Session 1.4

Distributed Workforce: How to Support a Remote BIM Team
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Class Description

With the Covid-19 pandemic, many project teams - and their BIM managers - found themselves working remotely and separated from each other for the first time. Working remotely is one thing and supporting a remote team while managing building information models is another challenge.

To start, companies need to re-open the debate about moving projects to people rather than moving people to projects. As companies are becoming more agile and upgrade their technology, it is important to assemble project teams that can work in a remote environment.

When supporting teams remotely, BIM managers need to understand the factors that can make remote work incredibly demanding. Otherwise, team members may experience declines in performance and engagement when they begin working remotely, especially in the absence of training and support.

These changes require a change of mindset and operating model. The objective is to manage a diverse workforce in a fluid and integrated way.

About the Speaker

Holger de Groot is the CEO and Founder of Modmation and a certified BIM Manager, bringing more than 17 years of professional experience in design & construction and consulting on BIM and Digital Engineering projects in Australia, New Zealand, and Europe to the Modmation team.

Holger is also the Vice Chairperson at buildingSMART Australasia, registered with the Chamber of Architects of Lower Saxony (#020262) in Germany, a Sessional Lecturer at the University of NSW and a sought-after author and regular speaker at high level industry conferences.

Before Holger founded Modmation in 2020, he has led the BIM implementation while employed at HDR as their National Director of BIM for the Australian region, and at Grimshaw Architects as their Office BIM Manager for the Sydney studio, advising on BIM matters at all levels.

Today, Holger's professional experience, technical competence and conceptual understanding of BIM and Digital Engineering allow him to support clients strategically in what digital project delivery looks like and to provide resources to clients who need strong BIM and Digital Engineering capabilities.
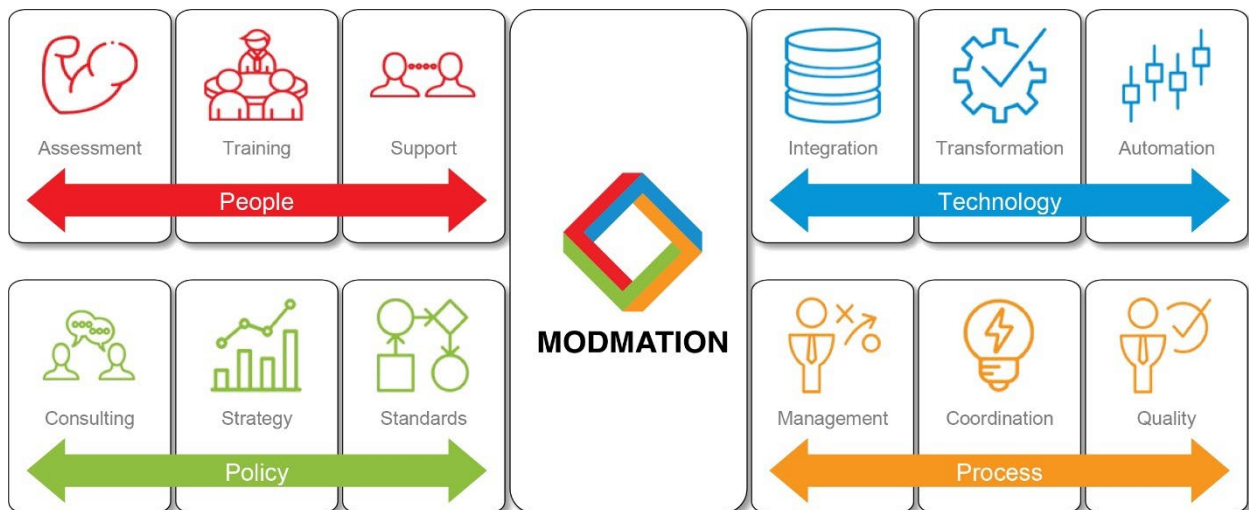
Modmation - Independent Consultancy

Remote Support Challenges

A New Way of Working

With the Covid-19 pandemic, many project teams - and their BIM managers - found themselves working remotely and separated from each other for the first time.

Today, distributed teams are not just a temporary fix – they are a new way of working, and an opportunity to reimagine traditional approaches to collaboration.

