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VIRTUALLY SPEAKING

HR Quarterly Newsletter
For Human Resource Practitioners & Staff
in the Government Service



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ANTIFRAGILITY: IS IT POSSIBLE?

Everyone had to *pivot* to accommodate all the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in a reactive rather than proactive manner. In 2021, we will now have to reflect on what changes were implemented in 2020 and focus our attention on how to grow, enhance and improve these preparations for the future. In this 'new normal', individuals and organisations will have to become 'antifragile.' While there is no word for the opposite of fragile, Nassim Nicholas Taleb in his book entitled 'Antifragile', thoroughly explains this concept.

Antifragility is a property of systems that thrives as a result of stressors, shocks, volatility, noise, mistakes, faults, attacks, or failures. Antifragility goes beyond being just resilient or robust. The resilient individual resists shocks and stays the same; however, the antifragile individual becomes even better and stronger.

HR must play a major role in helping their organisations to become anti-fragile, rather than being less vulnerable to randomness and chaos. HR should work in collaboration with Heads of Entities, Heads of Units/ Departments/Divisions, and team leaders to identify innovative ways to ensure that they not only survive in these uncertain times, but bounce back at a higher level.



Technology has been proven to be a useful and necessary tool to help ensure that organisations continue to provide products and services during the COVID-19 crisis. The new digital age is here and in 2021, HR and Heads of Entities must prepare employees to embrace new technologies that will be incorporated into the world of work. Relatedly, HR should assist to steer the organisation towards digital transformation that will lead to long-term growth and profitability. HR and Heads of Entities can prepare employees by:

- i. Assessing and determining their technology needs;
- ii. Including them in the decision-making process;
- iii. Keeping them informed of all decisions made;
- iv. Training and sensitising all users prior to full implementation and;
- v. Soliciting their feedback and making modifications where necessary.

Managing digitalisation and the transformation of business always involves new challenges. Some of these challenges may include: resistance to change; technological needs that may not align with the needs of the employees or that of the organisation; budgetary and infrastructure constraints, among others. Despite these uncertainties however, HR leaders and Heads of Entities will have to identify the challenges and implement the necessary changes that will drive positive shifts in corporate culture; not just to survive, but to become stronger than before.

Sources:

<https://hrtrendinstitute.com/2020/11/23/11-hr-trends-to-take-into-account-for-2021/>

<https://immedis.com/blog/our-predictions-for-global-payroll-and-hr-in-2021/>

<https://www.humanresourcetoday.com/2021/data/trends/>

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“DON'T AIM TO BE PERFECT, AIM TO BE ANTIFRAGILE.”

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Your mindset determines how you perceive and connect to the world around you - Joseph Taylor

CHANGING YOUR MINDSET

Love it or not, remote work has suddenly gone mainstream. Out of necessity due to the COVID-19 virus, organisations are turning to virtual solutions to keep workers active, engaged and above all, safe. Essentially, working or leading in a virtual world requires mindset shifts for employers as well as employees.

Mindset refers to whether you believe qualities such as intelligence and talent are fixed or changeable traits. The two types of mindsets are a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Employees with a fixed mindset believe that these qualities are inborn, fixed and unchangeable, while employees with a growth mindset believe abilities can be developed and strengthened by way of hard work and commitment.

MINDSETS

FIXED



The belief that intelligence is something you have or do not have

With a **FIXED** mindset, we tend to:

- Avoid taking challenges
- Quit or give up easily
- Be highly self-critical
- See efforts as pointless
- Disregard criticism
- Resent the success of others
- Criticise and judge others
- Avoid new experiences due to fear of failure

GROWTH



The belief that intelligence is something you are able to develop

With a **GROWTH** mindset we tend to:

- Embrace any challenge
- Never give up
- Practice self-compassion
- See efforts as a journey
- Learn from all criticisms
- Be inspired by others' success
- Help and nurture others
- Embrace novelty with a desire to master new skills

The sudden shift to remote working conditions means that both employers and employees must rethink not only how to manage their work, but also how to manage their workplace relationships remotely. The truth is that the virtual workplace - like the physical workplace - is still a social system, and in social systems; relationships matter - especially the relationships between employees and managers.

