



North-West University equips its leaders to connect, inspire & engage in the hybrid work environment

North-West University (NWU) is committed to functioning as a unitary, integrated, multi-campus university that enables equity, redress and globally competitive teaching and research across all three of its campuses.

The background

To achieve this ambition, the NWU recognised the need to equip its Directorate with the competencies to effectively deal with all functional and cross-functional university processes and operations. This need was particularly pronounced given the dramatic effect the pandemic has had on the academic environment and how it has influenced the Directors' ways of working. In addition to handling all of the typical management tasks – supervising teams, making decisions, and managing operations, for example – they now have the added complexity of doing so within an uncertain, hybrid working environment.

The NWU, therefore, launched a Director Development Programme for Support Directorate. The Programme provided Directors of the University's Support Services the opportunity to develop their skills to perform their management responsibilities more effectively within a changing and competitive academic environment. One of the key development areas identified for the Programme was effective leadership in a hybrid work environment.

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Our contribution

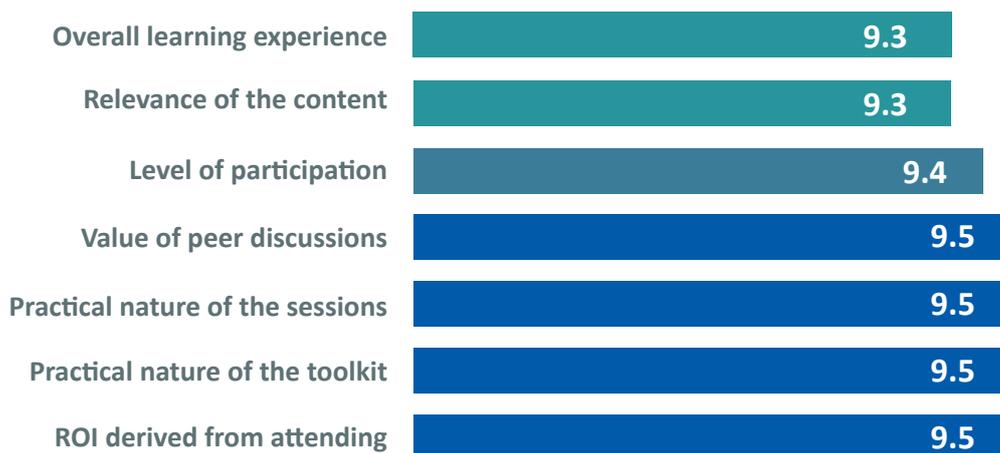
Having previously experienced the impact of Free To Grow's programmes, Keitumetse Moagi, Senior Learning and Development Specialist at the NWU, reached out to Free To Grow to submit a proposal for the Programme.

LEADConnect, Free To Grow's novel leadership development programme, designed specifically to equip leaders with skills and tools to lead effectively in a hybrid working environment, was the ideal fit for their needs. This programme is underpinned by extensive research into current best practises on hybrid leadership as well as Free To Grow's experience of leadership development and learning.

The impact

Both the participants and the NWU's Learning & Development team are thrilled with the impact.

This is the evaluation of the programme by participants on a 10 point scale, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent:



And this is what the Learning & Development team had to say:

"I want to thank you – the feedback on LEADConnect is excellent! Our directors found the practical and engaging nature of the programme insightful and refreshing. LEADConnect gave them the opportunity to connect as a team, explore common challenges and then gain practical tools to address these. People are impressed and we are experiencing a lot of change in how they are communicating."



