

HYBRID TEAMS PROVEN TIPS GUIDE

The Strategies You Need Manage
A Zoom And In-Person Office



Prepared For



HYBRID TEAMS

PROVEN TIPS GUIDE

THE KEYS TO WINNING WITH HYBRID TEAMS

To get the most out of your teams and keep employees motivated and productive, you need to focus on five key best practices:

1. **Being A Role Model For Hybrid Behaviors**
2. **Building Trust With Team Members**
3. **Share Context All The Time When Managing Hybrid Teams**
4. **Treat Each Team Member As An Individual When Managing Hybrid Teams**
5. **Structuring Your Own Workload**

Below are the details and proven tips to succeed.

1. BEING A ROLE MODEL FOR HYBRID BEHAVIORS

The Challenge

The move from an office-based working environment to a more complex hybrid team environment creates opportunities for people but it also presents a number of challenges. Many people are being asked to relearn habits and working patterns which have been around for decades and, as we all know, change is never easy. Transitions from an old approach to a new approach takes time and new behaviors must be learned and also embedded.

In an era of change, people often look to role models from whom they can learn best-practices, and in a team environment, this is usually the manager.

It is important that managers recognize that they have a responsibility to model good managing hybrid team behaviors and that their actions will probably set the tone the team will follow. If they set a good example, it is likely that the team will function well together in a hybrid environment but if their actions set a bad example, it is likely the team will malfunction.

PROVEN TIPS

1. **Recognize your role.** As a manager you are never off. All of your actions, approaches and behaviors are visible to the team.
2. **Talk hybrid.** Acknowledge that things are different now and discuss these differences with your team – don't pretend that things are just the same as before.

3. **Encourage communication.** Hybrid team members need to be actively encouraged to communicate in order to replace some of the spontaneous interactions that take place in an office environment. If you communicate often and encourage communication, the team will likely follow your lead.
4. **Don't model bad behaviors.** If you are always sending emails at 11 p.m., your team members might assume this is expected of them also.
5. **Exhibit a good work/life balance.** If you take a regular lunch break and let the team know you are doing that, they will feel it is fine to do so as well. Tell them you are unavailable for 30 minutes because you are going for a walk – they might also exercise as a result.

2. BUILDING TRUST WITH TEAM MEMBERS

The Challenge

Organizations are basically built on trust. We trust each other to perform the tasks we are asked to do; we trust our manager will support us and we trust that the company has our best interests at heart. Trust is the glue that binds the business together and helps everybody achieve corporate and personal objectives.

However, trust is intangible and difficult to define – it is also difficult to build and maintain.

What we do know is that trust is built over time through frequent, meaningful interactions that deliver purposeful results. Unfortunately, in a hybrid team environment, interactions with team members tend to be less frequent and can be more superficial. The daily bonding situations that occur in an office environment are difficult to replicate and relationships are more challenging to forge – yet trust remains the glue that will bind the team together, and the manager needs to work especially hard on this issue.



HYBRID TEAMS

PROVEN TIPS GUIDE

Trust is built at both the professional and the social level. Team members want to know that they can trust the manager's professional capabilities and knowledge, but they also want to feel that they can trust them as a person at a relationship level. Managing hybrid teams requires managers to work hard to build and maintain trust in both of these areas. The combination of the two is where real trust is found.

The tips below might be a starting point to help managers work on deepening trust with team members.

PROVEN TIPS

- 1. Open communication.** You need to communicate with team members on a consistent basis and keep them informed of developments – don't hide things from them.
- 2. Be responsive and reliable.** Team members need to know that you are available for them and that you will respond to their concerns.
- 3. Set clear expectations.** Set clear expectations for each team member and be consistent with those expectations over time.
- 4. Get personal.** It is difficult to have a trusting relationship with somebody you only know superficially. So, it is important to build social dialogue into your interactions.
- 5. Maintain confidentiality.** The quickest way to destroy trust is to break a confidence so ensure that people know they can trust you with any issues they might want to share.

3. SHARE CONTEXT ALL THE TIME WHEN MANAGING HYBRID TEAMS

The Challenge

When people work together in an office, news and information moves around freely. People speak to each other; they overhear the conversations of their co-workers and their manager, and they are involved in ad hoc meetings all the time.

This means that team members are often 'in the know'. They might not know everything, but they pick up a lot about what is going on both within the team and in the business more generally.

