

Back in the Game, Teams: But what will it look like?

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These past few months have been fairly similar for most of my clients, colleagues. We've all felt it differently, of course, but the same remote working themes have popped up in some form another.

- Aligning on Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, or FaceTime
- Logging off with a list of priorities
- Getting on with it, and of course
- An ongoing flurry of emails.

Whether we're seasoned freelancers or completely new to home-working, it's all been seasoned with a constant stream of tips and advice from the media.

"There's software for that..." or, "Draw clear work-life boundaries!"

All valuable, all well-intentioned, mostly very effective.

But as things start to look up, we're moving slowly but surely toward better days. And as human-human interactions - real-life teamwork - starts glimmering on the horizon, we need to think ahead.

When we can realistically meet as teams again, what's that going to look like?

Back in the game

Consider gradually moving back



into the office. Meeting with your team physically. Responsibly, socially distanced, cautiously, but once again together.

Finally, you can talk, gesture, listen, share. Feel vibes, smell moods, catch micro-expressions. Social dynamics are back in the equation - but somehow, they're not quite what we're used to.

From an organizational development perspective, here are some of the glaring challenges I foresee.

Switching "Relationships-mode" back on

For weeks, we've been keeping our heads on. Diligently focused on holding things together, we've dealt with plenty:

- Supply chain disruptions
- Lost income streams
- Sunk costs
- Lay-offs, reorganizations, and more.

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In constant crisis mode, we’ve quite simply had to be more task-oriented. Staying rational and content-focused, after all, is how we’ve successfully kept calm and carried on. To adapt, and even overcome.

The second we step back in social groups, however, we’ll all be dealing with relationships – competing priorities, differences of opinion, and the need to trust, share, compromise. In Zoom-mode, after all, we just don’t have time to build the high-quality common understandings that things like trust are based on.

Put another way, we’ll need to learn – or relearn – how to build the foundation for successful interactions. The easy-breezy feedback, the collective reflections, even the listening skills that haven’t mattered much in Zoom-mode.

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“Crisis Mode” and Defensiveness

Another important thing about Zoom- or Skype-mode is that it’s easy to switch off. Even without consciously acknowledging it, our (very natural) defensiveness takes over in times of crisis.

If tempers rise, or panic sets in during a remote meeting, most of us can dial up the task-focus I’ve just mentioned; worst-case scenario, we can push it aside for however long a virtual meeting lasts.

Not so in the real world, and especially not when “the real crunch time” comes around. When we’re face-to-face, picking up the pieces or charting a whole new direction, I guarantee you that managing our instincts will become much tougher.

Yes. “Crisis mode mentality” may slowly dial down, but it won’t be leaving us any time soon. And when re-strategizing and damage control both compete as top priorities, collective intelligence – not panic – will be critical.

As they don’t work well together, it’s down to us as people to do that extra legwork instead, by planning ahead about how we’ll collaborate.

What Do You Think?

I’ve been thinking for a little while about how things will be different for teams, and these are just two of the topmost issues that I’m certain we’ll need to deal with. Throw things like handshaking etiquette, room design, and other issues into the mix, and it’s clear we’ve got a lot more thinking ahead of us.

Besides defensiveness, and prioritizing relationships, what do you think we’ll have to deal with when we get back together again as humans? What do you feel we’ll be facing as management teams, project teams, and colleagues?

Now, not later, is the time to consider how the near future’s going to look for our teams your opinions.

Ready to reboot your team?

Contact us for a consultation and get your custom tailored Team Reboot program set up.

LETS GET YOUR CUSTOM PROGRAM SET UP

** This button will take you to the contact form on our website*