



Managing Teams Remotely in the New Normal

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Introduction / Housekeeping

Welcome and thankyou!

Webinar format – muted and video off. Interactive features – polls, Q&A

60 minutes including short period of Q&A at end

Nick Thomas

- Background in Insurance Broking Sector. Sales and Sales Leadership specialist
- Widely qualified coach and personal development specialist
- Corporate Health & Wellbeing
- Coaching, training and consulting – Insurance M&A

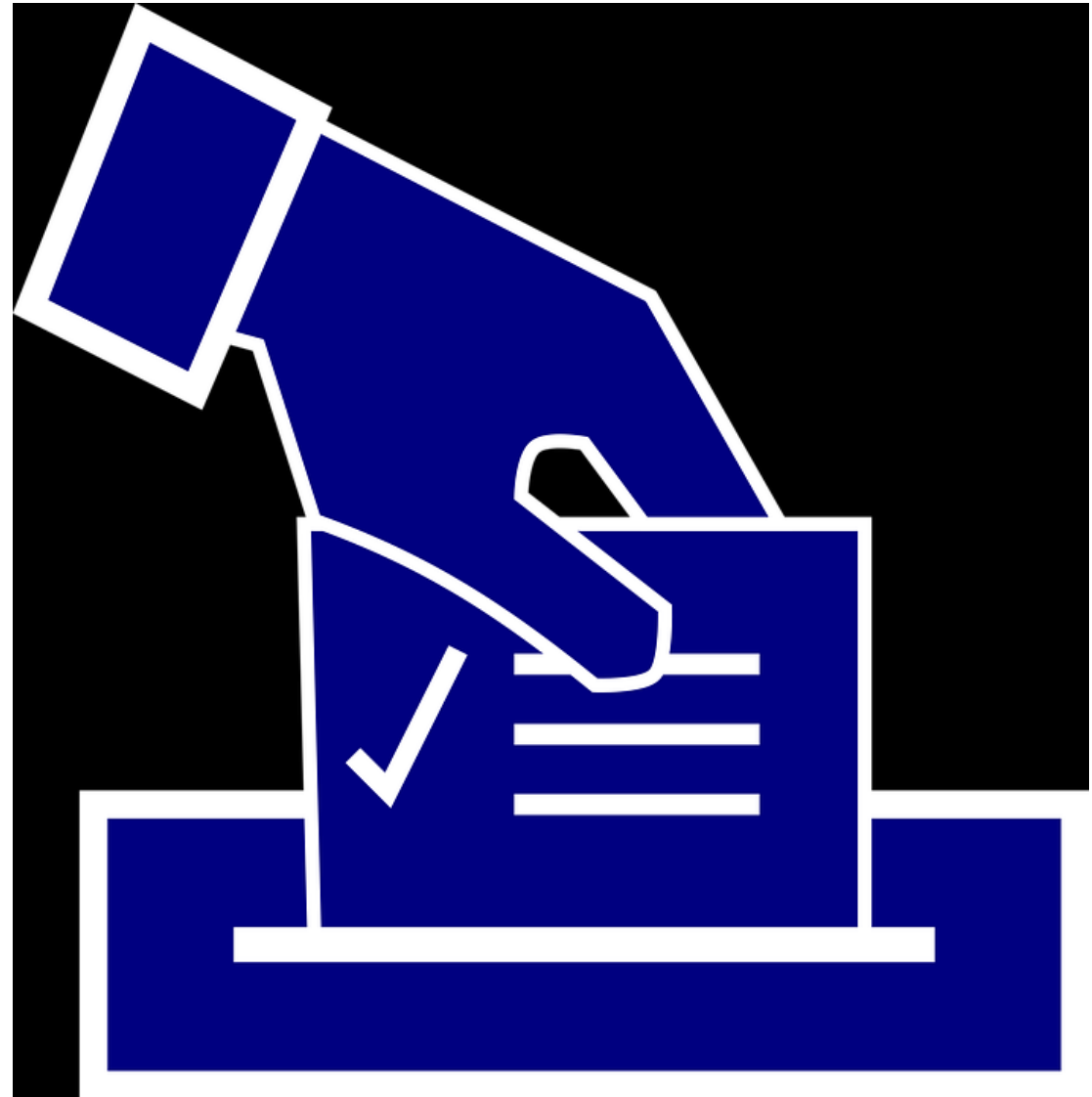
Nick Thomas & Associates

- Specialist training, coaching and consulting to the UK Insurance Sector
- Technical insurance, sales, business and soft skills, compliance training



POLL 1!

