

Unlocking Locked Potential

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During 2020, I spent a lot of time coaching leaders about people and leadership. So, let me offer four observations about leadership and the opportunities you can unlock if you embrace them.

Work At Home vs. Work From Anywhere

The first observation is about working remotely. In this “new” environment everyone is working remotely from home. But from a leadership standpoint, it’s not really about working remotely, it’s about working from anywhere – and that is a big difference.

For example, the Washington, DC area – where a lot of federal IT people work – is an area where the IT community is close knit, especially in regards to the ability to access talent.

Many think post-Pandemic work will mean returning to a partial office life where you might come into the office once or twice a week. But if I broaden my scope to the entire US and tell people they can work from anywhere, (it’s OK to work remotely from Montana), all of a sudden I open up and unlock this entire talent pool that I never even thought about tapping into.

So by embracing work from anywhere and making it the “new normal”, a new talent pool is created that executives and leaders can access. Being able to work remotely from Montana unlocks a whole new capability. Now leaders can tap into an entire country’s worth of workforce and they are starting to realize that potential.

Unleash Emerging Leaders

My second observation targets the unleashing the potential of emerging leaders driven by the realities of Zoom.

Pre-pandemic, many of these emerging leaders had been limiting their growth potential, partly because of their inability to speak effectively in public. But with Zoom meetings, you are seeing more and more of the deeper talent in front of the screen and presenting effectively. Leaders are recognizing this and encouraging them.

Before many leaders were hesitant about these people speaking in public because of what they would say; and they could be quoted causing issues – “the mop up on aisle 9” syndrome. But now many are allowing them to present in this

type of environment, giving them much needed experience and making them more comfortable speaking to audiences.

We have now unlocked some of that capability. Allowing these emerging leaders to be more comfortable in this type of environment is a bridge to speaking in public. It allows them to speak and answer

questions on demand in real time, unlocking their potential.

Only As Good As Your Health

In an EMT course, you quickly learn you are no good to anyone else unless you take care of yourself. You can’t go into a situation and be expected to help if you are not healthy and taking care of yourself.

So, my third observation is that leaders have to make assessment of their own health and ability so they can balance their work and family life. Not only should they be experiencing this, but it is essential to transfer this concept to their workforce.

The work/life balance situation starts with the leader themselves experiencing that work/life balance “aha” moment.

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Broaden Access

My fourth observation is take the opportunity to broaden access to information.

It always distressed me when I would go to a physical presentation (maybe with 50 others) with awesome content being presented about a very important topic/project/program and the only ones who could get the content are the 50 people in the room.

Now that we are in this webinar mode, recording all of this information, now you suddenly unlock a wealth of information to a community that wants to help the government.

If all of these emerging companies and communities that want to provide services to the federal government have access to this information – because of being able to work from anywhere – channels get unlocked and you bring into play a whole new set of capabilities and methods that we can use to find goods and services.

Normal Life With Benefits

In 2021 as life improves, leaders now have an environment where the stresses from the 2020 recede. Children are back at school, public life is resuming and I have the freedom to go out when I want, but I don't have to because things are safe.

I can have a workforce that is across the country; I can be aware of this work/life balance and I can organize my day and make sure my employees are organized around those principles.

So, looking forward, leaders can have their “cake and eat it too”. With all the new capabilities, it won't be an either/or but a mix because you now have access to information and talent across the US.

People want to live on their terms. And while they have always wanted that, now we can now allow them to do that. They can work productively and securely from anywhere. Leaders who are embracing that are the ones who are going to unlock the locked potential and do incredible things. ■