

# “How are you?”

Organisational connection and inclusion during coronavirus

Virtual roundtable, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020



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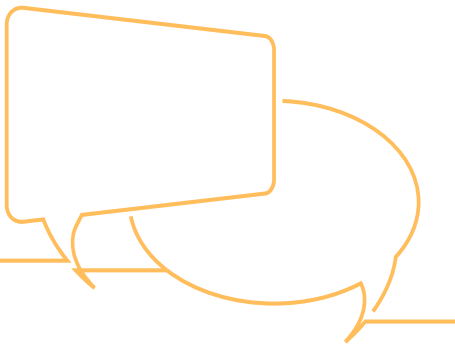
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# Introduction

**'Physically distant, but socially connected'** never felt truer than on Thursday 7th May as we gathered with Diversity and Inclusion leads, HR practitioners and Talent Directors to discuss the impact of coronavirus on organisational connection and inclusion.

With disruption being one of the largest drivers of innovation and an opportunity to thrive, the discussion unfolded along a theme of resilience and optimism, the realities of the challenging road ahead and the beginning of a new status quo.

If you were looking for clarity during this time of uncertainty, the speakers certainly brought clear and fresh thinking, unanimously agreeing things are not returning 'back to normal' and that this is an opportunity to think expansively and strategically. It was evident for the speakers that we are on the brink of radical change in working patterns, cultures and careers.



**Liz Dimmock**  
Founder and CEO,  
Women Ahead and  
Moving Ahead



**Dr Kate Goodger**  
Olympic performance  
psychologist;  
Moving Ahead speaker



**Fleur Bothwick OBE**  
EMEIA Director  
of Diversity and  
Inclusion at EY



**Chuck Stephens**  
Global Head of Inclusion,  
Diversity and Belonging  
at Booking.com

## Our wonderful speakers



**Tamar Hughes**  
Group Head of Talent  
and Development at  
Phoenix Group



**Anouska Ramsay**  
Director of Culture  
and Capability at  
Santander UK



**Rebekah Wallis**  
Director -  
People and CR,  
Ricoh UK Ltd



**Rachel Vecht**  
Former teacher,  
parent educator;  
Moving Ahead speaker

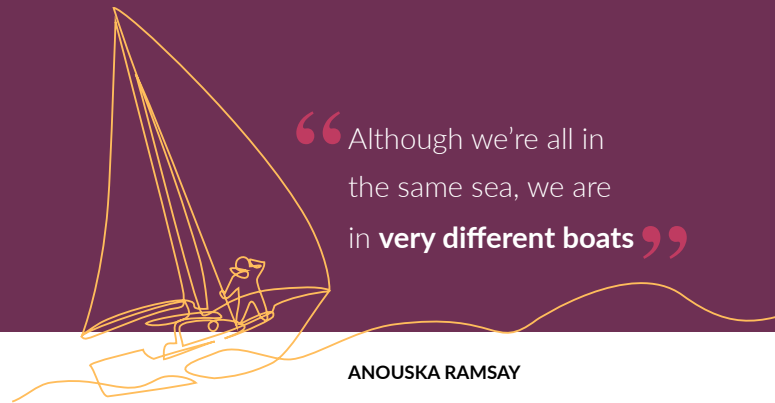


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# Being **more** human at work



“Although we’re all in the same sea, we are in **very different boats**”

ANOUSKA RAMSAY

When a colleague asks ‘how are you?’ the conversation now frequently unfolds to a caring and honest exchange.

We often talk about deep communication in our mentoring programmes, but never before have we seen an entire nation listening in a different way. There has been a shift in how colleagues are communicating with one another, with coronavirus representing a big enabler of vulnerability, honesty and humanity in the workplace. Reflecting on their own self-care practises in their introductions, the speakers highlighted the importance of taking holiday to have down time, needing more rest and asking for help, both at work and home.

“There’s a more human touch to every call and meeting, you’re connecting at a deeper level”



TAMAR HUGHES

Although we’re all in the same sea, we are in very different boats. With every individual and country experiencing coronavirus differently, there is no one size fits all response. Supportive initiatives are wide-ranging and adapting as the weeks progress. Some examples our speakers shared ranged from: new informal communication platforms; blocking out

personal time for a companywide golden hour over lunch; increasing the number of psychological services on offer; through to an informal heart emoji team check in every morning – green for good, blue for coping and red for needing help.