Who is on the call?



Objectives

*Begin with the
end in mind'*

Stephen R.
Covey, *The 7
Habits of Highly
Effective People'*

Challenges - Understand the challenges for remote workers and for their managers in terms of physical and mental wellbeing and performance

Managers - to provide some skills and structures for managers in interacting with their remote team

Team members - to provide guidance and skills to remote workers on how to set themselves up to minimise negative aspects and grasp the positives



Challenges of Remote Working

- Social Isolation and loneliness
- Lack of F2F supervision and support
- Employee access to information
- Team communication & relationships
- Sub-optimal workplace set up and environment
- Burnout



Social Isolation

- US Study – State of Remote Work 2018: loneliness is the biggest struggle to working remotely.
- Growing epidemic – even before Covid-19
- Multiple studies show ‘robust’ link to premature mortality
- Personality types and isolation – extroverts often fare worse
- Reduced engagement with employer = reduced productivity
- Higher staff turnover



Supervision

- Management concern around employee performance – trust!
- Employee concern about lack of management support and communication – out of touch. Loss of employee engagement



Performance and Trust

- 2013 9 month study (Chinese Travel Agency)
 - 13% increased productivity (4% more tasks per minute/9% more minutes per shift)
 - Roll out – half employees changed opinion (loneliness), other half productivity increase 20%!
 - Conditions: no kids/work room – not bedroom/quality broadband
- Covid-19 lockdown – most suggest enhanced performance (but short term)
- Consensus
 - Not a trust issue
 - post-Covid move to ‘hybrid’ remote/in office model

‘...crowded corporate offices with thousands of employees may be a thing of the past’

Barclays CEO Jes Staley

MCL InsureTech (Irish insurance company)

87% of employees wish to work remotely after COVID-19 restrictions

85% say they are just as productive at home as they are at their workplace

Access to Information

- Tougher to get hold information from co-workers
- Feeling out of the loop
- Water cooler moments/corridor decisions
- Modelling more experienced co-workers
- Affects learning and development, creativity, support for prospects and clients, cross sales
- New joiners, young and inexperienced = hardest hit



Team communication & relationships

- Lack of ‘mutual knowledge’ due to remote environment – do not have context and do not give benefit of doubt to colleague = conflict
 - Mehrabian’s Law – communication
 - Email
 - Rapport challenge – behavioural, capability levels
 - Pick up on conflict later – more damage

‘The two main things that get in the way are the lack of shared understanding about how you work and lack of shared identity. When you don’t have things in common, you’re less likely to give the person the benefit of the doubt. Plus, you don’t know how the other person is reacting. Is he being quiet because he’s setting aside his feelings or is he actually stewing?’ **Mark Mortensen, Professor of Organizational Behaviour at INSEAD** (Business School)



Team communication & relationships

Email issues!

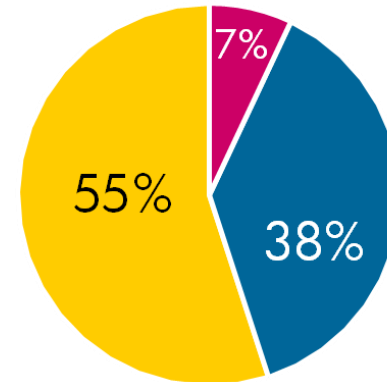
- 2007 Study - found that 'e-mail generally increases the likelihood of conflict and miscommunication'. Professor of Management Kristin Byron.
- Misinterpret positive e-mail messages as more neutral, and neutral ones as more negative, than the sender intended.
- Even jokes are rated as less funny by recipients than by senders.

