

every
woman
WORKBOOK

EFFECTIVE
LEADERSHIP:
KEEPING
MORALE UP IN
DIFFICULT TIMES

About this workbook

At everywoman, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that unlock the potential and talent of women in business globally. Whether you're just starting out, looking to progress your career, or even to build and develop your own enterprise, the everywomanNetwork provides a wealth of personal development resources, advice and inspiration to address the challenges you face at key stages in business. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to propel you through your life's work, at a time and place that suits you.

Welcome to our new workbook, *Effective Leadership: Keeping Morale Up in Difficult Times*.

The business world is beset with numerous challenges, and not all of the type that might excite or motivate us or our teams. How we face up to those challenges depends very much on us as individuals and the situation in front of us — how one leader approaches a potentially industry-disrupting move by a competitor may be quite different to how another squares up to a logistical nightmare caused by a global pandemic.

What is clear, is that regardless of the nature of the challenge or the individual in question, stress is on the rise. While some degree of stress can be a great motivator, chronic or extreme stress is incredibly damaging to productivity, engagement and wellbeing.

You've probably been in situations where the actions and behaviours of your boss during a difficult period — be it a downturn in sales or a lockdown situation — profoundly impacts how you and others feel about your working life. In this workbook, we'll ask you to take stock of your team's engagement levels right now, and consider your role in positively impacting those.

Of course, leading through difficult times is as much about how you nurture yourself as it is how you manage your teams. So we'll also be looking at your own motivation, and the ways in which you're caring for your own wellbeing, so that you're in fighting form and a role model in resilience for those who need you.

As we've said, today's business challenges are many and varied, but there are common threads in how we can overcome them. We ask that you think hard about the specific challenges you're faced with as a leader at this time, to get the very best out of this workbook and its many takeaways. We'd love to know how you get on – email us at karenmax@everywoman.com or tweet us @everywomanuk.

Max & Karen
and the everywoman team

Effective leadership

Being able to effectively lead others when things are going well is one thing. When times are challenging, it's a whole different ball game. There are a lot of circumstances that could constitute as 'challenging'. For example:

- Economic turmoil
- New ownership of the company
- Restructuring within the company
- Loss of a major client
- Loss of key team members

And... a global pandemic that has affected every single person and business in some way.

A 2020 survey by Perkbox found that, of British adults in employment, a staggering 79% commonly experience work-related stress. This is 20% higher than 2018's findings. We know that when people are in a state of uncertainty their stress levels rise. We know that when people are in a stressful state their performance is negatively impacted. We are less creative, less optimistic, less productive, and less efficient.

But on a positive note, the role of a leader can have a huge impact on each individual experience through the challenging times AND people who are positively managed during difficult times often become more loyal and engaged team members long term.

So, your role as leader (at any level) has become more important than ever.

Firstly, let's begin with the end in mind. When we talk about having an engaged team member, what does that actually mean for you?

If your employee was engaged with you and the business, what would they be doing, saying and feeling? How would you know they were engaged? (For example, communicating openly, being a team player, doing their work to a high standard, asking for help if needed, sharing suggestions, coming up with solutions, being open to change, bringing a positive attitude to work, contributing to meetings, hitting their targets etc.)

Write your answers here

How engaged are your team members?

Now that you've had a chance to think about how you want your team members to look, sound and feel, we need to look at where your team currently are in relation to that, and we need to look at what you as the leader could be doing to encourage these behaviours.

