vehicles to help us get what we need, obstacles in our way, or irrelevancies to the work we are doing.

Our mindset is what others are responding to—more than our behaviors. When things are not going well, we typically employ a behavioral solution. Changing our behaviors without addressing our mindset first will rarely lead to the results we want. It will be like replacing a wobbling wheel instead of addressing the bent axle. The wheels will continue to wobble, and resources and time will continue to be wasted.

See and treat people as objects and we invite their resistance—resistance we are now going to have to manage! See people as people who count and matter to the work—with ideas, thoughts, and objectives of their own and we will invite their cooperation.

Changing others begins with changing ourselves. We must learn to become more self-aware of our own mindset and the impact our mindset is having on others. In our spontaneous interactions with others—we need to get curious about our teams and what is going on with their lives. There has never been a time when this is more important. As we learn about them, it chases away our own problems and replaces them with care and empathy toward them—and solutions!

Learning why and understanding *how* to address mindset will allow us to reimagine how we work with others.

Building Relationships

As many of us are still working somewhat remotely, we are unable to spend the same amount of time as we used to with one another. Strategy sessions, performance reviews, and job interviews—interactions previously seen as incompatible in a remote or hybrid setting—are now the norm. Without the day-to-day interactions before and after meetings, in break rooms or hallways, team members can often feel disconnected.

Fortunately, building a relationship with a colleague does not require in-person interaction. Building a relationship is more about the frequency of connection rather than volumes of time. Connections are those windows of time when we're right with each another—when we're not trying to fix or change each other—just connect. If those windows of time are happening daily or multiple times a week, we can improve our influence in that relationship.

In a virtual environment, we need to get creative and intentional in our efforts to find times to connect. For example, if I have a team member who is underperforming—and I am only connecting with this employee once or twice a month, simply doubling the times to connect will double my influence as a leader. Focusing on building relationships in this way will lead to better results and fewer corrections.

Listening To Learn

Listening to learn is a powerful tool for genuinely understanding others. Whether leading a virtual, in-person, or hybrid team, we should ask ourselves, “Am I [listening](#) to respond, or am I listening to learn?” When people feel heard and understood, we form deeper connections.

A key to learning more about others is to get really curious about their experience—don’t take their first response to your questions—ask, “tell me more about that” and listen longer. Too often, we want to jump and fix things and we don’t listen long enough. People only get honest when you have listened long enough.

The people we lead virtually may be going through professional and personal challenges. As leaders, it’s up to us to understand the people we interact with—both their professional and personal challenges. We need their insight and understand what they see to better address how to invite collaboration, communication, and trust. To do so, we should take some time to listen a bit longer and focus on what they are going through.

While distance may make us feel disconnected from our team—improving our mindset, building relationships, listening to learn, and making the intentional effort to connect more often with them can help us lead more effectively.