



Leading **Forward**

Resource Guide for the Accountable Leader

Updated July 2023

SERVICE / CURIOSITY / RESPECT / ACCOUNTABILITY / APPRECIATION

Leader Note

Thank you for taking the time to invest in yourself and your team by pursuing this Resource Guide. Leadership is vital for organizational success. The knowledge, skills and abilities of people leaders are what drive our University towards our land-grant mission and create a strong culture of engagement. At WVU, “accountable” leaders need to lead in a way that they can build and sustain engagement, demonstrate key essential skills required of leaders in the 21st Century and navigate an increasingly complex and ever-changing work environment while positively impacting the wide-ranging employee experience.

Leadership accountability encompasses multiple principles and skills that we have identified and laid out for you throughout this guide. Being an accountable leader requires you to look at things like leadership agility, being accountable with decisions, using creative problem solving, finding ways to reduce cost and how to guide your team through change.

At WVU, we’ve always believed that leadership is a journey. You may be leading a team right now for the first time in your career or perhaps you have been leading for years. In either case, we want to make sure that you have the tools, resources and leader mindset needed to effectively lead your team.

You will be called upon to lead people and manage work differently by:

- ✓ Adapting to changing environments.
- ✓ Being agile and responsive in making decisions.
- ✓ Recognizing and eliminating waste and low value activity.
- ✓ Focusing on mission-centric work that draws our faculty, staff and students to our campuses.
- ✓ Providing frequent feedback and coaching to your employees.

A stylized mountain logo consisting of two overlapping geometric shapes, a dark blue triangle and a lighter blue parallelogram, forming a mountain peak.

MOUNTAINEERS
GO FIRST.

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Leading at WVU

As a people leader, we rely on you to adapt quickly to change and to anticipate future needs. Leading at WVU requires you and your team to focus on what success looks like not only today, but also tomorrow and requires you WITH your team to continuously develop up-to-date team norms, individual, and team goals. **Leading forward is not a destination; it is a way of being.**

First, a note about contradictions in leading...

“You can spend time sharpening your axe or exhaust your strength using a dull one.”

There are times when leading that you encounter seemingly contradictory activities that work together for success (think: tough love, do more with less). While these often occur naturally to us in our everyday life, examining and incorporating them into our leadership skills may require a more conscious effort.

For example, there is a popular saying often attributed to President Abraham Lincoln about planning and executing tasks: “If I had four hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend the first two hours sharpening the axe.” The lesson: Time spent in preparation for a task is better spent than rushing into it ill prepared.

There are many contradictions in leading. A few examples include:

Slow down, but go fast.	Get lean, but stay strong.	Go high-tech, but keep human touch.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take necessary time to evaluate holistically • Reflect on tripping points • Identify and understand opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What programs and services are essential? • Which programs and services add little value? • How can we reduce cost or increase revenue? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize technology • Ensure a strong employee-culture connection • Always make employee engagement a top priority

Building and Sustaining Engagement

People leaders significantly impact workplace engagement. High employee engagement in an organization's culture is the outcome of people choosing behaviors and actions that demonstrate a commitment to their work, a connection to their organizational purpose and living shared values both individually and collectively.

At WVU, it is about each employee taking ownership to ensure their work is aligned to the mission while intentionally cultivating service, curiosity, respect, accountability and appreciation in their everyday practices.

Employee engagement is much more than job satisfaction. An employee can be satisfied with their role and schedule, but still not actively engaged. Job satisfaction is a necessary foundation, but employee engagement is the differential for increased productivity, retention and overall effectiveness.

Employee engagement has never been more critical at WVU. While everyone is ultimately responsible for their own engagement, research indicates the immediate supervisor plays the most influential role. Engaged people leaders who foster the engagement of their employees find new opportunities to lead their teams (on-site, hybrid or fully remote) and reap important benefits and outcomes, the most important being increased student success at WVU.

