



Successful Hybrid Team Manager

Below are a tips and suggestions that might be useful to managers as they embark on leading remote/hybrid teams.

Be Systematic and Intentional

Have a systematic approach to assessing your department's work and priorities. Use the remote work guidelines to support you. And consider the following:

- Review the needs of the organization, your department's function, and each staff member's role and needs while making decisions and approving requests for remote work.
- Take time to listen both one on one as well as in a group. Be open and flexible. Remember each team member's needs and experiences are unique. Weigh them carefully against the priorities and requirements of the work.
- Make decisions together as a team. Determine what work requires coordination and what work requires sustained focus. And then create the schedules for optimal efficiency and effectiveness.
- Assess your team's stage of development. Is your team new and forming, are they going through a storming or performing phase? This will help you identify your priorities as a manager and create an environment that will help your team flourish together.
- Lead with empathy. Use a people-centric and wholistic approach to managing and supporting your team.
- Take a holistic approach. Model self-care and promote well-being for your team.
- Give grace to yourself and your team. As you implement remote work for your team, be patient with one another and use mistakes as learning moments.
- Empower your team. Take the time to help team members connect with the purpose of the unit and the University.
- Get to know your team well. Schedule regular one-on-one meetings, all team meetings, and informal check-ins. Ensure that team members are staying connected with one another and other functions across the University. You might need to create and facilitate these opportunities. When you meet, ask, "*How are you doing/feeling?*" and "*What can I do to help?*" This will help you keep a pulse on their well-being. Always ask, do not assume. During all team meetings, allow a few minutes for informal sharing so that team members can get to know each other's interests, hobbies, and values. Teams that feel connected have a higher sense of belonging and trust and are more successful as individuals and as a team.
- **Tip:** When you are checking in with individuals and ask, "*How are things going?,"*" ask a couple of follow-up questions based on their answer. This indicates a genuine interest and caring about their work. It helps team members feel seen and appreciated.

Foster Inclusion

Creating an environment where everyone feels included requires higher levels of intention and necessitates managers broaden their perspectives.

- Remote/hybrid work can provide a recruiting advantage. Expand your hiring scheme. Adjust job descriptions and postings, broaden your hiring team, and shift from a culture “fit” to a culture “add” mindset.
- Think about potential. A remote/hybrid work option could open opportunities for people with injuries, disabilities or neurodiversity, stay-at-home parents, retired workers, and people who might have experienced bias or are fearful of bias.
- Make diversity the norm. Make your values and intentions towards inclusion clear.
- Give employees the platform. Invite team members to express their thoughts, perspectives, and experiences without fear of judgment or retribution.
- Be flexible. A hybrid work environment requires managers to flex their style to the preference and style of their team members. Provide alternatives for how employees show you their work and engage in activities.
- Be equitable. All employees will have a unique experience with remote/hybrid work and will need different levels of support. For instance, for a new employee it might be important to have in-person interaction. Assign them a buddy and ensure both the buddy and the new employee are on-site on the same day. Stay tuned to extroverts and introverts. While introverts might thrive in a remote environment, extroverts might miss the energy of others. Ensure there are opportunities for on-site gatherings for this group.
- Be identity-conscious. It is essential to acknowledge that we are not all the same. Address microaggressions in virtual and on-site settings. Ensure materials are culturally relevant and representative of a group’s diversity. Be aware of how current social-political situations might impact different communities.
- Be proactive. Conduct informal check-ins to see how all employees are coping with the remote/hybrid work structure. Be proactive in helping employees who show signs of struggling.
- Support and prepare all employees for the digital work environment. Employees might be at different levels of comfort with technology and will need varying levels of support.

(This section adapted from [“6 Diversity & Inclusion Practices for Work from Home”](#) and [“8 Ways to Build Diversity & Inclusion In Your WFH Plan.”](#))

Ensure Expectations for Individuals and Teams Are Clear and Understood

Clarity of goals and norms for behavior are the cornerstones of success for a hybrid team.

