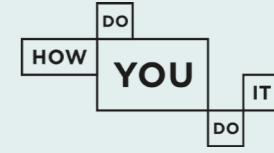




# HYBRID WORKING

A practical guide for managers:  
making hybrid working work



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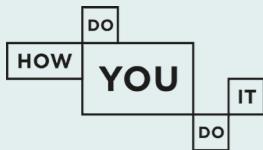
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We've been on the cusp of the shift to hybrid work for more than a year, with false starts attributed to a pandemic that had other ideas. Now, we're at a long-awaited inflection point: the lived experience of hybrid work

Microsoft Work Trends Index 2022



## Introduction

As many organisations move from Covid mandated remote working, to formalised hybrid working policies, the role of managers as the fulcrum balancing the needs of both organisation and employees has never been more important.

What was done as a temporary measure in an emergency has now become the mainstream way of working. This change requires a shift from viewing hybrid or remote working as a transient thing that will end when 'things get back to normal', to understanding how we successfully manage our organisations in the longer term when in-person contact is reduced. From the day-to-day practicalities of coordinating work when people are in different locations, to the management of team dynamics and equitable progression for all employees, this fundamental change in the way we work has implications for all managers.

## About this guide

This guide is designed to offer practical answers to some of the questions we've heard raised by managers from a range of organisations across the industry. It is divided into three sections to represent the different stages that managers are at in their experience of managing a hybrid team:

1. Understanding what some of the challenges are and how to address them
2. Setting a team up for success
3. Maintaining a great culture over time

**There's no erasing the lived experience and lasting impact of the past two years. Empowering managers to adapt to new employee expectations helps set businesses up for long-term success.**

Jared Spataro, CVP, Modern Work,  
Microsoft - Microsoft Work Trends  
Index 2022

## Foreword

The pandemic has changed the workplace forever. The ONS reported in January 22 that 36% of working adults spent at least one day a week working from home, an increase of 9.5% compared with 2019.

This dramatic shift in working patterns has clearly helped to improve the work/life balance for many people, however there are a number of emerging patterns that need to be considered<sup>i</sup>

- Employees who mainly worked from home are less than half as likely to be promoted than other employees.
- Employees who mainly worked from home are around 38% less likely on average to have received a bonus compared with those who never worked from home.
- People who completed any work from home did 6.0 hours of unpaid overtime on average per week, compared with 3.6 hours for those that never work from home.
- Homeworkers are more likely to work in the evenings compared with those who worked away from home.
- The sickness absence rate for workers doing any work from home was 0.9% on average, compared with 2.2% for those who never worked from home.

Early research<sup>ii</sup> has also highlighted that hybrid working intensifies the need for employees to be responsive and stay connected after working hours, during weekends and even on holidays, heightening work-related stress and impacting productivity.

These patterns need to be managed if hybrid working is going to become the beneficial step forward for employees, businesses, and society that it should be. As a result, our role as managers has just become infinitely more complex now that our teams are not always around us, with individual behaviours and work patterns not immediately obvious.

We will need to get closer to each team member to understand their needs/motivation and work with them to negate any emerging inequalities, as well as support their need to disconnect outside of work. This needs to be done while supporting the multiple work patterns of the whole team and still deliver on the business requirements. It will not be easy. Clear communication and inclusive engagement will be critical to success. We will need to empower the team to trial, evaluate and amend their working approach as we learn the best way forward.

The following guides are a starting point and framework to help you consider the challenges to navigate your way forward. Remember you are not alone; other managers are experiencing the same issues, so do share your experiences and develop best practice together. Good luck.

**Steve Butler**

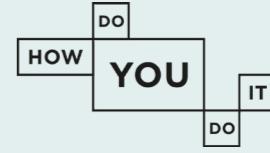


**Steve Butler**

Author, The Diversity Project  
CEO of Punter Southall Aspire & Diversity Project Advisory Council Member

<sup>i</sup> ONS (2021). Homeworking hours, rewards and opportunities in the UK, [Online] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/homeworkinghoursrewardsandopportunitiesintheuk2011to2020/2021-04-19>. [accessed 8th April 2022]

<sup>ii</sup> Taylor, H. et al, (2022). Digital Boundaries and Disconnection at Work: A guide for employers, Work Foundation (Lancaster University).



# Understanding the challenges

## It is management but not as we have known it.

Managing a hybrid team requires different management skills to those needed when everyone is present in the same location. Recognising the new dimensions this brings to your role is vital in helping you support your team and ensuring you get the support you need to thrive as a leader.

1 2 3 4 5

Understand your own management style - Think about what you need to adapt now that inperson contact with your team is limited. For example, if you are used to a very informal style that relies on impromptu conversations, you may need to be more considered in planning in advance what you want from your team.