Ultimately people want to come together and be a community and it’s the job of the organisation to facilitate and support this.

Unanimously, the speakers agreed they are enjoying seeing the human side of their colleagues. As much as we’re learning about our colleagues, we’re also enjoying being seen for who we really are. It’s absolutely fine that people see me in my home. There’s a more human touch to every call and meeting, you’re connecting at a deeper level.

The pandemic is having a colossal impact on school children and their parents alike. Rachel Vecht, Parenting and Caring expert and Moving Ahead speaker, closed this section of the discussion sharing an observation that there is opportunity for children to benefit from witnessing a more human and vulnerable world. Our children are learning about resilience, emotional intelligence, values and how to express themselves.



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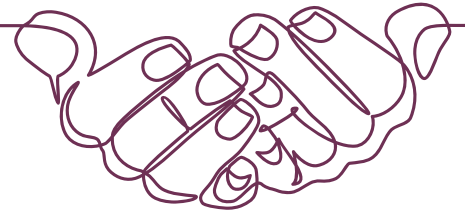


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# New ways of working

“ It’s not enough to just work from home but it must include flexibility and autonomy. When done right, **flexible and agile working is one of the biggest enablers for inclusion.** ”

REBEKAH WALLIS



This a radical experiment in the art of the possible. For many organisations, including some of our speakers, working from home has been on the agenda for years but considered near impossible. However, overnight, entire organisations have had to embrace every facet of agile working.

Ultimately, this is a great opportunity to reset the status quo and rethink work – how we do it, where we do it, and why we do it. It’s a healthy challenge for how we do daily business and we must seize the moment.

“ This a radical experiment in the art of the possible ”



DR KATE GOODGER

At Moving Ahead we are often asked the question ‘is there a silver bullet for inclusion?’. The answer is no; for us, it’s a tapestry of interventions and communications - a combination of inclusive leadership, development opportunities, a culture of mentoring and sponsorship, respectful curiosity for colleagues, underpinned by supporting policies and structures. However, one of the biggest drivers to inclusion a culture and practice of flexible working. It’s not enough to just work from home but it must include flexibility and autonomy. When done right, flexible and agile working is one of the biggest enablers for inclusion.

Of course, it’s easier said than done. Diverse working patterns come with their own challenges of an ‘always on’ culture and practicalities around when to hold key business meetings. What can we do to support our colleagues in this new way of working? Firstly, it’s important to acknowledge, that we are not just working from home, we are working from home in a crisis without the normal structures that support us to be successful.

New factors will be more important than ever, namely setting clear personal boundaries, creating mindset change and supporting employees to get the best out of their technology. We have all got to work on knowing what our boundaries are and how to articulate them. If you’re more of an introverted person and need time away from constant zoom calls, try a walking meeting, or structuring your day with pockets of down time. Equally we must all remember those without children, not to downplay their individual needs and personal responsibilities.

With regard to technology, Steve Dineen, CEO of Fuse Universal, shared the observation that overnight we’ve seen the event, conference and learning space move from London-centric to virtual-centric.

This means we’re going to need a massive step up in how we humanise technology and leverage its capacity to help us connect, communicate and learn authentically.



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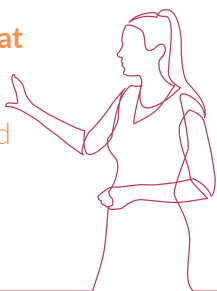
# Harnessing this **change**



Seen through the lens of flexible working, it might seem as though coronavirus is having a positive impact on organisational diversity and inclusion. Sadly, this is not the reality. As with any political, environmental or social challenge, it is always the under-represented and marginalised groups who will be impacted the most.

According to The Office of National Statistics, black people are more than four times more likely to die from coronavirus than white people. Although part of the difference has not yet been fully evidenced this is in part a result of socio-economic disadvantage. There will need to be a careful consideration of how economic fallout will disproportionately impact BAME communities. For example, after the 2007-08 financial crisis, ethnic minorities in the UK faced increased unemployment and lower earnings. We are also heading towards a potential storm with apprenticeships being cut and this additional focus on technology and automation a risk to jobs, we need more time to gather data and create a plan to support people through this transition.