Benefits of a highly engaged workforce include: 16% higher productivity¹ and 41% lower absenteeism.²

¹ *The State of Human Capital, McKinsey 2012*

² *State of the American Workplace, Gallup, 2017*

Reflection

What is one thing that you could do more of or better this week to enhance employee engagement in your college, department or unit?



Article

Gallup shares key findings from their research about employee engagement in the article, [Why Drive Employee Engagement in Higher Ed?](#)



Infographic

This infographic applies [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to the levels of an employee's engagement.](#)



Infographic

Review the [Six Best Practices for Engaging Your Employees.](#)

Essential Skills of an Accountable Leader

As you face challenges, change and the unknown, you will discover who you are and how you show up in your way of leading. This journey will look and feel different for everyone, but what really sets leaders apart is their level of accountability. As you dig in to learn about yourself and practice strong leadership practices, it will take courage to emerge as a flexible, balanced and accountable leader.

“Leadership is about the decision you make and the actions that you take each day. The world is waiting. Leadership is a choice – and it starts with you.”

- Alyse Nelson, Vital Voices

Leading forward means being successful at supporting your team through the challenges of building and sustaining engagement. You need to re-skill and up-skill to thrive in a changing work environment. It is through these skills that you can overcome obstacles in the work environment on a regular basis. To succeed as a WVU people leader, you need to demonstrate these top five leadership skills:

- ✓ Emotional Intelligence
- ✓ Strategic Forward Thinking
- ✓ Feedback and Coaching
- ✓ Leadership Agility
- ✓ Well-being and Resilience

As you dive into this next section of content, you will need to be candid with yourself, including how well you are supporting your team and demonstrating our core Mountaineer Values. There are essential skills that you will need to develop and/or refine, including things like leading through ambiguity or building trust.

Skill #1: Emotional Intelligence

Effective leaders are masterful at managing their relationships in a positive way. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is key to effective leadership and integral to workplace success. Having high emotional intelligence means being able to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions and influence the emotions of others in an appropriate and logical way – especially when we are under pressure. A person needs to develop both personal and social skills in the following four domains to have high EQ. Review the four domains and areas that need to be developed for each one:

Personal Skills

- **Self-Awareness:** accurate self-assessment and emotional self-awareness
- **Self-Management:** regulate self-control, initiative, trustworthiness, adaptability

Social Skills

- **Social Awareness:** demonstrate empathy, emotional awareness of others
- **Relationship Management:** others-oriented, influence, communication, conflict management

“If your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.”

- Daniel Goleman

Reflection

Are you a leader that you would follow?



Article

Read this article, [Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness](#), by Center for Creative Leadership to lead with emotional intelligence.



Video

Watch this brief video about [Developing Emotional Intelligence](#) by MindTools.



eLearning

Enroll in the self-paced course titled “Emotional Intelligence in Leadership – An Essential Skill” using the [LOD Registration Portal](#).

Skill #2: Strategic Forward-Thinking

Strategic forward-thinking leaders practice being comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Strategic forward-thinking is a thinking process that defines the way you think about, assess, anticipate, and create future opportunities for themselves and others. This essential skill provides a great advantage to people leaders to effectively plan in a strategic way.

Strategic forward-thinking leaders can solve problems differently and in a more comprehensive way through creative problem solving, discovering new sources of revenue and finding ways to reduce cost. They learn from past experiences, know how to work with less, react to changes in the landscape, create vision while connecting to the mission, reconnect to purpose and prepare their workforce to fulfill future needs through up-skilling and cross training employees including building up emerging leaders.

COMMUNICATION

PROACTIVE

GROWTH MINDSET

CHANGE LANES

MOBILIZE WORKFORCE

STRATEGIC FORWARD-THINKING

VALUE ADDED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

STRATEGY

REAL-TIME DECISIONS

ANTICIPATION

RESILIENCY



Article

Discover the [Three Unmistakable Signs That You Are a Strategic Thinker](#) from this brief article by Forbes.



