HOW TO:
BUILD HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

WORKING SIX-FEET APART

BY GRAYSON BASS

With support from the following organizations:

As part of the GIMI Think Tank, experts from around the world are collecting, contributing, and making available best practices to help government, industry, education, and NGO's adapt and thrive in one of the most difficult environments the world has seen.

The following organizations have supported and contributed to this guide.

For everyone working to bring about the The New Future:
We are not alone. This is the beginning of the beginning.

PROLOGUE

1 April 2020

Like many of you, we are trying to adapt - personally and professionally - to the surreal situation that confronts the entirety of human civilization. A situation that changes and unfolds daily would seem like a twisted April Fool's joke if it were not real.

(Imagine the person leaving a two month self-imposed meditative retreat - without access to news of any kind and returning to this !)

Aside from the horrible loss of life and toll on a human level, we are faced with a growing realization that the world - in just a few short weeks - has changed. The idea of community has changed. The idea of doing business has changed. Government, Education (at all levels), and Industry have all awoken from a slumber.

This is the good news. The world as it was had not adapted to the realities of this century. The ability for us to work collaboratively, remotely, and efficiently has been available for nearly two decades. Yet it is likely that all of the IT projects that have been pushed aside (that could have helped with productivity and remote work) are now being pushed to the front.

A crisis is never ideal. However, we can be assured that the innovations, changes, and the New World that emerges

will be one that we all create - and with a little luck and planning, it will be better than we can imagine.

One key question that many people are asking:

"HOW DO YOU BUILD HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS WORKING AT HOME?"

There are a lot of resources out there. This is a quick guide to help you. A guide to help you to get up and running, help you recover, and - most importantly - help you thrive. While not every business, government, or organization is the same (a solution for a restaurant will be vastly different from a solution for a tech company), this is a general guide full of "wise-practices" that can help you and your colleagues, employees, and customers.

It is organized into five parts: **The Model, Managing, Directing, Engaging**, and **Moving Forward Together**.

The first part looks at the situation, the second, third, and fourth parts provide three key areas of focus that you can adapt and implement to build and sustain a high-performing team, the fifth part is how to thrive and move forward "six-feet apart".

The work needed to be done starts now.

1.

THE MODEL: THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP

This guide uses the framework of *Integrated Leadership*. Leaders must wear three different hats: Managing - where decisive action is clear, Directing - where goals are clear, Engaging - where values are clear. In times of crisis, you need all three.

"HOW DO YOU UNLOCK THE POWER OF TEAMS WORKING SIX-FEET APART"

Innovation, Change Management, and Leadership show up at the same time. Most leadership stories we tell involve the heroic individual taking charge and guiding the efforts of teams working *closely* together to overcome a

seemingly impossible challenge. *How can you lead when you can't be close?* **This is the job of Managing.**

And while the myth of the lone innovator persists, the reality is that innovation is unlocked through a team effort. *How do you unlock the power of teams working six-feet apart?* **This is the job of Directing.**

Change management is no different. Given a crisis, we have an image of people *coming together* to meet a challenge and adapt. But what happens when closeness can be deadly. *How do you build trust and community?* **This is the job of Engaging.**

One of the fundamental tenants of unlocking innovation is looking at something with "new eyes". Sometimes this requires us to accept or realize that how things appear or the way something has "always been done" may not be valid or make much sense when looking it from a different perspective.

The bad news is this: adapting is never easy. The sooner you can accept that "the way things were" is gone, the faster and easier it will be to change, lead, and innovate. In fact, "the way things were" was probably not what you imagined.

The good news is this: there are examples from around the world (and history !) of people overcoming challenges when they couldn't be in the same room. In the 21st century we have never been more prepared to work collaboratively AND effectively than at this very moment.

2.
MANAGING - GETTING UP AND RUNNING

P lan, Organize, and Control. These are the tactical solutions needed to get you and your team up and running effectively.

There is an African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

We are in new territory and given the economic outlook, we need to go far. When you are dealing with a public health crisis or disaster response, it is important to make sure that life and well-being are the first priority. However, there is an illusion that 100% of your time needs to be spent managing the day-to-day. It's tempting, but you have to make sure to budget time for Directing and Engaging. To do that, you have to set up a system for success.

A KEY COMPETENCY AT THIS PHASE IS MAKING ACTION BINARY BY REMOVING AMBIGUITY.

This can be done using a checklist approach, here is what you can Manage day to day:

☐ **PLAN**

Team Strategy: Review your Crisis Plan, if you don't have one - a basic strategy of triage can be put in place for people, assets, and institutions. The US Navy will sometimes use the approach of "Mission, Ship, Crew".

