

Management in a crisis, advice for best practice

Coronavirus has taken all business by surprise, forcing them to rethink their management methods and their working practices. In the face of brutal and catastrophic change, what are the tips and techniques to keep your team united and motivated?

To understand how to keep teams engaged and motivated on a daily basis, on the 13th May Maddyness invited three business leaders to discuss the subject with Vincent Puren, Director of Maddyness Studio. Boris Lecoer, Head of Startup Business at [AWS](#), Matthieu Beucher, co-founder of [Klaxoon](#) and Rodolphe Ardant, CEO and founder of [Spendesk](#) revealed their secrets to instilling new and successful methods of working during periods of change.

Lesson 1: Be tolerant of and empathetic with your employees.

Two key elements become apparent early in the discussion; the working environment and the social relationships.

The crisis has caused so much disruption, employees finding themselves without a workplace, without structured working hours and no colleagues to talk to over a coffee. So, to keep your employees happy and operational you need to adapt to their new circumstances.

In reality, not everyone can continue to work the normal 9-5, so you must be able to adapt to asynchronous working and according to Boris Lecoer *“give everyone more flexibility”*.

As long of course as everyone has access to meeting minutes and the wider strategic points of action.

Thinking about everyone’s own individual comfort can also be a nice touch: at Klazoon, office chairs, double-screens and headphones have been sent to the whole team. This personal attention doesn’t need to stop at tools for work. At Spendesk an app dedicated to supporting team mental health and well-being has been deployed.

Finally, let your employees connect outside of work, even with physical distancing. *“Moments of fun are essential to keeping good spirits in society, as they are at work, but they need to be kept separate from work time. To keep this connection between colleagues we organise Coffee Roulettes in which 2 randomly selected employees to have a 10-minute catch-up”* explains Boris Lecoer. At Spendesk, cookery challenges are organised and Rodolphe Ardant has created “rooms” on [Discord](#) to allow the team to communicate and share quickly and easily. There’s nothing like a simple Netflix recommendation between colleagues to save a lost-connection.

Lesson 2: Be transparent with your employees

In the face of an emergency, managers tend to concentrate on fire-fighting and decisive actions rather than dedicating the necessary time for the employees. Sharing information is paramount as it will frequently stop misunderstandings, misinformation and reduce tension and conflict within a team. Being transparent and open with everyone will also stop feelings of isolation which can manifest themselves very quickly when strong face-to-face leadership is impossible.

“The one-on-one time is the first thing to go, but they are still really important,” suggests Boris Lecoer who is a keen advocate for complete transparency. “You must take the time to explain the situation and keep the team updated with new information as and when it is available. I believe that it is really important to maintain an open dialogue, to listen and to know how to celebrate success, even from a distance.”

Communication is the best way to *“clarify new expectations from a manager to an employee and allows for decisions to be made”* suggests Rodolphe Ardant.

Lesson 3: Don't be afraid to change your ways

In this time of crisis, you will have to depend on the agility of your team. You will also need to scrutinise your broader operational strategy to make sure it is as efficient as possible despite the distancing. Digital tools will be your friends, but their use can quickly become time-consuming and tiring. If there's no perfect tool, all participants agreed on the importance of reinforcing connections with the team and accentuating certain processes. Contrary to popular belief, having more meetings is advisable, as long as they are structured and efficient. Klaxoon, for example, are *"running team meetings of no more than 15 minutes on a daily rather than weekly basis,"* explains Matthieu Beucher.

Projects also need to be thought of differently. No more teams of 60 people working on the same thing. *"At AWS, we mobilise teams of 12-15 people who are responsible for the delivery of a product or service, managing the go-to-market and the budget. This method allows for greater autonomy, agility and flexibility,"* says Boris Lecoer.

Lesson 4: Who Dares Wins

"In times like this, time is more precious for entrepreneurs than ever." States Boris Lecoer. Reactivity is the crux of this whole ecosystem. You will, therefore, have to make decisions and ask your employees to adjust very quickly.

"In this kind of situation, we don't really know where we are going, so now more than ever we need to be trying, testing and switching up if things don't work. It's by stumbling around and keeping momentum that you can find an equilibrium" adds Matthieu Beucher.

Boris Lecoer sums it up simply, *"Before being a manager or a leader, you need to be a human. The leader must be sure that the teams are solid enough and come out of this period stronger."* So, be good to your employees.

Maddyne, media partner of AWS

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