



Scaling Impact Remotely

Lessons Learned from
Leading a National Network

Agenda

The problem we don't name

Consider a source

What is Digital Body Language

Reading the room

What I've learned leading remote

Moving to action



The problem we don't name

Body language didn't disappear when we went remote — it went digital.

70%

**of digital communication is
misinterpreted.**

Cited in Digital Body Language, Dhawan 2021

Response time

Silence reads as ignoring.

Punctuation & emoji

A period can read as anger.

Cc / Bcc / Reply All

Choices broadcast power.



The core idea

Reading carefully → *is the new listening.*

Writing clearly → *is the new empathy.*

A short call → *is worth a thousand emails.*



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Value Visibly

“Reading email with care and attention is the new art of listening.”

What it looks like

- Reply within a clear window — silence speaks.
- React, acknowledge, name what you read.
- Forward credit, not just information.
- Tailor channel to the person and the message.

What it costs when missing

- Teammates feel invisible and disengage.
- Decisions get re-litigated — no one said “got it.”
- Stars do invisible work that never gets seen.
- Junior staff read silence as disapproval.



Communicate Carefully

Set unambiguous norms for channel, message, and recipients.

CHANNEL LADDER

Email Records, decisions, async updates

Chat / DM Quick questions, social, light coordination

Doc comments Iterative feedback on artifacts

Video call High stakes, ambiguity, emotion, conflict

THREE RULES OF THUMB

If it would take 4 emails, schedule a call.

Complexity x emotion = real-time.

Use subject lines as headlines.

Lead with the ask, then the why.

Confirm receipt — even just “got it.”

Acknowledgment is half the message.



Collaborate Confidently

Confidence Comes from shared structure – not shared geography.



1

Clear owners

One name, one decision, one date.

2

Visible artifacts

If it's not in writing, it didn't happen.

3

Decision logs

What we chose, why, and what we'd revisit.

4

Time-zone-fair rituals

Rotate meeting times; record what matters.



Trust Totally

Small signals, big stakes

1.2 seconds delay after
which people seem less attentive

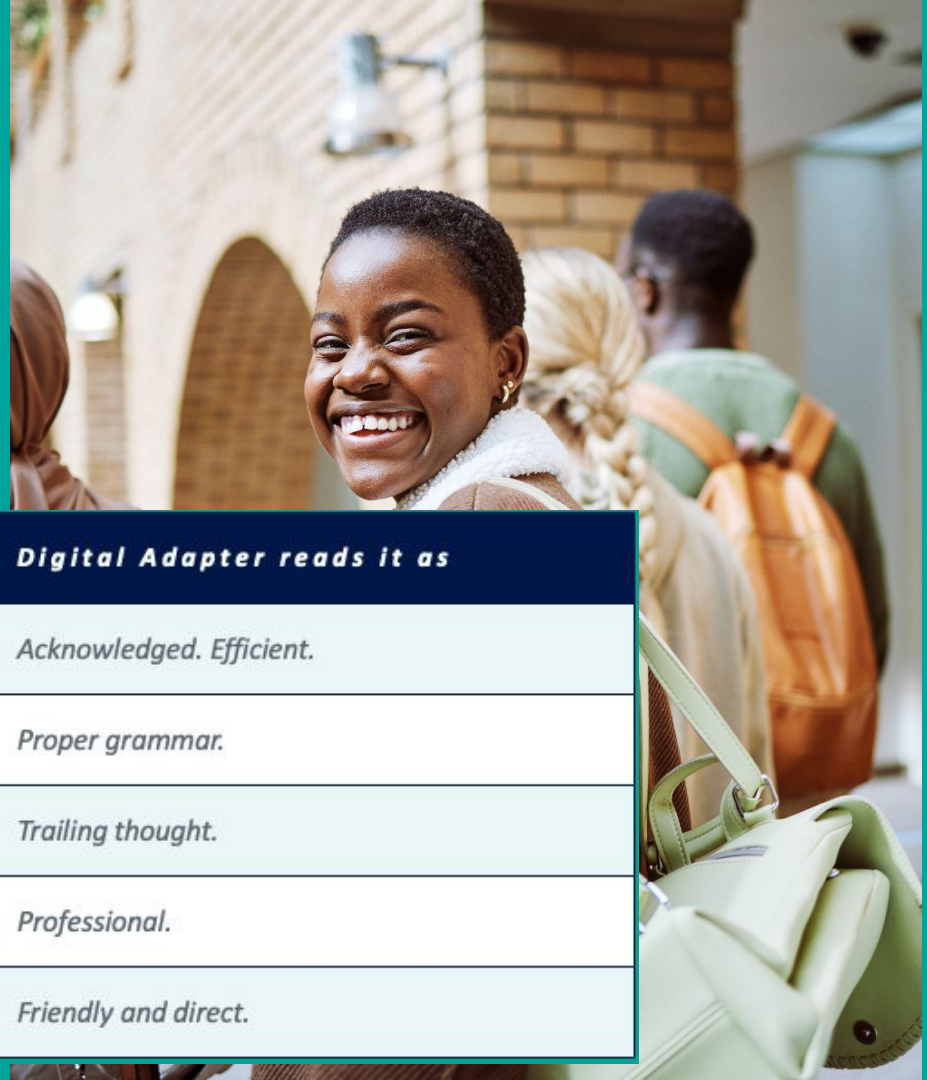
88% of Gen Z say emoji are useful
at work

4 X the cost of repair vs proactive



Same message, different reading

Digital Native and Digital Adapters



<i>Signal</i>	<i>Digital Native reads it as</i>	<i>Digital Adapter reads it as</i>
"K."	<i>Cold. Annoyed. Conversation over.</i>	<i>Acknowledged. Efficient.</i>
Period at end	<i>Passive-aggressive.</i>	<i>Proper grammar.</i>
Ellipsis...	<i>Resentment or sarcasm.</i>	<i>Trailing thought.</i>
No emoji	<i>Distant or angry.</i>	<i>Professional.</i>
Phone call cold	<i>Mildly alarming.</i>	<i>Friendly and direct.</i>



What I've learned leading a national fully remote organization



Three practices we keep

01

VALUE VISIBLY

We over-communicate context, not content.

Every project has a project launch: why now, who decides, what success looks like. Saves a week of guessing.

02

COMMUNICATE CAREFULLY

Async by default. Sync by design.

Meetings require a written agenda 24 hours ahead. If we can't write it down, we're not ready to meet.

03

COLLABORATE CONFIDENTLY

Cameras on for beginning and ending.

Faces at the start and close, freedom after. We get the human cues without the all-day fatigue.



Trust is built one tiny signal at a time.

Remember

- Pick the channel on purpose.
- Reply like you mean it.
- Say “got it” outloud.
- Turn the camera on when it matters.