Understand your own mindset and biases - What were your pre-Covid views about hybrid working and how it affects team performance? How have these changed and what lingering attitudes do you carry that could impact the team's ability to succeed in a hybrid environment?

Think about the team's outputs - Plan the team's work, identify which tasks you need to collaborate on together and which can be done remotely. Do any processes need to change to accommodate this?

Don't struggle alone - Find out what support or coaching is on offer to managers in your organisation. Build a network of support with other managers who may well be facing some of the same challenges you are. This is new for everyone - share best practices and reduce the risk of feeling isolated as a leader.

Role model what you want from your team - With less face to face contact your team will be even more reliant on cues from what you do rather than what you say to guide how they should act. Be open about the choices you are making, your own boundaries between work and home. Be clear about your expectations of others. Providing advice in areas like digital wellbeing and how to control your working hours at home can help your team find their own way to strike the right balance between work and personal needs.

**"Managing a hybrid team is new for me. I need a better understanding of the fundamentals for leading teams virtually before I implement flexible working for my team."**

## Understanding how flexible your hybrid working policy really is

As a manager, you can sometimes feel caught between your organisation's expectations and those of your team.

The rapid shift from office-based to more flexible working patterns is no exception. Companies are looking to establish rules and norms; yet, nearly two years of home working has left many employees with views and expectations on what now works for them and their family that differ from the expectations of their organisation.

1.

### Be clear about company policy

What are policies, what are guidelines, what discretion do you have as a manager to deviate from the policy? Being equipped with the information will help you fairly and objectively manage any disconnect between what employees want and what the business needs.

2.

### What is still a temporary Covid measure and what is permanent?

We are yet to fully enter a steady state post Covid working environment and your team is still likely to encounter disruption in their personal lives caused by the pandemic. Embracing flexibility within your team's structure can help employees navigate the stressful uncertainties of Covid.

3.

### What are the immovable objects?

Set clear expectations as a team, including any that the organisation has, for example: a team meeting every Tuesday at 10 that everyone is expected to attend, office attendance on certain days or mandatory core hours. Routine is important and having a feel for what your working day looks like in advance helps wellbeing.

## Managing what is fair when everyone's situation is different

Maintaining team cohesion when there is less in-person contact is more challenging for managers.

It is critical that team members feel like they are being treated fairly, both in the short term so that cliques and sub-cultures within a team do not form and in the longer term to ensure fair progression opportunities.

1.

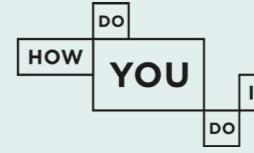
### Do not let cliques and presenteeism bias creep in

Even very well organised hybrid arrangements risk certain team members missing regular contact with key stakeholders within a business. Think through who your team needs to maintain visibility with and how to champion their work based on outputs rather than presence to ensure fairness of opportunities. Think about how fairly you are spreading your time to ensure some in person time with everyone.

2.

### Embrace different work patterns

Talk about flexible working with individuals and as a team. Ensure all the team understands each other's flexible working arrangements and everyone's contribution is valued. If necessary, increase your communication in the short term while everyone adjusts, for example, short focused daily check-ins.



# Setting up for success

## Making an unpredictable world predictable.

As organisations move from temporary remote working policies that were designed overnight, to permanent shifts in the way flexible working is organised, managers need to ensure they shift gear to provide a stable environment for their team where the new norms and ways of work are embedded and clearly understood. This starts with the onboarding process.

### 1

**Set clear onboarding processes** - Joining a new company can be overwhelming and the hybrid model brings its own set of challenges. A well thought out onboarding procedure creates a good first impression. Employees feel included and engaged from the get-go and are far more likely to stay for the long term.

### 2

**Prepare in advance** - A solid process includes the preparation of legal documents in advance, an overview of the tools and tech used with the appropriate communication norms, intro to learning opportunities and a walk through of the onboarding plan.

### 3

**Explain the company culture and values** - Arrange for everyone to be in the office for the first day of a new employee arriving and set up a welcome event, such as a team lunch. This helps the new employee foster meaningful connections with the team based on work and personal interests.

### 4

**Pair the new team member up with a buddy** - Schedule for them to meet on day 1 to answer any questions, share advice and help make the onboarding as smooth as possible. Check in early and often, maintain that human touch and let them know you are here to help. If you plan to onboard remotely, you will need to rethink how you onboard a new joiner. A positive remote onboarding experience starts at the pre-boarding stages. Prepare for this by planning ahead so they have everything they need for their first day, such as work devices and access to communication tools. Create a pre-boarding checklist. Swap out the office tour and welcome lunch for an online welcome event and virtual tour.

### 5

**Clarity about reviews, feedback and communication** - Providing ongoing support through regular 1:1s and continuous feedback, helps your team to know their work matters. By regularly setting clear goals, with realistic expectations and accountability for work, individuals are far more likely to feel engaged and connected with the company's purpose.

