PLAYBOOK

WAY TO WORK IN 2022

Slow is smooth, smooth is fast.
Get in touch.

Visit us at mcchrystalgroup.com for more information, or reach out to one of our team members below if you have any questions.

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WHY WE ARE CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

We’ve all spent two years wrestling to find the perfect balance between in-office, home-office, flex-days, all-remote days…the list goes on. It’s time to stop having winding-discussions around hybrid work. It’s just “work.” The statistics and trends make it clear that the workforce has entered a new chapter and it’s time to move past the cobbled-together solutions hastily conceived when the world was thrust into lockdown. We must focus instead on how to win in the world as it is – driven by unpredictable disruptions and a workforce that is constantly reimagining itself.

But every challenge brings opportunity, and anytime things look unpredictable, you’re wise to bet on the strongest team. Great teams adapt with cohesion. Great teams aren’t bound solely by the written rules. Great teams are grounded in trust-based relationships. So, the real question we should be asking ourselves isn’t about in-office versus remote schedule, but how do we maintain and deepen your team’s connectedness despite the complexity around us?

Last January, we were talking about establishing the “new normal” and exploring how to optimize hybrid workforces so that organizations could reach their goals while still prioritizing employee safety. For many – this was seen as a temporary solution until lockdown measures and vaccine rollout programs could finally bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic continues to morph, and new variants present challenges in waves, we must accept the reality that there is nothing temporary about how we’re all currently working. The only certainty is that. 2022 must therefore be the year where we begin the hard work of overhauling our provisional solutions into something truly sustainable.

At McChrystal Group we’re changing the conversation – internally and with our clients – away from quick fixes and towards sustainable solutions in a time of continued uncertainty. We challenge you to do the same.

Chris Fussell, President of McChrystal Group

HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

In this playbook, we aim to help leaders successfully bid farewell to short-term solutions and focus on winning. Each section will analyze how you should leverage people and behaviors, how to initiate productive processes, and utilize technological solutions to be competitive. Contact us to identify how we can partner with your organization to outpace your competition, environment, and next challenge.
Here are some practical tips and insights on how you and your teams should be thinking about leading with intentionality, shaping resilient culture, and forging deeper connections to tailor your environment to the challenges ahead. In each of the playbook’s sections, we will focus on how your teams can operationalize these concepts for your **People**, in your **Processes**, and in your **Technology**.

- **LEAD WITH INTENTION**: Embrace your role as a future-facing, digital leader while being more people-focused than ever before. By being intentional in your leadership approach, you will enable your team to collectively stay engaged, aligned and productive, with wellbeing at the forefront.

- **FORGE DEEPER CONNECTIONS**: Match the speed of the environment, and work to coordinate and communicate in a focused and streamlined way - while making space for deeper, inclusive conversations that foster trust and provide meaningful context.

- **SHAPE RESILIENT CULTURE**: Build a trust-based culture that provides stability while embedding an empowering bias for action, where your team has the freedom and capability to take decisive action and learn from mistakes.
SECTION 1

Lead with Intention

CHALLENGE FOR LEADERS

Leaders can’t be reactive in today’s working environment. The world has changed significantly: companies are reacting to “The Great Resignation,” generations are aging out of the workforce, and young employees enter the team without an understanding of a workplace that’s out of the virtual world. Acknowledging that the way of work has shifted, leaders must balance needs of individuals on the team, with those of the entire organization.

People — Adopt an Inclusion Mindset

This requires leaders to think and act with inclusion in mind. They must acknowledge that just because they, at the helm, prefer to work one way, it doesn’t necessarily mean their teammates feel the same.

Inclusion Imperative:

Inclusion isn’t just a moral imperative – it is a performance imperative to being competitive in today’s complex business environment. If you aren’t creating an inclusive environment where your team members feel like they belong and matter, and where their wellbeing is top of mind, you will increase your risk profile (disengagement, loss of talent, and lower performance) and decrease your ability to capture opportunities (producing lower ingenuity, lower profitability, lower energy, and motivation).

Voicing Up:

One way to cultivate greater inclusion is by creating a culture of voicing up. Voicing up is simply the ability for an individual to share their concerns, ideas, and opinions with his or her leader in a productive way. Many leaders think they foster a culture of voicing up – frequently saying phrases like, “my door is always open,” “I want to hear your opinion,” or “tell me if I’m wrong” – yet in doing so, leaders fail to recognize the power dynamics and cultural factors that make it incredibly difficult for people to provide authentic input. Hybrid teams present more barriers to voicing up as some operate in the workplace(s) and some operate from home. As a leader, you must be even more intentional to make it easy and accessible for your teammates to share their perspective and incorporate diverse perspectives into the conversation.

