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Career. Family. Organisation.
Making it work.

A GUIDE TO MANAGING HYBRID TEAMS

BUILDING A TEAM THAT WORKS

Know yourself

Managing a flexible/hybrid team requires different skills to those needed when everyone is always present in the same location at the same time. 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.



Understand your style

Think about what you need to adapt now that in-person 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 views about flexible 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?



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. We all have different experience of flexible working– share best practice and reduce the risk of feeling isolated as a leader.



Role model what you want from your team

With less in-person 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.

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Create a level playing field

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.



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 so that everyone can contribute?



Don't 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 evenly you are spreading your time to ensure some in person time with everyone.



Embrace different work patterns

Talk about flexible working with individuals and as a team. Ensure all the team understands each other's 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.

Manage the balance between team and organisation

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 on what now works for them and their family that differ from the expectations of their organisation.



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.



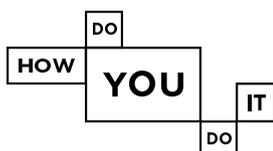
What is still a temporary Covid measure and what is permanent?

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.



What are the immovable objects?

Set clear expectations as a team, including any that the organisation has, for example: a team meeting on a specific day 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.



BUILDING A CULTURE THAT WORKS

Help me to belong

Creating a sense of team cohesion and belonging is not 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.



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.

Make sure my voice is heard

Where in-person time is limited, it is important that all the communication touchpoints with your team count and contribute towards a positive team culture. 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 together harmoniously.



Meetings that work for everyone

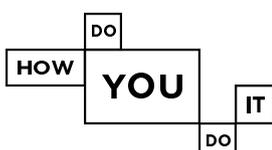
Consider virtual first meetings if even one person is not present to avoid in-person groups dominating the conversation. Vary meeting times or days to accommodate the whole team and ensure you adhere to the agreed meeting etiquette in your team. If you start to notice team members not contributing as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



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.

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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 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.



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.

Check in with yourself

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 a steady state for any great period. As things settle, create a regular check in with yourself about how it's going – both on a practical day to day level and longer term as the norms of hybrid working embed.

- 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?
- How is my team performing? Are there any adjustments needed?
- How is my team perceived by other stakeholders? What is contributing to those perceptions and does anything need to change?

