COMMONWEALTH PAYROLL & HR

THE REMOTE LEADERSHIP LAB

Remote Work Isn’t a Perk. It’s a Strategy.

November 4, 2026

Introductions



Jeff Plakans
Founder & President
Commonwealth Payroll & HR



Cecilia Dahl
Co-Chief Executive Officer
Key 360 Advisors LLC

Agenda

Today's conversation

A fireside chat with Jeff Plakans and Cecilia Dahl

Q&A TO FOLLOW

1. Why the office debate isn't over
2. Two crises, one lesson
3. The leadership gap
4. Signals worth watching
5. Accountability without surveillance
6. Building connection on purpose
7. Staying human as AI changes work

Six years later, the office debate isn’t over

1.7×

faster revenue growth at fully flexible companies than at office-mandate companies

Source: Flex Index & BCG, The Flex Report, Q3 2025

14%

jump in employee turnover after S&P 500 companies imposed return-to-office mandates

Source: University of Pittsburgh working paper, 2024

Forced remote and strategic remote are not the same thing.

The leadership gap

WHAT LEADERS SAY

"Our door is always open. Everyone speaks up."

WHAT EMPLOYEES FEEL

"They don't really listen, so I stopped trying."

70%

of the variance in team engagement comes from the manager, and Gallup finds that influence is even greater on remote teams.

Source: Gallup, A Strategic Guide for Managing Hybrid and Remote Teams



Signals worth watching

HEALTHY SIGNALS	WARNING SIGNS
+ Cameras on, without anyone asking	! Cameras off by default, attention elsewhere
+ People flag problems and push back early	! “Turtling”: silence when everyone sees the issue
+ Replies land within agreed windows	! 30-minute waits for a reply, slower turnaround
+ Answers live in a shared library, not one person’s head	! Veterans answering the same new-hire questions on repeat

Accountability without surveillance

DECIDE BEFORE YOU HIRE

- A dedicated workspace with a door
- A professional video background
- Set hours of availability
- Clear response-time expectations

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Output and availability. Not visibility.

33% fewer resignations with two days a week at home, and no hit to performance or promotions

Source: Bloom, Han & Liang, Nature, 2024

If you monitor, do it to support people, not to catch them.

Build connection on purpose

ONBOARDING

Get new hires in front of key people, even if it's just for a day.

MICRO-TRAINING

Short skill videos. Watch it, do it, move on to the next one.

SELF-SERVE ANSWERS

An FAQ library or internal AI agent, so veterans aren't on repeat.

PURPOSEFUL MEETINGS

Every meeting needs a reason and the right people. Otherwise, send the notes.

66%

more likely to be engaged when a hybrid team has a formal plan for working together

70%

of managers have had no formal training on leading hybrid teams

Source: Gallup, 2024

Staying human as AI changes work

As AI takes on more of the work, leading the humans matters more.

AI can make teams faster. Left unchecked, it also pulls people further apart.

3.8×

more likely to be high performers when work is designed around flexibility and people's needs

Source: Gartner, 2022

"We've changed the way our people work. Have we changed the way we lead?"

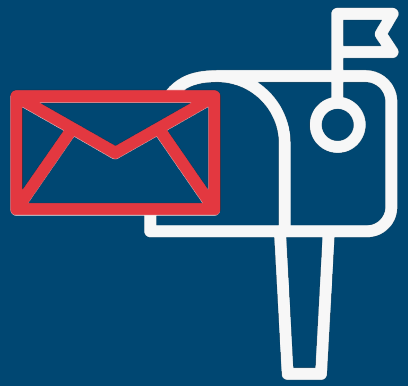
CECILIA DAHL

Five moves to make Monday

1	**Set expectations before the offer**	Spell out workspace and availability before anyone signs.
2	**Measure output and availability**	Visibility was never the point.
3	**Make every manager the face of leadership**	Know each person, and let them know you outside the box.
4	**Put in-person time on the calendar**	An annual gathering or a regional meetup pays for itself.
5	**Connect every role to the mission**	Show people why their work matters, not just what to do.

Questions?

Want more **HR guidance** in your inbox?



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Thank You!

Whether you have a question or want to learn more, we're happy to speak with you.



(978) 599-1050
jeff.plakans@commpayhr.com
www.commpayhr.com

COMMONWEALTH PAYROLL & HR



(857) 234-0316
cdahl@key360advisors.com
www.key360advisors.com/

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