May 2020

Right Lane Review

Think. Plan. Do.

The collective pivot

In this issue

COVID-19 has dominated our news feeds, our conversations and our headspace. What is unique is that we are experiencing this collectively. How we experience it will differ but this pandemic affects all of us.

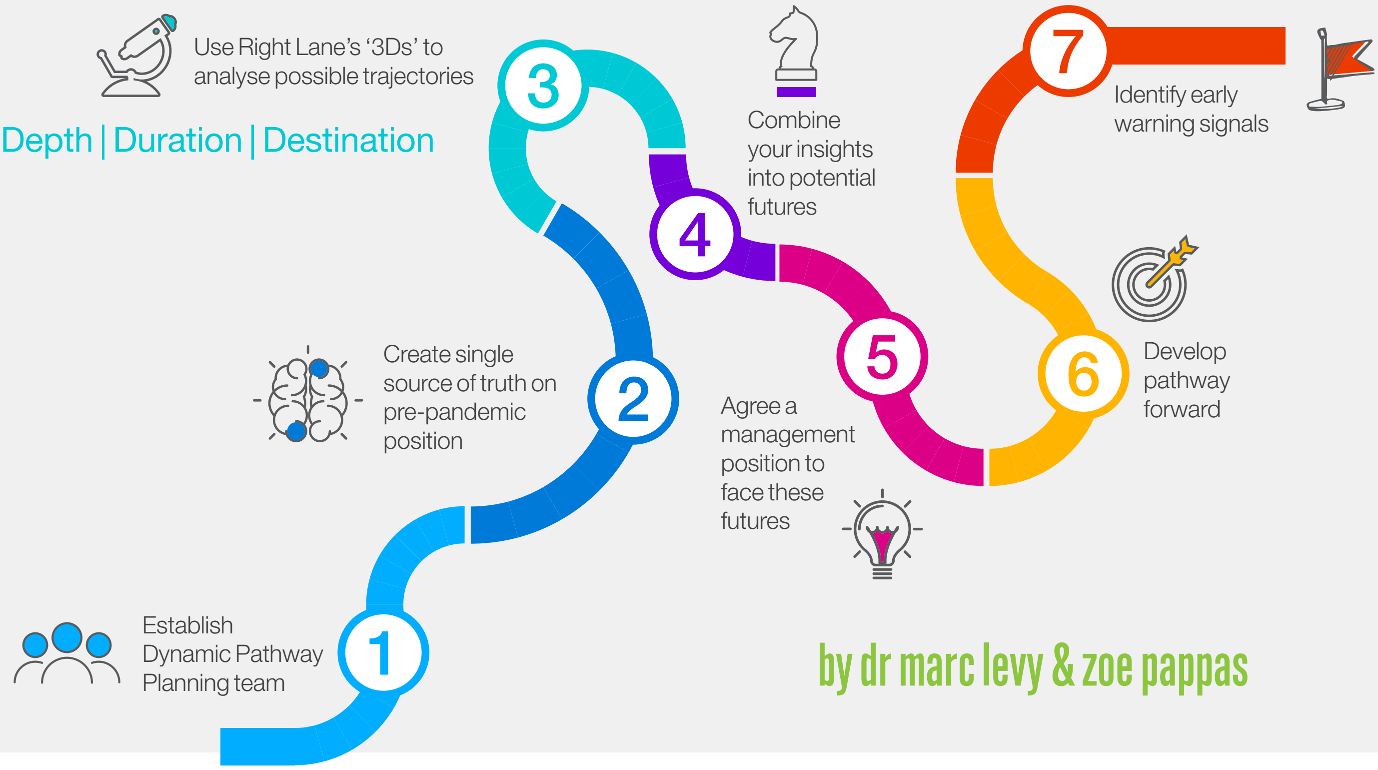
It's important to remind ourselves that regardless of how we got there – we pivoted. We brought our office furniture home, found nooks and cupboards to turn into offices, negotiated table space, bemoaned internet speeds and re-negotiated our calendars. The step you take after you pivot is the first of many towards adapting. In this edition of the Right Lane Review we outline processes, tools and practices that will support you to move towards adapting.

This pandemic has demanded a lot of us and it will continue to for some time. However, it too will pass and it is important to think about the kind of organisation you want to be on the other side of this disruption. Our first article in this edition looks at Right Lane's seven step Dynamic Pathway Planning methodology and how it can be applied by organisations who are looking to make sense of COVID-19.