Infographic

Gain [three insightful tips](#) on how to be a strategic, forward-thinking leader.

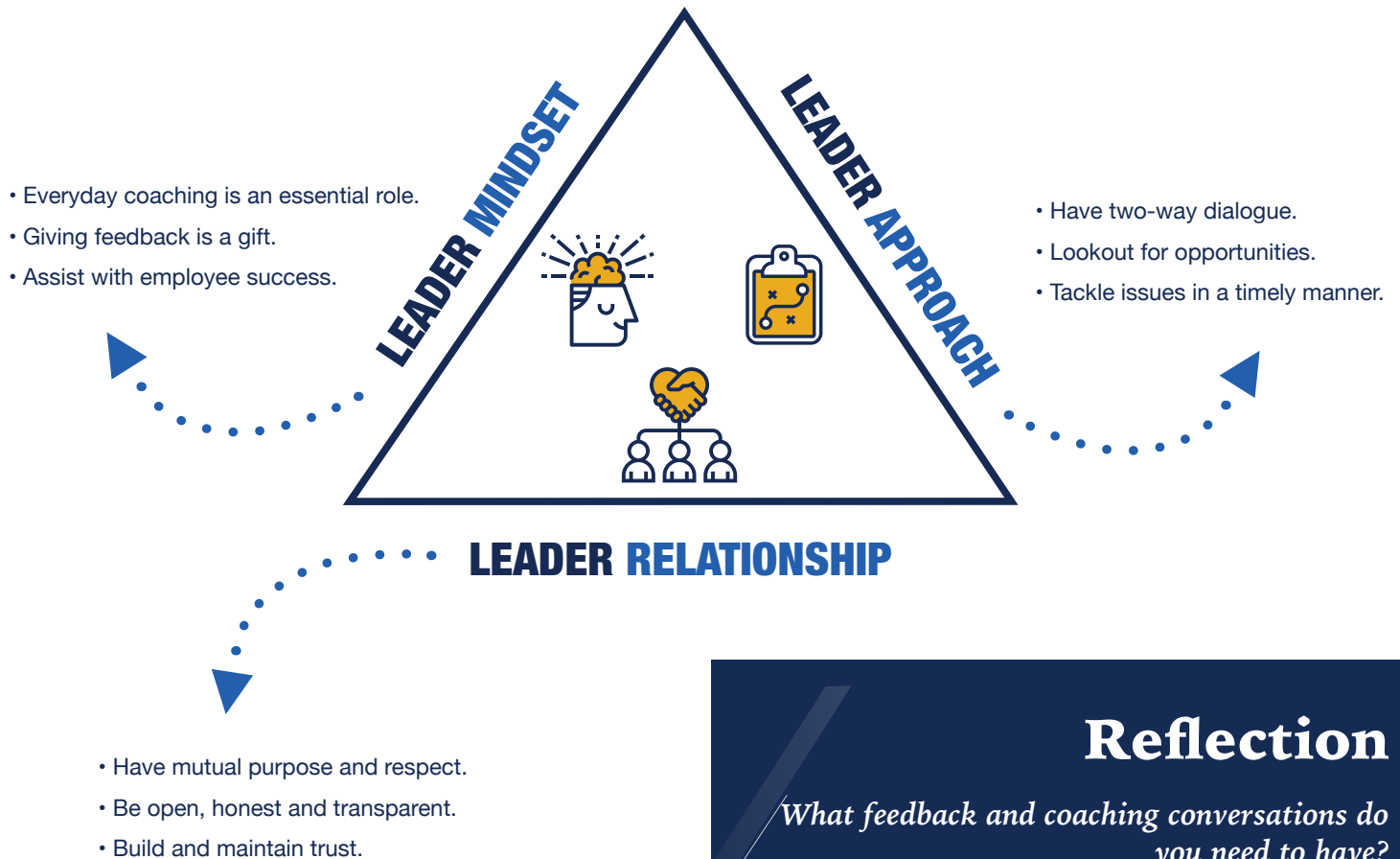


Toolkit

Download this [SWOT Analysis tool](#) to gain insights into using this technique to identify the various Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats during your strategic planning process.