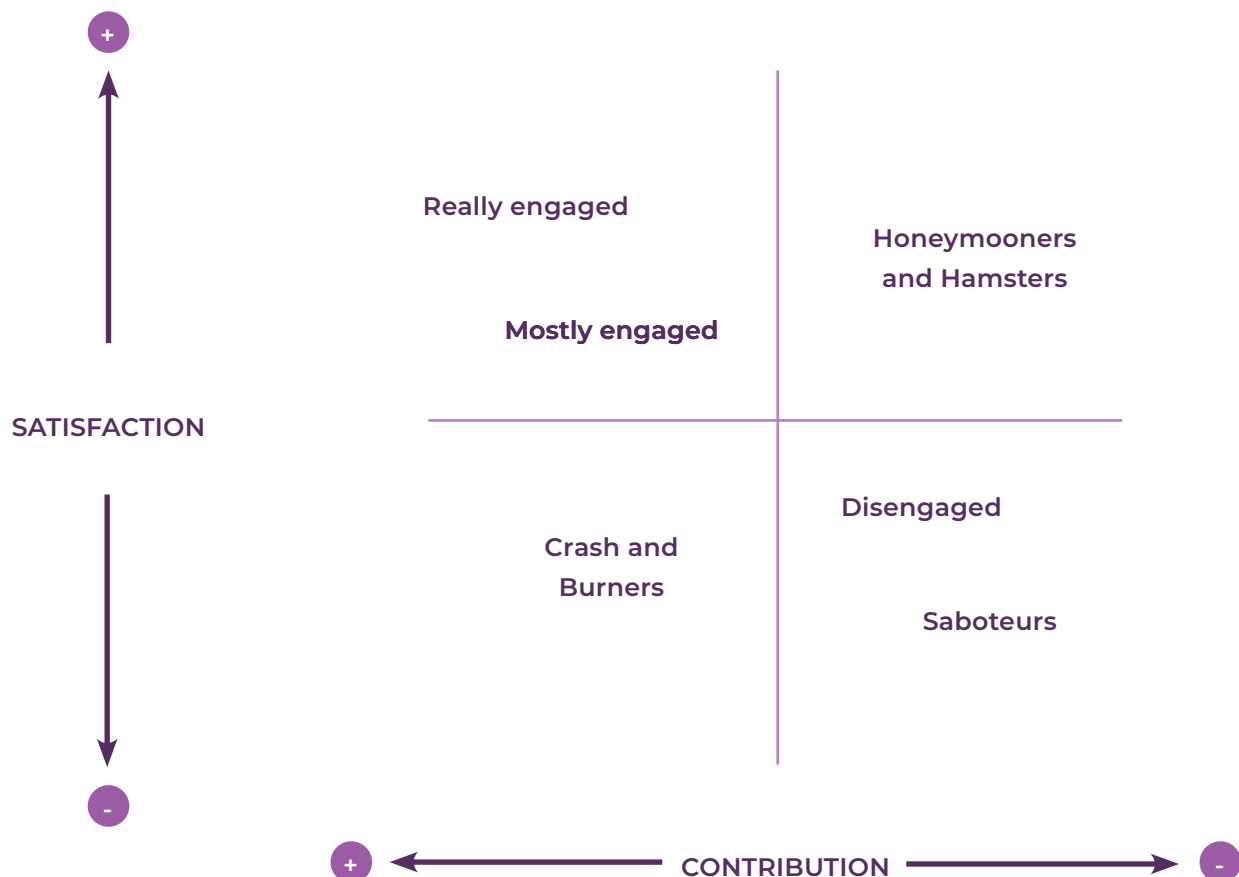
Defining employee engagement

When we talk about employee engagement, I like to use the Blessing White definition of: maximum contribution and maximum satisfaction.

Contribution: To what degree the businesses needs are being met: how effectively and efficiently people actually do their job.

Satisfaction: To what degree the individuals needs are being met: how happy and personally fulfilled they are by the company and their work.

Take a look at this table:



If you look at it from this point of view, you have five groups your people could fall into:

Really Engaged: these are your champions, the people who are contributing to the business and feeling personally satisfied within themselves.

Mostly Engaged: contribute to the best of their ability most of the time, and are mostly satisfied.

Honeymooners: new starters who are very satisfied at having the job but are not able to contribute fully yet as they are still learning their role/the business. They are in the honeymoon phase of feeling good but don't know everything about the relationship yet.

Hamsters: people who have potentially been in their role a long time and while they are satisfied and 'comfortable' they no longer contribute to their full potential. They look busy but aren't doing much, like a hamster on a wheel running but not going anywhere.

Crash and Burners: people who are performing to a high standard and contributing to the business but are not feeling personally satisfied. There is only so long people can give without feeling fulfilled before they crash and burn (get burn out, become disengaged or leave the business).

