Tips for Managers: Making Hybrid Work

BOSTON COLLEGE
Center for Work & Family

Increasingly, employers are committing to long-term flexible and remote work policies, with many adopting a hybrid work model. This can present challenges when it comes to managing team alignment and collaboration, managing performance, and creating a sense of belonging. As managers re-engage with their teams, they should pay attention to the four areas below to ensure an engaged and productive workforce.

Team Norms & Guiding Principles
Formally relaunch your team and determine shared norms to help foster alignment.

- Discuss **team members' work locations and schedules,** as well as expectations around availability.
- Enable **calendar sharing** and consider **"office hours"** — specific blocks of time when people will be available for meetings. Designate no-meeting days/times for uninterrupted work. Make sure to lead by example.

- **Define the type of work** that needs to get done in the office vs. remotely. Ideally, have set days in the office for face-to-face collaboration.
- Implement the use of **task boards** to help team members **communicate asynchronously** on the status of current tasks, reducing work interruptions.

Meetings & Collaboration Tools
Optimize collaboration tools and technology. Strive to support an equitable experience for employees, regardless of work location, and actively monitor imbalances.

- **Assess employees' comfort level** using available collaboration tools. Agree on which tools should be used for which purpose.
- Be intentional about **which team meetings require everyone to be on site**. If at least one person is remote, ask all to join virtually.

- Discuss **guidelines for cameras on or off** during virtual meetings. Specify this in advance on the meeting invite.
- Balance the use of video calls and technology and a provide a buffer time between meetings to **minimize digital exhaustion.** Encourage walking meetings when possible and appropriate.

Performance Management
Articulate specific goals and metrics, while empowering employees to have a say in how they do their work. Proactively keep your proximity bias in check when evaluating performance.

- **Hold routine 1:1 meetings** to agree on expectations and share feedback.
- Assess employees' performance against agreed goals and metrics. **Focus on results vs. facetime.**

- Ask yourself: Are you **recognizing your employees' contributions** and hard work regardless of work location?

Community & Belonging
Managing a dispersed team requires building strong connections with and among your employees. Create a climate of trust and psychological safety by leading with empathy.

- Routinely hold **community-building events** that allow team members to bond and get to know one another (e.g.: virtual or in-person lunches with food delivery, coffee chats, online experiences, games, etc.).

- When **onboarding new team members**, assign them a buddy in advance with team members on site for their first week(s), where feasible.
- Check-in with your team. **Be an active listener** and address their feedback and concerns.

Proximity bias is the unconscious tendency to give preferential treatment to those who are in close physical proximity to us, perceiving them as better workers.

Tips for inclusive hybrid meetings

Ensure an optimal audio and video experience for remote participants

Set up the room and camera so that virtual participants are able to see everyone clearly

Ensure all participants have equal access to materials/handouts

When opening for comments, start with virtual participants

Actively monitor the chat

Use virtual whiteboards

For working lunches, order meals for those joining remotely

Cameras on or off?

Cameras on: Sharing feedback, sensitive or personal information, celebrations, team-building activities

Cameras off: All other topics, but make sure everyone has the option to do so

Useful resources

HubSpot Company Spotlight

12 Questions About Hybrid Work, Answered.

Making the Hybrid Workplace Fair

Remote Work Should Be (Mostly) Asynchronous

Creating a Successful Hybrid Environment

Managing Employee Burnout