“According to a Cornell survey, 53% of respondents had never spoken up to their managers about a problem or idea. Of those 53%, 31% believed they could be retaliated against for doing so, while 41% believed it was a waste of their time.”
Encouraging Voicing Up:

- **Ask powerful questions.** Questions like, “How are you doing?” are not going to yield the most helpful or interesting answers. Instead, ask questions that get to the heart of the challenge. General (Ret.) Stan McChrystal used to ask his teammates in the field, “If I told you that you couldn’t go home until the war is over, what would you do differently?” These questions often elicited the most crucial responses to change how his teams fought and operated.

- **Hold back your opinion.** If you begin a meeting or conversation with, “Here is what I think…” your opinion will immediately bias the room. Ask the most junior people to share first so that you get their untainted perspective.

- **Be accessible.** If your schedule is constantly packed, your people may not feel that they have the opportunity to actually share their thoughts with you. If you can’t schedule regular one-on-one meetings with your team, then at least schedule regular “office hours” when your team knows they can steal a few minutes of your time. When teammates do approach you for a meeting, give them your undivided attention.

- **Be vulnerable.** If you always seem to know the answer and create a persona of perfection, your team members will not share a dissenting opinion. Assuming that leadership has it “all figured out,” teammates may believe that speaking up would be a waste of their time. Instead, openly share with the team when you are uncertain or unsure. Acknowledge when you make a mistake and ask them for help when you need it.

- **Follow up on rejected ideas.** Even if someone shares an idea that is ridiculous or infeasible, ensure you are not dissuading teammates from elevating ideas in the future. On the one hand, don’t just ignore the shared idea. Teammates will stop sharing if they feel their ideas won’t be acted upon. Yet on the other, don’t pretend the shared idea is a good one - you may appear inauthentic to teammates who can easily identify bad ideas. Instead, give your team member the respect they deserve. Genuinely thank the teammates for their input, try to find some portion of the input that was valuable, and compliment them for that, and then explain why that idea will not be acted upon in that situation.

- **Reward speaking up.** When someone does provide constructive critique or raises an important risk, ensure you respond in a way that demonstrates to the rest of the team that you welcome when teammates speak up.
Questions for Leaders to Ask as They Enter the Next Stage of the Pandemic:

- **How has the flow of information changed in your organization?** Remote working will have made access to certain information harder in some areas, but easier in others. More instantly available communication with team members has changed connections within your network. But just as teams have established new rapid access pathways, they have also created new information bottlenecks. Both must be addressed.

- **How have connections between people and departments changed?** Teams are more closely tied with their IT departments than ever before, as many of our meetings have moved to online platforms. These new, close relationships have benefited our teams. Humans require a real shock (like a pandemic) to get behind effective change. Nassim Nicholas Taleb identified this in his famous book, *Antifragile*. Consider how relationships between individuals and departments have changed elsewhere in your organization. Finding out where the changes have occurred, and to what degree, is essential before you design anything, so that your infrastructure can complement, rather than hinder, this new network.

- **Who are your key culture carriers now?** While leadership structure may not have changed during the lockdown, many have observed the emergence of unexpected influencers under remote working conditions. Whether they be technical experts, more gregarious in the virtual space or more empowered by its greater psychological safety, these people are now more actively voicing up and carrying your culture to a greater extent. It would be a mistake to send them back to the bottom of the boardroom table after re-entry, so identify them now and figure out how they can reinforce your narrative.

**Process — Establish Clear and Decisive Communications**

It’s imperative that leaders have clear messages, and that they balance humility and confidence, while being vulnerable with their teams. They achieve this by focusing on a singular aligning narrative.

**Secure the Aligning Narrative:**

As Chris Fussell argues in *One Mission*, an aligning narrative “not only unites our teams on our organization’s single mission, but also tells teams how to achieve that mission.” Leaders must establish the team’s identity (who we are), their mission (what we do), and the behaviors and processes to get there (now we do it).

**Communicating the Aligning Narrative:**

Teams need to take a closer look at their content, cadence, and channels to align their team around a single narrative, one uniform definition of success.
Focus on Content – what you are trying to say:
Aim to simplify your message, make the “why” behind your communications clear, tailor your message to the emotions in the room, and rely upon stories to build culture around your team.

Master Your Cadence – the pace of messages:
Consider the number of communication attempts, the time passed between attempts, and the duration of your messages.