For many of us key interactions and events have been postponed or cancelled all together. Some of these interactions, such as strategy offsites, are critical to the functioning of organisations. Our second article outlines five practices for conducting successful remote/digital workshops.

The pivot from office life to home office life has come with challenges. Our next three articles all focus on adapting our ways of working to our new context. They cover effective meetings, productivity and accountability. Each looks at different tools and processes that will enable teams to work effectively while working remotely.

This pandemic has also prompted us to think about the wellbeing of the collective in ways we might not have before. A reframe that we have found helpful is to think about this time of physical distancing as an act of solidarity. We stay home so that people don't fall ill. We want to acknowledge those that have lost their jobs, those for whom home is not safe and those working on the front lines of this health crisis.



by dr marc levy & zoe pappas

Making sense of COVID-19: Dynamic Pathway Planning

Right thinking

Facing uncertainty, scenario planning methods come into their own.

In this article, we apply our own Dynamic Pathway Planning methodology to illustrate its practical application for organisations seeking to make sense of COVID-19.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and isolation measures disrupting organisations, their customers and suppliers, and it being the time of the year executives are intensively undertaking planning and budgeting work, we are doing a considerable amount of scenario planning work right now.

We'll be honest – scenario planning hasn't been our favourite strategy framework, in no small part because the way it's often used lacks true purpose, context and clarity. Often the scenarios that organisations craft are too improbable and farfetched, or there's been too much focus on the front end – crafting clever combinations of trends and events – and not enough focus on the back end such as considering the different planning responses, or the monitoring and review disciplines required to determine when to change tack as the future plays out.

Other strategy frameworks do a better job when conditions are more predictable[1], but scenario planning, and derivatives thereof, can come into its own under conditions of uncertainty. A pervasive pandemic like COVID-19 (similar to a war or a collapse in financial markets) raises the level of uncertainty for everyone.

In this article, we share Right Lane's seven step Dynamic Pathway Planning framework, drawing on our own firm's experience applying it in the current climate. We've focused on our firm's application of the framework, because our client examples are confidential, and also because we have found it extremely helpful in aligning our Leadership Team in these challenging times.

1 For those interested in strategy frameworks suitable for organisations in industries facing different levels of uncertainty, Courtney et al.'s timeless *Strategy Under Uncertainty* (1997) is an excellent read.

Step 1: Establish the Dynamic Pathway Planning team

At Right Lane, the first thing we did was to form a Dynamic Pathway Planning team and establish some parameters. In our case, we decided the Leadership Team was the right group to do this work.

We distinguished this forward-looking effort from the work of the 'pandemic response' team that is responding to the immediate priorities of evolving our COVID-19 policies, getting our people set up remotely and facilitating new ways of working.

Step 2: Create the single source of truth on your pre-pandemic position

For this second step, we reviewed our strategy, plans and the progress of our key initiatives. We also took a step back to recap the key performance trends we'd been experiencing pre-pandemic – our track record of revenue growth, steady increases in average engagement size, deeper client relationships and a more diversified revenue base – to give us a solid understanding of our pre-COVID-19 position and trajectory. We then paid particular attention to our immediate future performance indicators – establishing our cash and debtors positions, our year to date profit margin and our pipeline of new work. Being aligned on our pre-pandemic position gave us a solid foundation for thinking about the possible futures that lie in front of us.

Step 3: Gain a greater appreciation of possible COVID-19 trajectories using Right Lane's '3Ds'

In step 3, we analysed the '3Ds' of the pandemic as they were impacting our operating environment, industry and firm – that is, the **depth, duration and destination** of the pandemic.

In our case we are most concerned about the longevity of disruption to demand patterns. Some of our clients have pushed out strategy discussions or delayed projects. Will demand 'snap back' to where it was before the pandemic, or will there be a long-term disruption to demand patterns? If it will 'snap back', when might that be – when everyone goes back to the office, when clients' finances improve or when organisations decide they want to catch up on longer-term initiatives?

We also discussed opportunities presented by the current situation, including our post-COVID-19 mission or 'moon shot' as Sam Mostyn has called it (Mostyn, 2019).

What kind of organisation do we want to be, on the other side of this disruption? Our moon shot ideas centred on opportunities for our clients, our own firm's growth and some of our new ways of working.