Skill #3: Feedback and Coaching

The key to performance development is leaders being day-to-day coaches. At WVU, performance development is defined as a continuous active partnership between people leaders and employees to enable employees to be fully engaged, enhance effectiveness and reach their full potential through ongoing meaningful feedback and coaching conversations beyond the annual performance review. It is a leader's job to embed feedback and coaching into the culture as a natural way of working at WVU. For a leader to be successful in feedback and coaching conversations, it is important to apply the three elements of the Courageous Conversation Triangle.



Reflection

What feedback and coaching conversations do you need to have?



Webinar

This webinar, [Coaching Your Employees](#), will help you improve your coaching skills and support staff to achieve peak performance.



Infographic

This [visual tool](#) discusses the three critical elements of valuable performance and can be used during coaching conversations with your employees.



Toolkit

Download the [Coaching Toolkit](#), complete with helpful tools for effective conversations.

Skill #4: Leadership Agility

Agile leaders quickly adapt to changes and problems and react to them flexibly. Leadership agility is navigating through complexity, chaos and confusion; sorting through information quickly and discerning what is important; quickly turning thoughts and ideas into smart actions and evaluating the results for successes and failures. Agility helps you inspire your team and tackle the challenges of today while also thinking about the bigger picture and planning for the future.

Six Traits of Agile Leaders

- 1 Be Open** by looking for new opportunities, new experiences and using innovation to increase sources of input to make better, quicker decisions.
- 2 Be Comfortable with the Uncomfortable** by engaging in healthy conflict and making it a habit to step outside of your comfort zone to face fears, vulnerabilities and doubts.
- 3 Be Curious** by using a natural curiosity that triggers deeper thought about decisions, cultivate new ideas, challenge the status quo to drive change and produce more creative solutions with fewer errors.
- 4 Be Transparent** by being candid, honest and authentic – about yourself, your work and the broader goals of the organization. Encourage your team to do the same by paving a way for trust and collaboration through sharing of opinions and solving problems together.
- 5 Be Collaborative** by allowing others to weight in and offer their ideas fully acknowledging that you don't know everything and need the perspectives of others.
- 6 Be Empowering** by ensuring your team has the resources and direction needed to do their work, then get out of the way.

Reflection

Of the six traits, which one(s) do you need to strengthen to increase your leadership agility?



Article

The MIT Sloan Management Review explores how a few businesses [moved with agility when faced with a crisis](#).



Assessment

Consider each statement and rank your organization on a Strongly disagree – Strongly agree scale in this [Agility Attributes Assessment](#).



White Paper

Read this white paper by the Center for Creative Leadership on [Adaptable Leadership](#).

Skill #5: Well-Being and Resilience

Leaders must be vigilant of the overall well-being of themselves and their team. Employee well-being goes hand in hand with employee engagement. For example, if an employee isn't feeling well, it's hard for them to stay engaged at work. The same is true if an employee is struggling with financial issues – they are more likely to be distracted and unable to give their full attention to their job. While organizations have historically focused on the physical aspects of wellness (Walk 100 Miles in 100 Days, healthy eating initiatives), it's important to keep in mind that physical well-being is only one of five components that make up employees' total well-being.

Five Components of Well-being

- ✓ Physical Well-being
- ✓ Career Well-being (having a sense of purpose)
- ✓ Financial Well-being
- ✓ Emotional Well-being
- ✓ Social Well-being

Reflection

65% of US employees report their jobs as their number one stressor in their lives. As a leader, consider what impact this can have on your team and your own levels of well-being.