Mission

Ship

Crew

Strategic Importance   **Tactical Importance**
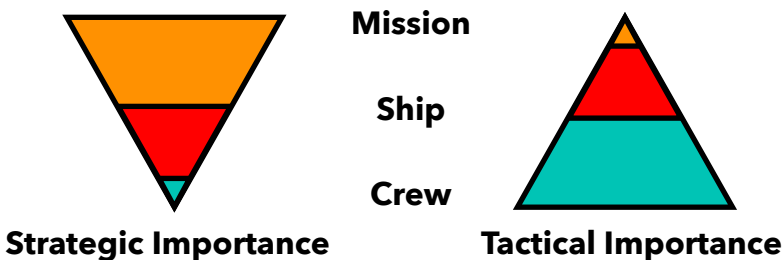
Your team is your Crew. Without them, the Ship (your assets) can't function and your Mission (the company itself) can't continue. Whether you are in the Navy, managing a 3PL, or working at a start-up; your mission has likely not changed much in the near term. What most likely has changed is the tactical implementation of that strategy.

Take Action:
Take an immediate assessment of your Crew and Ship:

1) Is everyone ok?, Can everyone connect remotely?
2) What assets can we manage remotely, which ones require direct human contact?
3) Ask the first two questions of your suppliers.
4) Ask the first two questions of your customers.

Assign roles in your team and key contacts (plus at least one back-up) to collect and maintain this information daily/weekly.

Targets and Goals: Getting your team moving when working apart can be challenging even for high-functioning teams that were used to working closely together. Getting your team connected with a daily check-in is invaluable. For first time remote workers, this has the added benefit of building/maintaining community. All companies can adopt the agile methodology framework of daily stand-ups:.

Take Action:
Set a time first thing in the morning on a conference or video call (or even a group chat). Each member answers the following questions in order:

1) What did you do yesterday?
2) What will you do today?
3) Are there any impediments in your way?

Keep this to a maximum of 15 - 30 minutes. If you need more time than this, your team is too big right now to be effective.

Allocating Resources: With established priorities (Targets & Goals), and with a Strategy in place, your role is to make decisions on what, when, and where to move resources. The main goal will always be to manage capacity and resources, identify how long until capacity is depleted, and how fast resources can be increased.

Take Action:
Use the assessment and daily meeting to collect decision making information:

1) Which project is most productive?
2) Which teams are most effective?
3) What resources do you need to plan around?

At this phase, survival may be the most important metric, knowing what resources you have and where they are being deployed is a daily and weekly KPI.
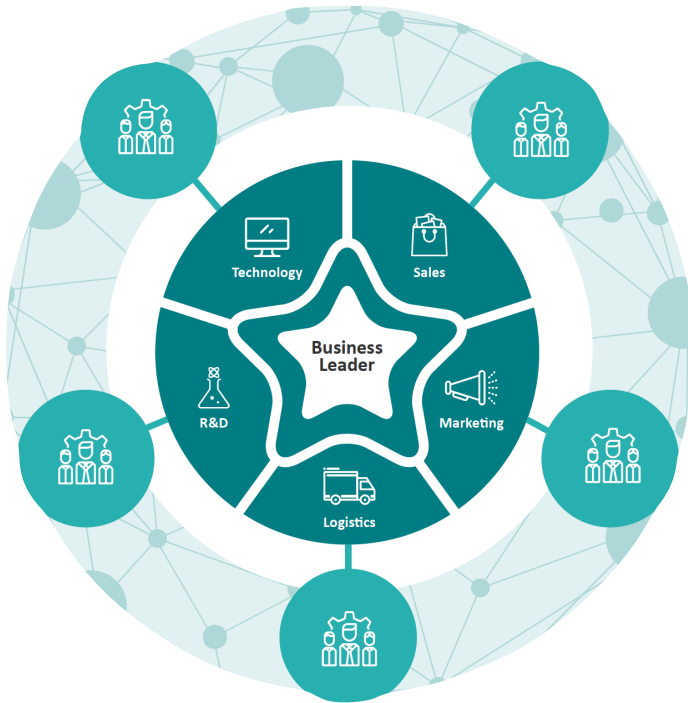
☐ ORGANIZE

Design: How will you organize your command center, your resources, your team?

Whether it is your home office, or an operational floor, designing the flow of communication is important.

Take Action:
Set the schedule for your team:

1) Daily Check-in with each team.

2) When KPI reporting is due (*hint: structure no more than one KPI check-in per hour*)

3) Impediment Knock-down - as a leader you can support your team the most by removing anything blocking them. Use the daily check-in to collect and prioritize your efforts.

You can always adjust, but design your work flow (and have your team do the same).

Team: A team is a microcosm of a community. A community has roles, responsibilities and rituals.

Your team likely already has job descriptions and responsibilities - you may even have rituals in place (*e.g. celebrating wins, weekly meals, etc)* - some of these may not translate into a new work flow and structure.