- Keep the focus on the outcomes and results, not on where and when work is performed.
- Ensure understanding. When you communicate, ensure that your communications are understood. You might need to overcommunicate to ensure everyone has the same information. Ensure that information

about projects, initiatives, and expectations are shared with everyone in a consistent manner. Avoid sharing critical information with people who are on-site first, to avoid misinformation from spreading. Ask questions to ensure understanding and agreement. Documenting goals and expectations, setting timelines, and checking on milestones can help you provide timely support and ensure employees' success.

- Provide clear, consistent, honest, and productive [feedback](#). Tips for constructive feedback:
 - establish trust
 - balance the positive and the negative
 - observe, don't interpret
 - be specific
 - talk face-to-face
 - don't make it personal
 - provide feedback consistently
 - be timely
- Use an outcomes-based approach to performance assessment. Measure success and productivity in ways that are clearly understood and agreed upon. [Click here for Job Aid](#).
- Together with your teams, develop norms for how you will work and communicate with one another. Include acceptable response times to email and how you will keep each other updated on availability, projects, and more. Consistent and mutual expectations will help everyone feel successful and hold each other accountable. Review these norms periodically to assess if they are helpful and not becoming obstacles.

Embrace Digital Collaboration Tools

Many teams adapted to using virtual meeting tools during the pandemic, suggesting that we can all learn new ways of working. A sustained remote/hybrid team will require that we also adopt digital tools for collaborating and providing updates.

- Assess your comfort level with digital collaboration tools like Microsoft Planner and Teams or other tools. Be honest about your experience with these and be open to learning and trying them.
- Invite team members who might be early adopters of collaboration tools to help the rest of the team. This could be a great opportunity for making team members feel valued and included.
- **Tip:** Select one tool for the entire team to use. Periodically review how the tool is working for everyone.

Be Intentional about Well-Being

Being a role model in your own practice for well-being and encouraging everyone to do the same will help create a well-being mindset.

- Support your team to create optimal workspaces when they are remote.
- Support them to set clear work/life boundaries. Model the same.

- Keep a pulse on how each team member is faring in the hybrid workspace. Invite team members to provide feedback on what's working and what might need to be reviewed/changed.
- Ensure there are times for in-person/all on-site times.
- Establish video-free meeting opportunities. Let team members know when video is expected ahead of time. Zoom fatigue is real, and the requirement of being on video for every meeting can be draining for many.
- Ask for help and encourage others to do the same. Asking for help is an act of courage, not weakness.

“Leaders must lead by example in creating a culture where connections matter, people matter. It means investing in people, investing in helping others when there is a need, even if it is not convenient.” – Dr. Vivek Murthy, former US Surgeon General

In his Whiteboard Session on “[The Problem of Loneliness at Work*](#),” Dr. Vivek Murthy notes that large numbers of people state that they are lonely at work. Sustained states of loneliness can lead to chronic stress, which in turn impacts our general health as well has a negative impact on our ability to demonstrate executive functioning, decision-making, and resilience, which are all necessary for successful and meaningful work.

Dr. Murthy recommends leaders and managers take the following actions to help employees feel connected at work:

- **Assess State of Connection:** By checking in regularly in both informal and formal ways, managers can continually measure if their teams are feeling connected and be proactive in creating opportunities for connection.
- **Protect Time Outside of Work:** Leaders and managers play an important role in creating a culture where being immersed in your inbox during off-work hours is not expected or preferred. It is important for managers to lead by example and support employees to create work/life boundaries. This is even more important when employees work remotely.
- **Create Opportunities for Connections:** It is important to go beyond occasional “happy hours” and create spaces for employees to connect in a deep and meaningful way. To share their values, aspirations, and concerns and get to know each other as whole people beyond their skills and work-related information. Employees thrive when they feel seen and understood by their peers.

Remote employees are at risk for feeling more isolated and disconnected with their peers. Being intentional and proactive with the actions above can ensure that your teams thrive.

For training on topics mentioned in this section, [visit Successful Hybrid Teams](#).

*Subscription is required.