Consider Your Channels – How and where you communicate:
Is a phone call the most appropriate way to send a message? What about over chat? Is an in-person meeting best, or an announcement to the team?

Technology — Tailor Technology to Your Team
Technology is ever-changing; leaders must be intentional on how they adjust technological processes to the needs of their organization.

Employ Analytical Data to Drive Employee Wellbeing:
Technology often feels the opposite of human – automating processes that were once done by human hands. Several tech platforms, however, can tell the human story, and provide meaningful data about the workplace. How has the flow of information changed in your organization?

- **Use Microsoft Viva:** Use tools like Microsoft Viva insights to leverage enterprise data to give insight into how an organization is spending time, and to analyze the organizational culture around work/life balance. These tools can also analyze whether employees are being afforded equitable opportunities across the organization, creating an environment that’s diverse and inclusive. The analytics provide the insights to draw conclusions, dictate the baseline, set plans, and monitor progress.

- **Share Company Vision:** Leaders can guide the organization with intentionality by also clearly expressing and reinforcing the company’s vision and culture. An organization can rely on technology as the digital holder of that process – sharing videos, documents, and chat functions to both build, and reflect, the culture of a team.
Take a Closer Look at Which Systems and Processes Need Updating:

IT teams can make meaningful changes and investments to technologies to improve the employee experience.

- **Changing Work Needs:** Consider reallocating employee investments to meet changing work needs. Rather than consider a cell phone plan, think about broadband internet services in remote work settings, good chairs for home offices, etc.
  - Acknowledge that your team will likely have different interactions with technology - and have various levels of comfort/discomfort. More junior employees will be digital natives and will have quickly adapted to a mostly virtual workplace, where millennials and older teammates will have a more challenging time adapting to new technologies. As you roll out tech changes, it’s imperative for leaders to have an inclusion mindset and meet teammates where they are.

- **Reconsider Legacy Based Systems:** IT teams must identify when current systems become a burden either to operate or maintain, and then consider change. Be intentional as you consider:
  - How does a proposed change impact your ecosystem of software? There’s always a cost to train people on a new system – what does that impact look like? What’s that cost? What do you lose?

- **Revisit Security:** Teams must make a mental shift around security. Secure used to be associated with on premise servers, in a thick-walled cement room with cameras pointing at it. These set-ups are no longer considered “secured” because those systems are too expensive to maintain, hard to patch up, and typically cause us to be more reactive than proactive.
  - Teams can, and should, focus on improving cloud services to increase the security of their organization. Cloud-based systems enables employees to work from anywhere. The COVID pandemic has seen younger generations become more nomadic, and new systems allow them to work from the road, via mobile, etc., without having to go through VPNs or other network connections.

**Consider Change Management Systems:**

Teams tend to underestimate the amount of time required for technology change management. As you change processes, reconsidering legacy-based systems and updating security, teams must have executive and project sponsors to see these objectives come through.

- **Leadership Buy-in:** Teams must be intentional about securing leadership buy-in, as well as a team appreciation of how the change will fit into, and perhaps challenge, their culture, with frequent touchpoints about the changes made. Additionally, the team needs to work to establish proper governance around the technology.

- **It’s Important to View Technology as an Enabler** - not as a cost center. Employing new technology just because it’s the latest innovation doesn’t provide a purpose or intention. You cannot measure success (whether a return or actionable behavior) without having an intention behind “turning on” the tool.

- **Don’t Skip the Piloting Phase:** Teams are often tempted to skip the piloting phase. Focus on making a deliberate plan, communicate upfront about the technology and the change that is going to happen. A good solid pilot is important before a slow phased roll-out of a new tool.
SECTION 2
Forge Deeper Connection

CHALLENGE FOR LEADERS

Today’s decentralized and dispersed teams are constantly battling entropy – the drift toward disorder and disconnection. To keep these teams focused and aligned, leaders must constantly invest energy and initiate a variety of processes that maintain healthy connections.

- You must employ systems to rapidly distribute critical information and knowledge across the dispersed team on a regular cadence. As these systems become routinized and ingrained into your processes, team members will more effectively collaborate with each other and across your organization. But it starts by ensuring everyone on your team has access to essential technology.

Questions for your Team to Consider:

- How do you foster connections when some of your teammates are remote, some are not?
- What’s your limit of how long people can go without seeing each other? 6 months? More or less?
- How is your organization connected? Are the right people connected? Are there islands?

People — This All Comes Down to Relationships

Focus on building trust with your team.

