GALLUP®

Hybrid Workplace Strategies for Leaders and Managers

Regardless of remote, in-person or hybrid working, Gallup has discovered three areas of performance that comprehensively describe and consistently predict success in a role:

- setting goals and meeting them — my work
- partnering for effectiveness — my team
- translating work into its consequences — my customer

My work, *my team* and *my customer* provide a standard framework that every leader can use to evaluate employees' productivity — wherever those employees are working. To connect these areas of performance, leaders should focus on the role that has the most influence on team engagement and productivity: the manager.

Managers' Importance in Employee Productivity and Performance

Because managers are responsible for 70% of their team's engagement, they are the best at promoting excellence and building a foundation to reliably track employee productivity. Especially when navigating hybrid and flexible work environments, managers must do two things to get this right:

Establish Clear Expectations.

- Prioritize ongoing performance conversations because employees may either be working remotely permanently or working in the office and working remotely.

- Emphasize what success looks like in during discussions by giving employees a well-defined target for excellence.

- Expect excellence, and ask about progress to celebrate employees' successes, maintain accountability and remove barriers to advancement.

Set Clear — and Collaborative — Goals.

- Have employees work together to set goals to boost their intrinsic motivation and encourage them to be active participants in identifying which responsibilities are most meaningful to them.

- Use collaborative goal setting to challenge employees to think about how to create individualized goals and understand how they, as managers, can best support each individual in realizing these goals.

- Continue to challenge employees to set high standards for success.

- Review employees' progress toward meeting their goals regularly.

- Assess whether employees' performance goals are still relevant occasionally, but frequently evaluate whether the goals are appropriate for the role.

- Think about individual, team and customer outcomes when goal setting — don't just focus on individual performance expectations.

- Keep an open dialogue and routinely scheduled check-in conversations to continuously monitor performance, ensure progress toward goals and be ready to remove any barriers to productivity.

- Know when it's time to dig a little deeper: When alignment seems strained or progress is missing the mark, take time to get to the root of what's causing it.

- Don't jump to conclusions about employees' shortcomings. Instead, consider how the team, the organization and they themselves as managers are setting employees up for success — or not.

Additional Leadership Strategies for Hybrid and Remote Working

Managing remote and hybrid workers can't be oversimplified or reduced to a menu of virtual tools and videoconferencing software; it requires thoughtful adaptations of day-to-day tasks. Managers who lead high-performing teams are willing to regularly ask for and listen to their employees' feedback. More importantly, they frequently act on this feedback. Managers who model this kind of accountability inspire their team members to do their best work too. The best managers:

- **Adopt a growth mindset.**
  - Don't just think you can apply a one-size-fits-all approach with your employees.
  - Ask for feedback, learn what works best for each employee based on their specific situation and keep learning and evolving your approach.
  - Expect to learn and adapt as your team becomes more experienced with hybrid work.

- **Determine the workplace value proposition (WVP).**
  - What inspires — as opposed to mandates — employees to come into the office?
  - What type of work is best done at the office versus at home?
  - Consider the **four C's** when discussing the advantages of spending time together in person:
    - *Connection* — interpersonal relationships.
    - *Collaboration* — interdependent work that requires detailed and highly coordinated partnership.
    - *Creativity* — both planned and unplanned time to explore, ideate and innovate.
    - *Culture* — norms, cues and behaviors that reflect how we work together.
  - Consider the core challenges of hybrid work:
    - coordinating with people on different schedules
    - neglecting remote workers who are not physically in the room
    - employee development opportunities for remote workers who receive less feedback, fewer experiential opportunities and less face time with mentors and leaders
    - fairness issues related to resources and access when working remotely
- **Co-create a team charter.**
  - After using your WVP to talk about your team's needs and the changes it is facing, collaboratively create a team charter for how you will work together going forward.
  - First, consider your shared purpose, performance goals and what you want to be known for — your "famous" internal brand.
  - Next, discuss how you are going to work together to achieve that vision:
    - What are our strengths and areas for improvement?

- What activities are best done on-site versus off-site?
- When do we meet at the office, and when do we work remotely?
  - Revise your team charter as you learn and goals change.
- **Increase the frequency of check-in conversations with remote and hybrid workers**.
  - Having more check-in conversations helps managers stay on top of progress and potential roadblocks while also helping employees feel supported and connected.