In other words, they have context. They understand what they are being asked to do, why they are being asked to do it and what impact it will have. This gives people a sense of purpose.

When people work in hybrid teams, information is much more difficult to come by. All the normal informal communication channels are lost and the danger over time is that people lack context and start to lose any sense of purpose associated with their role.

When managing hybrid teams, managers cannot allow any loss of a sense of purpose to occur, which results from lack of context.

PROVEN TIPS

- 1. Question yourself.** When allocating tasks to team members ask yourself the simple question, "will this person understand why I am asking them to do this and what the impact of doing it will be?"
- 2. Share information.** When you receive new information on a project or on the business in general, have a process in place to share this information with the whole team (unless it is business sensitive of course).
- 3. Don't assume.** Never assume people know things just because you do – as the manager you have access to more information than the rest of your team.
- 4. Revisit issues:** Just because you have communicated something once don't think everybody will have read it, understood it or realized its significance
- 5. Address context in 1-to-1s.** Build context updates into every one-to-one you have with team member.

4. TREAT EACH TEAM MEMBER AS AN INDIVIDUAL WHEN MANAGING HYBRID TEAMS

The Challenge

When working remotely in a hybrid environment, it is critical that each team member continues to feel valued and appreciated by their manager. Unfortunately, it is more difficult for managers to maintain a close relationship with people when they don't see them face-to-face on a regular basis.

Therefore, managers need to make special efforts to keep in regular contact with each team member, and that contact needs to be tailored to the needs of each individual. Some team members may need extra coaching on certain aspects of the job, another may be worrying about their career progression prospects, while a third may be grappling with domestic challenges.

HYBRID TEAMS

PROVEN TIPS GUIDE

If you don't ask questions to ascertain individual team members' concerns, you won't know how to calibrate your conversations with them.

The challenge is keeping close enough to all your team members, so you know what to focus on with them at any specific time.

PROVEN TIPS

- 1. Don't take a one size fit all approach.** When having one-to-ones with people, analyze what the key element of your conversation needs to be in advance of the call.
- 2. Ask questions.** At a distance, it can be difficult to gauge the mood of a team member, so you need to get into the habit of asking them open questions to get them to talk.
- 3. Give context.** Don't just confine your discussions to immediate task-related topics. Talk more broadly about the business, their aspirations within the business and upcoming developments.
- 4. Build the relationship.** When people work together in the office they don't only talk about work-related issues, they also talk about broader areas of interest – be that family, current events or even sport.
- 5. Be open.** People are more likely to be open with you if you are open with them.

5. Structuring Your Own Workload

The Challenge

Managers of hybrid teams often find themselves under huge amounts of time pressure which results from the complex nature of working in a remote environment. They find that they are constantly pulled in different directions by the competing demands of working on team dynamics, spending sufficient time with individual team members, managing their own bosses, and delivering on their own core tasks.

The danger in this situation is that managers become overly reactive to the demands of the moment at the expense of taking a more strategic approach to their responsibilities – the immediate needs of the moment start to dictate the structure of the manager's day. And the more this is allowed to happen the more acute the challenge becomes.

Managing time effectively is key to ensuring team effectiveness.

The challenge, when managing hybrid teams, is to recognize this pattern and take active steps to take back control of their schedule and workload. Managers need to take stock of how they are allocating their time on a daily basis and take action if they find their use of time is imbalanced.

PROVEN TIPS

- 1. Taking stock.** Assess how much time you are spending on the different aspects of your managerial responsibilities and review if any one area of your work is taking up a disproportionate amount of your time.
- 2. Recalibrate.** If you find that your time is not allocated efficiently try to work out why certain tasks are eating into your time and devise a plan to rebalance things.
- 3. Delegate.** If you find that you are engaged in tasks that could easily be undertaken by other members of your team, reassign tasks accordingly.
- 4. Reassess processes.** Managers are often dragged-in to fix problems that have arisen due to process failures. If the same time-consuming problems occur regularly, look at fixing the cause of the problem rather than resolving the results of the problem.
- 5. Have team time-outs.** Timetable periods of each day when you can simply focus on some of the key tasks you need to accomplish and let the team know you will be online for a certain period.

It is important that managers recognize that leading a hybrid team is very different from leading a co-located team and that they need to develop new skills and new approaches.

It is also important that organizations recognize the challenge their management teams face in this new environment and invest in training and development to help them navigate the future world of work.