Trust is the cornerstone of every high-performing team, but it is even more important for hybrid teams where miscommunication, misalignment and misunderstandings are that much more prevalent. When trust is missing or broken, hybrid teams cannot lean on physical presence and non-verbal communication to rebuild that trust. Above all, when trust dissipates, so does your competitive edge. Trust is also slow to build and quick to disappear. If you’re reaching a crisis without trust already built, you are already behind. So, focus on building trust slowly, steadily, and smoothly.

As a leader, you have a sizable challenge – but there are steps you can take to accelerate the development of trust in your team. First, you need to understand the foundational components of trust: benevolence, competence and reliability. Once you have a firm grasp on the components, you will be able to diagnose which are lacking and then take targeted actions to strengthen trust in a strategic way.

- **BENEVOLENCE**: Do I trust that the person is thinking of others and has the team’s best interest in mind?
  - **If YOU are perceived as lacking benevolence**: Actively listen to the needs of others, and then proactively share your resources, time and information to help them solve their challenges. These actions will demonstrate your empathy, and willingness to sacrifice for the betterment of others and the team. Be vulnerable and aim to match your team members’ vulnerability – so they feel safe and more willing to share their experiences.
➤ If a TEAM MEMBER appears to lack benevolence: Don’t rush to judgement. Seek to understand why they took particular actions that appeared self-serving. Do not be naïve but fight the urge to ascribe intent to their actions. Encourage your teammate to share their logic with the rest of the team to quash concerns and conjectures.

- **COMPETENCE:** Do I trust that the person has the knowledge and capability to get the job done?

  ➤ If YOU are perceived as lacking competence: Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses and openly share that information with others. This self-awareness will give others confidence that you understand your limitations, as well as demonstrate the value that you can add to the team. Then proactively take steps to mitigate those limitations, either through personal development (training, mentoring, practice) or procuring the support of others who can compensate.

  ➤ If a TEAM MEMBER appears to lack competence: Have the tough conversation. In private, discuss the problematic areas with the teammate directly and use specific examples where their lack of competence has hurt the team. Once you agree on the issue, identify tangible ways you will help them develop the capability.

- **RELIABILITY:** Do I trust that the person will do the right thing consistently?

  ➤ If YOU are perceived as lacking reliability: Fight the urge to overpromise and set clear expectations of what you will deliver and when you will deliver it. Work to build a track record of integrity, and when you drop the ball occasionally, make apologies, not excuses.

  ➤ If a TEAM MEMBER appears to lack reliability: To avoid miscommunication, provide your expectations and timelines for assigned tasks in writing. Ask your team member to schedule regular status updates with you leading up to the due date – this will allow you to monitor progress and course correct along the way. If the team member fails to meet the prescribed expectations, hold them accountable and help them see how their failure negatively impacted the team.

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**TRUST BUILDING EXERCISE TO COMPLETE INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A TEAM**

Trust cannot be manufactured overnight and is particularly challenging to build when teams aren’t face-to-face. Proximity to teammates engenders greater trust - which puts remote employees at an immediate disadvantage. To overcome this disadvantage, engineer meaningful conversations between team members. Share the Trust Model with your team and share what component of trust you personally need to work on, and how you intend to address it.

For example, you may routinely show up late to one-on-one meetings with your remote employees because you are chatting with people in the office. This will lower their trust in the area of Benevolence – you will seem as if you don’t care as much about their success. To address this shortcoming, acknowledge it and start arriving to those meetings on time as evidence that you see them as valuable members of the team.

Once you’ve shared your example with transparency and vulnerability, ask your team members to share their reflections on what component of trust they need to improve. If your team is dealing with trust issues, these conversations might be best in a one-on-one setting with you and a team member. If you have a healthy team dynamic where everyone values each other’s opinions, try this activity altogether. The open and honest discussion that follows will form powerful bonds that will strengthen the team to deal with future challenges.
Process — Establish an Effective Operating Rhythm

Focus in on the right cadence connect your team with the right information, at the right time.

While sharing the right information is vital to connect with your teams, it’s just as important to focus on the frequency of your messages. Every team has an operating rhythm – the habitual cadence in which the team meets, shares information and disperses to get work done – but most of these rhythms happen by accident.

It is particularly easy for teams in today’s challenging environment to fall into a convenient, but suboptimal rhythm. You need to keep a pulse on your team’s operating rhythm and routinely fine tune the cadence to match the speed of the environment, making sure that everyone, regardless of where they work, is staying connected and receiving the essential information they need when they need it.