Step 4: Combine your insights from the 3Ds analysis into potential futures

Exploring the 3Ds of the pandemic gave rise to four 'potential futures' we believe we might face, represented by the matrix below in exhibit 1, with depth of disruption (demand patterns go back to 'normal' or they don't) on the y-axis and duration of disruption (3-6 months and greater than 6 months) on the x-axis.

For clarity, deep disruption might include clients wanting different services than the ones we provided pre-pandemic, or wanting to engage with us in different ways.

We examined the implications of each 'future' for our strategy, operating model and financial position. A high-level snapshot of this analysis is shown overleaf in exhibit 2.

Step 5: Agree a general position management will take to face into these futures

Having established these possible futures and the implications, we agreed our general position via a set of principles: keep our people feeling purposeful, productive and connected; always consider what we want Right Lane to look like on the other side of this; preserve the cash we've built up in the firm as best we can; and make workforce adjustments only when necessary, not pre-emptively.

We agreed to plan in six-week blocks, reviewing progress weekly.

Exhibit 1: Right Lane's four potential futures

Source: Right Lane Consulting. (2020).

In our case we are most concerned about the longevity of disruption to demand patterns ... Will demand 'snap back' to where it was before the pandemic, or will there be a long-term disruption to demand patterns?

Exhibit 2: Possible futures based on analysis of the 3Ds

NOT EXHAUSTIVE

Implications for:	Possible futures, based on analysis of the 3Ds			
	3-6 months, 'snap back'	>6 months, 'snap back'	3-6 months, demand disrupted	>6 months, disrupted demand
Strategy	• Hold the line on long-term aspirations • Adjust existing product/ proposition for new climate	• As for 3-6 months, 'snap back' • Consider mergers and acquisitions that might make sense in this climate	• Revisit long-term aspirations • Identify what will resonate with clients post demand disruption – products, channels, ways of working, etc. • Create new offers that chime with new demand pattern	• As for 3-6 months, disrupted (more wide-ranging exercise)
Operating model	• Refresh growth aspirations • Consider reorganising for new environment • Refocus marketing activity • Stop recruiting • Identify the changes we've made that we'd like to keep	• As for 3-6 months, 'snap back'	• Reset short and long-term growth targets • Revisit marketing strategy • Review required capabilities and workforce plan	• As for 3-6 months, disrupted (more wide-ranging exercise)
Financial position	• Trim discretionary expenses • Make low impost workforce adjustments	• Adjust workforce – employ one or more of reduced hours/pay, leave without pay, temporary shutdown, redundancies	• Rebuild cost structure to fit new demand pattern	• Rebuild cost structure to fit new demand pattern (more sweeping changes)

Step 6: Develop the pathway forward

We then developed a plan that's robust to the four futures and flexible enough to adapt as things change.

We made the changes suggested by the least disruptive, 3-6 month, 'snap back' future. For example, we 'atomised', establishing smaller teams to help our people stay connected and create purposeful, productive individual work programs. We refocused our marketing activity with the emphasis on staying connected with existing clients. We fine-tuned our existing product propositions so that they would resonate more in the current climate. We made 'low impost' workforce adjustments such as asking people to use up their time-off-in-lieu if they were unable to maintain a threshold level of productivity.

With an eye to possible disruption to demand patterns, we decided to maintain our investment in our strategy workshops service, which will always be in demand; we launched initiatives to create new offers that might resonate with clients under different circumstances; and we intensified discussions with potential merger partners with value propositions that might complement ours in a disrupted environment.

Step 7: Identify early warning signals and adapt in the face of new developments

We set expectations for the next six-week period covering revenue, pipeline, cash, profit margin and utilisation, twelve measures in all, and developed a dashboard to monitor these measures in our regular Leadership Team meetings. We agreed that should we meet those expectations, we would not make workforce adjustments.

Agreeing to these measures – along with targets and 'early warning signals' that identify whether significant, prolonged disruption is playing out – has brought focus and agility to our weekly Leadership Team Dynamic Pathway Planning discussions. By monitoring these signals we will have alignment on when we might need to adapt our plans and change tack as the situation evolves. We understand that it is quite likely that the 'other side' will be characterised by 'fits and starts', and still further economic uncertainty – the 'dance' as Tomas Pueyo called it (Leonhardt, 2020), and so we are likely to need to be highly adaptive in response.

