



# The Perfect Virtual Leader

**Panellists: Charmaine Griffiths, Andrew Mawson, Karen Plum**

## About our Panellists

**Charmaine Griffiths-** *Chief Executive at British Heart Foundation*

Charmaine did her PhD and postdoctoral research in Neuroscience at University College London, alongside working in public engagement for the Wellcome Trust. Her subsequent career at the BHF included roles spanning communications, policy and assurance, as well as strategy.

She also holds leadership roles for several ambitious initiatives, including the London Cancer Hub and a pioneering new £75 million Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery set to open in Spring 2020.

Charmaine led the development of the previous BHF strategy, winning the Best Strategic Transformation category at the Chief Strategy Officer Awards 2014.

**Andrew Mawson-** *Co-Founder of Advanced Workplace Associates*

He's a leading pioneer, thinker and speaker on matters 'work and place' with the extraordinary ability to span the worlds of business strategy, organisational design, workplace strategy, workplace design and change management. In his consulting work he has led workplace change management programmes with respected clients including Invesco, Unicef UK, Willis Towers Watson, Direct Line Group, National Rail, Royal Bank of Scotland, Merrill Lynch, BUPA and Interserve.

In 2014 Andrew worked with the UK Cabinet Office as an adviser, participating in a review of 13 government departments' performance in implementing 'Agile working' as part of the government's Civil Service Reform programme, leading to reducing the UK Governments property portfolio by 20%.

**Karen Plum-** *Director of Research and Development at Advanced Workplace Associates*

In her consulting work Karen specialises in working as a senior coach with leaders, supporting them in creating the conditions to bring about strategic change in the way their people work. Karen is an expert in agile working, having helped countless organisations transition into new ways of working.

She has worked with numerous organisations, helping to coordinate and construct more effective workplace strategies. Clients she has worked with include the Royal Bank of Scotland, Microsoft, Nationwide Building Society, Morgan Stanley, Lloyds Banking Group, Prostate Cancer UK and London & Partners.

Recently, Karen has been interviewed on the BBC as well as other news outlets regarding the topic of Agile working and understanding what the science truly says works and is effective.

## The Topic

As organisations shift to more virtualised organisational models, leadership and people skills come under the spotlight. Every leader needs to be your best leader. In this session we explored what the perfect virtual leader might look like and how we might bring all leaders up to the standards of the best.

During this session we expanded on what the research had to say about managing virtual teams. We identified what characteristics would make the perfect virtual leader. Charmaine shared with those in attendance how they work towards this in her organisation.

## Panel Discussion Notes

- Two leadership traits that are the same in person or virtually are those who can lead authentically as themselves and those who can lead with a clarity of focus and vision.
- It is vitally important that virtual leaders learn to master multiple forms of communication. Media usage is keenly important. Even the use of selfies and at home videos
- The use of these varying forms and more personal media has led to an increase in authenticity, humanising and a closing of the perceived power gap.
- Communication isn't just about organisation news, its also about personal touches such as birthday well wishing.
- Online barriers to engage are lower, which can lead to a democratisation of engagement. The levelling effect of seeing people in a home, human environment.
- The physical signs of authority have been taken away and therefore there is a greater reliance on the intrinsic characteristics of leadership have to be stronger. This can reveal a weakness in leadership skills that were hidden previously.
- The shrinking of the power gap can lead to greater innovation and collaboration as team members feel more comfortable speaking up and sharing their ideas or concerns.
- It was noted that the science behind team management highlights perceived supervisory support as one of six key factors in team cohesion and productivity. This is particularly benefited when leaders take on a more coaching style in their role as leader.

## Characteristics of the Perfect Virtual Leader

- Authenticity- Being able to lead in your own style and character
- Clarity of vision
- Clarity of focus
- Communication Skills
- Ability to adapt to new technologies
- Skilled and appropriate use of written text alongside other forms of comms
- Be relatable
- Builds trust

## About the Advanced Workplace Institute

The Advanced Workplace Institute (AWI) is a supported community for leaders at all levels who aspire to change the world of work for their organisations.

Everything we do is under-pinned by the very latest scientific research and we make this research, and its outcomes, available to our members

We provide events, tools, processes and research geared to the transition to new ways of working and managing the workplace.

Our members are typically from HR, FM, IT and CRE.

If you would like to know more about membership with the AWI, please contact Lewis Crompton at [lcrompton@advanced-workplace.com](mailto:lcrompton@advanced-workplace.com)

To read more about the research, please [click here](#)

To register for our next event, please [click here](#)

To read a blog article on building strong virtual teams, please [click here](#)