

**home** 

# Working out our new normal

Your COVID-19 resources pack

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**Chapter 4:** Managing a team through COVID-19



# Hello



**It's hard to think we're already on our fourth weekly toolkit. For many of us, that's four weeks of remote working and trying to find our way through this 'new normal'. Each week we're reacting to what we're hearing from our clients and the industry. And, over the last couple of days, our conversations have focused on how we can support our leaders and line managers to feel equipped to lead through a time of daily change.**

We hate to use the word unprecedented (because we've really heard that enough now, right?), but we will, this leadership challenge truly is unprecedented. How can we expect our leaders and line managers to have all the answers? How can we equip them to communicate with, support, and engage their teams when they're also experiencing this for themselves? We don't profess to have all the answers but, we want to share some of our own creative ideas and, some of the great things we see happening globally. And believe us when we say, we really are seeing some great things!

In addition, many UK businesses are now needing to engage a new audience; furloughed employees. These employees may not be working, but they're still part of your organisation and so we've explored some ideas to help you create a sense of community for this group.

As with every week, we've focused on providing thought starters, tangible tools and resources to hopefully give you some inspiration for your plans. Let us know if there's something you'd like to see in next week's edition.



# A guide for managing a team through COVID-19

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We've been reading lots of leadership articles which suggest that this is simply managing through crisis. We absolutely agree but, this crisis has another element to it. We all know the fundamentals of good crisis management so we're not going to go over those. This list is designed to help you think about the human experience of leading and managing a remote workforce.



# A guide for managing a team through COVID-19

# 1

**Connection matters more than ever.** You might not be able to be physically present for your people, but you can still emotionally connect. Create new virtual team rituals to keep your connections strong.



# 2

**You don't need to be the expert.** Don't put pressure on yourself to have all the answers, none of us do. For people related questions, ensure you feel equipped and confident to be clear with your team.

# 5

**Live your personal and business values.** Consumers will remember how a business acted during COVID-19, the same goes for leaders. Now is the time to live our values and show people why they matter.

# 6

**Look for the silver lining.** You need to authentically share and show your feelings, but it's also important to help your team see a positive future that you can work towards. Explore the benefits of remote working together.

# 7

**Look to your team for the answers.** What should we do as a team to make this work? How can I help you? What positive outcomes do we want to see through this time? These are all questions that you don't have to face on your own. Be in it together.

# 10

**Look after yourself too.** Many of us are forgetting this bit...



# 9

**Help your people find their new normal.** And be there to work through it together. Ask to meet partners, pets, and children. Embrace the new working conditions your team have, and help them work around their challenges to show you understand and trust them.

# 3

**Help your people prioritise.** It might seem too obvious, but you can have real impact by helping your team focus on the right work whilst they're working out their new work environment. Focus on what matters, skip secondary tasks.



# 4

**Don't be overly tactical.** It's tempting to be swept away by short-term reactive needs at the moment. Compliment your quick wins by framing them in the bigger – more ambitious – picture.

# 8

**Think differently.** Forget relying on the processes and ways of working you're comfortable with. Encourage yourself to think differently to create the work environment you want to see for your team.

# Leading with your values



The way that some of our well known brands have responded has been remarkable. Brands have made bold and brave decisions that will inevitably cost them financially but, will protect the wellbeing of their employees.

Whilst not everyone is making business wide decisions, we can all take inspiration from these values and purpose-led actions, and lead from the heart.

This is an opportunity to show your values in action, or your business purpose brought to life. As individual leaders, we also have a responsibility to show our own values and, what they mean to those counting on us.



**Pret a Manger** led the way with free hot drinks for NHS workers and 50% discounts on all other products.



Alongside some of the supermarkets, **Nationwide** are opening their branches early for elderly and vulnerable customers.

**Morrisons** have created 3,500 new jobs by recruiting more drivers to extend their home delivery service to the most vulnerable.



**Patagonia** and many other fashion retailers have taken the decision to protect the wellbeing of all their employees, choosing early on to close warehouses and stop online deliveries.