"When you communicate with a group you only know through electronic channels, it's like having functional Asperger's Syndrome — you are very logical and rational, but emotionally brittle."

Email... "is not better than face-to-face contact; it's only better than nothing."
Professor Clay Shirky (Social Computing specialist)

Team communication - Mehrabian's Law

- Professor Albert Mehrabian, University of California
- His studies in 1970s suggested that we overwhelmingly deduce our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about what someone says by the speaker's body language and tone of voice, NOT the actual words
- '...if words and body language disagree, one tends to believe the body language'. Professor Mehrabian
- **When we lose F2F contact, we lose body language communication**



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule

Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

Workplace Environment

- Home distractions – some aspects only short-term lockdown related
- Sub-optimal virtual workplace set up
- Performance, physical and mental health implications



Burnout

Research Paper on flexible work practices suggests employees (especially with families) are grateful for work ‘flexibility’

- ...‘employees respond to the ability to work flexibly by exerting additional effort, in order to return benefit to their employer.’ Can go to extremes.
- Employer may intensify the workload with unrealistic timeframe requests
- Harder to spot the signs with remote workers



Burnout – Zoom Fatigue

Why?

- We need to focus more intently to absorb information – no peripheral vision, side conversations
- Easily distracted – online/phone etc
- Unnatural ‘constant gaze’
- Unconscious mind - constantly scanning own image. Turn off self view!





Signs of Burnout

1

Apathy and anhedonia

Anhedonia is a loss of pleasure in activities you would normally find pleasurable. Apathy relates to a reluctance to do things, and even depressive symptoms

2

You feel very fatigued

You might have very low energy, or find that whilst you can get through a work day, once you get home you have nothing left in the tank. You might also sleep a lot but never wake up feeling rested – or the adrenaline that gets you through the day keeps you up at night and you can't sleep

3

You find it hard to shut off

You struggle to quieten the mind, and might even dream about work-related matters. You may feel a constant level of anxiety even when you're at home or there are no threats. Often, it will be hard to avoid repeatedly checking your devices or feeling as though you should be working

4

You have mood and/or personality problems

Perhaps someone will comment on how you're not yourself, or you'll notice that you respond differently to situations where you might normally have been calm. You might notice feeling irritable, low in mood or anxious and those feelings bleeding into everyday life

5

The body keeps the score

Physical symptoms often manifest themselves before mental or emotional signs appear. Unexplained aches and pains, mild aversion to light, low back pain, weight loss or weight gain and headaches can all be signs of burnout

Supporting Remote Teams

- Structured daily communication
- Established rules of engagement
- Creating remote social interaction
- Emotional intelligence
- Informing, connecting and bringing ‘perspective’



Structured communication

- Regular daily contact – 1 to 1 and/or team based if team is collaborative. Employee must feel heard
- Multiple tech platforms
 - Email – has benefits. But limit use.
 - Video – deeper communication. Builds ‘mutual knowledge’ but watch for Zoom burnout. Balance
 - Phone
- Employee access to manager
- Establish Rules of Engagement - What, when and how. Everyone understands.



Rules of Engagement

- What does high performance look like? Long hours, available at any time?
- Shift emphasis and set an example as leader
- Sending emails – studies demonstrate that senders of ‘after work emails’ underestimate how compelled recipients feel to respond immediately. Set cut off time.
- Respect healthy behaviours – sickness time off, holiday, regular breaks in day, time for family and movement
- Limit Zoom meetings – maximum 3x90 minutes per day



Create remote social interaction

- Structure time for team non-work social conversation
- Start and end of team meetings
- Virtual social events – virtual coffee, virtual wine tasting, team party, virtual weekend chat on Fridays
- Builds team bonding and rapport, reduces isolation



Create remote social interaction

- When you can – augment with F2F
 - People who know each other well F2F less likely to have misunderstandings/conflict - Joseph Walther, Professor Communication and Telecommunication
 - Not everyone needs to get together for benefits – Professor Shirky - ‘Banyan model’ after the Asian tree that puts down roots from its branches. “...put down little roots of face-to-face contact everywhere, to strategically augment electronic communications.”