Take Action:
Update and Upgrade your Team:

1) What is the smallest job or task that each member can own? *(hint: this can contribute to current or future innovation challenges in terms of "collecting dots")*
2) Create a new ritual - *e.g.* the CivicTech Toronto chapter uses Penguin emojis to show joy and celebrate
3) Formalize a connector role in each team if you have different teams (or teams across different time zones).

These changes don't have to be major, in-fact, the smaller and more meaningful the better. Think of this as a way to prepare your team for a new reality.

Monitoring/Adjusting: What key indicators, information, and data do you need to pay attention to daily (hourly?) to be able to respond and lead effectively? Having a Strategy, Targets and Goals is not effective without a means to Control and adjust as needed.

Take Action:
Establish what and when to report:

1) Adapt the scrum method of measuring "velocity" for your projects

2) Determine the 3 - 4 KPI you need to track daily (or hourly) - *set 30 minutes to an hour each day to address and unblock issues for each KPI.*
3) Adjust to improve velocity and improve measurement sensitivity.

Humans can only manage 6-7 things before disaster hits. Monitoring and adjusting has an implicit goal of addressing issues before they contribute to total meltdown.

☐ **CONTROL**

Results and Reports: Based on how you have Planned and Organized, you should have unambiguous and even binary measures of success. This can also make up part of a daily or regular briefing and can even serve as early indicators of an innovation opportunity to solicit help from "the crowd" or to engage outside assistance.

Take Action:
Determine the following:

1) What is adding value?
2) What is subtracting value?

Taken from Six Sigma, these questions can be asked both internally (within teams and as an organization) as well as externally (with suppliers and customers).

Correcting: To paraphrase a well known adage, "No battle plan survives first contact". You will not manage change with 100% effectiveness. That should never be the

goal. The challenge is to be able to respond and adjust as quickly and effectively as possible.

   Take Action:
   Determine the following:

   1) What should we do less of now?
   2) What should we do more of now?
   3) What should we automate?

   These are common questions in any process improvement process - in working six feet apart, what can be done to enhance the process for individuals, teams, the company, and customers.

   Assessment of Commitment: Checking in as a team and individually to understand commitment - and how you can help your team cope and thrive.

   Take Action:
   Commit to:

   1) Setting up bi-monthly check-in and planning review sessions with individuals.
   2) End-of-week review with the entire team during the last hour of the last day.
   3) Monthly check-in with teams / individuals.

   In the world of innovation, these are opportunities for Optimization and Sustaining Innovation.

While you may choose a different set of tactical actions following the Plan, Organize, Control will help you right your ship.

On a final note, we can draw from a case of remote work in history. Many people are familiar with the story of Apollo 13. Some people are familiar with the ingenuity and innovation needed to safely bring the crew home. The hours of teams working at NASA to create air-filters (new products), a system to avoid overloading the electrical system (new processes), and the constant communication and check-in with the crew.

One story is less well known[1]. A group of mathematicians at University of Toronto were called to calculate one of the most important variables to get the crew home. They were not at NASA headquarters. They didn't have the luxury of video conferencing, and they didn't have time. They did have expertise and the ability to do weeks of work in a matter of hours. What they realized only later (after a successful re-entry) is that they were the only group tasked to work on that problem. Given the challenges and extreme limits NASA was tasked with, they gave a mission critical problem to a group - remotely working - but with clear, simple direction. This made all the difference and helped avoid a tragedy.

We are all tasked with a new way to work. Harnessing the ability and creating high-performing teams starts with Managing effectively and unambiguously.

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[1] "Canadians honoured for aiding Apollo 13" https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/canadians-honoured-for-aiding-apollo-13/article4314677/

MANAGING	DIRECTING	ENGAGING
PLAN • The Strategy • Targets and Goals • Allocating Resources	**VISION** • Setting a direction • Articulating the Vision in clear language	**VALUES** • Defining the Values • Articulating the Values • Modelling the values daily
ORGANIZE • Design • Team • Monitoring/Adjusting	**ALIGNMENT** • Identification of constituencies • Communicating for relevance • Selling for commitment	**CLARITY** • Ensure Clear Targets • Searching/Making decisions • Ensure boundary awareness
CONTROL • Results and Reports • Correcting • Assessment of Commitment	**MOTIVATION** • Appeal to untapped needs • Belonging and fulfillment • Link to personal payoff	**INVOLVEMENT** • Systems and Procedures • Inclusivity and Restraint • Organizational Assessment

Courtesy of Jim Fisher: "The Thoughtful Leader"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Grayson Bass is a GIMI Board Member, a Logistics Institute Fellow, and Managing Director of Mayor Wilson - a firm focused on working with governments, industry, and organizations. The firm focuses on Academia (teaching GIMI and Applied Innovation frameworks at Universities, Colleges, and Secondary Schools), Advisory (working with Governments, Startups and Corporations) building and manage Innovation Management Offices, and R&D (taking the most disruptive ideas and incubating and experimenting in business models).

He is self isolating in Canada at Community Ag Lab #1.