For remote workers, it's important to note that social and emotional well-being may become lower for some employees as feelings of isolation, blurred lines between personal and professional lives or disconnecting from work at the end of the day may occur. According to [research from Limeaide](#), “72% of employees said they're currently burned out (a result of high engagement and low well-being), a substantial increase from the 2020 Employee Care Report, where only 42% of respondents said the same”.

You are encouraged to acknowledge the different components of well-being and consider ways you can combat lower levels among your team. One effective strategy to improving overall well-being is to focus on resilience. Resilience is what helps you bounce back during difficult times. There are ways to practice and build resilience, such as fostering an open and trusting management style. Employees want to know they are not alone and that you are there to support them. Check out the three resources below to find out how you can increase lower levels of well-being among yourself and your team.



Article

Forbes breaks down the [5 Top Reasons Resilience at Work Matters](#), covering how to become more resilient and how it contributes to your overall well-being.



WVU Resources

Please follow the link below to see an entire [web page of resources](#) available to WVU employees.



Webinar

Learn how to make self-care a priority for you and your team by watching the CUPA-HR 1-hour webinar, [Self-care for Personal and Professional Success](#).

The Work Environment and the Employee Experience

The work environment directly impacts the employee experience. The employee experience drives great positive outcomes. And the connection between the two that ultimately determines organizational success is dependent upon a culture of employee engagement. Employee engagement is not to be confused with “happiness”. It is the emotional commitment and connection that an employee has to the organization and its goals. Not all happy employees are engaged, but all engaged employees find value in the work they do.

Generally, engaged employees:

- ✓ are **CONNECTED** to the mission because they **KNOW** that they make a difference
- ✓ genuinely **CARE** about the work so they are motivated to **EXCEED** their goals-that’s the differential
- ✓ are **POSITIVE** in their approach to work
- ✓ are more **CREATIVE** in problem solving
- ✓ feel a **PART** of something bigger

This section focuses on the factors that will impact the work environment and the employee experience, including why retaining top talent matters, the importance of onboarding new hires and the first year experience, best practices of virtual teams and remote work and the importance of recognition.

Before you read about the key topics, first take the Leadership Quiz on the next page to assess how well you support your team in their work environment and the employee experience.



Leadership Quiz

How well do I support my team?

Are you providing the right level of support to your team? Find out by reading each question below and choosing the best answer that is true for you most of the time. It is also important to consider how your team might answer about you as their leader. **Record your answers on a separate sheet of paper.**

1. How frequently do you check in with your team?

- a. I know what my team is doing at all times
- b. Once a day to see if the team needs anything and we also have weekly team meetings
- c. I make myself available to anyone but only reach out to certain folks directly
- d. My team knows how to reach me if they need anything

2. What is your top priority for conversations with employees?

- a. Understanding how the work is getting done
- b. Being transparent and fostering open dialogue
- c. Knowing high performers have what they need
- d. Getting everyone up to speed quickly

3. How collaborative are you with prioritizing/deprioritizing work?

- a. I set deadlines and check for status updates frequently
- b. I ask employees what their current workload is, and we discuss together what the top priorities should be
- c. I give tasks to certain employees because I know they will get it done
- d. I assign projects/tasks and check in on the due dates to see what the final product is

4. What is your approach to sharing information with the team?

- a. I keep the information high level and only include what is absolutely necessary for them to get work done
- b. I share relevant information frequently to ensure it's easy to digest and not overwhelming
- c. I give some team members more information than others
- d. I send emails that cover any upcoming changes or impacts to the team

5. In general, how do you lead through ambiguity?

- a. I set multiple touchpoints to see how the group is doing
- b. I provide a clear vision for the group, but let them come up with how to execute it
- c. I know who I can trust and rely on them during uncertain times
- d. Business as usual – I have a pretty great team

6. How often do you provide feedback?

- a. Very often and mostly constructive feedback
- b. At least once a week
- c. I give frequent praise to star performers
- d. During performance reviews

7. How do you gauge the overall wellbeing of your team?

- a. I limit the amount of projects I have the group working on at once
- b. I ask questions other than, “how are you” and empathize when they share information with me
- c. I let some employees take time off to decompress
- d. They show up fine to meetings, so I assume everything is fine

8. How often do you leave questions unanswered?

- a. I don't have many questions because my team knows how I like things done
- b. I encourage people to reach out to seek clarification when needed, and aim to get answers out quickly
- c. I'm good at responding to some employees more than others
- d. I'm trying to get better at improving my say/do ratio

Ready to Check Your Answers?