**Dyson** have committed to an initial order of 10,000 ventilators. They've worked to design and build an entirely new model, The CoVent.





# **Five days of team meetings**

## **A line manager resource**

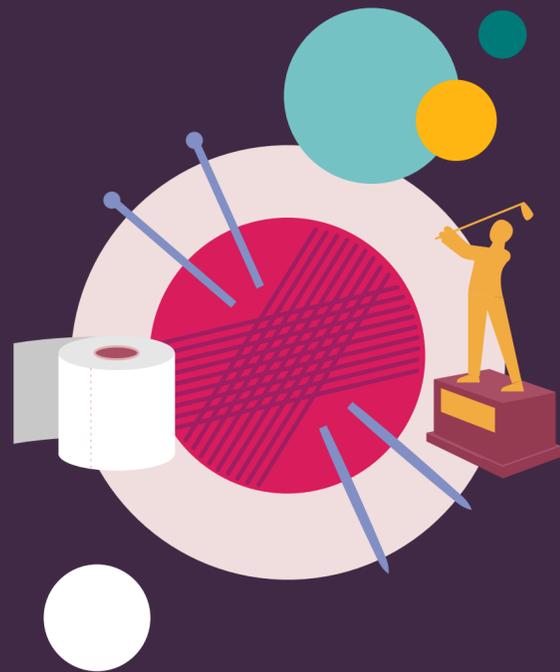
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It's important to keep virtual team meetings dynamic and full of energy. We've compiled five of our favourite formats to reflect varied team personalities and objectives. One for every day of the week.

# Mon

## For the innovators

This classic design thinking exercise has been widely used in design sprints. It works just as well in an interactive team meeting to start the week in the right way. You need to be on a video call for this one...



### Everyday objects

Ask your team to each come prepared to show two or three small household objectives. They can be as weird and wonderful as they like. Don't tell them the challenge in advance.

The objects shouldn't have any obvious connection. Think stationery, clothing, office materials, or anything else you have lying around.

On the call, give your team five minutes to complete the following task: 'Come up with a way to combine the objects and create something brand new'.

After the five minutes is up. Have each team member show their innovation and chat through the ideas as a team.

# Tue

## For the empathisers

We're all under extra pressure and a new way of working and this session is great when you need your team to reflect on a difficult conversation and how using an empathetic approach could see a better outcome.

### Two sides to every story

Ask your team to each think back to a challenging conversation they've had over the past 12 months – one that didn't go as they would like it to have done.

- What happened?
- Why was it challenging?
- What was the outcome?
- What did they want the outcome to be?

Now ask your team to put themselves in the other person's shoes. If they had used that insight, ask them to discuss how their conversation could have gone differently to achieve the desired outcome.



# Wed

## For the relationship builders

How well do you really know your team? Use this opportunity to build genuine connections. This activity is perfect to start improving personal relationships in a remote environment.

### Developing real relationships – how well do we know each other?

- Ask your team members to discuss the following questions:
  - What were some of your childhood dreams?
  - What are your biggest personal motivations?
  - What keeps you going on a tough day?
  - When you're working at home, when do you feel most motivated?
  - What keeps you up at night?

Once you've had your discussion, ask the team to think about what they want to put in place to continue to build personal connections while working remotely.



# Thur

## For the communicators

Right now, our teams are managing their stakeholders in a whole new way. Those stakeholders could be customers or colleagues. Use this session to explore the best way to communicate and engage your audience, whoever they might be.



### The personal challenge...

...is an exercise that asks the team to think about a key audience you need to communicate with. This could be a furloughed employee, for example. They're asked to put themselves in their shoes and answer four questions.

1. What does this person currently think about their employee/customer experience?
2. What would they want to be different?
3. What do they find challenging?
4. What do they need from us right now?

Try asking each member of your team to take on a different audience persona and, use the insight to build a full and considered picture of your stakeholders.