However, working remotely is one thing but supporting a remote team while managing building information models is another challenge.
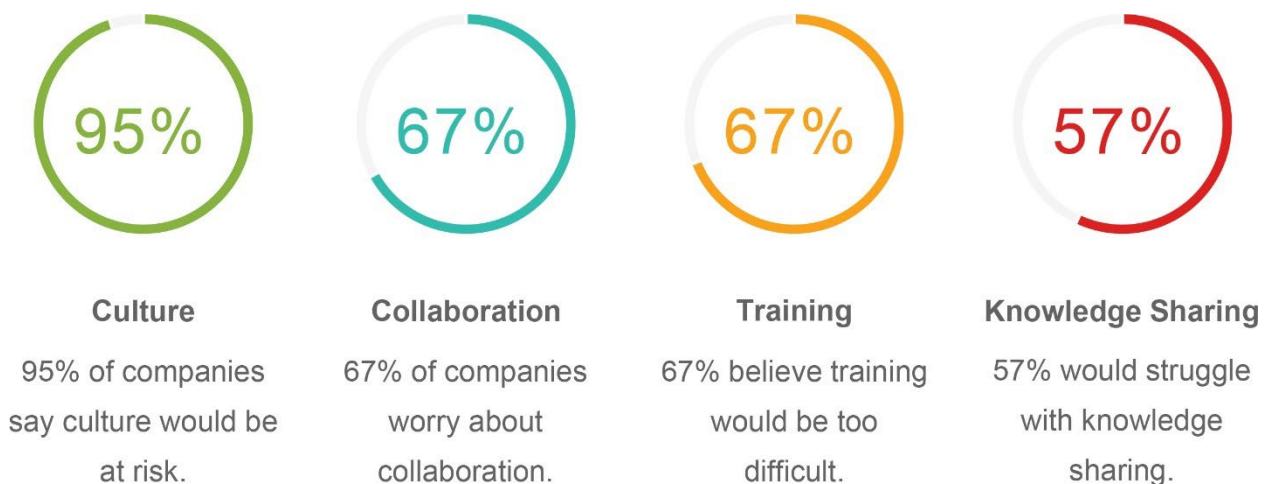
"As BIM centres on collaboration, successful teams need to be equipped to deal with it." Deepak Maini, Autodesk Expert Elite

Moving Projects to People

To start, companies need to re-open the debate about moving the projects to people rather than moving people to the projects.

Companies must think differently to meet the demand changes and be able to adopt digital workflows and support to cope with remote working.

Many companies - Modmation included - are already successful as 100% remote teams. Yet it is still not a common company structure in our industry.

95%	67%	67%	57%
Culture	**Collaboration**	**Training**	**Knowledge Sharing**
95% of companies say culture would be at risk.	67% of companies worry about collaboration.	67% believe training would be too difficult.	57% would struggle with knowledge sharing.

Source: https://www.bvp.com/atlas/remote-work

Companies Perceptions of Distributed Work

Understand the Challenges

As companies are becoming more agile and upgrade their technology, it is important to assemble teams that are capable of working in a remote environment.

When supporting teams remotely, BIM managers need to understand the factors that can make remote work incredibly challenging.

Otherwise, teams may experience declines in performance and engagement when they begin working remotely, especially in the absence of training and support.

Remote Support Challenges

Challenges inherent in remote support include:

- Lack of communication
- Lack of face-to-face supervision
- Lack of cohesion within the team
- Lack of access to information
- Lack of professional development
- Lack of ownership and trust
- Lack of accountability