Here are two questions your teams should ask themselves, as they are developing your operating rhythm:

1. “How fast is our environment changing?” Leaders often overlook this question. While an operating rhythm is a series of internal processes, we should model those internal processes to keep pace with the external environment. For example, when McChrystal group helped city and state governments stand-up fusion cells, COVID’s effects dictated our meeting cadence. At the start of the pandemic, we synced with hundreds of public health officials and government leaders on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week tempo. The pandemic dictated this frequency as anything longer would leave problems to fester and the relevancy of data to spoil. The takeaway here is you cannot design an operating rhythm until you look outward and answer, “What outcomes should my operating rhythm enable?”

When we work with private partners, the answer often revolves around empowering their front-line leaders to act with greater autonomy, enabling those closest to the problem to solve it, or those nearest to the opportunity to capitalize without asking for permission.

2. “Currently, how quickly can our organization adapt to change?” This question prompts leaders to look internally, asking for an honest assessment of an organization’s current structures, processes, and behaviors.
Here’s how you should think about the strategic, operational, and tactical decisions in your organization:

- **Shape the operating rhythm through select meetings that convey clear and actionable strategic intent.** The least frequent of the three strategic meetings shape the organization by providing a high-level, senior-leader plan that cascades to comparatively junior teammates. These teammates interpret, operationalize, and translate that strategic guidance for their teams throughout the organization.

- **Monitor the organization’s pulse and maintain momentum with informed operational syncs.** These meetings must be a two-way street flowing strategic intent down to teams and bubbling up front-line reports to their superiors in a digestible format that respects a senior leader’s limited time.

- **Outpace the organization’s external environment by empowering front-line teams with tactical guidance, resources, and support.** By creating a culture of communicate, teams can outpace their environments.

### Technology — Establish a Robust Knowledge Management System

It’s critical that your teammates have access to what they need; this often means knowing where documents live, and how to access them.

There often exists a disconnect between the IT and business teams when it comes to knowledge management, however: businesses tend to believe that knowledge management tools are owned and managed by IT. In reality, business and IT have to be close partners to make knowledge management tools useful for everyone.

- **Examine Business Processes:** IT teams must partner with the business to ensure the knowledge management tools are both useful and usable. It’s important the business units sit with IT, for a week or more, to map out their business processes.
  
  ➤ Knowledge Management starts with the organizational knowledge that is in the top performers’ heads (i.e. what is the special sauce of the company?) Then, the team works to extract those learnings for dissemination or training and works to then automate those processes to increase performance across the organization.
  
  ➤ IT needs, for example, to figure out how to automate a process when a sale closes, when it then goes to finance and it’s out of the pipeline and becomes an active client.
  
  ➤ There are exciting benefits to this approach: a decrease in overhead support costs, real-time access to knowledge/information to allow users to do their daily functions and transparency in the business process to outline where improvements could be made. It also allows that knowledge to be kept within the company in the effort that an employee departs.

- **Automation is a Good Thing!** People are fearful of automation, as they equate it with removing human positions. The joy of automation is freeing up the humans to do more critical analysis that cannot be automated. It’s a realized opportunity cost that frees up someone from the trivial and mundane (automation should always be linked with repetitive notions) so they can better use their skills/talents where they are more suited.

- **IT is Proactive, Not Reactive:** As we establish knowledge management tools and consider technology change management, it’s important we convert IT from a reactive (firefighter) role to a proactive and supplemental enablement role. Teams can partner technology with most initiatives to reduce silos, provide real time collaboration, solicit feedback/metrics and track progress.
SECTION 3
Shape Resilient Culture

CHALLENGE FOR LEADERS
Whether you recognize it or not, many leaders have been given a gift during the COVID-19 pandemic. The forced move to remote work, and the further evolution to a hybrid environment, provides leaders with the unique opportunity to hit the “reset button.” Your team culture is more malleable now than it has been historically, and you have the chance to proactively shape it to ensure you are competitive and relevant in the marketplace, whether it be with your customers or talent. Today’s ever-changing professional environment requires a culture that embodies trust, empowerment, and learning.

People — Reinforce the Foundation
Resilience stems from a solid understanding of the team, its values, and how it determines success.

Whether you are establishing a new culture or fortifying an existing one, you must start with purpose. Your current teams face an onslaught of challenges that range from simple tech complications to complex group dynamics. In the midst of these challenges, it is easy to become consumed by the urgent and forget the important. Over time, this shortsighted focus causes teams to lose sight of their north star, their common purpose.