Disengaged: people who are not contributing to the business and are not satisfied. At best, they call in sick, or do the bare minimum, and at worst they actively sabotage by moaning and gossiping to others.

Look at your current team. Where do you think each person currently sits?

Which are the people who always do more than you expect them to do, with a good attitude?

My 'really engaged' are:

Which are the people who usually do more than you expect them to do, with a good attitude?

My 'mostly engaged' are:

Which are the people who have been with you less than six months and are not yet fully self-sufficient within their role?

My 'honeymooners' are:

Which are the people who have been there a really long time and don't do any more than the bare minimum required of them?

My 'hamsters' are:

Which are the people who seem to be working really hard and are potentially feeling frustrated or stressed out?

My 'crash and burners' are:

Which are the people who often don't do what they're supposed to do and are constantly negative?

My 'actively disengaged' are:

What people need

As an exceptional leader, you will need to adapt your style to the needs of your people. Not everyone needs the same thing at the same time, and working out where they sit on this scale is a great tool to help you to work out what it is that they might need at any given time (as it can change).

The 'really engaged' and 'mostly engaged' need: recognition, autonomy, and support. You don't want them to become dissatisfied by taking them for granted. Check in and make sure they have what they need and are feeling supported.

'Honeymooners' need: training, development, communication, an opportunity to ask questions, patience, regular check-ins. This is an opportunity to lay the ground work for an engaged member moving forward. The first 3–6 months of a new team member is crucial in their long-term success with you and the business.

'Hamsters' need: communication, change, and honest conversations around performance. When you have team members who are not pulling their weight it can be detrimental to the overall engagement of other team members. It's important as a leader to manage this. Sometimes taking the person out of their comfort zone can shift this.

'Crash and burners' need: communication, support, recognition. It is important to find out what specifically has created their feeling of dissatisfaction. There is only so long that someone can give/work/produce without feeling happy or fulfilled. These people often land up leaving the business if this isn't addressed.

The 'disengaged' need: constructive conversations, disciplinarys, change, to exit. It is vital that the disengaged do not become saboteurs – at any time - but especially during difficult times. This behaviour must be managed quickly, and without taking too much energy away from the rest of the team. For more information, see our workbook [Giving and Receiving Feedback in a Remote World](#) or our webinar [Productive Ways to Have Difficult Work Conversations](#).

Below are some questions to ask/think about when checking in with your people. These questions are designed to gain information about what is important to the individual, what their values are, what motivates them, and how to communicate best with them so that you can tailor your style to suit that person.

“WHAT DO YOU NEED IN ORDER TO FEEL SUPPORTED?”

“WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DO MORE OF OR LESS OF WHILE WE WORK THROUGH THESE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?”

“HOW CAN I HELP YOU RIGHT NOW?”

“HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’VE DONE A GOOD JOB/HOW DO YOU LIKE TO BE APPRECIATED?”

“WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU TO HAVE FROM WORK?”

“WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU TO HAVE FROM YOUR LEADER?”

“WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST FRUSTRATING IN THE WORKPLACE?”

“HOW OFTEN DO YOU LIKE TO HAVE CHECK-INS?”

“HOW DO YOU LIKE TO BE COMMUNICATED WITH BEST?”

What will you do more/less of to help encourage each person to become more engaged?

(Remember, being engaged is about BOTH their performance AND their personal happiness).

Write your answer here:

Leading yourself through difficult times

In order to lead others, you need to first lead yourself. It's important that YOU are showing up as the best version of yourself so that you can help to support others. During times of uncertainty the one thing that people need most is a confident, optimistic leader who exudes certainty. You might not feel it, or even be certain, but you do need your people to feel like you have everything under control.

Your own needs: make sure you are giving yourself what YOU need in order to feel motivated, positive, energised, and confident. You cannot give from an empty cup. Fill yourself up so that you have more to give to those who need you.

What do you need in order to feel your best, and are you giving it to yourself?

Your own development: when things become difficult, we can often put learning and growing on the back burner while we try to simply survive. But now is the time to continue to learn. Read books that give you ideas and motivation, take courses that will help you with tools you could either use or impart to others, ask for feedback and continue to have a growth mindset.