This requires a change of mindset and operating model. The objective is to support and manage a distributed workforce in a fluid and integrated way.
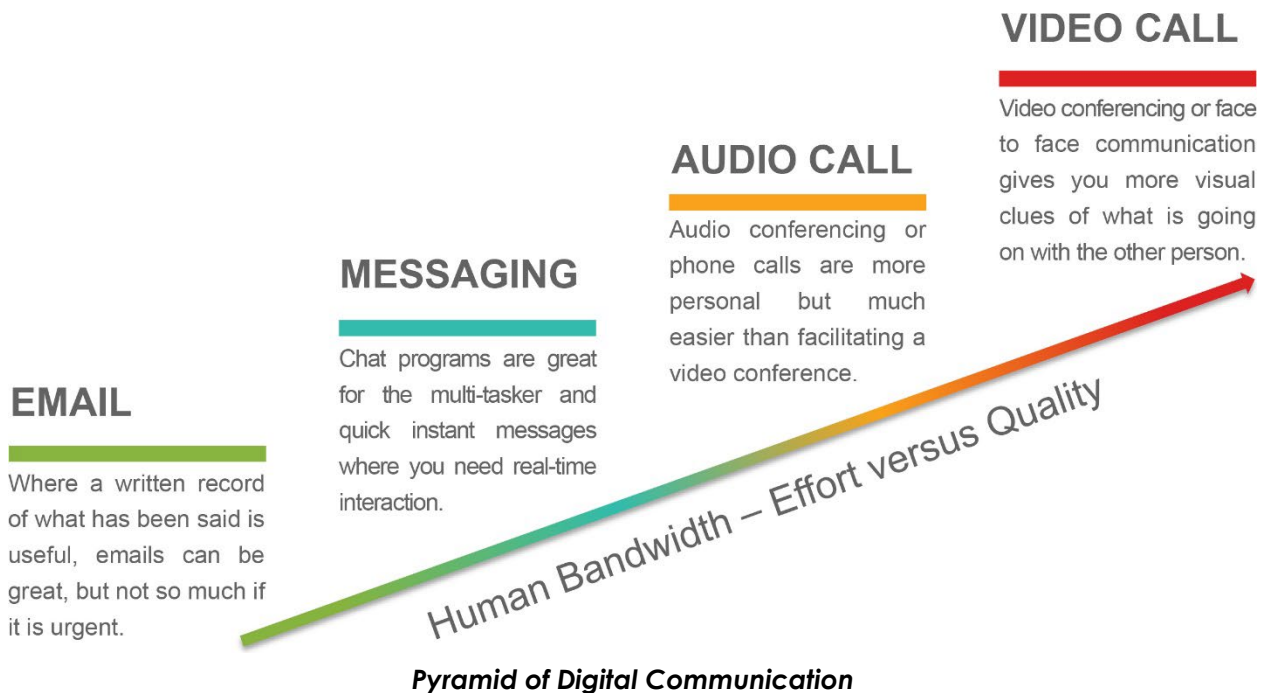
Rules of Engagement

Lack of Communication

By now, most of us have been down a path of digital transformation that can take most companies in the AEC industry months, if not years, to adopt.

This does not only include Autodesk products, but also tools like MS Teams, Zoom, and others that can be used as a simple platform for tackling communication issues.

Take advantage of these tools to increase the efficiency of your team and set clear expectations for the means, frequency, and ideal timing of communication for them.

VIDEO CALL
Video conferencing or face to face communication gives you more visual clues of what is going on with the other person.

AUDIO CALL
Audio conferencing or phone calls are more personal but much easier than facilitating a video conference.

MESSAGING
Chat programs are great for the multi-tasker and quick instant messages where you need real-time interaction.

EMAIL
Where a written record of what has been said is useful, emails can be great, but not so much if it is urgent.

Human Bandwidth – Effort versus Quality

Pyramid of Digital Communication

Establish Daily Check-Ins

Establish a daily check-in call with your remote team to make sure there is nothing blocking them from achieving their goals.

This could be a series of one-on-one calls, if your team members work more independently from each other, or a team call, if their work is highly collaborative.
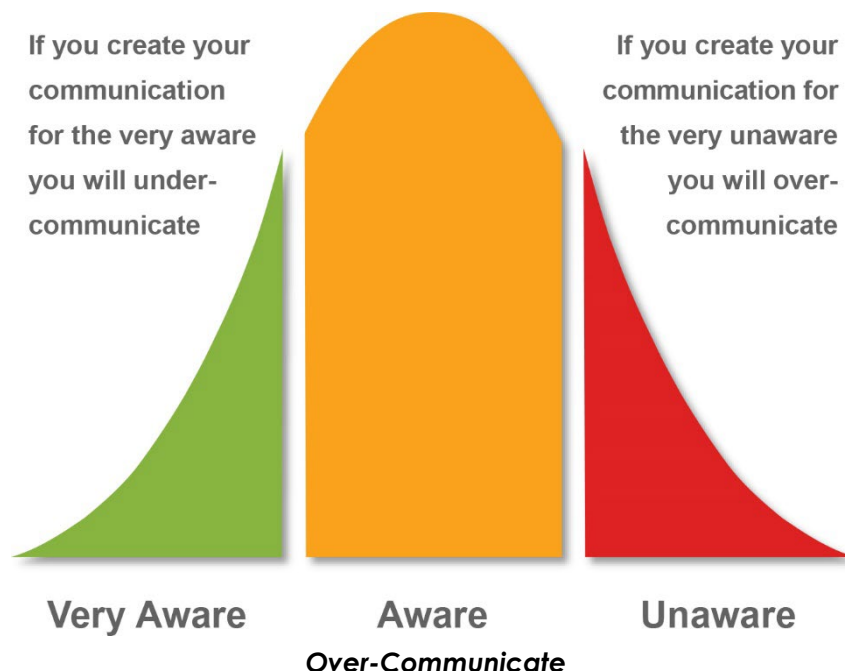
Make regular and predictable calls, providing a forum in which your team members know that they can consult with you.