Having a fixed mindset can affect how you approach work, goals, dreams and even your relationships with loved ones. When you believe your qualities are carved in stone, you may feel a sudden urge to give up and return to what feels the most comfortable.

Changing our beliefs can have a powerful impact. The growth mindset creates a powerful passion for learning. Our ideas about risk and effort come from our mindset. Some employees realise the value of challenging themselves; they want to put in the effort to learn and grow.



But how does this relate to working online?

Working remotely is becoming commonplace. Let us look at six (6) ways to overcome the fixed mindset to continue working virtually:

- Examine your state of mind each day;
- Determine what working remotely means for you;
- Determine whether you are ready to work remotely;
- Get to know the common tools used in a remote environment;
- Learn from the challenges and;
- Value the process over the end result.

Sources:

<https://fs.blog/2015/03/carol-dweck-mindset/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/marvabbajay/2020/03/28/10-tips-to-successfully-manage-up-in-a-virtual-world/?sh=65ccc44e244d>

<https://www.ibiscoaching.com/single-post/2020/03/15/Mindset-Shifts-for-Virtual-Work-Success>

<https://www.topresume.com/career-advice/remote-job-search-mindset>

SURVIVING THE VIRTUAL WORLD



Virtual Engagement Protocols

Prior to March 10, 2020, webinars, virtual training, virtual conferences, live talks and virtual meetings seemed like a distant dream to many public sector entities. Then came COVID-19 and the social distancing protocols. Seemingly overnight, organisations had to discover virtual tools and platforms to connect, network and collaborate to promote social distancing, keep their employees healthy and safe, while maintaining operational continuity.

Particularly for organisations with a strong office presence, the sudden shift to virtual platforms can result in employees, clients and stakeholders feeling stressed, angry, confused and disengaged. This can lead to emotional and mental distress especially for persons who are not technologically savvy.

Setting healthy boundaries on virtual platforms is just as important as teaching persons how to use the virtual platforms. These boundaries help to create a safe space for everyone to operate and inform participants of what is expected of them during virtual engagements. Healthy boundaries can be created in the virtual world through the use of protocols.

These protocols should be shared with all participants **at least five (5) days** before the virtual engagement and should be reviewed with all participants on the day of the virtual session.

HAVE NO PROTOCOLS IN PLACE FOR YOUR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENTS?

We've got you covered. This article will provide protocols or guidelines for your virtual engagement needs. These include:

- i. Virtual assessment
- ii. Virtual interview
- iii. Virtual meeting
- iv. Virtual training
- v. Virtual orientation

In addition to the protocols provided, you may opt to include an EXIT CLAUSE to disconnect participants from the session at any time prior to the closing, should they fail to comply with the dictates of the protocols. The terms of this EXIT CLAUSE should be documented and discussed with all participants in advance of the session.

It would also be helpful to circulate an agenda prior to the virtual training/meeting or orientation session. For smooth transition and inclusivity, a moderator should be assigned to manage the flow of communication throughout the session.

VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

1. Dress modestly and professionally.
2. Get familiar with all the features of the virtual platform prior to the assessment and/or interview.
3. Ensure that you have strong WIFI connection and sufficient electrical power.
4. Ensure that your device is fully charged or plugged in before the commencement of the assessment and/or interview.
5. Join the virtual session at least **fifteen (15) minutes** in advance.
6. Register on the virtual platform using your **FULL NAME**.
7. Test all the commands/features (video, microphone, raise hand and screen sharing) to ensure that they are fully operational before the commencement of the virtual assessment and/or interview.
8. Ensure that you are situated in an area that is free from noise and distraction and conducive to participating in the virtual assessment and/or interview.
9. Ensure that your background is simple and clean.
10. Ensure that the room/area has adequate lighting.
11. Ensure that your cellphone is on silent or vibration during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
12. Keep a healthy distance from the camera.
13. Look directly into the camera and not the screen or monitor to make eye contact during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
14. Unmute the microphone before you speak.
15. Speak slowly and clearly at all times.
16. Avoid making hand gestures while you speak.
17. **DO NOT** allow any guests in the room during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
18. **DO NOT** seek assistance from anyone during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
19. **DO NOT** take any screenshots or record the virtual assessment and/or interview.
20. **DO NOT** use the internet or any printed materials to assist you during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
21. **DO NOT** leave the room for the duration of the virtual assessment and/or interview.
22. **DO NOT** communicate with anyone via telephone or in-person, during the virtual assessment and/or interview.
23. If you encounter any technical or other difficulties, inform the host immediately via telephone.
24. If you get disconnected, please return to the link and **re-join**. If this fails, then the host will contact you immediately to discuss the contingency plan.
25. If you did a virtual assessment, you should submit your assessment response as per the instructions outlined on the assessment sheet; and if you did a virtual interview, you should sign and return the Appeal Form **no more than two (2) days** following the interview.
26. Select the option to **leave the meeting** at the end of the virtual assessment and/or interview.