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We've found that **Dynamic Pathway Planning** helps bring clarity to an otherwise opaque set of circumstances and provides a practical and action-oriented method that's often absent in typical scenario planning. It aligns teams, enriches and invigorates decision making and reduces the anxiety involved in working in uncertain times.

We think you'll also benefit from embedding **Dynamic Pathway Planning** in your organisation.

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by zoe pappas

Five practices for conducting successful remote/digital workshops

Right thinking

In light of the escalating responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been turning our minds to a key question that our clients are currently grappling with: 'What will happen to our strategy offsite and other key workshop dates in the calendar?'

Most of our clients are keen to find ways to make sure these important events and conversations in the strategy calendar are able to proceed, and soon.

The current COVID-19 situation is first and foremost a health concern. We must keep our people and workplaces safe and reduce the risk to our families and communities. The secondary challenge is keeping the wheels of our economy and businesses turning. Decisions still need to be made, strategies and plans developed, and we still have to bring together groups for powerful, meaningful collaboration if we are to continue to deliver as best we can through turbulent times.

In light of this, we thought we'd share five practices for conducting successful remote/digital workshops, developed through conducting multiple engagements in these forms:

1. Break it down

One of the reasons offsites are usually designed as consecutive sessions over one to two days is that it's an efficient way to use everyone's time if you are bringing them together physically. In fact – if we are not all required to be in the same location at the same time – we can get creative with our format and break it down into different time periods, delivering the sessions in modules over a few days or a couple of weeks. The trick is not to let there be too much time between sessions so you can maintain the right momentum and flow required to achieve desired outcomes.

2. Redesign sessions and mix them up

Don't just expect that a session plan that works in physical form will translate perfectly for the virtual world. It won't. Clever session design, that is cognisant of the strengths and limitations of working in a digital space, is more important than ever. And mix it up! Some sessions require synchronous participation, while others (for example, guest presenters) could potentially be pre-recorded. Breakouts can be scheduled at different times to meet the needs of different groups of attendees.

3. Make use of the full digital toolkit

There's an amazing array of tools at our disposal to support effective digital workshops. At Right Lane we love Zoom, as it allows us to see large numbers of participants and has easy screen sharing and virtual breakout capabilities. We are also big fans of Mural, which allows us to create virtual whiteboards and templates that everyone can contribute to, and Zeetings for managing real time questions and polling. Many of these tools require nothing more than a device (smartphone or tablet) and a browser, making them easy for participants to access. By selecting the right mix of tools, you can keep everyone engaged, collaborating and developing outputs in the right way, for the duration of workshop sessions.

4. Be disciplined

Even more so than usual, it's important to establish good protocols for participation during a digital workshop. Rules around multitasking must be agreed up front (no side-emails or calls for example), session leaders must be clearly identified, and rules applied for gathering contributions and comments.

Videocons are notoriously difficult if people talk over each other. Structure and process are very important here. Systematic 'turns around the table' to allow everyone a chance to speak can be useful; using digital tools to post questions that can then be addressed in an orderly fashion is good too. We also like to build in structured feedback mechanisms – polls or surveys for example – so participants can flag if there are residual issues that need to be addressed in subsequent sessions or offline. And – of course – strong, confident facilitators who can bring together the mix of tools, processes and people are key.

5. Be (super) prepared

This is really important for any workshop, and particularly so for a virtual one. Have clear session objectives and structured plans. Run through sessions in advance. Ensure key participants (e.g. CEO, chair, presenters, group captains, co-facilitators) are fully briefed on session structure, materials and tools so there are no surprises, and everyone is clear on their role. It's frustrating when the technology lets you down, so have a test run on digital tools with everyone in advance, and make sure there's a back-up plan in the event of a tech melt-down. Have clear expectations for the circulation of outcomes following the session, and make sure these are met.

