

add up the actual hours you spent “with” that person in face-to-face meetings, on a field visit, in virtual online meetings, and in personal phone/online calls.

What was your total? How did that compare with your estimate?

Every time I lead this exercise I am surprised by the results. On average, pastors of multi-site churches, ministry leaders, and high-level executives estimate they spend between twenty and forty hours **per year** in intentional personal interaction with people they lead over distance. That’s it. Occasionally someone will break into the fifty-hour per year range, but that is rare.

Added together, those typical hours amount to at most five days per year. That’s not a lot of time. Yet the success of these leaders’ churches or organizations may rely on this small period of time.

This common experience has birthed what I call The Five-Day Rule of Heart: If a global leader has no more than five days per year of intentional personal interaction with his or her co-laborers in a multi-national context, how can that leader appropriately serve, strengthen, inspire, align, equip, and coach those field leaders to live and lead well throughout the other 360 days?

# 2

## CLOSE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The world has changed dramatically in the past decade. The human race is rapidly becoming a more tightly knit global community. A dip in one country’s economy can prompt falls across world markets before the next day’s trading cycle. A technological explosion of mobile devices, social networking, and cloud computing has made the world seem smaller.

These shifts have changed the way people live, work, think, learn, and relate to family and friends. Our expectations have changed. Increasingly, we believe that information and people should be available on demand. A global economy with shrinking boundaries allows buyers and sellers to conduct business non-stop, 24/7/365. For an increasing number of consumers it is easier and cheaper to order books, bicycle parts, or Mother’s Day gifts from a mobile phone than it is to wait until the next free weekend to shop in brick-and-mortar stores. If anyone doubts the far-reaching significance of these kinds of changes,

they might ask any political leader of the dozen or so Mideast countries who have recently experienced the “Arab Spring” how his or her views on the power of social networking have changed.

Companies, institutions, nonprofits, churches, and mission agencies are all struggling to keep up with this pace of change. Many are rightly questioning whether the practices that made yesterday’s leaders successful will still be helpful tomorrow. In *Leading Across Boundaries: Creating Collaborative Agencies in a Networked World*, Russell Linden comments, “The most significant challenges facing our society cannot be addressed by any one organization. They all require collaboration among many organizations.”

If you have ever tried to collaborate with another team, company or organization you know how difficult this can be. It takes work, trust, communication, and focus to deliver a level of partnership Linden writes about. The people who can deliver these partnerships are even rarer.

*Success for the New Global Manager: What You Need to Know to Work across Distances, Countries, and Cultures* notes that a number of top global management teams share the opinion, “The greatest obstacle to global effectiveness is a shortage of people who are prepared to manage and thrive in this new business paradigm.”

In the twenty-first-century workplace, technological advances force most organizations to embrace some form of distributed teaming. In fact, the presence of purely localized teams is decreasing. A study commissioned by Cisco reports the proportion of U.S. workers taking advantage of flexible work schedules has more than doubled since 1985. According to *Officing Today*, the market research firm IDT estimated the world’s mobile worker population surpassed one billion in 2010, and that by 2013 fully one-third of all workers would be mobile (defined as someone who works at least ten hours per week away from his or her primary office—doing field supervision, sales,

business travel, itinerant ministry, or service at a client’s location) and using online computer connections when doing so.

Today’s leader must embrace his or her role as change agent. This type of leadership, as explained by Michael Hammer in *Faster, Cheaper, Better*, “is about vision and commitment, but it is also about taking difficult and even painful steps to ensure your company gets to where it needs to be.”

James Ware, Executive Director of The Future of Work, put it this way:

“When team members are not co-located they typically have relatively independent personal lives and social support systems. Realistically, they just don’t have as much in common. They go to different churches, synagogues, and mosques; they participate in different local town events; their children attend different schools and participate in different sports programs. And they just don’t bump into each other at the grocery store or on the commuter trains and buses. And even if we continue to prefer face-to-face meetings, the hard reality is that they are becoming a smaller and smaller percentage of our work experience. We’ve all got to learn how to work effectively with people who are located in other places most—or even all—of the time.”

The workplace has changed forever.