# Fri

## For the visionaries

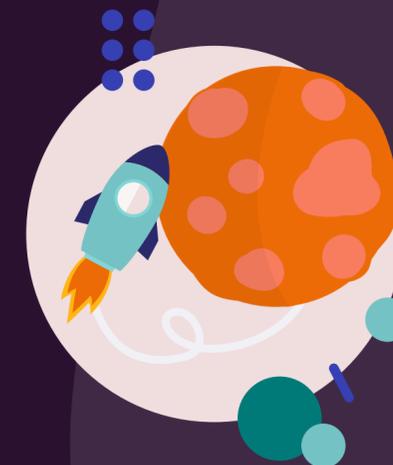
This is a great activity to use when you're working with your team to find a solution to a challenge. In design thinking, we remove barriers and think about what's possible.

### A whole new world

Ask your team to discuss the following scenario:

'You're on a rocket to a new planet, when you get there you're going to be setting up a new (insert challenge) and you'll be designing the (insert desired outcome) from scratch.'

Once you've talked about the ideal solution you're trying to create, ask your team to **ONLY** talk about what it would take to get there, don't focus on the barriers. This exercise is a great lens to use before becoming stuck on what you can't achieve.

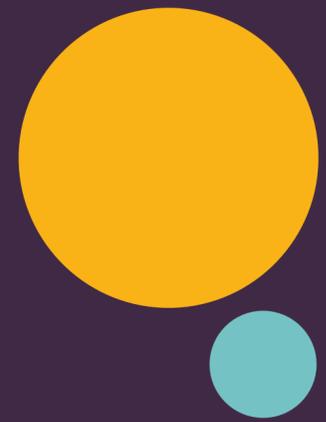


If you only do one thing...

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**Make sure  
you're checking in  
with your teams,  
not checking up**