- Establish Common Purpose: Your common purpose is your alignment to a shared set of goals or values. As General McChrystal explains in Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World, “on a team of teams, every individual does not have to have a relationship with every other individual; instead, the relationships between the constituent teams need to resemble those between individuals on a given team... and for them all to be bound by a sense of common purpose.”
- **Ensure Alignment**: Connection needs to be firmly rooted in an aligned perspective. If the team does not collectively agree on (1) where they are going, and (2) the reality of their current situation, then no degree of connection will improve performance. Your hybrid team needs a compelling and codified purpose that states why their work matters and how that work fits within the bigger picture. This isn’t just to motivate and energize people, but to define a true north star that allows teammates to focus their efforts and activities even when they aren’t co-located.

  ➤ As the leader, you must regularly refocus your people on what matters and the best way to do that is with tools that humans have been using for millennia.

- **Language**: Words matter. They matter even more in a hybrid environment that lacks significant nonverbal communication. Be very thoughtful in the words you use to reinforce your team’s common purpose. Once you’ve crafted your common purpose (ideally with your team), use the exact phrasing over and over again. You want those words to be tattooed on the minds of your teammates to remind them of their north star - even when you aren’t present.

- **Symbols & Traditions**: At a base level, humans crave being part of a community. They want to know they belong and are part of a tribe, of something bigger than themselves. This need is amplified in the hybrid environment where teammates are missing the social cues that affirm their place in the tribe. In the Information Age, we regularly downplay the importance of these cultural elements because they seem archaic or superfluous but they are potent tools to effectively ingrain a feeling of unity. Something as simple as clothing with a matching insignia or celebratory happy hour every time the team closes a deal can effectively bond the team.

- **Routines**: Changing behavior is difficult, particularly in a hybrid environment where you can’t influence that behavior on an ongoing basis. Routines are a powerful vehicle to drive behavior change over time. Instill team routines, like an operating rhythm, to nurture the types of behaviors you want to see from your team. Over time, not only will behaviors change to align with those routines, but the culture will also begin to shift as well.

- **Stories**: The power of stories to transmit important concepts in a memorable way has been regularly extolled in recent years. However, this effective tool is underutilized in hybrid teams. It can be awkward to tell a compelling vignette to remote and in-person audiences simultaneously. Think about what central narratives you want to serve as the foundation of the team and periodically share ideas with teammates. Adopt the “remote-first” policy when telling stories, prioritizing those who are listening in remotely. If you can deliver the story in a compelling way to those team members who aren’t physically present, it will resonate with your in-person audience as well.

- **Discussion**: Culture is always the collective product of a group. As the leader, you can’t control it, but you can influence and guide it toward the common purpose. One effective way to do that is by asking powerful questions and then creating the opportunity for the group to collectively respond to those questions. Again, it is important for you to defer to remote team members. People who are physically in the room will naturally dominate the conversation and so you must intentionally make space for remote individuals, whether in other offices or at home, to weigh in and share their perspective.

- **Shared Hardship**: This may seem out of place, but enduring a difficult experience together is an incredible bonding agent and focuses a team on what matters most: the common purpose and their relationships. In difficult circumstance, remote team members often face different challenges than those who are in person. This can exacerbate the divide between the two groups. One way you can overcome this is by engineering shared hardship – bringing your full team together for offsites or team building activities where the team experiences a hardship together and works as a unit to overcome the challenge.
Process — Take a Close Look at Your Strategy and Outcomes

Your culture eats strategy for breakfast.

You and your teams need to look at your strategies and objectives for the next year, and do an analysis of: what parts of our culture are going to prevent us from achieving our objectives? Do we have inherent competition and siloes across teams? How can we break those down? Are we rewarding/incentivizing competition? Stretching people too much?

Consider an organizational analysis to take a closer look at how your team is operating.

- Leaders intuitively have an understanding of their immediate network. They know who they can trust for a special project, who they might seek out to play devil’s advocate and whom to turn to for mentorship or advice.

- But that small cadre isn’t sufficient in this climate. High levels of uncertainty require faster feedback and innovation that cannot simply come from a tightly knit leadership team separated from the rest of the organization. Leaders must leverage and lead a much larger network, which requires understanding their organization at a deep level — how it actually functions.

- In its most basic form, organizational network analysis is a study of the individuals or groups within an organization and the links or connections between them. It can be used to understand everything from the spread of goods, diseases or ideas to social interactions that strengthen or divide communities.

- Leaders can leverage network analysis to understand the following: how knowledge flows through their teams, the key individuals throughout their network who speed up or slow down certain processes and information and the challenges they need to address to facilitate those flows and processes.

