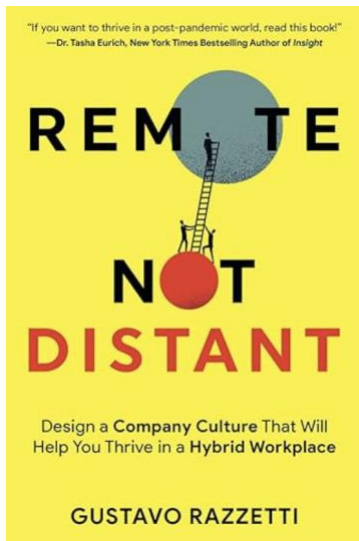


'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

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March 2024

Remote, Not Distant

By Gustavo Razzetti

Discussion Highlights

Presented by Mary Power

Overview

Remote, Not Distant by Gustavo Razzetti is a guidebook for navigating the new era of remote work. Razzetti offers insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by remote work, emphasizing the importance of human connection and communication in virtual environments.

He argues that distance does not have to equate to disconnection, and provides practical strategies for building strong remote teams, fostering collaboration, and maintaining productivity. Razzetti encourages readers to embrace flexibility, adaptability, and empathy in their approach to remote work. He offers actionable advice, exercises to try with your team and real-world examples to inspire positive change in remote work cultures.

Razzetti begins with a strong statement: "Welcome to the beginning of the end of the workplace as we know it. The culture that got you here won't get you there."

Foundation: Culture by Design, Not by Chance

Razzetti provides an explanation of workplace culture: what it is, what it isn't, why it's important and how you can begin to examine your own. This lays the groundwork for the rest of the book. He also describes his Culture Design Canvas which is a visual framework that helps plan your culture and codify the three areas of culture: The Core, The Emotional Culture and the Functional Culture.

The Design Canvas diagram is at the end of this document.

Razzetti explores what culture is:

- The environment where people do their best work.
- It's a "wicked problem" that cannot be "solved" once and for all. It must be continually worked on.
- It can evolve naturally although the most successful organizations deliberately design theirs.
- It is an interconnected system of behavior, mindset and emotions.

He calls out the **cultural system**, which goes beyond behavior (what people do and how they do it) and includes how people feel and how they think (mindsets) Additionally he defines hybrid, remote first and remote because there are important differences that have critical implications.

He defines "Hybrid" or "Distributed" as referring to the full hybrid spectrum.

"Remote first," Digital first or Virtual First" denotes organizations that have *intentionally* created a culture and workflow focused on serving a distributed workforce.

Razzetti explains his 5-Step Roadmap for creating a culture that moves your organization forward. One chapter in the book is dedicated to each of these steps. The steps are:

1. **Reset your culture** by creating the mindset shifts required to succeed in a hybrid workplace and build a strong remote culture no matter where your team members work from.
2. Include the full team in the process of **Reimagining a Shared Future** with the purpose and definition of clear priorities and expected behaviors.
3. Create a sense of belonging (**Reignite Belonging**). Ensure team members feel safe to bring their full selves to work by building a culture of inclusion, connection, and feedback.
4. **Rethink Collaboration**. Dive into the 6 modes of collaboration in a hybrid workplace.
5. **Release Agility**. Develop ways to increase speed, adaptability and decision making. Revisit norms and rules of your organization.

Chapter 1: Reset Your Culture

Razzetti emphasizes creating your own intentional hybrid culture by leveraging what's worked in the past *and* adopt new behaviors as needed that bring people in your organization together regardless of where they are working from.

He calls for 5 key mindset shifts:

1. **From Culture by Chance to Culture by Design**. Design the Culture by creating a healthy focus on clarity and transparency. Adopt a trial-and-error mindset by building a framework through continuous input from people and intentional iteration.
2. **From Input to Impact** Don't reward "presentism", visibility, etc. over outcome. Manage by objectives and key results. Create metrics beyond goals, add focus on the impact you want to create.
3. **From Work-Life Balance to Work Life Integration**. Accept the increasingly fluid boundaries between work and personal life and build it into your canvas.
4. **From Synchronous to Asynchronous Collaboration**. Become obsessive about documentation. Create info and idea sharing "pre-meeting", thus allowing time to reflect and contribute. Use

meetings for focused discussion, decision making and delegation. Post-meeting tasks are then shared asynchronously.

5. **From One-Size-Fits All to Flexibility.** Give teams the freedom to design their own hybrid approach within the designed framework. Continually ask, “how should we ask for help?” “How can we have fun and connect remotely?” “How can we continually build trust remotely?” “How can we remove obstacles that get in the way?” Rethink the role of the office.

He also offers some suggestions:

1. Supercharge the Trust Battery. Trust employees beyond what feels comfortable.
2. Embrace tension and conflict. Encourage people to address conflict in the open. Prioritize open discourse over private. No one should worry about stepping on someone’s toes because all assume positive intent. Approach conflict from the filter of what is best for the organization.
3. Obsess over communication. Replace discussion or bullet points with a clear well written memo so very little is inferred, and all can react to the same document. Put upfront investment into advance documentation to reduce mistakes, confusion or friction. **KEY-** Create a single source of truth that all can refer to.
4. Leave no one behind. Work hard to eliminate proximity bias.
5. Level the playing field. Look for ways to create the same or similar experience for everyone.
6. Share the pain of remote jetlag. (This is especially important for global companies)

Chapter 2: Shaping Your Remote Culture

In this chapter he starts to work through his Culture Reset Canvas. The work begins with three critical questions that you must address with your team:

1. What used to be?
2. What should be?
3. What could be?

Specific questions that should be asked in each area were provided.