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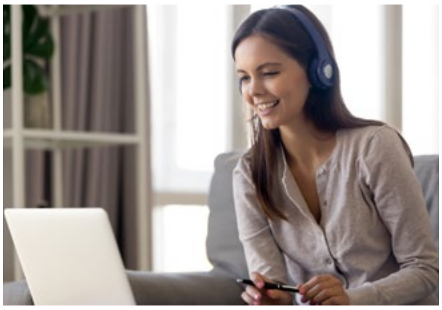
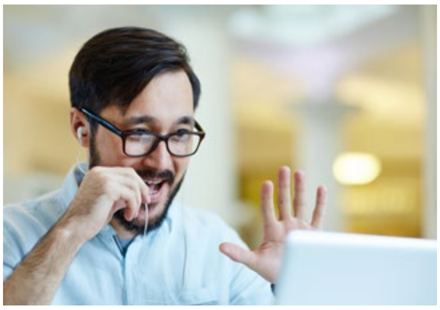
By adopting the above practices we can conduct workshops successfully into the realm of remote working, enabling productive collaboration and meaningful discussion with participants in dispersed locations. By working together we can help keep this show on the road.





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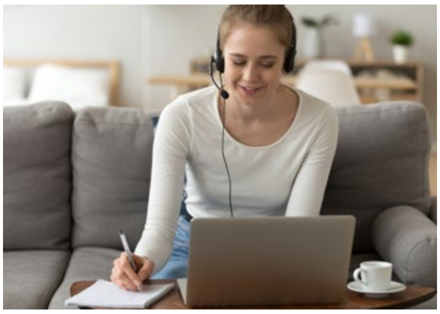

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Run better virtual meetings

by focusing on what (really) needs to be done

Right thinking

Virtual meetings have fast become our new normal; and while principles for running effective in-person meetings remain highly relevant, we need to adjust our approach and focus to get the most out of our virtual interactions. Here we discuss two key fundamentals: rigorous preparation and structured facilitation that's adaptive to the virtual realm. Focus must be placed on the following questions: 'How can I capture and hold the attention of the people in my meeting? How can we move people towards the outcomes we need to achieve?'

As we made the transition to working from home sparked by COVID-19, virtual meetings fast became the new normal. This new way of working hasn't come without challenges. Through our work with dozens of organisations since the emergency began, we have developed a set of simple fundamentals for running effective virtual meetings.

We've written extensively about meetings in recent years because meetings are a source of pain for many organisations. Clients are increasingly looking to us for ideas to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these everyday group interactions—their organisations' 'meeting fitness'.

We published an article on the 'five Ps' of meeting effectiveness (Levy, 2014) and we wrote about ways to reclaim lost time in meetings (Levy & Mills, 2019), in response to client complaints about the variable quality of their meetings and how much time they spent attending them.

At Right Lane we use the 'five Ps' to get the most out of our meetings: purpose, process, product, perspective and participants. We expect meetings to have an agreed purpose, a clear process and an end product. In consulting, we want our team members to bring their perspectives to the discussion, have a view on the issues and 'get in the game'. We pay attention to who should participate in the meeting, the parts they should attend and their roles.

While principles for running effective in-person meetings such as these remain highly relevant, running effective virtual meetings requires more preparation and a different kind of facilitation. This isn't an environment to wing it. In this environment, poor planning and meeting management are laid bare. We've been operating with some goodwill up until now, but as meeting and working virtually is normalised people will start to lose patience with meetings that frustrate them and feel like a waste of time. To top it off, we've noticed participants find it more difficult to concentrate in the virtual realm for long periods, especially if the meetings are not engaging and well executed.

We believe it's important to pay careful attention to two key fundamentals: **rigorous preparation and structured facilitation** that's adaptive to the virtual realm. In planning these two aspects of virtual meetings – the preparation (agenda development and session planning, the pre-reading and pre-work) and the facilitation – focus must be placed on the following questions: 'How can I capture and hold the attention of the people in my meeting? How can we move people towards the outcomes we need to achieve?'

Below are some tips for improving virtual meetings by attending to these two fundamentals.

1. Rigorous preparation

- In preparing for the meeting, set robust foundations. Get clear on why you are having the meeting by establishing a clear purpose.
- Working from this clear purpose, establish a firm view on the questions you want to have answered by the end of the meeting to give you clear outcomes to work towards.
- Understand that pre-meeting materials need to 'work harder', preparing participants for sharper discussions and setting up decisions needed from the meeting.
- Keep presentations to a minimum. Instead, have erstwhile presenters pre-circulate the content they would have spoken to with a cover sheet that establishes what they want discussed and decided at the meeting, or record the presentation and issue it to participants in advance so they can watch it before the meeting.
- Compress sessions and allow for longer breaks.
- Provide a briefing to make sure any handover points in the meeting (facilitator or chair to others) have been clearly communicated in advance so that they're not clunky.
- Make sure participants are clear on their roles and contributions are well thought through.