[Review the Leadership Quiz Results.](#)

Retaining Top Talent Matters

To get the most value of your talent, make retention a top priority. Talent planning ensures you have the highest quality employees in critical roles and that you have a plan in place to fulfill your talent needs as your organization grows and changes. The cost of losing a good employee is steep and finding new employees who are motivated and aligned with your goals can be a lengthy, difficult process. Talent planning itself is a commitment to recruit, hire and retain your top employees while developing them for positions they aspire to and want to grow into.

- 1 Workforce planning:** Workforce planning aligns strategic and organizational planning processes with hiring and retention and allows you to have right number of employees with the right skills at the right time in order to meet goals and thrive. Beyond uncovering new talent you need, WP helps identify hard-to-fill positions if an employee left, allowing you to prioritize employee retention plans.
- 2 Find the right people:** Hiring the right person is essential. And while the right skills and qualifications are important, great recruitment also pinpoints the right “fit” for your team and culture – a person with the right work style, personality, emotional intelligence, communication style, sense of humor, attitude and so on.
- 3 Identify, develop, promote and retain high performers:** Identify your high performing, high potential employees, assess if they have what it takes to be a future leader and put them on a path to success. Doing so will lead to better leadership in your organization.
- 4 Feedback and Coaching:** Just as in sports, feedback and coaching help people learn new skills and get better results. It’s a robust tool for creating a healthy environment, boosting productivity and engagement.
- 5 Manage performance:** Coach employees not performing up to snuff. Poor performers may be coached to success by strong leaders who understand that regular performance feedback, managing expectations, and focusing on success are key.

Your high-performance, high potential employees are your greatest asset: Treat them as such.



Chart

Learn the basic definitions of talent planning from this one-page chart, [Talent Planning Definitions](#).



Article

Read the article, [What High Performers Want at Work](#), to learn what your top talent values in the workplace by Harvard Business Review.



Read the article, [12 Actionable Tips for Managing Underperforming Employees](#) for advice on how to assist employees whose quality of work has decreased below the required level from the Academy to Innovate HR (AIHR).

Onboarding New Hires and the First Year Experience

Successful onboarding validates to the employee that they made the right choice. As a leader, you may find yourself feeling relieved after an offer has been accepted – that your “work is done here.” The truth is that your job is only just beginning at this point. Onboarding, which is commonly confused with orientation (short lived, highly transactional, and filled with lots of paperwork) is a journey. You want their onboarding experience to validate the employee’s decision they made the right choice.

Successful onboarding can:

- ✓ Increase retention
- ✓ Reduce time to productivity
- ✓ Boost engagement and commitment
- ✓ Improve job performance and enhance best practices such as collaborative working, innovation, and teamwork

Onboarding remote employees must include more than a welcome email and a hope that they can figure out the rest on their own. This planned, strategic process creates a foundation to establish expectations for you and your new hire to build upon; creating more engaged and committed employees. Involve your team to show collaborative teamwork, understand the culture, and demonstrate success. Use the customizable remote onboarding checklist in the resources below.

Reflection

What is one thing you could do differently to improve the onboarding experience for your remote employees?



Article

This [Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\) article](#) emphasizes why virtual onboarding is more important than ever.



eLearning

This [Microsoft Sway course](#) walks you through tips along the way of a virtual employee’s first year.



