THE ZALT BUBBLE – WE'RE FLEXIBLE, BUT IT HURTS

Clients are trying so hard to be 'flexible', some are even able to do 'the splits'! This is GREAT, right? Well YES and NO. Many of our clients tell us that their staff are crying out to work remotely and not be office bound, so they are doing their best to support that. However they have noticed a downside to this…

The downside of remote working

Yes the workplace is 'bending over backwards' to allow people to work remotely, but they also report 2 key failings as identified by [Daniel Kraft, President and CEO of Sitiron](#).

Loss of engagement. As staff are away from the central hub they feel that they are not being included in key conversations and social interactions. Joint experiences that create a shared learning and sense of connection can be missed. This affects collaboration levels and engagement levels.

Drop in empowerment. As the remoteness grows, staff have notice they lose the context of their work, they miss the opportunity to participate in key meetings, they lose access to systems, and they lose access to internal expertise. This can result in less alignment with the organisation, they are less likely to understand and be mindful of the organisation's values and KPIs… all leading to a loss of empowerment in how they act.

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We need a spotter for the gymnasts

A loss of engagement and drop in empowerment can be the catalyst for workplace conflict. To proactively help support our gymnastic employees – the ones who are working flexibly and remotely – there are a number of initiatives we've identified for clients that support the remote worker and counter this loss of engagement and empowerment.

1. **We need real interactions**

    The spotter needs to be hands on. Just because a person is remote does not mean they should be unseen. If they just use email, they are unseen. If they just join conference calls, they are unseen (and mostly unheard). Make your call video! It is important to try and make as many of the remote contacts as 'human' as possible. Make the conscious effort to have more brief discussions as you would if they were working in physical proximity.

2. **Make the virtual meetings count**

    A great suggestion by Paul Axtel in the HBR is to open the phone lines 10minutes early, this gives opportunity to just talk and catch up. Build this time into the
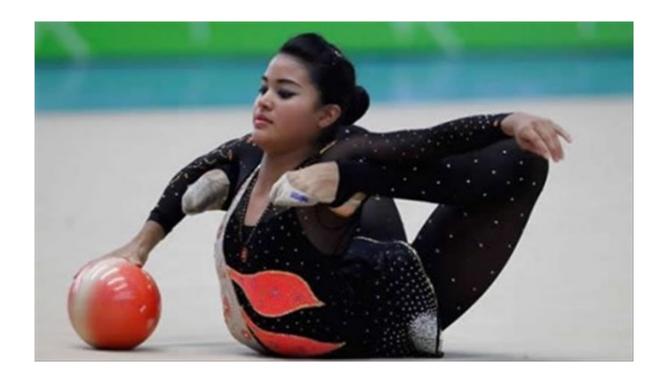
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meeting agenda. If you make a special effort to use people's names, rather than "*I heard*" or "*What I understand to be is …*" then this will help bridge the divide, keep up the engagement and maintain the empowerment.

3. **Results count**

If this is to work, then effectively managing performance is the key and managing time it not critical. I can't put it better than this [HBR article by Scott Behson](#) (which I implore you to read) "*Instead of infrequent, subjective evaluations based largely on "time on task," managers, employees, and teams develop a set of agreed-upon performance metrics that are consistently tracked. As long as these metrics are met and customers and coworkers are happy with their access to employees, managers generally do not track office hours.*"

4. **Accessibility to all**

There is no point bending and stretching like Nadia Comaneci if you can't get into the gym! Remote workers need to have access to all systems, data and comms tools to make it work.

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5. Discuss the arrangement

On a regular basis discuss what is and is not working about the arrangement from employees, managers and organizational perspective and transparently work through countermeasures.

So as you strive to provide a workplace that is as flexible as possible, help to meet your 'gymnasts' needs by keeping them engaged and empowered.

The ZALT Group are excited to announce new dates for Workplace Investigations Training for HR Practitioners and Line Managers. The dates are:

- Tuesday, 24 May 2016
- Friday, 26 August 2016
- Monday, 14 November 2016

For more details click here

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