Over-Communicate

In a non-distributed workforce, lack of communication can already be a challenge, but when your team is working remotely under-communication is a key risk.

Beyond your daily check-ins, over-communicating is imperative when it comes to your team's tasks, duties, responsibilities, and desired outcomes.

BIM managers need to over-communicate and create opportunities such as regular meetings for everyone to talk about their (Revit) challenges.

If you create your communication for the very aware you will under-communicate

If you create your communication for the very unaware you will over-communicate

Very Aware   **Aware**   **Unaware**

Over-Communicate

Communicate Confidence

Research on emotional intelligence tells us that team members do not only look to their BIM manager for help but also for clues about how to react to challenges.

If a BIM manager communicates helplessness and stress to a team, this will have a trickle-down effect on their individual team members.

Effective BIM managers acknowledge the challenge that a team member has, but also provide affirmation of their confidence in that member.

Exhibit Empathy

Especially for a newly remote team member, it is important for BIM managers to acknowledge stress, listen to concerns and empathize with their challenges.

If a team member is struggling but not communicating, ask them how they are doing - they may give you some information that you might not otherwise hear.

Once you ask the question, let the stress, concern or the challenge of your remote team member be the focus of this conversation.

Rules of Engagement

Establish "Rules of Engagement" (ROE) with your team members for every project that you support remotely.

- Use video conferencing for daily check-ins
- Use instance massaging when something is urgent.
- Establish your teams' expectations on the best way and time to reach you.
- Make sure that your team knows how they can reach you in an emergency.

Afterall, the most important factor is that all your team members share the expectations for communication.

Cloud Collaboration

Access to Information

Remote team members are often surprised by the added time and effort needed to gain access to knowledge:

- Knowledge Sharing Platform

This phenomenon extends beyond training & support to company standards, templates, and workflows:

- Internal / Cloud Storage

And data corruption when using unsupported workflows such as file-based worksharing via VPN or FTP:

- Cloud Collaboration

Cloud Collaboration

Autodesk Construction Cloud connects workflows, teams, and data at every stage of construction, bringing every team together from design to turnover on a single construction software solution.
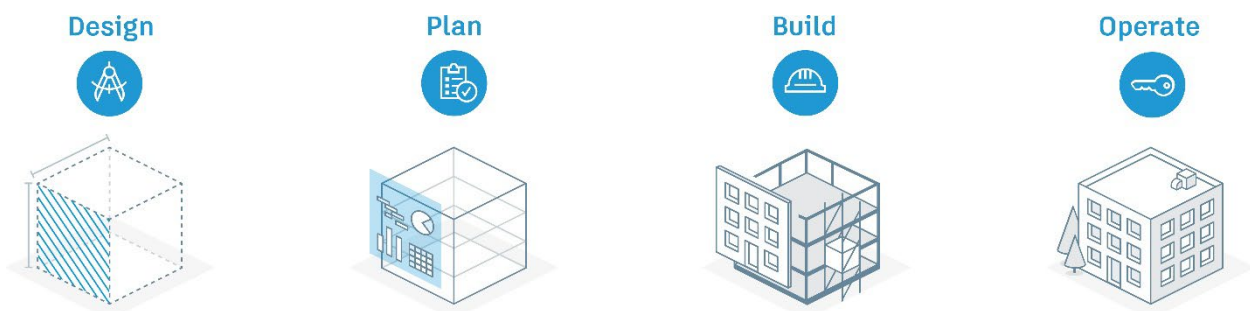
Cloud Collaboration - Autodesk Construction Cloud