**"The shift to hybrid work has blurred the lines separating work and home life. Without the natural breaks that occur in the office, my team often end up working longer hours."**

## Getting the tech right

**Successful hybrid working focuses on three key pillars: communication, documentation and tools.** Establish communication protocols as a team e.g. use of email at certain times of day, non-meeting days, texting or calling if something is urgent.

1.

### Set clear communication principles

Decide as a team how and where information should be relayed. You can no longer rely on tapping your colleague on the shoulder for a quick word. Setting a hierarchy for communication channels (for example: Call > Instant Message > Email), will help your team know which tool to use for the most urgent messages. Be clear what the different channels are for and expectations about their use.

2.

### Define meeting rules etiquette

Agree your team's virtual meeting etiquette and format. Set best practice by hosting meetings in a well-lit room, facing a light source so your team can see you properly. Minimise distractions such as background noise by going on mute when not speaking. Agree as a team if it is cameras on or off for everyone.

Making eye contact, seeing each other on camera, and addressing people by name will help maintain connection and keep everyone engaged. Prepare for virtual team meetings just like a regular one. Give your teams enough advance notice and share the agenda prior to the meeting. If it is a long meeting, factor in a short break halfway through to help people retain focus and avoid 'Zoom fatigue.'

3.

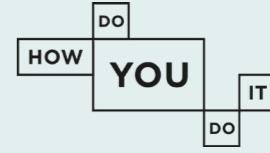
### Documentation

Give everyone on your team one source of truth for essential information, policies, announcements and more. Everything that needs to be known should be written down in an easily accessible online location, like a shared drive or company wiki. Share responsibility amongst the team for keeping this up to date and on point.

4.

### Digital tools

Adopt a suitable toolkit to help your team automate tasks, collaborate online and project manage effectively. Digital tools play a key role in a hybrid setup, supporting your distributed team's communication and collaboration. Choose wisely, too many digital tools or not using the right ones can kill remote working productivity. As a team, experiment with 'flight-mode' days where you switch off distractions and assign time for undisturbed or 'deep focus' work. Schedule this in advance in your team calendar.



# Building a team culture that keeps working

## Providing a sense of belonging.

Creating a sense of team cohesion and belonging is not exactly a new management skill - it is simply that in a world where in person contact is reduced, it can be harder to achieve. Things that as a leader you might take for granted, may need to be restated or emphasised.

1

2

3

**What are we all here for?** - Be open about what you need to achieve as a team, your purpose, how each team member contributes to that and where you fit in the wider organisation.

**Are we all clear?** - Always check in with the team that they understand the context of their work. When working flexibly, it is easy to miss information as more informal channels of communication can be lost, for example, side conversations in the work kitchen.

**How can we all contribute?** - Involve the team in decision making about team rotas, meeting etiquette, communication methods. Hold conversations at a team as well as individual level so you are not carrying all the different arrangements yourself and having to fix all challenges yourself. You do not have to have all the answers and your team will be more bought into the arrangements if they have been involved in their creation.

**"We are embracing the new found flexibility of hybrid work. The full picture of our hybrid culture is still emerging."**

## Making communication count

Where in-person time is limited, it is important that all the touchpoints with your team count and contribute towards a positive team culture. Looking holistically at how, where, why and when your team communicate with each other will help you reinforce a positive culture.

1.

### Meetings that work for everyone

Consider virtual first meetings if even one person is not present to avoid in-person groups dominating the conversation. Vary meeting times or days to accommodate the whole team and ensure you adhere to the agreed meeting etiquette in your team. If you start to notice team members not contributing as you would expect, or others dominating the conversation, step in early to course-correct.

2.

### Mix up when and where you meet

While it is important to respect agreed boundaries, do not assume that people will not be flexible. If you vary when and where team events take place, so it is not always the same people compromising, most people are keen to feel part of a team and take part. Given enough notice, people will flex their schedule to accommodate important team events or meetings.

## Paying attention to team dynamics

Much of the key to successfully managing a hybrid team involves being more considered or interventionist as a manager. Things that could just be left to chance when everyone was together all the time, now need to be thought through and this includes the role you play in helping your team gel and continue to work harmoniously.

1.

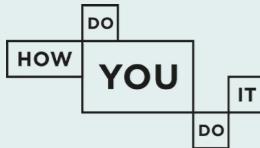
### Don't let resentment build

Inevitably there will be times where the dynamic of the team does not flow and misunderstandings occur. Allow open discussion about challenges as a hybrid team so you do not let resentment build. Ask the team to contribute to the solution and regularly check in on how things are working.

2.

