Using C.R.U.S.T. to help you manage remotely!

The Hunger for the Topic

2020 has been labelled as 'the remote work decade'; one in which workers are expecting their managers to have greater availability and transparency whilst managers are trying to get the balance right between showing concern for their people without appearing to be micro-managing. Layer upon this the concern for everyone's mental wellbeing and it makes quite a feast out of managing remotely. And it's because of this, that I've focused this takeaway on how we can manage remotely using these five simple ingredients.

Keeping our teams connected and feeling valued is crucial to anyone managing. Brene Brown said 'I define connection as energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement'. We hear how difficult this in the work-place, so you can imagine how much more complex this becomes when you're not seeing one another on a daily basis. There are only so many online meetings we can take part in without becoming totally fatigued.

Using C.R.U.S.T. today will help you be more focused on outputs rather than time spent on activities. As a broad brush stroke doesn't work for all your people, we'll explore a variety of ways for you to utilise your time more effectively to bring out the best in your team. There has never been a better time to be a servant leader.

The Ingredients for Success

- **Collaboration** brings people together in a way that they see their interdependencies, whilst still maintaining ownership. They can talk freely about what's working well and what's not!

- **Responsiveness** comes from a place of having clarity in expectations

- **Understanding** your team will help you to tailor your approach to each individual instead of having a 'one size fits all' approach

- **Skills** to do what is expected of you gives you confidence and bolsters your self-esteem. When they're lacking it has the opposite effect. What are you doing to make sure your people have competence and confidence to do the task in hand?

- **Trust** is the bedrock of great relationship.

The Methods to Blend it Together

A great team works **collaboratively** whether they're together or a part. They have mutual respect and a willingness to balance personal achievement with group goals, and this has been so important during the last 12 months.

Some of your people will find working from home ok, whilst there will be others who are really struggling. When teams work collaboratively, they listen and learn from each other. And it's your role to create an

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environment for this to happen because when people support one another they feel able to share their vulnerabilities and ask for help where it's needed, thereby tapping into one another's resources in a variety of ways. Some ways in which you could increase collaboration in the team:

- As a team you could hold a mini S.W.O.T. (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) to find out what works well for you with everyone working from home. These types of sessions will help you to get all the issues out on the table for discussion for example, I know some teams have struggled with differing time zones but working through this together has made everyone feel that they were listened to because the result worked for everyone rather than the majority. If you're good with online tools you may want to use something like MIRO which is great for gathering everyone's ideas.
- Think about introducing differing message systems for different activities eg email, WhatsApp, Slack, Padlet are just some of the tools that will help you keep in touch without having to always call or video. Microsoft and Google also have documents that you can use to share files and keep everyone up to date.
- Have a regular meeting either weekly or fortnightly just for sharing information and helping you all to be more proactive.

Our second nugget is about being **responsive.** When someone needs help in your team, it's about being quick to act and respond in an appropriate way that enables them to get on with their work. And this is much easier for everyone when you have clear ground rules within the team on how you want to communicate to one another. For example, when do you want to have team check ins, what about one to ones? If someone has an issue or a complaint that needs all hands to deck who do they turn to etc.

The importance of having a roadmap is to make sure people know what to do. No-one is worried about interrupting someone else because you're all playing to the same rules. Your response factor may be along the lines of emails get replied to within 24 hours, texts when you can and calls straight away. And as my mantra is always 'what happens in the workplace is replicated on the outside', these standards should then flow into the way your people manage their customer relationships.

Our third nugget is about **understanding** your team and recognising that your approach can't be a one size fits all, because it doesn't. By getting to know each individual you will have a greater clarity of what helps, hinders and motivates them to achieve. For example, some people have been home schooling, others have been supporting those who are shielded so there may be different times of the day that work better for some people than others. At the end of the day, our focus needs to be on output rather than time spent.

This understanding comes from listening with empathy. Hearing what people are not saying as well as what they are, so don't skimp on the small talk as it will give you a better picture of what is happening for your people in their home and business life. We've heard, and perhaps experienced, a lot of vulnerabilities during this pandemic, so it's crucial that we understand what we're hearing. Sometimes people's emotions are running high or low and that makes us act and behave in a variety of ways. Check in with the person to make sure that what you heard really what was intended and this will then enable you to set up the relevant systems to support your people to meet their goals and targets. And don't always be focused on the work element.