Autodesk BIM Collaborate is a cloud-based design collaboration and co-ordination software that connects remote teams, helping them to edit and share information on a single platform.
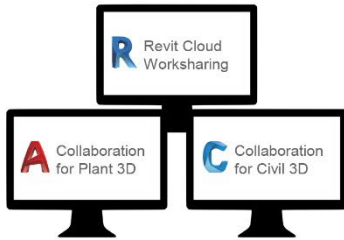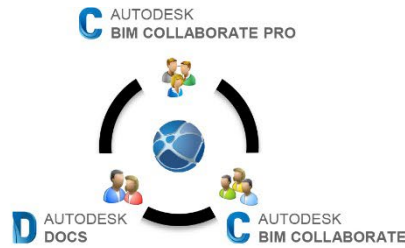
Cloud Collaboration - BIM Collaborate Pro

BIM Collaborate Pro (formerly BIM 360) adds cloud collaboration capabilities for model authoring.

Coaching, Mentoring & Managing

Professional Development

Companies want their teams to learn quickly, to improve efficiency and productivity. Achieving these goals involves managing, mentoring, and coaching.

The primary differences between managing, mentoring, and coaching are based on the relationship between the individuals and what outcome they are looking for.

The best BIM managers understand the differences between the disciplines of leadership and management, and mentor and coach more than they manage.

## Five Phases of Revit

Five Phases of Revit
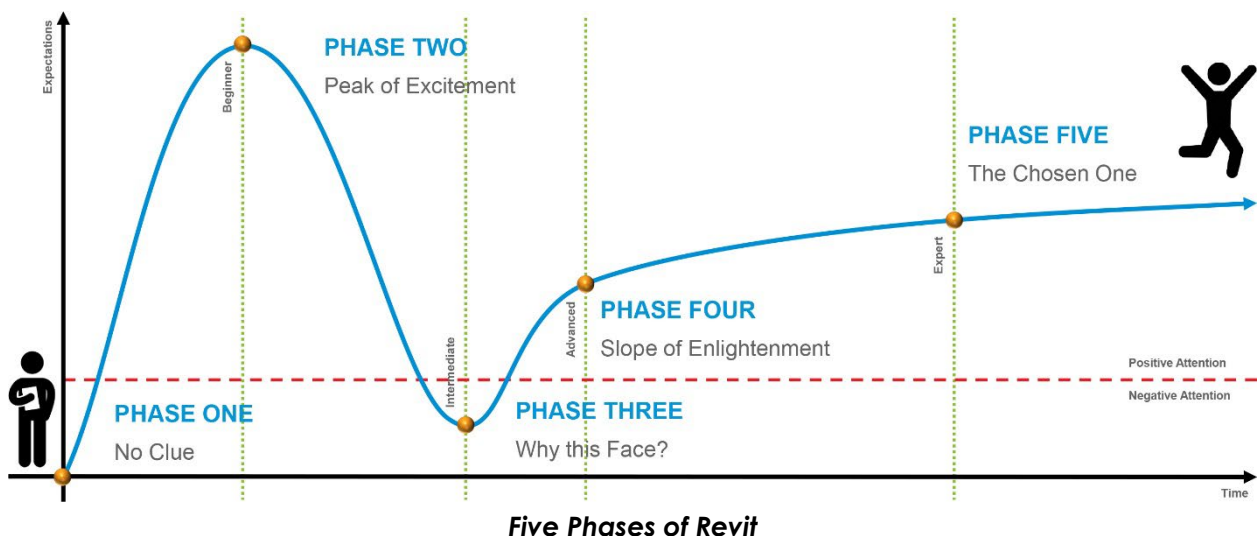
Coach, Mentor or Manager

Coaching is a more personal, generally short-term relationship that is fostered to achieve personal or professional development.

Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship with the purpose of developing a specific skill rather than achieving a task - it generally lasts a year or longer.

Managing is a professional relationship used to achieve operational results. It is indefinite in duration and defined by organizational structure.