2. Structured facilitation

- Focus facilitation on the set of specific questions you want answered and on systematically working towards desired outcomes.
- Think carefully about what tools you will use to elicit input – for small groups of five or fewer, a fist to five or 'hands-up' vote is often effective; for larger groups, polling technology may be suitable.
- Mix up the methods of interaction to aid concentration. Zoom has an excellent break-out group function. Invite feedback using virtual whiteboards or even virtually 'going around the room'.
- Actively draw in participants by name to maintain energy and momentum.
- Be ruthless and disciplined in carving out of the meeting any discussions that do not require the input of the whole group.

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As we've said in the past, improving your organisation's 'meeting fitness' is more than just an exercise in operational hygiene. The benefits to be realised are tangible and significant. Our post-project analyses indicate significant time (and therefore financial) savings can be made through improving meeting effectiveness – in one recent case we helped an executive team regain 44% of the time they were previously spending in meetings. And in this current climate, by improving the effectiveness of virtual meetings, these benefits can be backed up by increasing the productivity, engagement and trust of our people.

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How can I capture and hold the attention of the people in my meeting?

How can we move people towards the outcomes we need to achieve?

Structured facilitation

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by abhishek chhikara

Productivity
in the midst of a pandemic

Right thinking

As leaders of teams come to grips with the challenges of remote working, they appear to be increasingly engaged in thinking about the productivity of their teams. Productivity means getting things – the right things – done. A productivity habit requires a three-step approach. Applied consistently, this relatively simple formula can help leaders galvanise their teams, focus the organisation's effort on the most important priorities and 'get stuff done'.

COVID-19 shines a spotlight on productivity

'Stay safe, stay well, stay productive'. That's how one of our clients signed off at the end of a recent teleconference. COVID-19 has upended the way we live and work. Our lives have been temporarily reduced to the single site of the home. Home is now office, school and café whilst still being a place for rest and to reset. The challenges of this transition have been wide ranging, and in the realm of work, many are experiencing difficulties with productivity.

At Right Lane, the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues is our principal concern. We firmly believe that maintaining 'productivity' is also important – as an end, and as a driver of wellbeing in work.

But proselytising about personal productivity is a little like dispensing parenting advice: some of us think we have deep insights about it, but we are worried that people won't want to hear them. Perhaps that's changed as we deal with the impacts of COVID-19. As leaders of teams come to grips with the challenges of remote working, they appear to be increasingly engaged in this important topic.

Productivity is a habit not a hack

Productivity means getting things – the right things – done. A defining trait of nearly all successful individuals, productivity has also been linked to happiness at work and in life – happier people are generally more productive, and productive people are generally happier (Bellet, Neve, & Ward, 2019).

Most executives will readily admit that their workforces could be more consistently productive, and each of us have at some point asked ourselves how we can be more productive. Why is productivity so elusive for so many?

The answer probably won't be found in downloading a time management app or in reading about the next best 'productivity hack'. Rather, it has to do with making productivity a habit, and habits need to be cultivated and attended to over time. A productivity habit requires a three-step approach: first, constantly reinforce priorities; second, make it easy to start and hard to stray away from them; and finally, build in rewards to sustain the habit.

Applied consistently, this relatively simple formula can help leaders galvanise their teams, focus the organisation's effort on the most important priorities and 'get stuff done'.

1. Constantly reinforce priorities

Now, more than ever, it is critical for individuals and teams to have clearly defined priorities – daily and over the next three to six weeks. For planning over the longer term, we have long favoured the approach of renowned executive coach Peter Bregman who suggests using a 5+1 approach to setting priorities – that is, setting five major priorities to which you dedicate about 95% of your time, with everything else – the 'plus one' – shoehorned into the remaining 5% (Bregman, 2013).

The challenge is making sure that in this virtual setting, the team remembers to focus on these priorities.

At a day-to-day level, it is important to clarify daily priorities, anchored in the longer term priorities, and to encourage your team members to plan days in blocks, in advance – even going to the extent of encouraging them to put tasks and the required time commitments in their calendars. We've found the practice of daily check-ins on individuals' priorities, coupled with one- and six-week planning sessions, to be an effective way of to make sure that we remain focused.