The nature of work—how relevant tasks get assigned and accomplished—has also changed. Clemons and Kroth, in *Managing the Mobile Workforce: Leading, Building, and Sustaining Virtual Teams*, identify some of the new paradigms employees, staff, volunteers, and organizational leaders must embrace in order to work effectively in the new global environment (see Table 1).

**Table 1. The Changing Rules of Work**

Old Rules	New Rules
Work is a physical place	Work is something you do or accomplish
Work takes place between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.	Work takes place between the time when it is assigned and when it is due
Employees, staff, or volunteers need to be controlled	Employees, staff, or volunteers are responsible for results
Work must be completed where the worker (or formal leader) is located	Work (surgery, personal evangelism, follow-up, mentoring, leadership decision-making) can occur far from the worker's location
Relationships are limited to whom one can meet personally	People can interact online with almost anyone and develop deep relationships with others they have never met face-to-face

Adapted from David Clemons and Michael S. Kroth, *Managing the Mobile Workforce: Leading, Building, and Sustaining Virtual Teams* (McGraw-Hill, 2011), 41.

Many already practice some of the new rules as individuals. For instance, the use of e-mail and Skype to support ministry interaction is nothing new. Also, a growing number of team members serving at a national, regional, or global level find themselves constantly depending upon telecommunications to include remote team members in meetings, planning, and ongoing relational connection.

Yet all too often institutions continue to organize, structure, and train employees and volunteers in ways that reflect the old rules and assumptions of work needing supervision. For instance, a team leader may feel pressure to require all team members to live in one city even though the team's charter includes a scope of ten or twenty countries. Or, current human resource policies may reveal the assumption that supervisory roles must continually interact face-to-face in order to effectively manage employees. But every global leader's philosophy, practice, and policy must reflect the new reality: work has become people-centric, not place-centric.

Effective spiritual leadership across distance and cultures is a crucial topic for all Christian missions right now, as the lines between local and global cultures blur, as the majority world surpasses North America in sending missionaries, as hierarchical organizations flatten into peer networks, and as a new generation of volunteers and full-time laborers assume responsibility for the Great Commission.

We have been wrestling with these issues for some time in Cru. In the sixty-plus years since Dr. Bill Bright founded the organization on the UCLA campus in southern California, it has grown to comprise dozens of different types of ministries led by staff or volunteers in almost every nation of the world. God has honored our commitment to raise indigenous national leaders and rapidly entrust them with overall responsibility for their nation's mission by weaving together a beautiful multinational tapestry. The forces of distance, culture, and power pull at the threads of that tapestry every day.

In the weeks after my visit with Aaron, my questions would not go away. I would come to find my experience was not uncommon. The challenges resonated with those I had the privilege of meeting through years of distance leadership. Yet when I looked for help from them, I found most did not have firm answers but were asking the same questions.

This launched me on a personal research project where I conducted in-depth interviews with more than twenty global leaders, and engaged another fifty top leaders in small-group discussions. I asked them how they dealt with leading, or being led, over distance. I also benefitted from feedback and comments collected from a global survey of 8,200 of our organization's staff members serving in over 150 nations.

I looked at best practices among global companies and non-profits that work across time zones and multiple cultures, and I studied biblical practices and principles that have worked over the past two thousand years.

Here's what I learned: global leadership is difficult!

Surprised? Of course not. No one is born knowing how to do all this. But we need to consider the impact of our shortcomings. I made a lot of mistakes that cost me relational trust. It cost my team and organization time, money, and emotional energy that could have yielded greater fruit with fewer bruised relationships along the way.

My research and study revealed more, though. I discovered what top leaders really want from those to whom they report and are responsible. And I identified three specific shifts in mindset and competencies you need to lead well across distance and cultures. They provide a new paradigm for leading effectively in the twenty-first century.

However, before we look to the results, it is important to revisit our call to participate in this global culture.

# 3

## THE INEVITABILITY OF BEING CLOSE

*Go and make disciples of all nations.*

*- Jesus*

*When multiplying disciples are present everywhere – geographically, culturally, and linguistically – that doesn't just make fulfilling the Great Commission possible, it makes it inevitable!*

*- Steve Douglass, President of Cru*

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb*

*- Revelation 7:9 (ESV)*

The challenges and complexities of leadership in the 21st century are daunting, yet our mission to press on amidst these realities has