Chapter 3: Reimagine a Shared Future

In this section Razzetti recommends engaging your full team. He feels strongly that a shared future begins with a strong sense of shared purpose. He advises:

- Create alignment among your employees and teams so that everyone is on the same page with regard to short-term, long term business initiatives, workflow and expectations.
- Focus on the company’s culture and the subculture of various teams. He recommends having each team create a team purpose which complements the organizational purpose.
- Set clear priorities that support what is important for the corporate culture.
- A critical part of those priorities is having a clear picture of what the company and teams will say “no” to.

Chapter 4: Reignite Belonging

Razzetti shares the concept of Whakapapa, which is a Maori idea that embodies our universal human need to belong. A spiritual belief that each person is part of an unbroken and unbreakable chain of people who share a sacred identity and culture. He provides strategies for fostering strong connections among team members despite physical distance.

He also Introduces the Psychological Safety Ladder. Which is:

Level 1-Welcome

Level 2-Courageous Conversations

Level 3-Innovation Emphasizes the role of empathy, active listening, and regular communication in nurturing relationships in remote teams.

In this chapter he offers exercises to help a team move from one level to the next on the Psychological Safety Ladder. He also focuses on the critical need for feedback and offers 5 mind shifts for better feedback. These are:

1. Move from annual performance reviews to regular feedback.
2. Move from giving to requesting feedback.
3. Move from top down to peer-to-peer feedback.
4. Move from closed and individual to open and collective feedback.
5. Move from rehashing past issues to designing the future.

Also, Razzetti addresses the challenge of providing remote feedback and offers some solutions. He discusses the critical role habits, routines and rituals at play in remote cultures. He ended the chapter with a tool to use the psychological safety ladder to help your team understand how they are doing, identify areas of opportunities for change and prioritize action. Razzetti also discusses strategies for fostering an inclusive remote culture, including promoting accessibility, addressing bias, and celebrating diversity.

Chapter 5: Rethinking Collaboration

The key concept in this chapter is knowing when collaboration is necessary and when it is not. Razetti focuses on the unique leadership skills required to effectively manage remote teams and he discusses the three elements of successful collaboration:

1. Why we do it
2. What we do
3. How we do it.

Razetti also offers six modes of collaboration for distributed teams which are:

1. Focus
2. Deep Collaboration
3. Casual collaboration
4. Learning
5. Regular Collaboration
6. Unplug.

These were charted on a grid with two axes. They were “We Time” versus “Me Time”—activities we perform at our own pace and time versus those we need to do together and “Deep work” versus “Casual Work,” which area activities that require more concentration, quality time and focus versus those that require less. He highlights the importance of balancing synchronous and asynchronous work and thinking of ways to optimize each. He also offered an exercise to help your team differentiate between “good” and “bad” collaboration and help them determine when collaboration is really needed.

Chapter 6: Release Agility

Razzetti addresses why the new reality of work requires new norms and new rules. He challenges each organization to define their hybrid work model. This chapter explores the 5 types of hybrid work models. These are:

1. Remote friendly or office first
2. Fixed hybrid
3. Partly remote or collaboration days
4. Flexible hybrid or flexible schedule
5. Remote first or virtual first.

Razzetti emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and growth for remote team members. He shares the various assumptions leaders have about employee motivation and challenges each leader to examine their assumptions. He also provides a check list to identify limiting rules.

Razzetti calls out the competitive advantage of speed in decision making and he offers suggestions to improve the speed and effectiveness of decision making. He then outlines the seven essential decision-making methods, the characteristics of each and when to best use each.

The seven methods are:

1. Autocratic
2. Delegation
3. Democratic
4. Consent
5. Avoidance
6. Consultative
7. Consensus.

Razzetti stressed the importance of providing clarity and alignment on how decisions should be made and develop skills and provide authority to allow the most junior employee to make calls about the work they are doing. He offers examples of what successful remote leaders do differently.

He also provided an exercise to cover the four areas crucial for a leader to thrive in a hybrid workplace. These are:

1. Define-Choosing the right hybrid model for your organization or team
2. Design-Intentionally designing the different building blocks of culture for your organization
3. Demonstrate-Modeling the right behaviors to align words and action
4. Demand-Setting clear expectations for team member.

About the Book Club In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).

CULTURE DESIGN CANVAS[©]

Design a workplace culture that propels you into the future.

Team name:

Date:

<p>DECISION-MAKING How is authority distributed? What methods do we use to make decisions?</p>	<p>PRIORITIES Select the top three cultural priorities using even over statements</p>	<p>RITUALS How do we celebrate our people, culture, and work?</p>
<p>MEETINGS How do we collaborate and convene? (Synchronously and asynchronously)</p>	<p>VALUES What do we believe in?</p> <p>PURPOSE Why do we exist?</p>	<p>FEEDBACK How do we help each other learn and grow?</p>
<p>NORMS & RULES How do we clarify expectations without hindering autonomy?</p>	<p>BEHAVIORS What behaviors do we punish? What behaviors do we reward?</p>	<p>PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY How do we make people feel welcome? How do we encourage courageous conversations and experimentation?</p>