### Schedule social time

One of the inevitable consequences of less in-person time as a team is reduced social contact and spontaneous interactions. Talk with your team about what they miss from pre-Covid days and what works to help fill that gap - virtual coffee mornings, quizzes or planned whole team meet ups. Figure out what works for your team (after all no one likes enforced socialising) and even if it feels a little forced to start with, schedule social time as part of regular team interaction.



## Keep evolving and questioning

Ongoing Covid disruption has meant that even organisations that have formalised and rolled out their hybrid policies, have had little time to evaluate them working in practice for any great period. To finish this guide, here are some questions to regularly ask yourself as your team settles into hybrid as their regular working practice.

- Is everyone participating in team level interactions - if not, why? Are some people being left behind or feeling excluded?
- Is everyone in my team getting the right exposure to other stakeholders to help their career progression?
- What is happening in other teams - have I spoken to other managers about their experience?
- Where there are problems, have I accessed all the support options available to me?
- Am I practicing what I preach for my team in relation to interaction with my stakeholders and opportunities for my progression?
- How are performance reviews working - is hybrid working bringing more parity to my team or creating new divides? How do I address this?
- What forums are there in my organisation for making suggestions about further changes?

Hybrid working will continue to evolve as organisations discover what works best for them over the longer term. As the impact on culture, performance, equity, productivity and more becomes apparent, there is no doubt that managers will be critical in shaping the success and evolution of this huge transition in the way we work.

## Conclusion

Looking forward, everything points to hybrid becoming the 'new normal' for global workforces. As individuals and companies adapt to this new normal, hybrid working continues to evolve. That pace of change makes it difficult to predict exactly what the future of work should look like. What can be said with certainty is the way we work has fundamentally changed forever.

It's important for leaders to preserve the trust that has been built up over the last couple of years. Allowing for flexibility and accepting that there will be different work and life circumstances for every member of your team and across your organisation, will make your business a better place to work, which can only be a good thing in the long run.

As we head beyond the pandemic, organisations that continue to prioritise inclusivity and become more intentional about workplace culture will thrive.

The next phase of the future of work will be written by the teams and business leaders that are comfortable with change, that drive innovation and are focussed on building and maintaining a strong hybrid culture.

# HYBRID WORKING

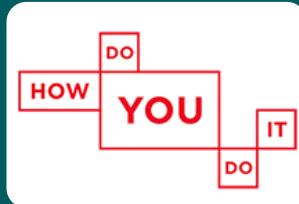
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## The Diversity Project

The Diversity Project is a not-for-profit, cross company organisation championing a cross industry initiative for a more inclusive culture within the investment and savings industry. Our 90+ members in the UK are comprised of investment managers, investment consultants, asset owners, wealth managers, trustees, professional standard and trade bodies and other firms across the industry working together to improve diversity and inclusion across all dimensions and at every career stage. Within the Diversity Project, the Working families work stream encompasses employees who have parental or carer responsibilities and covers a broad range of issues pertinent to working carers, working mums, working dads and working parents, through the various stages of these life events.

For more information about The Diversity Project, contact: [info@diversityproject.com](mailto:info@diversityproject.com) or visit our website: [www.diversityproject.com](http://www.diversityproject.com)



## How Do You Do It

How Do You Do It is a specialist international coaching company, founded in 2006. Working with individuals (working parents and carers), their managers and the wider organisation, we run award-winning group coaching programmes that support flexible and inclusive workplaces. Our flexible approach, tailored for each client uses a mix of virtual and face-to-face group and 1:1 coaching supplemented with e-learning to create powerful long-term support networks and role models that facilitate the sharing of best practices across an organisation. Throughout the pandemic, we have supported teams across a range of organisations to rapidly adapt to the changed working environment. Our in-depth experience of the challenges managers and individuals have encountered means we can facilitate actionable solutions that address both the immediate situation and longer-term implications.

To find out more please contact: [debs.ingham@howdoyoudoit.com](mailto:debs.ingham@howdoyoudoit.com) or visit our website: [www.howdoyoudoit.com](http://www.howdoyoudoit.com)



## Remote Kontrol

Remote Kontrol is a consultancy that helps organisations sustain their company culture and thrive remotely by adopting the best tools and solutions. We build online working strategies so teams feel more connected, productive and engaged while beating burnout and tech fatigue. Remote Kontrol was founded to fix the biggest remote and hybrid working challenges companies face. Our focus areas are around Culture Building, Communication, Collaboration and Employee Wellbeing. We know the mental, financial and environmental benefits flexible work brings to people, businesses and society. It's why we've made it our mission to increase happiness and efficiency in the workplace. Our custom workshops enable our community, teams, and leaders to develop the skills and competencies needed to master the new era of remote & hybrid work.

To find out more please contact: [francine.keating@remotekontrol.io](mailto:francine.keating@remotekontrol.io) or visit our website: [www.remotekontrol.io](http://www.remotekontrol.io)

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