VIRTUAL MEETING, TRAINING AND ORIENTATION PROTOCOLS

1. Dress modestly and professionally.
2. Get familiar with all the features of the virtual platform prior to the session.
3. Ensure that you have strong WIFI connection and sufficient electrical power.
4. Ensure that your device is fully charged or plugged in before the commencement of the session.
5. Join the virtual session at least **fifteen (15) minutes** in advance.
6. Register on the virtual platform using your **FULL NAME**.
7. Test all the commands/features (video, microphone, raise hand and screen sharing) to ensure that they are fully operational before the commencement of the virtual session.
8. Ensure that you are situated in an area or office that is free from noise and distraction and conducive to participating in the virtual session.
9. Ensure that your background is simple and clean.
10. Ensure that the room/area has adequate lighting.
11. Ensure that your cellphone is on silent or vibration during the virtual session.
12. Engage fully in the online session and pause all work-related activities.
13. Ensure that all materials needed during the session are accessible.
14. Mute your microphone unless you are speaking. While speaking, avoid rustling papers, eating, typing loudly and all sidebar conversations, so that the virtual attendees can hear you clearly.
15. Use the **RAISE HAND** command/feature to indicate that you wish to speak or type your question, answer or comment in the chat.
16. Wait to be acknowledged before you speak.
17. Pause before answering a question, to be sure that the other person has finished speaking.
18. Always identify yourself before speaking.
19. Speak slowly and clearly at all times.
20. Be polite and respect the thoughts, opinions and feelings of others.
21. **DO NOT** interrupt others while they are speaking.
22. Avoid making hand gestures while you speak.
23. Be mindful of what you say and do during the virtual session as it may be recorded for future reference.
24. If you get disconnected, please return to the link and **re-join**. If this fails, then inform the host immediately.
25. Complete the evaluation at the end of the session (if applicable).
26. Select the option to **leave the meeting** at the end of the session.

Sources: <https://www.best-job-interview.com/online-interview-questions.html>
<https://www.bizjournals.com/tampabay/news/2020/10/05/surviving-and-thriving-tips-for-sustaining-your.html>
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VIRTUALLY make your mark.

ACHIEVING TOGETHER APART

The COVID-19 global situation has many companies and organisations asking employees to maintain business continuity through virtual working tools. Additionally, having to work from home – especially while having children to supervise - can prove to be very daunting, to say the least.

The challenge in most cases is to simultaneously adapt to the 'new normal' and help others to do the same. If you are a supervisor or manager, the task is yours to oversee your reports physically or virtually, depending on the arrangements of the entity.

The question therefore is: ***How does one balance working from home, supervising children, and meeting work targets?*** Are you able to honestly perform a day's work despite the restrictions? Are you able to effectively organise or manage your time? Are you still the 'go to' person even though you are not physically in office? Can you be depended on to be 'that guy'? (The good kind).



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“Integrity
is
doing
the right thing
even when
no one
is watching.”

~ C. S. Lewis

Here are **FIVE (5) TIPS** for managers/
team leaders and **FIVE (5) TIPS** for
employees/team members to ensure
that your work from home remains
effective and you can still
make your mark virtually
in this pandemic.