2. Make it easy to start and hard to stray

So your team knows what the organisation's priorities are and what needs to be done today, but how can you make sure your team members get things started and done, with nothing getting in the way?

A quote often attributed to Mark Twain said that 'the secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one'. We'd add to that by suggesting that your team members do one thing at a time and do the most challenging one when they have the most energy for it.

We don't have to look far for things that hijack our focus: emails, instant messaging, phone calls and texts. Making it hard to stray from priorities is about being deliberate with how we allocate time and attention. Encourage team members to allocate breaks and times to return calls and 'batch process' emails into their daily schedules. For anything new that may land on their desks, help them to prioritise ruthlessly, so that they address only the tasks that are truly urgent and important, set a suitable time for tasks that are important but not urgent, delegate tasks that are urgent but not important, and minimise or eliminate ones that are neither urgent nor important.

3. Build in rewards to sustain the habit

Cementing productivity as a habit requires a motivating reward. Rewards make habits easier to adopt because they drive an underlying chemical reaction, releasing the neurotransmitters such as dopamine and encouraging your brain to continue the habit (Schultz, 2015). Each of us will be motivated by a different reward. It helps some to think about the impact they want to have on their colleagues or clients. For others, it is about the dopamine hit that you can get from ticking things off before taking a break or going for a walk.

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It is understandable that productivity may be a challenge during these uncertain and unprecedented times. Supporting your teams to build their productivity habit, and thereby feel better about their work, might just be the panacea for the disruption to work caused by the pandemic.

Stay safe, stay well, stay productive and wash your hands.

> Mark Twain said that 'the secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one'. We'd add to that by suggesting that your team members do one thing at a time and do the most challenging one when they have the most energy for it.

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by abhishek chhikara
& jackie laws

Remote yet accountable:

How to create a culture of accountability while working remotely

Right thinking

Accountability is front of mind with so many people working from home, away from the rhythms and routines of the office environment. Fostering and maintaining a culture of accountability virtually is possible by focusing on two factors: the right cadence of interactions and the right digital tools. An effective virtual cadence of accountability comprises a consistent approach to a series of interactions spanning a range of frequencies and formats. While using the right tools is the difference between working remotely and remotely working.

Accountability – doing what you say you will do – is an integral characteristic of high-performing organisations, teams and individuals.

With many people working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, away from the rhythms and routines of the office environment, there has been renewed interest in accountability. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that visibility means accountability, and therefore working remotely can lead to less accountability.

In this article, we explore the necessary conditions for a culture of accountability and how to foster these conditions when working remotely by implementing a cadence and using the right digital tools.

Creating a culture of accountability

Creating a culture of accountability has been a topic of interest for academics, business commentators and executives for many years. The current state of knowledge on the topic of personal or individual accountability has been well summarised by Bregman (2016), who proposed five requirements of a culture of accountability:

1. Clear expectations: Set clear goals, expectations, outcomes and measurement. To ensure understanding, ask employees to summarise what has been agreed.
2. Clear capability: Establish what skills and resources people need to achieve expected results. If the skills and resources are lacking, establish a plan to acquire them.
3. Clear measurement: Set weekly milestones with clear, measurable targets.
4. Clear feedback: Regularly track and measure progress. Provide weekly feedback that is honest and helpful. Engage immediately when things get off-track.

5. Clear consequences: Depending on the outcome, there are three choices: repeat, reward or release. Repeat steps if there's a lack of understanding. Reward execution – acknowledge success, compliment, promote. Release if the person is not able to be held to account or a good fit for the job.

Falling short on even one of the requirements can hinder your ability to drive accountability.

Getting all five right can be challenging, even when working in close physical proximity. However, it is certainly possible to foster and maintain a culture of accountability virtually with the right interactions and tools.

Finding your cadence: be structured and consistent

Franklin Covey refers to a 'cadence of accountability', a rhythm of *formal* and *informal* interactions to which you will commit to keep the work you agreed to do on track (McChesney, Covey, & Huling, 2012).

It's not always easy to strike up organic, informal conversations with your team when they are working remotely. So, in a virtual environment, managers aiming to increase accountability need to intentionally create opportunities to interact with their teams.