Emotional intelligence

- Check in individually – truly listen and empathise. Active listening skills. Summarise back
- Emotional contagion – employees look to managers for behavioural cues. Acknowledge challenges and employee issues but project calm, positive demeanour.



Informing, connecting and bringing ‘perspective’

Management to leadership shift:

- *‘from being the “orchestra leader” of the past five years (making sure all the players harmonize) to today’s “electrical conductor”—pushing information and energy throughout the network’.* Gary Burnison, CEO of Korn Ferry. Author of Leadership U: Accelerating through the Crisis Curve
- Cascade and interpret corporate strategy
- Connect team with each other and wider business to gain access to information
- Support with content and learning and that will bring insight and perspective to clients and prospects and unlock client apathy!



Client Apathy and ‘Perspective’

Research by CSO Insights (Pre-Covid) - Identified ‘**prospect/client apathy**’

- See less value from sellers/advisers due to wealth of available information
- Tend to engage later in a buying process
- Harder for adviser/seller to engage with client
- Client better at blocking sellers

We would expect new normal to accentuate this difficulty in gaining client intimacy?



POLL 2!

What is/are the exceptions to client apathy?



Client Apathy and ‘Perspective’

BUT same research showed four exceptions:

- Where adviser could bring something new, or bring innovation
 - Where the situation is ‘risky’ for the individual
 - Where the situation is risky for the company
 - Where the situation has become more complex
- ...in these situations, client is more likely to engage!



Client Apathy and ‘Perspective’

How do we exploit this opportunity?

Perspective Selling:

- Knowledge or insight you can share that expands your client/prospect’s understanding of a business opportunity or challenge
- Helping them to see something they did not see before (or in different light) and appreciate the whole picture
- Fusion of client knowledge, industry knowledge and business acumen
- Examples of perspective – unrecognized problem, unseen opportunity, unanticipated solution, broker of capability – leveraging full breadth of capabilities

Manager needs to work with team giving them the tools to bring ‘perspective’ to clients



Setting yourself up (to succeed)

- Virtual Workplace set-up
- Work-life transition
- The four Doctors (you'll ever need)



