

Notes from: Tessitura Arts & Culture Connection Reigniting Your Furloughed Team

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Reigniting your team is an incredibly important job which will take time and energy over a long period of time. It may be a different experience to how you were able to manage your team pre this pandemic. Responsibility is best shared so not on the shoulders of one person especially if that is you. The instinct is to priorities things, tasks, and what's changed but it's ok to focus on people, wellbeing and the team culture first. Training in procedures, processes, change, service levels will be easier with less anxious and more confident, engaged, happy individuals working together collaboratively.

We naturally think of re-igniting our furloughed staff but life and work have changed for everyone, whether a person has been furloughed, remained working or a combination of the two. Focus on those who haven't been furloughed as much as those who have. Everyone will need onboarding to a degree. Think about it like starting a new business with a new team, how would you onboard them into their roles?

Feeling overwhelmed. Here are 5 Steps to help you get started:

1. **YOU:** Self-reflection Take a step back. Give yourself time to prepare. Some questions you may want to ask yourself. How are you feeling? What are your worries? What do you want to achieve e.g. a happy high performing team? In your current role how much time do you have to focus to onboard your team? What do you need from your manager? What may need to change in your role to enable you to give focus and time to re-igniting your team?

What resources are available to you? e.g. HR, Senior Leadership, training & wellbeing budgets, groups, non-work & social activities, occupational health, counselling, mental health first aiders, peer knowledge and experience.

2. **INDIVIDUALS:** Finding out where we are now? How are people feeling? What are their worries, hopes, aspirations, goals, concerns? What do they see as the challenges for the next 6 months? What new skills have they developed? 1-1 conversations are a really useful way of understanding the hidden emotions. Anonymous surveys can also be useful. Find a way of connecting with each team member and create an open space that allows them to share comfortably how they really are. Equally important is asking what they need (and this may include needs outside of work e.g. childcare etc).

Know the signs of a struggling employee (furloughed or non-furloughed)

If you know some of the signs to look out for, you can step in and offer support in a compassionate non-judgemental manner. Here is what you may see in workplaces:

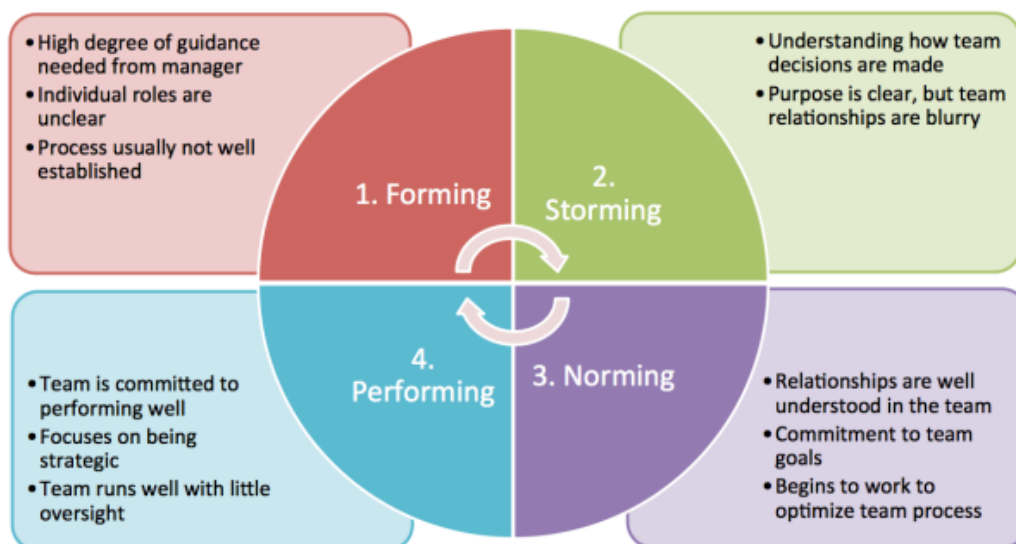
- Changes in mood
- Anxious thinking
- Poor sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Performance or attendance issues
- Changes in appearance
- Sometimes withdrawn
- More defensive or argumentative
- Something about the person doesn't 'seem right'

In addition to 1-1's you could consider introducing wellbeing buddies. A Buddy is someone with whom an employee can have an informal, egalitarian and respectful relationship whilst at work. This may be when an employee feels in need of additional support, a Buddy can be guaranteed to offer a "safe haven", someone with whom to go for a walk, meet for a coffee, arrange a quick chat, and, above all, to listen without judgement. A Buddy's main skills are empathy, presence and the ability to listen and manage their own emotional responses and wellbeing, so that conversations are based on genuineness and trust.

Buddies can be someone within your team or from another team/department but it's important that this is supported and valued from the top down.

3. **THE TEAM:** The people and size of the team may have changed, and roles and responsibilities different. Even if you have the same team back together there will be a mixture of furloughed and non-furloughed people who have had different experiences team dynamic will be different from March 2020. Pre-lockdown you may have been leading or part of a high performing team, now it's likely to be a "new" team to develop. Check out the stages of the Tuckman model of team development (there are lots of free resources available but here are a couple of examples). Where you are now, what actions are needed and how long it takes to move from where you are "to high performing" will be different for each team.

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm



THE GOALS: You will have goals for you, each individual and the team. Involve the whole team in conversations around celebrating and reflecting on the successes of the last year (there will be more than you think), start to prepare people for what maybe an uncertain year. Work together to decide your teams goals, focus on the what you want to achieve collectively. Think about goals that you can achieve in a few weeks, and a few months. Keep them specific and measurable. There may be operational goals e.g. to introduce e-ticketing or to review membership benefits and there may be more holistic goals e.g. building personal resilience or start a book club. Think about how you will celebrate achieving each goal.

- 4. PLANS:** Now you understand where you, individual team members and the whole team are now, how people are feeling, what your goals are (and hopefully an understanding from Senior Leaders of some organisational goals for re-opening/the next year) you can start to agree and write a simple plan for you, each team member and the collective team.

Writing an Individual Development Plan

- 1. Goal Description.** What do you want to achieve?
For example, this could be more flexible working e.g. working from home 2 days a week or flexible hours
- 2. Action Steps.** The activities that will help you reach your goal
Explore rotas and how the team may adapt to enable 2 days working from home
- 3. Measurable Definition of Success.** Describes how you will know when the goal is achieved
We'll know we've achieved this when the person is working 2 days from home without a negative impact on them, their wellbeing or the team
- 4. Resources Needed**
Technology and equipment, trust from your manager and team, remote meetings,
- 5. Target Date**
2 months from now

Remember each person's experience of the pandemic will have been different, domestic situations, agility and resilience, people and organisations have changed and will need to continue to adapt and work in different ways.

And finally remember to look after yourself too, you need to be in a good place and develop your own skills to be able to re-ignite your team.