



GENERATE
WELL-
BEING

A Global Leader Thrives by Pursuing Purpose & Balance via Interactions Inside & Outside of Work

CASE CONTEXT

A leader of a global function thrives at work by interacting with his team and stakeholders in ways that align with his sense of purpose. He manages a 24/7 work environment, but maintains perspective by anchoring to family and outside activities.



MALE

Level: MANAGER OF MANAGERS

Industry: TECHNOLOGY

HIGH-PERFORMING LEADERS LEVERAGE NETWORKS TO DO 5 THINGS

Based on 20 years of research in more than 300 organizations, we know that the quality of your professional relationship play a significant role in your success. We have extended this research to describe the way high-performing leaders leverage their networks to: Innovate, Execute, Scale, Thrive and Adapt.



Logan's early career was in banking and wealth

management. After getting his MBA 15 years ago, he took

a corporate finance job at a global technology firm, where he's been since. He's moved around, working in Latin America, Europe and the U.S. and in a range of analyst and management jobs. Currently, he is the top financial manager for a business unit with global operations, runs a team of 23 people and is responsible for a group of 75.

Over the years, Logan has learned ways to create a more collaborative, productive and enjoyable context for himself and for his team, even when work is intense. "A guiding principle is, *be in touch with your team.*" He holds one-on-one, weekly check-ins with each direct report to talk about projects, challenges, priorities and the areas where he can help. He uses quarterly "synch-ups" to talk about performance, development and career aspirations. Once-a-week team calls keep everyone updated and allow for recognition and idea-sharing. He consistently uses video calls so a far-flung team can feel more connected to him and to each other. "Another principle for me is to *treat other people how you like to be treated yourself.* I like to have time with my manager and to know that time is respected and kept. So, yes, it's a big commitment of time on my side but I know it is important." Treating people with respect includes simple things, such as rotating the times of routine calls across time zones so the inconvenience is not always placed on the same people.

Logan, like most people, has seen collaborative demands and time spent on calls, meetings and emails increase tremendously over the years. The constant connectivity is "*a blessing and can also be very disruptive.*" Most of Logan's day is spent on calls, but he tries to balance that out with face-to-face interaction when he can. The constant connectivity is also fueled by an in-house chat tool, which allows interruptions any time. "It is great because you can ping somebody and get a quick answer ... But, you can see if someone is on the phone or in a meeting. It used to be if you were busy, people wouldn't ping you. Now, that respect is shifting. It doesn't matter, they will ping you whenever." The increasing collaborative demands, plus technology that allows for constant availability, combine to create much of the frenzy and overload people experience. "Technology allows us to do amazing, wonderful things. But, you never really stop. It is hard to say where work stops and when personal time or time with family begins."

To create some control over his time, Logan maps out his calendar every weekend, looking two weeks ahead. He blocks out chunks of time, which he can then choose how to use based on his priorities.

“I have learned if there is open space in my calendar, it will get filled. If there is no availability on my calendar, people have to talk to me. I have more control over my calendar and it allows me to do my job, after I finish the 8 or 10 calls I’ve had in a day.” Imposing structure this way is the only way Logan sees to keep up with the demands of his role. “It’s fair to push back, within reason ... If something comes from the top, you just have to get it done.”

Company culture plays a powerful role in overload and the always-on expectation. “There are unwritten rules ... We strive to be available anywhere in the world, 24/7 as long as you have an internet connection ... It is a personal choice you have to make as to how far you go with it. But, work does creep into your personal life—there’s no other way to put it.” Logan starts work early in the morning, in the office or on a call. He’s online or working late in the evenings. “Everything I have on my computer, I have on my phone, so even if I’m on vacation somebody can ask for something.” Knowing this, Logan is comfortable leaving the office every day at four to beat traffic and hopefully fit in exercise. Even though his intentions for that time may change with a call from his boss or a need from across time zones, “You have to draw your personal line ... The unintended consequence of all this is that people pay for it in their personal or family life somehow. We might not see it at work, but there is definitely a price ... *I would have liked to set more boundaries earlier in my career.*”

For Logan, family commitments are his biggest incentive to protect time and mental space away from work. He also rides with a cycling club—“You’re not going to check the phone when you’re riding the bike!” *Being pulled into other worlds is important to thriving at work and preventing people from being one-dimensional.* “If you are focused on something you enjoy, you don’t see that phone showing you more emails or requests. If you don’t have those activities, the phone is close by and buzzing and it is easy to look at it and get sucked back in.” Without non-work interests, you are more susceptible to the demands of work and less likely to push back or set limits. “It becomes a downward spiral. Work starts creeping more and more into your other life and you stop doing things at a personal level because you are spending more and more time at work. At some point, everything revolves around one thing: work.”

Logan has seen people hit that point, burn out and leave the company. “I haven’t seen people able to change and get themselves out of that cycle and stay in the same role or group ... But, of course, they have to make a conscious decision not to fall into that same cycle again.”

Even with the time demands, Logan enjoys his work and feels he is thriving. He likes working directly with the business leaders, contributing in a meaningful way and co-creating or developing solutions together. He gains satisfaction, too, from leading his team and facilitating their success—something that came over time. “I tend to be a control freak! I enjoyed being an individual contributor because I could plan and control my work ... When you are in a managerial role, you are dependent on others ... You have to learn to delegate. You have to learn to trust. I have learned, over time, that to be successful and satisfied in my role is making sure other people on my team are successful.”

Network Insights

- **Set times with your team to build relationships and create space for serendipity and off-task connections.** Weekly check-ins and quarterly synch-ups with direct reports and regular team meetings that encourage idea sharing and risk taking all create a context where trust, authenticity and purpose can thrive. Use 1:1s to address the work, give/receive feedback and discuss development, aspirations and how things are going in general.
- **Play offense to reduce collaborative overload.** The time people spend on email, meetings, calls, IM and texting has gone through the roof. Work will never stop if you let it take over. Set norms on email and technology use to reduce demands throughout your team or unit. Insist on effective meeting practices (e.g., be clear who needs to attend, have an agenda, facilitate smartly, post minutes, etc.) to reduce unnecessary collaborative demands.
- **Impose structure to ensure time to get work done and pursue your North Star.** Work through your calendar strategically every Friday or Sunday night. Looking a week or two ahead lets you proactively structure time for strategic work, creative interactions and re-energizing.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH & ROB CROSS

Building on 20 years of research with more than 300 organizations, the Network Leader Research Project seeks to understand the approach and strategies that enable certain leaders to consistently achieve peak performance. The research includes 160 in-depth interviews conducted by Rob Cross, a Professor of Management at University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce. The Connected Commons is currently focusing its research on leadership effectiveness, talent optimization and organizational alignment and change—three areas where network insights can clearly drive performance. For more information visit www.connectedcommons.com or email Rob at rlcrossjr@gmail.com.