Coach, Mentor or Manager
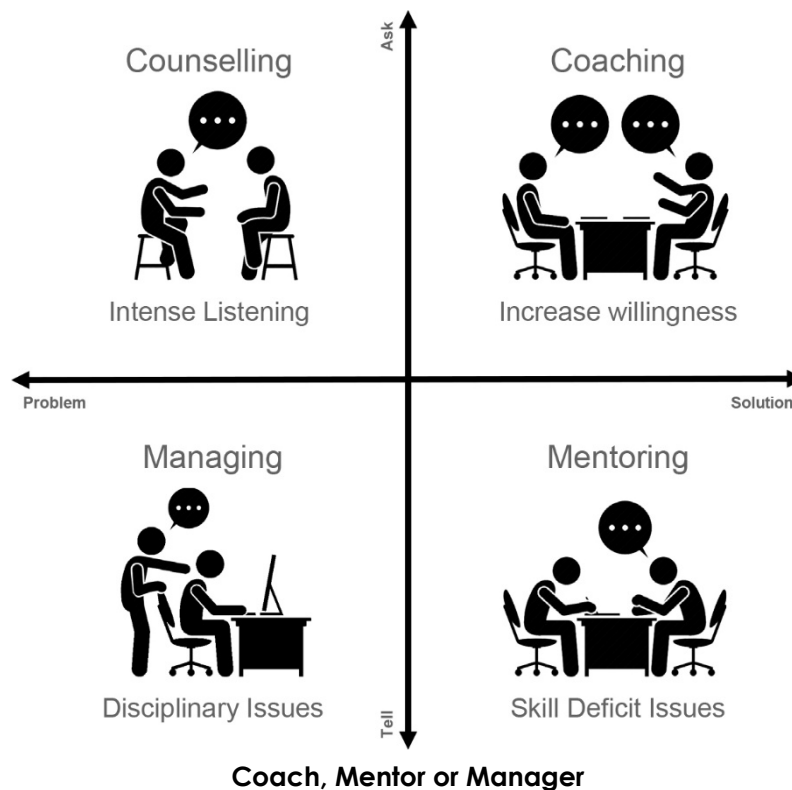
Coaching Styles

There are five coaching styles:

- **Democratic:** Only step in when needed to keep the process going and to let the coachee feel in control.
- **Authoritarian:** Decide what, when and how to do it, and make the coachee understand.
- **Holistic:** Give the coachee a sense of their role, help them to feel more connected and show them how they matter.
- **Autocratic:** Rather than opening a dialogue, tell the coachee what to do rather than asking.
- **Vision:** Encourage and empower the coachee by giving direction and strategies for achieving objectives.

Mentoring Styles

There are five mentoring styles:

- **Challenger:** Be supportive but firm and push the mentee to focus on a specific goal.

- **Cheerleader:** Be supportive and encourage the mentee to focus on growing new skills.
- **Connector:** Use your social skills and teach the mentee how to network and create connections.
- **Educator:** Having a background in training and push the mentee to learn and develop.
- **Ideator:** Use creativity to spark brainstorming and planning and push the mentee to get creative.

Ownership, Accountability & Trust

Ownership

For every company, there is a strong link between team members who take ownership, having a culture of accountability, and having a high trust workplace.

Ownership, accountability, and trust are critical for the success of any project. They make collaboration possible - especially in a remote work environment.

Let us start with some definitions for ownership, accountability, and trust in a distributed workforce. What does it mean for your team members?

Accountability

Taking ownership is about taking initiative. When teams take ownership of their work, they treat the project they are working on as if it were their own project.

Being accountable is about being responsible for the result. It is about acknowledging that your actions affect other team members' abilities to accomplish their goals.

Trust encourages team members to take ownership and reinforces accountability because when you are trusted, you do not want to let your team down.

Trust

Taking ownership tells others:

"You can trust me to do the right thing".

Being accountable tells others:

"You can trust me to do what I say I'm going to do."

Having trust in a team tells others:

*"I believe you will do the right thing and
I believe you will do what you say you are going to do."*

Summary

It is important to **1)** understand the common challenges, from under-communication, to lack of face-to-face supervision to lack of information.

Improve the support of your remote team members with **2)** regular, structured check-ins; **3)** multiple communication options; and **4)** ongoing encouragement and support.

Remember the difference between the disciplines of leadership and management, and **5)** mentor and coach your team members more than you manage.

But most importantly remember that ownership and accountability build trust. At the same time, your **6)** trust encourages team members to take ownership and reinforces accountability.

And to all the BIM managers here today who are facing remote support for the first time: **7)** You have got this!