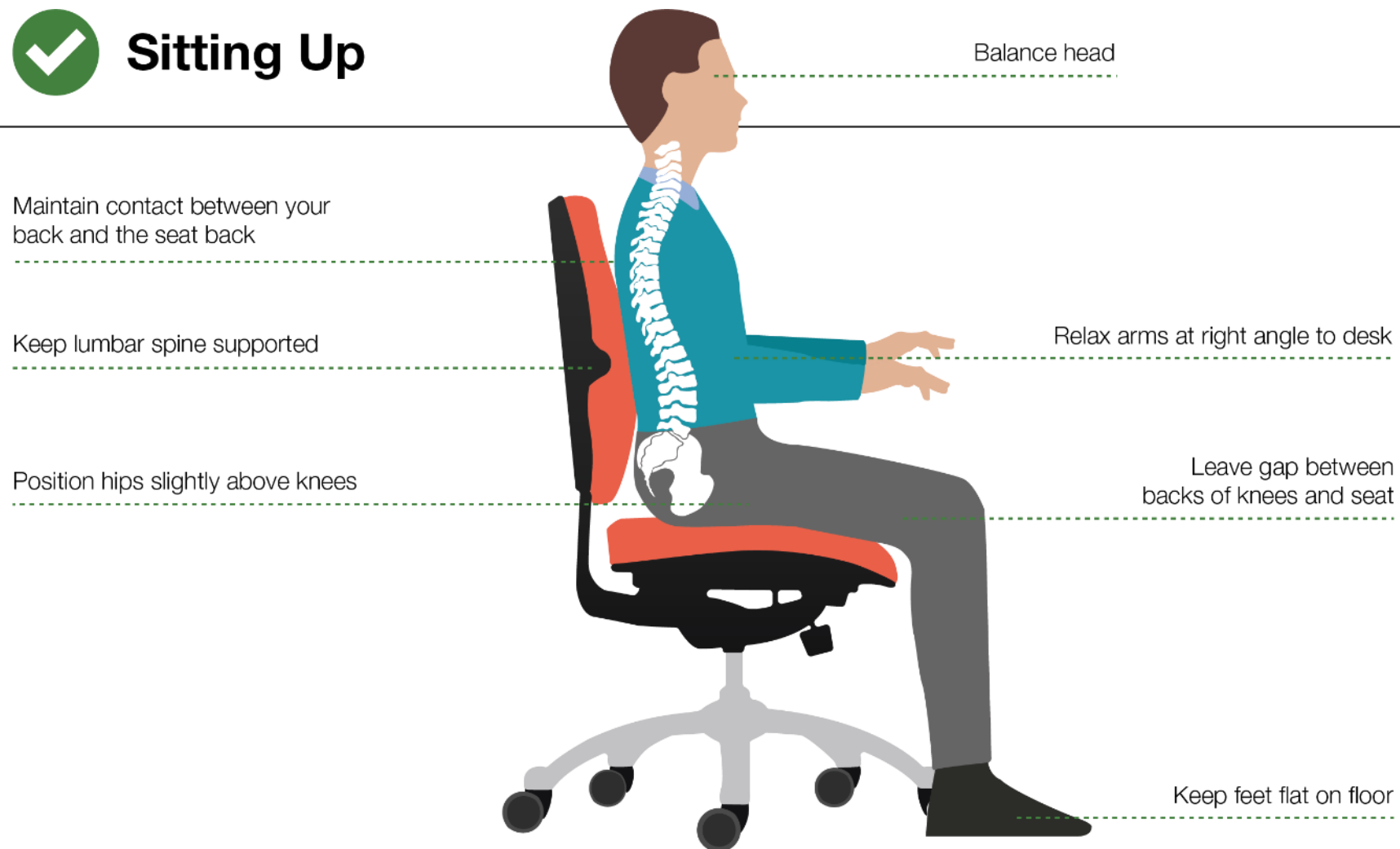
Your virtual workspace

- Ergonomics
- Separate space – neutral and calming.
Well lit
- Series of sprints – not a marathon





Sitting Up



Work-life transition

Research shows drawing line between personal and professional is crucial for mental health

WFH - no natural transition cues – e.g. commute. Need to create psychological separation (Ashworth, Arizona State University)

- **Start work routine** e.g. workout, dog walk, shower, work clothes
- **Plan the day and schedule** – acknowledge and accept non-work e.g. school pick up!
- **Avoid Mult-tasking!** Focus on one things at a time. Avoid distraction. E.g. allocate email catch up periods.
- **Temporal boundaries** – set out of office/manage expectations when required
- **Prioritise communication** based on context – e.g. limit personal email in work times
- **Work wrap up** – work late for specific tasks only and limit work creep. Work separation activity.



Objectives:

- *Be present in home life and switch off from work*
- *Avoid burnout*
- *Be focused in productive in work*

The four Doctors

Paul Chek, The CHEK Institute – one of the world's leading holistic health experts

- **Dr Diet** – sustainable energy. Avoid energy rollercoaster. Real food. Hydration.
- **Dr Movement** – pumping mechanisms of body. Improved cognitive performance. Outdoor exercise – Vit D/mood enhancement
- **Dr Quiet** – offset 'stress', access right brain - creativity
- **Dr Sleep** – understand circadian rhythms. Melatonin and cortisol. Blue light.



Consider: do you understand the true nature of stress?

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Questions and Answers

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'Specialist training, coaching and consulting to the UK Insurance Sector'