How do you do that? In our view, an effective virtual cadence of accountability comprises a consistent approach to a series of interactions spanning a range of *frequencies* (for example, daily, weekly, fortnightly) and *formats* (for example, check-ins and updates, formal and less structured discussions). A clear leader to manage the discussion, mediate in the event of any confusion, and ensure everyone has a chance to provide ongoing input as circumstances change.

When the entire Right Lane team started working remotely, we established the following interactions:

- Broader team check-ins: We share a short Teams post that includes priorities for the day in the morning and achievements at the end of the day.
- Small team check-ins: We established 'cells' (five to six people), teams within our teams, that meet daily for 15 minutes, to check-in on priorities, ask for any help they need, and to have some fun (two truths and a lie anyone?).
- All-hands check-ins: All staff meet once a week to share how they are feeling, hear leadership updates and share achievements and wins.

We've also maintained pre-COVID-19 interactions focused on setting and reinforcing accountabilities. These include continuous within-project feedback to and from project leaders and regular weekly or fortnightly one-on-ones to track progress to long-term career and development goals and shorter term (six month) expectations.

Once frequency and format have been decided, managers should ensure that everyone on the team is aware of the cadence and what is expected of them.

Finally, maintaining your cadence of accountability relies on consistency. Ensure that interactions are scheduled well in advance, and that these interactions don't get moved. Set the expectation that everyone attends as a matter of priority. This can only be maintained if managers role model attendance and focus.

Effective use of digital tools

Setting up people to work effectively remotely includes deploying the best available digital tools to support internal and external interactions and to help people stay connected. These tools can help reinforce relationships, provide the conditions to build trust, and keep people motivated.

Using the tools at your disposal effectively is the difference between working remotely and remotely working.

Like everyone else it seems, we've found that we can't use video conferencing too much. Video conferencing feels more personal than written or audio-only communication; it can help reduce the sense of social isolation many of us are feeling; and it gives participants many of the visual cues that they would experience if they were meeting face-to-face. The importance of visual cues and nonverbal communication for effective communication and collaboration is profound. A study by Roghanizad and Bohns (2017) found that a face-to-face request is 34 times more successful than an email.

Right Lane uses a combination of the following digital tools:

- Virtual collaboration (Microsoft Teams, Webex, Zoom, BlueJeans)
- Content co-creation (Office 365, Mural)
- Communication platforms (Microsoft Teams)
- Polling (Zeetings, Mentimeter, Slido)
- In-the-cloud document storage and file-sharing tools (SharePoint, OneDrive)
- Online scheduling (Calendly)
- Project management (Basecamp, Trello)

Choosing the right tools for your team is about being clear on the purpose of the tool and how it enables a particular interaction.

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More than ever before, performance and results need to be valued over a physical presence. With the right cadence and the right tools, organisations can continue to foster a culture of accountability and deliver high-performance.

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want to know more?

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About Right Lane

Right Lane is a flourishing, top quality, management consulting firm.

We employ our distinctive ideas and processes, and our absolute commitment to delivery, to help clients we care about pursue their inspiring missions.

We work alongside clients who do great work within the sectors they operate, and we are excited to be involved in creating outcomes that truly make a difference.

We are an ethical consulting firm with a strong belief in the work we do, and with a passion to give back to the broader community with the skills and expertise available within our walls.

Right Lane was established in 1997 to help private, not for profit and public sector clients to clarify and accelerate their future plans. Over the past 23 years, we have helped the executive teams and boards of around 300 organisations to define and adapt their direction and strategy, identify and clarify their priorities, align their efforts with their aspirations, get their major projects started and finished, and measure and improve their performance.

B Corp certified - what does it mean?

In 2015 Right Lane became Australia's first B Corp certified strategy consulting firm and the first to be recertified in 2017.

This follows Right Lane's decision in 2011 to adopt 'for benefit' principles, including reasonable returns, inclusive ownership, stakeholder governance, transparency, and social and environmental responsibility. Capping our return on shareholder funds at reasonable levels, rather than seeking to maximise financial returns, has allowed our firm to pursue our purpose to contribute to a better society by helping organisations that do good, do better.

B Corporations are a new kind of company that uses the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. Certified B Corporations meet higher standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. The performance standards measure a company's impact on all its stakeholders, including workers, suppliers, community, and the environment. It's like Fair Trade certification but for the whole business.