MANAGERS/TEAM LEADERS

01

Communicate Regularly

No team can effectively function without communication. It is a critical part of the group synergy, and even more so when interaction platforms are limited. Create a digital open-door for your team members to communicate, collaborate and share information, thereby diminishing the feeling of 'disconnect'.

02

Cultivate Personal Connections

Create the opportunity to further bond with your team by participating in social activities together. It could take the form of a virtual games evening, for example. Let them feel a sense of community and you will be surprised at the quality and quantity of work completed.

03

Frame Tasks around Goals

Ensure that all tasks are in line with the organisation's goals. Gently remind your team of how their jobs are related to the objectives. Keeping everyone on the same page on a regular basis will allow them to feel a part of the bigger picture.

04

Define Clear Expectations

There will be less time and energy wasted if your team does not have to figure out what exactly is to be done. Be clear when communicating instructions and expectations for tasks to be completed, it will be easier on everyone. Of course, if there are adjustments to be made, ensure that the team is informed immediately.

05

Be Transparent

People will be motivated to do better when they are made to understand why they are performing their duties, and informed of the rationale behind decisions made. They will ensure that their jobs are completed on time and may even go beyond the call of duty when they see how processes are connected to the organisation's objectives.

EMPLOYEES/TEAM MEMBERS

01

Establish a Daily Routine

It is important that you develop a daily routine and stick to it. If you are an early bird - or not - set a time that works best for you. One benefit of being on a remote team is that your schedule can be made a little more flexible. However, you must ensure that you are available when needed.

02

Dress for Success

Just because you are at home does not mean that you should work in sleepwear. It is important that you dress comfortably and professionally so that when called upon suddenly you are able to represent your organisation well. *You can't go wrong with a pair of jeans and a dress shirt.*

03

Share your Working Hours

Communicate your working hours with your team leader, teammates and other clients. Utilise this time-band to focus on your tasks, so that you will be able to efficiently and effectively meet your daily targets. This is one way to prove that you are active and visible.

04

Deliver on your Promises

Meet your targets and exceed your customers' expectations. If you say you will get it done – get it done! Keep your internal and external clients up to date on the progress of their transactions. Also, be accessible and readily available. Offer multiple mediums through which you can be reached.

05

Don't Let Distance be an Excuse

Check in with your team leader, teammates and clients regularly. Find out what their preferred communication format is and adapt to it. Regular contact with your team for work-related or non-work related matters will keep everyone in the know. This creates a sense of community and *does wonders for team synergy.*

Sources: <https://annarborusa.org/news/adapting-to-the-virtual-working-world/>
<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/349495>



HAPPENING NOW: IA & HR

The Government has delivered on its promise to commence the Shared Corporate Services (SCS) initiative being implemented by the Transformation Implementation Unit (TIU) of the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service (MoF&PS). This initiative involves the consolidation of certain administrative and support functions performed within each Ministry, Department and Agency (MDA).

The pilot which is scheduled to last for three to six (3-6) months, commenced with Internal Audit (IA) Shared Services and later Human Resource (HR) Shared Services. Both will be rolled out on a phased basis. Thirty (30) individuals were trained and installed in their new posts during January 2021 for IA Shared Services and sixteen (16), during the first week of February 2021 for HR Shared Services.

The Shared Service operates from its headquarters at 6 Saxthorpe Avenue, Kingston 8. The participating entities for IA Shared Services are the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Transport and Mining, the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. For HR Shared Services, the participating entities are the Office of the Services Commissions, eGov Jamaica Limited, Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency, Aeronautical Telecommunications Limited and the Transport Authority.

Sources: <https://jis.gov.jm/hr-shared-services-begin-february/>
<https://jis.gov.jm/tiu-prepares-for-internal-audit-shared-services/>

REMINDERS

ITEM/EVENT	DEADLINE/DATE
Performance Evaluation	March 31, 2021
Study Leave/Day Release	
Statutory Declaration	
Good Friday	April 2, 2021
Easter Monday	April 5, 2021

See you in June

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