

Virtual Coaching: Don't let current travel restrictions prevent you from developing your people

By Martin Kavanagh | March 6, 2020

Recent global affairs have resulted in many organizations asking colleagues to cancel face-to-face events which are often highly valued (attendance at conferences, face-to-face team meetings etc), which could be having a big impact on employee experience.

I've seen some long-planned development initiatives being delayed as "they would lose their impact if not delivered face to face." Often, this needn't be the case. In fact, a time where colleagues are not getting as much interaction as they may be used to, or need, is exactly the time when colleagues should be receiving that extra bit of support or coaching.

I've experienced some reluctance from Wave users to run coaching sessions remotely. The Saville Assessment Consultancy Team regularly deliver coaching sessions based on the outputs of our assessments using conferencing or video conferencing services. In light of the current global context, and given the importance of colleagues feeling supported at this time, I thought it would be helpful to share some simple tips on making a virtual coaching session successful.

Tip 1: Try out video conferencing

I've seen the sheer panic on people's faces when their webcam unintentionally projects them into a meeting. But once you're used to it, video conferencing can feel almost as natural as a face-to-face interaction. From my experience, it feels significantly more personal than an audio-only conversation, so well worth trying out.

Tip 2: Have a backup in case the technology doesn't work

Make sure you have a backup agreed in advance of the session. You don't want to lose time trying to reconnect or constantly asking each other "Can you hear me now?" If the technology is impacting the flow of the session, move to the back up straight away.

Tip 3: Make sure the coachee is situated somewhere they can speak openly

If they're in an open-plan office, the flow of the conversation will almost certainly be interrupted at some point by the coachee saying they need to move somewhere more private. Alternatively, they might start talking in code as the example they could be sharing involves a colleague on the next bank of desks. Either way, these kinds of instances will interrupt the flow of the conversation.

Tip 4: Make sure the coachee has access to any outputs you need to share

If the purpose of the call is to share the output of a Saville assessment, it is easy to share reports securely, in line with GDPR, through the Oasys platform (video tutorials on how to do this are available). This avoids the need to send the dreaded password-protected zip file.

If you really don't want the coachee to access the data beforehand (this is often the case with 360 reports) and feel they won't be able to resist the temptation, don't send the report in advance; share your screen instead. This could either be for the whole session or at specific points. In some of the Wave Expert Reports there are a lot of deep dives to cover off. There is nothing worse than when you've just asked an insightful question and the coachee asks, "What page are we on, sorry?"

Sharing a screen, or regularly checking in, can make sure you are (literally) on the same page.

Tip 5: Become comfortable with periods of silence

Periods of silence in a coaching session typically offer the most powerful reflections. It means the coachee is working through something and they need to be given space. "Are you still there?" can really interrupt the flow. Get used to long silences and wait for the other person patiently - particularly if you are a 'Relator-Assertor' (one for Work Roles users there).

Tip 6: Ask for feedback at the end of the session

Be as blunt as "How do you feel this compares with a face-to-face session?". You are likely to get a very reassuring response. If you wouldn't feel comfortable asking this, explore options for anonymized survey technology to help you.

If you are a Wave user and still do not feel comfortable with the idea of a virtual coaching session, you don't need to put the brakes on your development activities; we have a range of reports that can be shared with colleagues which do not require expert interpretation.

So don't let virtual working be an excuse for delaying development initiatives. Make it a time you kick them off to give your team some much needed support.



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