

Leader Tool - Harnessing your people's strengths

Being in the new normal, we find ourselves challenged on a daily basis in ways that we have not been tested before. The gaps between what is familiar and what is not can cause a sense of displacement, or a feeling things are not quite right. Your people may experience similar sorts of feelings and responses. It is understandable to feel a sense of discomfort or loss as we look around and see empty streets, cafes or workplaces. In uncertain times, our role as leaders is to bring individuals and teams together to harness their respective strengths. Leaders help make sense of the mission, strategy and direction required, communicate this clearly and then help individuals and teams collaborate to co-create best outcomes during a pandemic. They often do this by identifying their own and their employee's strengths.

How can you identify these strengths? Here are some things to think about to help you identify and help people lean into their strengths. Remember, there is no one size fits all or one right answer. Think of these ideas and how you can best apply them to your unique organisation and people:

Their why - each of us chose to work for our current organisation for reasons that made sense to us. Understanding why they decided to work here and why they've chosen to stay will help you understand how to connect their personal why with your organisational why. As a leader, you can strengthen their connection to your mission and values. Their engagement will help them feel empowered to make decisions about how to do their work.

Conversations - have you had a conversation with each of your people to identify what their goals are, right now and in the future? As leaders, having these conversations can help us better understand what people are looking for in their role and allow us to help them achieve the goals that are important to them. For some, that may be financial remuneration. For others, it may be about being given opportunities to learn new skills that will help them get ahead in their career. Remember, there are no wrong goals here. If your people believe you are supporting them to achieve their best in life and work, they will bring their best selves to work and do their best work.

Co-creators - invite your people to help be a part of the solution. This can be as simple as posing the situation or challenge to your people and teams and ask them how they would create a solution. As leaders, when we shift from giving answers to asking questions, the quality of outcomes that people will collaborate on to co-create solutions are often better and more impactful. This is an important part of building personal resilience and managing change, both of which are critical skills that will remain high in demand in the new normal.



Self-awareness - it can be challenging to find time to reflect on ourselves and our performance as leaders in the new normal. However, it is important to not only give yourself permission for time-out to reflect on your own strengths and how you can be a better leader but to be disciplined in undertaking this self-reflection. Ask your peers for feedback on those things they believe you do well and think about ways to consistently bring this to your people. Knowing where your own strengths are will help you identify others whose strengths in other areas will complement your own and provide great opportunities for collaborative leadership and accomplishment.

Stories - as leaders, the core requirements and expectations of our role demand that we are great communicators. Effective communication is always a challenge, particularly through COVID-19, and helping our people operate effectively in a consistently uncertain environment requires us, leaders, to adapt how we communicate. However, a tried and tested rule of thumb for effective communication from leaders is to tell stories that help people understand the decision, the journey and the destination. Connecting individuals, teams and the organisation to the 'why' will help your people buy into what's happening and can help them identify what they can contribute personally.

Reaching out to get some assistance can feel foreign at first. As leaders, we can model how best to seek help by doing it and adapting the learning into our work life. Our Manager Support Hotline is also available for you and your managers to be proactive and seek assistance on how best to assist your employees. We also provide learning and development options; your Relationship Manager can help connect you with our Clinical and Organisation Development teams to discuss.

As always, as your EAP we are here to support your people whatever the nature of their concerns, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

