

Managing a Virtual Team During a Pandemic: Tips for Success – Handout (TCAL 2021)

Julie Harding

Assistant Director for Public Services, UMGC Library

julie.harding@umgc.edu

References

5 tips for working from home with kids. AICPA. <https://blog.aicpa.org/2020/06/5-tips-for-working-from-home-with-kids.html#sthash.PBiPMXu4.dpbs>

Burton, K. (2021, February 22). 90 seconds of resiliency: Zoom fatigue [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8wD4YVK11k>

Companies are trying to connect remote workers with ‘virtual water coolers’ – but it’s harder than it sounds. (2020, September 23). The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/companies-are-trying-to-connect-remote-workers-with-virtual-water-coolers-but-its-harder-than-it-sounds-146505>

Greenleaf, R. K., Senge, P. M., Covey, S. R., & Spears, L. C. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness* (Vol. Twenty-fifth anniversary edition). Paulist Press.

Gregory, A. (2020, April 11). *17 office essentials to set up an efficient home office*. The Balance Small Business. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/a-checklist-for-setting-up-your-home-office-2951767>

Servant leadership: Putting your team first, and yourself second. MindTools. <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/servant-leadership.htm>

Key Principles of Servant Leadership (<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/servant-leadership.htm>)

From "Character and Servant Leadership: 10 Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders" by Larry C. Spears, published in "The Journal of Virtues and Leadership," Vol. 1, Issue 1. Reproduced with permission.

1. Listening

You'll serve people better when you make a deep commitment to listening intently to them and understanding what they're saying. To improve your listening skills, give people your full attention, take notice of their body language, avoid interrupting them before they've finished speaking, and give feedback on what they say.

2. Empathy

Servant leaders strive to understand other people's intentions and perspectives. You can be more empathetic by putting aside your viewpoint temporarily, valuing others' perspectives, and approaching situations with an open mind.

3. Healing

This characteristic relates to the emotional health and "wholeness" of people, and involves supporting them both physically and mentally. First, make sure that your people have the knowledge, support, and resources that they need to do their jobs effectively, and that they have a healthy workplace. Then take steps to help them be happy and engaged in their roles.

4. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to look at yourself, think deeply about your emotions and behavior, and consider how they affect the people around you and align with your values. You can become more self-aware by knowing your strengths and weaknesses and asking for other people's feedback on them. Also, learn to manage your emotions, so that you consider how your actions and behavior might affect others.

5. Persuasion

Servant leaders use persuasion – rather than their authority – to encourage people to take action. They also aim to build consensus in groups, so that everyone supports decisions. There are many tools and models that you can use to be more persuasive, without damaging relationships or taking advantage of others. You should also build your expert power – when people perceive you as an expert, they are more likely to listen to you when you want to persuade or inspire them.

6. Conceptualization

This characteristic relates to your ability to "dream great dreams," so that you look beyond day-to-day realities to the bigger picture. If you're a senior leader in your company, work through and develop a robust organizational strategy. Then, whatever level you're at, create mission and vision statements for your team, and make it clear how people's roles tie in with your team's and organization's long-term objectives. Also, develop long-term focus so that you stay motivated to achieve your more distant goals, without getting distracted.

7. Foresight

Foresight is when you can predict what's likely to happen in the future by learning from past experiences, identifying what's happening now, and understanding the consequences of your decisions. You can use tools such as SWOT Analysis and PEST Analysis to think about your current situation and environment, while Scenario Analysis helps you understand how the future could play out. Use the ORAPAPA checklist when you make a decision, to learn from experience and make sure that you've considered all the angles. Also, learn to trust your intuition – if your instinct is telling you that something is wrong, listen to it!

8. Stewardship

Stewardship is about taking responsibility for the actions and performance of your team, and being accountable for the role team members play in your organization. Whether you're a formal leader or not, you have a responsibility for the things that happen in your company. Take time to think about your own values, as well as those of your organization, so that you know what you will and won't stand for. Also, lead by example by demonstrating the values and behaviors that you want to see in others, and have the confidence to stand up to people when they act in a way that isn't aligned with them.

9. Commitment to the Growth of People

Servant leaders are committed to the personal and professional development of everyone on their teams. To develop your people, make sure that you use Training Needs Assessments to understand their developmental needs and give them the skills they need to do their jobs effectively. Also, find out what

their personal goals are, and see if you can give them projects or additional responsibilities that will help them achieve these.

10. Building Community

The last characteristic is to do with building a sense of community within your organization. You can do this by providing opportunities for people to interact with one another across the company. For instance, you could organize social events such as team lunches and barbecues, design your workspace to encourage people to chat informally away from their desks, and dedicate the first few minutes of meetings to non-work-related conversations. Encourage people to take responsibility for their work, and remind them how what they do contributes to the success and overall objectives of the organization.