- **Think about location.**
  - For hybrid workers, consider scheduling check-in conversations about performance in person for a more natural conversation flow, but don't wait if you need to give timely feedback.
  - For remote workers, make sure you have a quiet, distraction-free environment with a strong internet connection for one-on-one conversations so that they feel like they are getting your undivided attention and you don't miss important feedback.

- **Make milestones tangible**.
  - Connect goals with tangible outcomes that make it clear what progress looks like.
  - Everyone likes to have something to show for their hard work, but it can be especially beneficial for remote or hybrid workers when you can't see the tasks they complete each day in person.

- **Are available.**
  - Make sure remote and hybrid workers can easily connect with you when they have questions, need clarification on next steps or want to discuss obstacles to performance. Making it easy to reach you is important because these employees can't simply stop by your office or catch you in the hallway.
  - It might be helpful to have "office hours" on your calendar or a status update on your internal software system that lets employees know when you're available.

- **Don't neglect relationships.**
  - Make time for small talk during your check-in conversations and team meetings.
  - Remember, friendly exchanges can make up for missing the frequent casual conversations in the workplace. This is vital to maintaining rapport and helping employees feel cared about as people — no matter where they are.

- **Think "equity" — always.**
  - If you manage a hybrid or blended team, be aware of the differences in the employee experience for on-site versus remote employees.
  - Does everyone have equal access to opportunities? An equal say in decisions?
  - Noticing and addressing any disparities in advance is vital to avoiding tensions and long-term consequences that can arise from treating employees differently based on their work arrangement.

Leading Effective Engagement Conversations With Hybrid Teams

When employees and managers discuss employee engagement survey results, these conversations can increase engagement, enhance collaboration and improve performance. Use the following strategies to lead effective engagement conversations with your hybrid teams.

- **Use available conversation tools.**
  - Depending on how you define "hybrid" for your team — whether the majority of the team is joining virtually or in person — use the **State of the Team Conversation Outline** or the **Virtual State of the Team Conversation Outline** to maximize the effectiveness of your engagement conversation. *You can search for these tools in the **Resources** section in Gallup Access.*

- **Include diverse groups in the conversation so that everyone feels included.**
  - Have remote groups and individuals share before in-person groups and individuals during the discussion.
  - Be mindful when asking for participation so that everyone has a chance to speak up.

- **Try to summarize and share hallway or side conversations.**
  - While these discussions may have happened in small groups previously or with the whole group, they are still valuable to share for a holistic engagement conversation.

- **Think holistically about your engagement conversations.**
  - Expand the discussion outside of the 12 elements of engagement.
  - Include workplace topics that you know are important to the team — such as the dynamics of remote/hybrid working, team collaboration, fairness, team norms/ways of working — in your engagement discussion.

- **Use these engagement conversations to bring together your hybrid workers in person on the same day.**
  - Pick a day that most of the team is in the office, if possible.
  - Give advance notice for everyone to coordinate their calendars.

- **Encourage anyone joining remotely to turn on their video.**
  - These are especially important team conversations, so seeing everyone's face is essential.
  - Set expectations of participation and involvement beforehand to maximize individual and collective contributions to the discussion.

- **Start with a collaboration activity to get people working together.**
  - What's a fun question you could ask in the group chat?
  - For example, you could share the 12 elements of engagement on the screen and have the group use the videoconference features to identify which element most resonates with them.

- **Schedule moments of personal connection.**
  - Use the first five minutes of the team engagement conversation to build relationships among team members.
  - Experiment with having this engagement discussion as a larger group or break into smaller groups.

- o Try building connections before talking through creating an engaging culture as a team to maximize the meeting's effectiveness.

- **Make it feel special.**
    - o Provide snacks and/or drinks.
    - o Encourage people to attend the videoconference from a place in their office or home where they don't normally join from.
    - o Send ahead for a snack box or a drink recipe for people to enjoy during the conversation.
    - o Put nameplates on seats for those joining remotely to show that they are still in the room despite not physically being there.
    - o Get creative with what you're wearing — make it feel different than a regular workday.

- **Be intentional with prework.**
    - o Have employees review their team engagement results before having the larger group discussion.
    - o Assign specific engagement items to smaller groups, and then have them share their insights during the group discussion.
    - o Be creative yet intentional: What can you make into prework to maximize efficiency? What should remain as a group discussion to promote collaboration and fairness?

- **Make action planning manageable.**
    - o Encourage a shared commitment to ownership and accountability by supporting action planning in groups.
    - o Create groups of employees who don't interact very often or don't directly work together for improved action planning.