



Are you making the most of your current circumstances as a leader? Are you hopping on Zoom call after Zoom call just running through the motions? This month's articles can help you check in with your team, check in with yourself, and maximize your space as a team leader, whether that's onscreen or in person.

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HOW TEAM LEADERS CAN COMBAT REMOTE WORK FATIGUE

After an exceedingly long day of online meetings, I said to my husband, "I think I am Zoomed out." No kidding! Zoom fatigue is a growing phenomenon. Regardless of whether you are on Zoom, GoToMeeting, Adobe Connect, or any of these amazing tools that allow us to connect with people all over the planet, the COVID-19 reality is sinking in.

Many of us continue to work from home. Rather than meet in the face-to-face world, we spend hours upon hours in front of a screen.

At the onset of the pandemic, corporate titans were hailing the success of the work-from-home (WFH) model. Productivity was up and operations continued, albeit a bit differently. But now that the adrenaline surge has subsided, I am concerned about the health of our workplace teams – and it's more than just dealing with Zoom fatigue.

What about workplace burnout – even when you are not "at" the company workplace? A recent survey by FlexJobs showed that employees were three times as likely to report burnout now than before the pandemic!

As you check-in with your remote employees, recognize the symptoms of workplace fatigue:

The Usual Suspects. It can show up in poor work performance, a drop in productivity, increased use of sick leave/paid-time-off (PTO), or increased difficulty in completing tasks on time. These are the obvious measurables that you *should* be watching out for.

Specific Behaviors. A one-time snippy retort, an irritable remark, uncharacteristic frustration, or cynical comment alone isn't cause for concern. We all have bad days. But when it becomes a series of remarks amidst a series of bad days, weeks, or even months, it's time to get concerned.

Work-Life Balance. The separation between work and life continues to blur as we

are always just a few feet away from “the office.” Watch for team members who are “always on” and quick to reply to each and every email, text, or Slack message.

Hoarding Time Off. During COVID-19, travel is limited and staycations have never been that enticing. Some of your team members are compounding their own stress by hoarding PTO, saving it for a time when a vacation can feel like a true break or feeling guilty about using it.

What team leaders can do to combat workplace fatigue:

1. *Pay attention* to the symptoms of workplace fatigue. A one-time event doesn’t make it so, but if you see three or more instances, probe a bit further during your weekly check-in calls. (You ARE doing one-on-one weekly check-in calls, right?)
2. *Encourage communications.* Whether you are using Slack, facilitating a “check-in” at the beginning of your weekly team meetings, or encouraging small group conversations among peers, make sure your team members are conversing with each other and not so isolated.
3. *Limit communications.* Don’t send emails after 6 pm or on the weekend (or whatever time zones you set in place). And no READING email during the “no-email” time zones!
4. *Offer a mental health day.* As team leaders, you can offer a mental health day whenever you want to whomever you want. For one person who just had to put their dog down or for the entire team to take the day off.
5. *More flexibility.* 56% of respondents of the FlexJobs survey said, “having flexibility in their workday was overwhelmingly listed as the top way their workplace could better support them.”
6. *Change it up.* Change responsibilities or readjust workloads to keep it more interesting and dynamic.
7. *Recognize good work and extra effort.* An email gift certificate, a hand-written thank you card or a gift package goes a long way – for the employee and the family as well!

Working from home isn’t going to change anytime soon, but we can make sure that people stay productive, happy, and healthy through this pandemic!

USE THE FULL “CAMERA STAGE” TO SPARK INTEREST AND VARIETY

Just as actors and speakers use the physical stage, virtual presenters, panel moderators, and panelists should use the “camera stage” to spark interest and variety while on screen.

Unfortunately, many adopt a restrained “newscaster style” approach to the camera: their headshot is front and center, looking directly at the camera and never moving. And while this isn’t “bad,” it can be rather tiresome.

Why not spice up your camera stage with a little variety?

Camera Frame. The traditional “frame” is sitting down with your face in the center of the screen, the camera at eye level, and “one hand” distance between the top of your head and the frame. But it doesn’t have to be that way! Try standing up, showing more than just your face!

Position. In addition to centering yourself on the screen, stand or sit to the right or left of the screen. When performed live, you can put a monitor beside you and show slides, pop up a virtual background that accommodates where your head will be, or when recorded, insert a graphic beside you.

Movement. While an actor can move about the stage, your movement is limited to within the camera view. You can move closer to the camera when making an important point or sharing a secret with the audience. If you want to move around, place markers (I use tape) on the floor in front of the camera so that you know exactly where to stop before you go out

of frame.

Gestures. On stage, gestures are much bigger and broader. After all, you have a whole stage to work with! On camera, your gestures are confined to the camera view, so they are smaller and more nuanced. So you want to be a tad bit more animated than normal while still being genuine, enthusiastic, and passionate as the topic matter permits. It's perfectly okay to smile, nod, or use your hands to create interest. Something as simple as holding up your fingers to note which point you are making goes a long way!

Hands Up! [Chris Savage](#) warns that you should “never put your hands behind your back or in your pockets. Hiding your hands makes viewers subconsciously think of you as untrustworthy. It also makes [gesturing] difficult.”

Nervous Tics. The camera will pick up facial gestures that you wouldn't normally notice in a F2F performance. Watch a few of your practice recordings to see if you scrunch or wiggle your eyebrows, wring your hands, crack your knuckles, tap your foot, shift back and forth, sway side to side, blink excessively, swallow hard, clear your throat or utter the proverbial vocalized pauses such as “um,” “uh,” or “like” too often. [Laci Texter](#) suggests that you “Periodically check in with your body language to see if you are tensing up. Some subconscious signs include crossing your arms, bouncing your leg, gritting your teeth, or forcing a smile.”

Visuals. I'm a big fan of using props on stage *and* on camera. Rather than simply talking about it, why not show it? Just make sure you practice how to hold it up to the camera or share your screen!

Next time you present in front of a camera, don't limit yourself to the traditional camera frame when there are so many things you can do!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: TEAMS AT THE TOP: UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF BOTH TEAMS AND INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Companies all across the economic spectrum are making use of teams. They go by a variety of names and can be found at all levels. In fact, you are likely to find the group at the very top of an organization professing to be a team. Yet even in the best of companies, a so-called top team seldom functions as a real team.

[Jon Katzenbach](#), author of the best-seller [Wisdom of Teams](#), also authored the book [Teams at the Top: the Potential of Both Teams and Individual Leaders](#). He states that a team effort at the top can be essential to capturing the highest performance results possible — when the conditions are right.

Good leadership requires differentiating between team and non-team opportunities, and then acting accordingly. Three litmus tests must be passed for a team at the top to be effective.

First, the team must shape collective work products — these are tangible performance results that the group can achieve working together that surpass what the team members could have achieved working on their own.

Second, the leadership role must shift, depending on the task at hand. And third, the team's members must be mutually accountable for the group's results. When these criteria can be met, senior executives should come together to achieve real team performance. When the criteria cannot be met, they should rely on the individual leadership skills they have honed over the years.

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