- The chart on the right depicts the network of a small organization that is going through major change and restructuring. Each circle or node is an individual within the organization, and each line between circles indicates that one individual goes to another as a good source of help or information. The larger the circle is, the more people go to them for help or information.

- Leaders can gather this information a number of different ways — surveys, passive data collection — but gathering this information is only the first step. To make an impact, they must make sense of the information and use that contextualized data to drive action.

- Connection needs to be firmly rooted in an aligned perspective. If the team does not collectively agree on (1) where they are going, and (2) the reality of their current situation, then no degree of connection will improve performance. Your team needs a compelling and codified common purpose that states why their work matters and how that work fits within the bigger picture, regardless of where they physically are. This isn’t just to motivate and energize people, but to define a true north star that allows teammates to focus their efforts and activities even when they aren’t co-located.
• **Boost Information Sharing:** Today’s teams are regularly inundated by meetings and their email inboxes fill up daily, yet they often lack the necessary information to act in a timely manner. In partnership with your team, you need to identify what information is truly important (and what is not), and then implement systems and processes that convey that information to those who need it, when they need it.

• Certain types of knowledge are particularly important for teams to create a shared consciousness that connects people regardless of location.

**Technology — Enables Your Strategy and Culture**

Technology enables organizations to shape a resilient culture. It helps your organization make stronger connections, establish your values, and determine how the team measures itself against those values as the team builds their culture.

• **Use the Right Technology:** The role of IT is not just about using the latest technology, but the right technology to support teams in their goals, that then aggregate up to departmental goals, into organizational goals, and the multi-year trajectory.
  ➤ IT can leverage the vast amount of data in various disparate systems to streamline ways that the organization works, increase organizational culture/promote employee wellbeing, and boost the effectiveness of leadership.
  ➤ IT helps the team use dashboards, metrics and KPIs that are refreshed and driven from daily data, thereby allowing leaders to track progress in real time and create plans that align to objectives and key results (OKRs).

• **Culture, technology, and intentionality should go hand-in-hand.**
  ➤ On the one hand, analytical data can drive employee wellbeing. As we’ve mentioned previously, Microsoft Viva insights enables teams to leverage enterprise data to give insight into how an organization is spending time, the organizational culture around work/life balance, and the ability to make sure employees are being afforded equitable opportunities across the org. Additionally, these insights can help organizational DEI efforts as well, examining whether the organization is affording the same opportunities equally across the firm.
  ➤ On the other, technology can help onboard new teammates, and expose them to an organization’s values. Teams undervalue the power technology can have to tell digital stories. Though organizations tend to use platforms to create records of client engagements and financial outcomes, it can also be a digital time capsule of the company’s culture. Teams can consider creating a YouTube-like channel, where they share videos, humorous moments, and shared experiences – to further connect the team.
  ➤ In total, technology should support connections across teams, and allow teammates to have quick and easy access to important information to help them do their jobs better, while continuing to feel like important members of the team.

• **Technology can adapt with you.** The good news about technology is that it’s always adapting. There’s always a new tool, and the new tool is constantly reconfiguring itself. The real challenge is how we embrace that change, to drive our strategy and keep pace with the surrounding competition.
HOW TO GET STARTED

Here are some quick, easy ways to operationalize the above with your team.

Leading with Intention

This format helps teams establish and align around their common purpose. The beauty of the framework is in its simplicity: it forces you to succinctly capture your key initiatives and demonstrate, on one page, how they connect to the bigger picture.

Capture the critical parts of your strategy below. When it comes to your objectives, strategies, and initiatives, make sure you identify critical metrics that define progress. To ensure the team is aligned on the most important tasks, be sure to prioritize initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Initiatives</th>
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Once your team collectively understands and embraces their common purpose, you need to ensure they have a shared situational awareness. Team members who are co-located frequently pressure test their perceptions and assumptions through informal chats or sidebar conversations. Remote team members do not have that opportunity for informal sensemaking. To ensure everyone has the same level of situational awareness, leverage the popular SWOT Analysis Tool below on a periodic basis to make sure everyone is on the same page. Have each team member identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats and then have each share their observations with the rest of the team. Start by having the remote team members brief first.

**SWOT Analysis**

A SWOT analysis is a great tool that helps you to examine your current environment, both the internal reality of your team and organization and the external reality of the environment in which you are operating. This will be an ongoing process because, while your organizational goals and values may be steadfast, it’s likely your objectives and priorities may have to continue to change.