Ronewa Rokho, Specialist:
Learning and Development,
NWU

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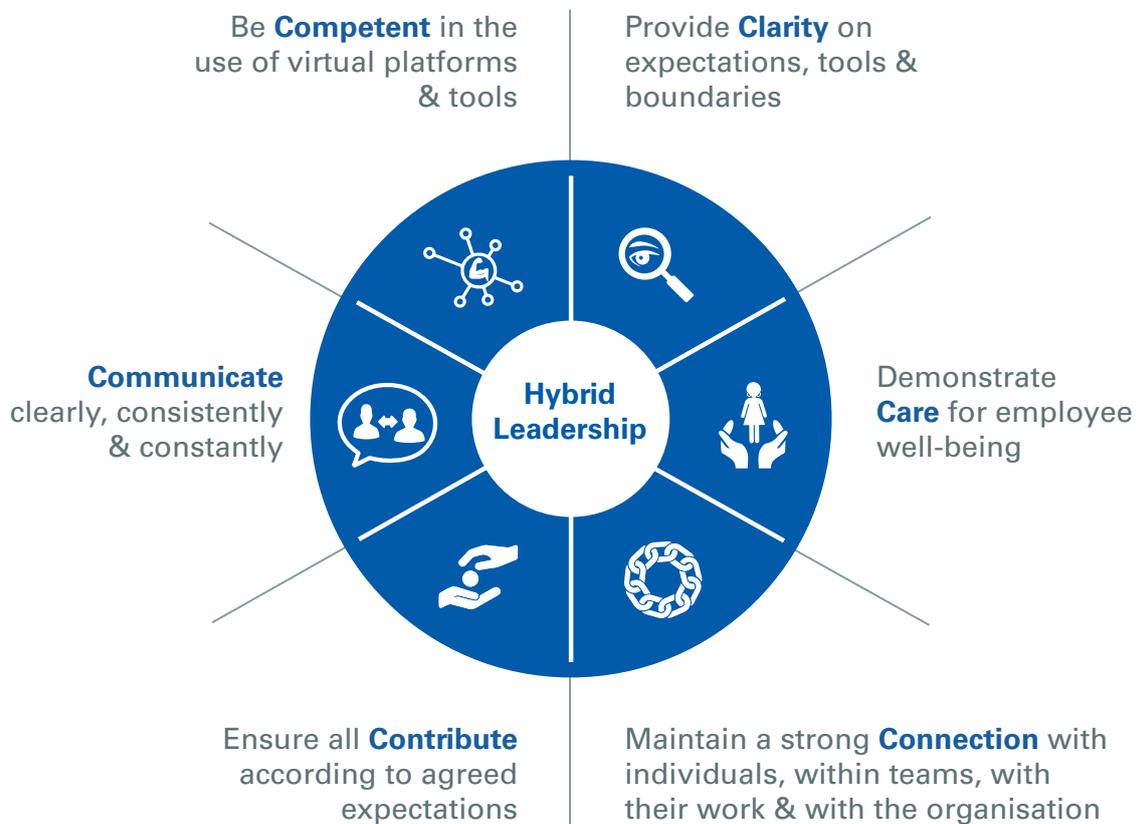


Keitumetse Moagi, Senior Specialist: Learning and Development, NWU

“Having experienced Free To Grow’s programmes years ago, I know the value of their methodology. Engaging them a decade later – and this time virtually – it’s wonderful to find their methodology as impactful as ever. The feedback from the group of Directors who attended LEADConnect is exceptionally positive. People are impressed, to the degree that they have recommended this programme for the Executive Team.”

LEADConnect: Objectives

To strengthen the 6C’s critical to remote and hybrid leadership.



Blended Learning Journey

The LEADConnect journey is usually structured as a series of 10 high-impact micro-learning bites of 90 minutes each. This provides a deep dive into each piece of the hybrid leadership puzzle. Together, the bites provide a comprehensive, structured and, most importantly, practical learning journey that leaders can tackle one step at a time.

To meet the University’s timeline for the Director Development Programme, we customised the delivery into 5 x 3-hour online learning sessions. The 27 Directors were accommodated in two groups. The group sizes are deliberately kept small to enable maximum participation.

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This ensured engaging sessions, delivered in digestible chunks that could easily be accommodated in the Director's schedules. The breaks between sessions gave participants the opportunity to apply the tools and skills gained and reflect on the successes and challenges they experienced before joining their next session. This focused approach, underpinned by peer support and the co-creation of best practices, was a big highlight:

"Thank you so much. This was really an opportunity to reflect on who we are as leaders and how we can enhance our individual value-add as leaders within the University. A definite ah-ha moment," shared one Director.

"I valued the opportunity to connect with colleagues. It was great to be able to interact, share experiences and work together as peers," said another.

The facilitator

Jo Thomson, one of Free To Grow's senior team members, was the ideal facilitator for the Programme. Jo is an established strategic HR professional and qualified Business Coach, with more than 30 years of experience in the Retail, Heavy manufacturing, Automotive assembly, Public Health, and Pharmaceutical sectors.

Jo has a deep passion for improving leadership and corporate efficiency. He has excellent interpersonal and communication skills, a strong work ethic, and the ability to simplify complexity. His corporate background provides him with a solid understanding of business, which enables him to make the programmes and interventions he presents contextually relevant. Speaking to the quality and experience of Jo's facilitation, one Director shared the following:

"Jo is an excellent facilitator who is dedicated, well-prepared and has a great attitude. He made the training enjoyable and practical."

Value-adding Toolkit

One of the key differentiators of LEADConnect is the extensive toolkit provided to the participants. The tools include: conversation guides, activities, poll templates and slides, that are ready to use in team meetings and one-on-one conversations. It also includes infographics on each of the 10 topics that serve as visual reminders of session nuggets for easy reference.

The toolkit's content was key to ensure that the principles covered by the Programme were applied for maximum impact, as attested to by one of the Directors:

"What I appreciated most was the practical nature and 'implement-ability' of the content. It was very appropriate and relevant with loads of practical applications that I can really use."

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