Checklist

Review the [Supervisor’s Guide to Welcoming New Employees](#) and [customize your remote checklist](#).

Virtual Teams and Remote Work

It is important for leaders of remote teams to lead with empathy. Leaders can do this by being in-tune with their employees' workloads, personal life demands and well-being, acknowledge stress, listen to employees' anxieties/concerns, and empathize with their struggles. To keep engagement and job performance high, leaders need to understand factors that can make remote work especially demanding, such as lack of face-to-face supervision, lack of access to information, decreased effective communication, social isolation, and distractions at home. Despite these challenges, a leader can better manage the remote work experience by enhancing their team's connection and communication by incorporating these five best practices into their leadership practices:

- 1 Have Regular Check-Ins:** Use weekly 1:1 meetings to assess needs and review goals.
- 2 Communicate More, Not Less:** Share information early and often. Be clear and explain the reason 'why'.
- 3 Set Expectations – Avoid Micromanaging:** Identify priorities, establish deadlines and determine the follow-up plan in advance. Check for questions then focus on outcomes instead of activity.
- 4 Establish Communication Practices:** Give each type of communication need a designated method (team meetings = Teams or Zoom; project discussion = Teams or chat; file storage = OneDrive). Establish guidelines for your availability.
- 5 Include Remote Social Interactions:** Use designated time for personal sharing. Create space for recognition, appreciation and celebrations. Encourage virtual connection rituals such as coffee breaks, lunches or team meeting ice breakers.

Reflection

What is one thing you can do more of or better in each best practice to enhance the remote work experience?



Article

Read [Best Practices for Engagement in Virtual Meetings](#).



Podcast

Gain insights on remote work strategies, isolation, wellbeing and how to stay productive in this [Gallup Podcast](#).



Toolkits

Check out these ideas: [Recognize a Job Well Done](#), [Virtual Toolkit for Remote Appreciation](#), [Virtual Team Building Activities](#).

Recognition

Recognition and appreciation directly impact employee engagement. Research from Deloitte found that organizations with highly effective recognition programs had 31% lower voluntary turnover than those with ineffective recognition programs. At the core of showing recognition is letting others know that the work they do is valuable and appreciated. The key to successful recognition is not using a “one-size fits all” approach. While some may enjoy grand gestures of public recognition, such as putting the spotlight on an individual during a departmental retreat, others may prefer a handwritten note of thanks (with the specific details on why that work was truly appreciated). As a leader, it’s your role to get to know your employees so you are able to show consistent authentic appreciation, no matter where they are located.

Think about a time when you have been recognized in the past...

- ✓ How did you feel in the moment?
- ✓ Why was this so memorable to you?
- ✓ What feelings surface as you think about that day?

GO BEYOND

Employee Recognition Portal

gobeyond.wvu.edu

Reflection

When was the last time you shared your appreciation for others?



Article

Recognition should be practiced on a regular basis. This article breaks down [what recognition looks like in the modern workplace](#).



Infographic

This infographic provides ideas on how to [show appreciation no matter where your employees work](#).



Form

This form helps you [learn about employee preferences](#) to effectively show appreciation that resonates with each individual.

Conclusion

It's our privilege to provide you with this Resource Guide to assist and inspire you to serve as an accountable leader at WVU. Being an accountable leader is sometimes harder than it looks. Along with leading through our WVU Values of Service, Curiosity, Respect, Accountability and Appreciation, it requires you to build and sustain engagement, master essential leadership skills and pay special attention to the work environment and the employee experience.

As we said in the beginning, we've always believed that leadership is a journey. It's your opportunity to demonstrate your ability to continuously learn and grow while leading your team's **engagement, development and well-being**, which in turn contributes to a culture of successful **student recruitment, retention and success** at WVU.

We wish all of our leaders the best in their journey. Always be on the lookout for ways to develop your leadership skills so that you can flourish in your role as a leader and keep propelling your career forward.

*Let's go.*TM