This leads us nicely into our fourth nugget which is focused on the **skills** of our people. When we're in the office it's much easier to turn to others to tap into their skills to complete a task. Of course, this is much more difficult when we're working from home. The thing is that when we don't feel competent to do what is being asked of us, it can lead to our self-esteem dropping which then impacts upon our confidence.

As a manager and leader of people, we have the role of challenging and supporting our teams to achieve their potential. It means giving them the right tools and support systems to flourish in their roles.

Do you know the capabilities of each person in your team? Which zone are they currently performing? Is it their comfort zone, are they slightly stretched or are they constantly in their stressed zone? What can you do to support them to work at their optimum levels? How do you know?

Finally, our last ingredient is probably the most important one. It's **trust** and it's central to any great relationship. We all know what it's like to be managed by someone who demonstrates they **trust** us and by someone who doesn't! If there isn't trust, there won't be the same level of cooperation or collaboration in place. However, when trust is in place, the team just seems to fly; challenge isn't viewed personally, it's a way of creating high performance because you know it comes from a good place in the heart.

The worst thing is that distrust can come about from mere suggestion. There was an interesting simulation exercise undertaken where two groups were asked to discuss the same topics with their manager. The managers were provided with exactly the same information, however one team was told that the manager was trustworthy and the other team were told that their manager wasn't at all trustworthy. The outcomes were very different. Even though the managers stuck to the same scripts, the team who were working with the 'trustworthy' manager engaged and came to consensus, whereas the team working with the 'untrustworthy' manager were much more cynical and skeptical of what his agenda was all about.

Kouzes and Posner have a saying in their book which is that 'people have to believe the messenger before they believe the message' and this is essentially about trust. We listen to people we trust and accept their influence more readily. Trust is the most fundamental element of a high performing team. If people think individuals within their team are lying, withholding information or plotting against them, nothing valuable will get done. Patrick Lencioni, author of 5 Dysfunctions of a team, says 'The main obstacle to a team building trust is that many people are unwilling to be vulnerable with each other as they fear it will be used against them.'

If we are going to enable people to feel vulnerable, we need to demonstrate that we trust them first. We can't expect them to trust us just because we're their manager. We need to create a climate of trust. By nurturing openness, involvement and commitment to achieving great things we can build each individual's self-esteem to make them feel strong and capable. This may mean providing additional development, giving them the visibility and credit for the work they are currently doing or showing we are willing to take risks and support them when mistakes occur. My suggestions to develop trust are:

- Alter your language. When we use 'I' and 'you' it makes it feel as if we belong to different teams. It doesn't shout out that 'we're in this

together'. As soon as we use words like 'we', it helps the group to feel as one.

- Set team goals rather than individual ones as it removes the element of competition – 'none of us are finished until all of us are finished'.

- Think about the methods you currently have for building trust with your team, peer group etc. How are they perceived? Is there a list of things you should do and those you shouldn't to strengthen your relationships?

- Be the mirror you want to see coming back. Be a great role model because it's important that you sent an example. Keep confidences, do what you say you're going to do and provide context as much as you possibly can for decisions.   At the same time encourage conversations and discourage cliques as they damage group trust.

The seasoning to make it your own

We've touched on five key ingredients to help you manage your people whilst working remotely. However, there will be times when you may feel you're not getting the results you desire. Create a bit of space for yourself and ask:

- Are we taking ourselves too seriously? What are we doing to have some fun? Are you helping your team to kick off the duvet in the morning and be excited about their work or are they groaning and pulling the duvet up higher?

- Daniel Pink's work talks about motivation being about Mastery, Autonomy and Purpose.   We've talked about skills and we've mentioned purpose in making sure that everyone is on the same page, but autonomy is about having a loose and flexible structure that helps you to get out of the way and let them get on with the work. Are you giving your team the ownership to do that?

About Jane

Jane Hirst is an engaging and all-encompassing facilitator as well as pragmatic and results oriented coach. She has been in the business of helping people develop for more than 30 years and gets a real buzz from enabling them to become more self-aware, improve their emotional intelligence and achieve better results in both their personal and professional lives.

The F.O.O.D. series came to life during the 2020 pandemic. Jane was aware of the difficulties for so many adapting to working remotely and so created bite-sized learning that would be easy to digest and use straight away.   The menu demonstrates Jane's creativity and fun for what she does. The latter not detracting from the learning; it adds curiosity and makes it easier to absorb and remember as each technique is linked to a food acronym.

Keep your eyes peeled for other ingredients in our FOOD series, our team sessions and one to one coaching sessions. Do get in touch if they are of interest to you.