# Keeping in touch with furloughed employees

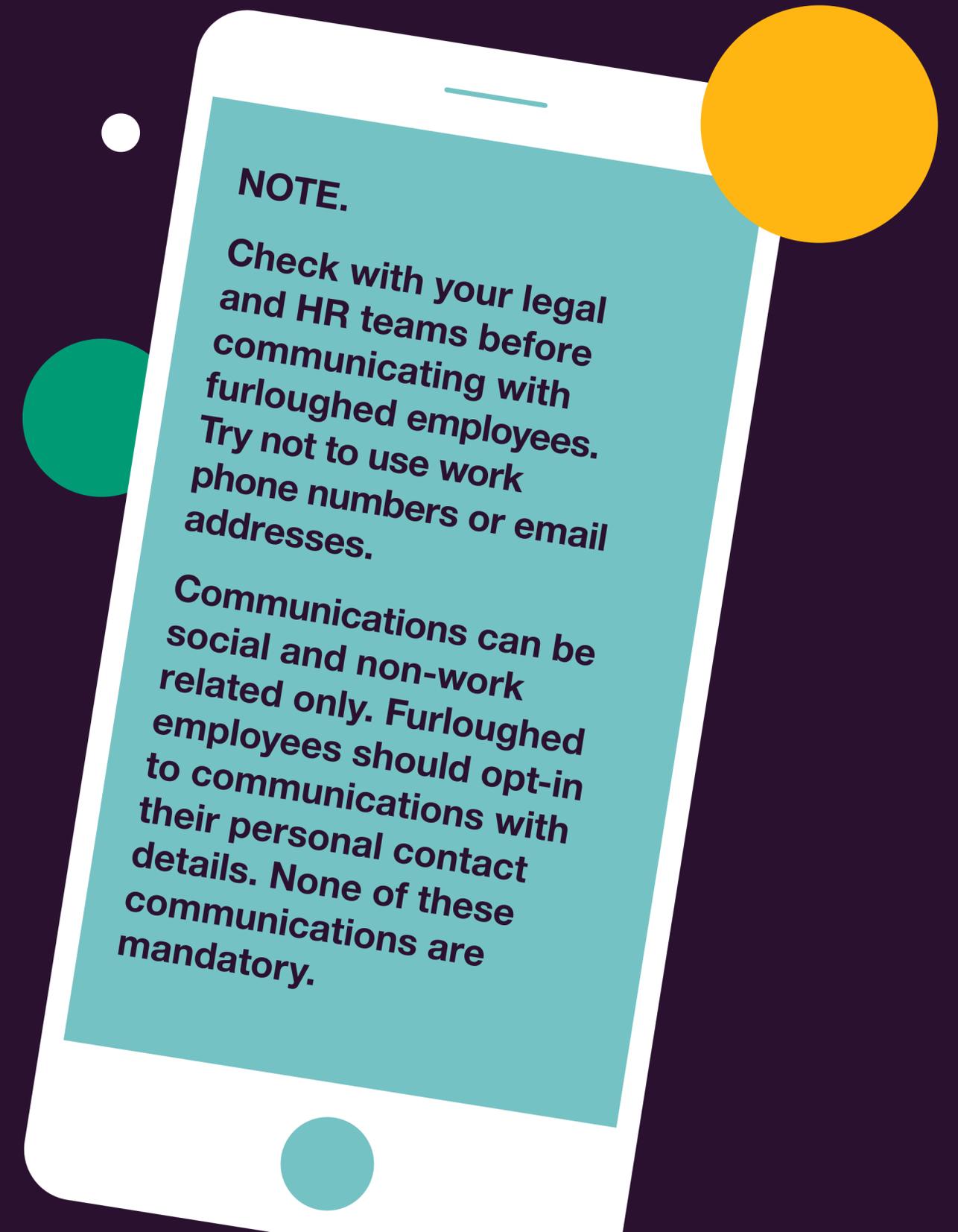


# Keeping in touch with furloughed employees



**The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a temporary scheme open to all UK employers. It is designed to support employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).**

Furlough isn't a widely used term in the UK so it's important we're clear about what it means. Guidance shows that furloughed employees aren't able to do any work during this time, including checking work emails. That leaves us with a challenge. How do we continue to engage these employees?





1

Set up a **WhatsApp group** for daily chats to share social, wellbeing or company news to help people feel connected.



2

**Weekly line manager social and wellbeing check-ins.** Remember to remind your line managers that these calls are social only.



4

**What happened in the world this week?** Create a weekly email that's packed full with industry news, updates and values led stories.

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**Furlough staff guide**

Everything you need to know.  
From home.

Start exploring



3

**What does furlough mean for me?**

Create a clear digital guide to ensure employees understand what furlough means for them, their pay, their free time and their transition back to work. Keep the guide warm and human.

5

**Inspiration bursts.** You can't communicate work or set tasks, but you can still motivate and inspire your team and help keep them mentally active. Think about sharing TED talks, wellbeing or positivity workshops.



# 6

**Daily wellbeing planner.** Send your furloughed employees a daily planner full of wellbeing tips and tools. Be clear that you care for their wellbeing even when they're not at work.



# 8

**Book club.** Show your people you still care about their professional development and think about an online learning membership or providing relevant ebooks.



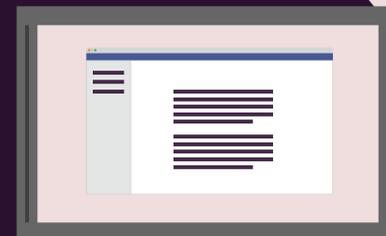
# 7

**Confidential support helpline.** If you have the resource available, provide your employees access to the support and advice they may feel they need, be it financial, emotional or other.



# 9

**Closed Facebook groups** – Creates a platform for social interaction that's accessible to most. You could also think about platforms like House Party to support quizzes and social interaction.



# Need extra support?

These ideas aren't bespoke, they're just starters to help you think differently about the current challenges we're all facing. They are some of the high-level solutions we're seeing our clients work through. There's so much good general advice out there, but if you have a specific challenge you'd like to just chat through, our lines will always be open.

Give Hattie, our lead strategist, a call on **07850 491 827**. We've also set up a dedicated mailbox **support@thisishome.co.uk** if you'd like to request sample agendas, tools or templates to help you.

**We're in it together,**

**Home**