What are you doing/could you be doing towards your own development?

Your own confidence and positivity: during difficult times YOU might be feeling unsure and uncertain. All the things that are affecting your team will of course be impacting you too. Communication with your leader is something that can help you to feel more confident so you have as much information as possible. Working on your own mindset and creating a daily morning ritual that will set you up for the day is very useful. It's easier to 'get out in front' of anxiety than to try and deal with it when it comes.

What could you be doing more of to build your confidence and positivity during this time?

Leading others through difficult times

In addition to looking at the engagement of each individual and working out what they specifically need, there are some universal truths that everyone needs in order to be effectively managed (especially during times of uncertainty).

1. Two-way communication

Communication problems are the most common issues that cause stress in the workplace. People NEED communication in order to feel good.

- Update people as much as possible (even when there isn't an update). If you don't tell them something, they will make things up that are worse than the truth. Simply say 'we still don't know, nothing has been confirmed, when we know I will tell you.' And keep saying this until you do know.
- Do share as much information as possible. No news is worse than bad news for people in terms of stress and anxiety. So as much as possible, share what is going on.
- Ask people questions. Give them a chance to voice their concerns to you. If they don't tell you, they will tell someone else. This is how rumours and negativity start within teams. Allow people space to share but do so in a constructive way so it doesn't turn into an opportunity to just be negative. For example, get everyone to write down their biggest concern or question. Then see which one is the most common and address those first.

- **Are you giving updates as often as possible?**
- **Are you sharing as much information as you can?**
- **Are you asking people for their feedback?**
- **Are you creating open channels for people to voice their concerns?**

2. Deal with negative people

It's important to not let negativity effect your whole team. Very often we find it difficult to talk about this kind of behaviour with people but it's necessary. Remember your responsibility as a leader is to the majority. So, if people are being negative it might be time for a constructive conversation or some feedback about this. Let them know how this is impacting on the team and what you expect instead.

- **Are you allowing any negative behaviours to affect the team?**
- **Are you avoiding conversations with people about their behaviour?**

3. Start with the positive

When people are in a positive mental state, they are more open to change, more creative, better at finding solutions, more efficient, and more productive. Get into the habit of starting meetings with the positive. For example, get everyone to share something that has gone well this week. Share something positive someone did for you. Always start with what is working. This will get people into a positive mindset.

- **Do you make a conscious effort to focus on the positive aspects?**
- **Do you start conversations with positives or negatives?**
- **How could you encourage more focus on positive aspects?**

4. Reward and recognise

When things are difficult people need far more encouragement, recognition and support than usual (and they usually need more than what we give!) so look at each member of your team and think about how you could personalise a thank you. Hand-written cards, sending flowers, writing a detailed email as to why and how they have been helpful and are appreciated, sharing a book, and so on. The more personalised and specific the better. Research shows that people who have received praise in the last seven days are more productive and motivated.

- **Have you given people personalised praise in the last seven days?**
- **How could you show someone appreciation in a more meaningful way?**

5. See the human

Remember that every person that you work with is a human being. They will all have their own stuff going on. They have a family dynamic impacting them, a home situation, work stresses, personal insecurities/doubts/fears/motivators, they have their own values and perspectives on the world. The more you are able to look at this person and see them as a human the more you will be able to lead them through these difficult times, because ultimately everyone just wants to be seen. Take an interest in them as a whole.

- **Do you know what personal challenges your team are facing right now?**
- **Have you asked about family/home in recent conversations?**
- **Do you know what each person's personal aspirations and goals are?**
- **Do you know what each person values most?**

Lastly, I want to share the most powerful question you can ask your team when things are difficult, in order to be the leader they need you to be.

But first, think about the last time someone said “let me know if you need any help.”

How likely were you to ask them for help? Usually, not likely at all.

Instead, ask “how can I help you right now?” and/or “what do you need from me right now?”

How will you apply these five points to your team members?

Having a person's trust is
more powerful than all other
management techniques
put together

Linus Torvalds

Effective Leadership: Keeping Morale Up in Difficult Times

Articles

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