Leverage the SWOT Analysis worksheet to create a snapshot of your team/organization. Fill out the four quadrants keeping in mind that strengths and weaknesses have to do with your internal environment, while opportunities and threats are external factors affecting your team/organization.

1. How can you use your strengths to take advantage of the opportunities?
2. How can you leverage strengths/opportunities to combat weakness and threats?
3. What actions does the SWOT analysis enable you to take?
Forge Deeper Connections

Operating Rhythm Audit

Use the Operating Rhythm Audit below once a quarter to evaluate your operating rhythm and make subsequent adjustments. This routine evaluation, and the conversations that follow, will have the added benefit of promoting trust in the team – as teammates will see that their input is valued.

- **Strengths**: what relevant capabilities can we bring to bear for a competitive advantage?
- **Weaknesses**: what poses a risk that must be addressed or mitigated?
- **Challenges**: what barriers or hurdles are impeding progress?
- **Resources**: what people, bandwidth, expertise, relationships, money, equipment and technology are available or needed?
- **Priorities**: what is the order of the near-term and long-term priorities?
- **Current Actions**: what are people working on?
- **Interdependencies**: who else will be impacted by decisions and who else needs to know?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Current Actions</th>
<th>Interdependencies</th>
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<tr>
<td>How effectively do we share this type of information with key stakeholders?</td>
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How can information sharing be improved?
While sharing the right information is vital to connect with your teams, it’s just as important to focus on the frequency of your messages. Every team has an operating rhythm – the habitual cadence in which the team meets, shares information, and disperses to get work done – but most of these rhythms happen by accident. Effective hybrid teams actively fight this pull toward passive adherence. They keep a pulse on their operating rhythm and routinely fine-tune the cadence to match the speed of the environment.

**Are we meeting at the right cadence?**

1. **Too frequent**
   - We meet so often that we have difficulty finding time to execute our critical tasks.

2. **Too infrequent**
   - We feel disconnected and the information we receive is outdated.

3. **On target**

**Are we sharing the right amount of information?**

1. **Too much**
   - We are inundated with so much information that it is difficult to separate the signal from the noise.

2. **Too little**
   - We don’t receive enough information to understand the context or develop situational awareness.

3. **On target**

**Are we retaining the right amount of flexibility in our schedule?**

1. **Too rigid**
   - Our schedules are so packed that there is no room to adjust to changes or no time to reflect.

2. **Too undefined**
   - Our schedules are so open that we are becoming inefficient and uncoordinated.

3. **On target**

**Are we maintaining the right balance between short-term and long-term priorities?**

1. **Too focused on short-term**
   - We focus so heavily on tactical or urgent topics that we stray from our long-term goals.

2. **Too focused on long-term**
   - We focus so heavily on strategic topics that we do not address the tasks that require our attention.

3. **On target**

**Are we maintaining the right balance between top-down and bottom-up communication?**

1. **Too much top-down**
   - Our leaders monopolize the conversation and frontline intel is never shared.

2. **Too much bottom-up**
   - Our team members monopolize the conversation and leaders never provide direction.

3. **On target**
**Shape a Resilient Culture**

**Start / Stop / Continue**

As a leader, you are a force multiplier when it comes to cultivating team resilience, but you are only one person who is already in high demand with a packed schedule. You need to be strategic in how you focus your time and energy to develop team resilience within your organization.

The following steps provide a simple and pragmatic approach to identify the critical actions that you can take to foster resilience. Note, specificity is the key: the more specific your definition, the clearer the next steps and the more actionable the game plan.

**Stop:** What specific actions do I need to stop?

**Start:** What specific actions do I need to start?

**Continue:** What specific actions do I need to continue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>START</th>
<th>CONTINUE</th>
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HILLS Assessment

Resilient teams acknowledge the barriers, or hills, that inhibit a collaborative team from achieving its objective. Think of a future or recent collaborative project and then score the detrimental impact of the “hills.”

1 = no impact on the team’s ability to collaborate
2 = minor negative impact on the team’s ability to collaborate
3 = moderate negative impact on the team’s ability to collaborate
4 = significant negative impact on the team’s ability to collaborate
5 = highly negative impact on the team’s ability to collaborate

For those HILLS that scored either 4 or 5, what can you do to mitigate their impact?
McChrystal Group

McChrystal Group assesses, equips, and connects your teams to outpace your environment, your competitors, and your next challenge.

Contact us. Let us know how McChrystal Group can support you and your teams as we continue to navigate this uncertain landscape. We appreciate your feedback on the content shared here, and look forward to hearing about the impact it has on your organization.