“ **More than ever it is imperative that D&I initiatives continue to keep pace** but what and how is delivered will be refreshed ”



“ The road ahead is unclear, but the consensus is that **there is no going back to normal** ”



The road ahead is unclear, but the consensus is that there is no going back to normal. We owe it to the gravity of the situation to prevent our organisations doing a u-turn. More than ever it is imperative that D&I initiatives continue to keep pace but what and how is delivered will be refreshed. Learning and development is going to be a critical lever to build the new skills we need to build resilience and work and lead inclusively.



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# Together,

we will need to harness the **positive changes** of flexible working,

while giving our due diligence to the severity of the situation, especially for marginalised groups.

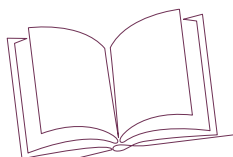
**This is impacting society as a whole.**



The gravity of the situation was certainly felt throughout the speakers, with agreement that there has been a void of empathy in the world.

The humble consensus was that we must acknowledge the severity of the situation for those suffering both physically and financially, and that our collective way through is to embrace inclusive leadership at every level. Coronavirus has clearly differentiated the leaders who can connect and engage their teams and proved that real leadership comes down to people-based skills. There is also a need to come back to basics: helping people have engaging inclusive conversations virtually and giving people the confidence to run effective meetings online. Inclusive leadership traits have never been more important and leaders now need to bring forward and develop these

“**We’ve ripped up the rule book on working remotely**, so how can we use this opportunity to look at other barriers to D&I?”



“**Coronavirus has clearly differentiated the leaders who can connect and engage their teams and proved that real leadership comes down to people-based skills**”

Harnessing this momentum of change, there is a need to capitalise on the rapid changes that we’ve seen so far. We’ve ripped up the rule book on working remotely, so how can we use this opportunity to look at other barriers to D&I? In all of this, we’ve got to be careful not focus on a single narrative. It’s about respecting whatever needs you have as an individual in order to be successful. Ultimately, this is also a time for self-empowerment and self-reflection so that each of us as individuals can ask for what we need to be our best. As said right at the start, how can we use the downtime now, to become the leaders of tomorrow.



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# Looking forward together

It's been an absolute pleasure connecting to you all throughout this discussion.

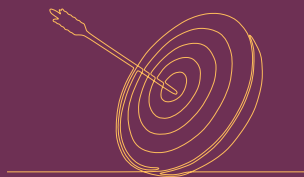
At Moving Ahead we are feeling inspired by the resilience and innovation we've seen in all our clients. We are feeling hopeful for a new way of working that embraces true flexibility and considers individual diversity. We recognise the magnitude of the road ahead but are grateful to be walking it, physically distant, but very much together.

In the meantime, we leave you with Dr Kate Goodger's top tips for coping during the weeks and months ahead:



## Acceptance

Recognise the things that you can change and those that you can't. Put your energy into the things within your control and saving your precious energy for the things that are important



## Resetting expectations

Think about your expectations of the day and be realistic. What is reasonable and what isn't? We need to manage our expectations of both ourselves and others.

Do more of what gives you perspective and activities that support you to settle and stabilise.

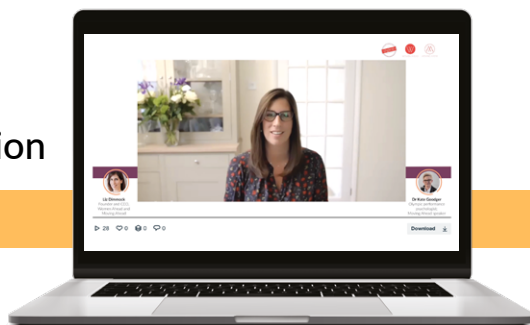


## Adopt a test and learn mindset

Find out what works for you and embrace the failure. Taking the learning mindset forward. It's unique opportunity to explore little micro experiments. It's not failing, it's just learning.

If you'd like to hear more,  
**watch the full  
roundtable discussion**

**HERE** ▶



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