How to Maximize the Benefits of Hybrid Work

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Many employees feel most comfortable in a hybrid work environment, where some work takes place remotely and some happen in person. The best strategy to excel in a hybrid work environment is one your team has likely used to excel in other areas: set and reiterate clear expectations, try new things, and adapt quickly when your plan doesn't work as expected. Here are some tips to help your nonprofit maximize the benefits of hybrid work.

Determine where key tasks ideally will take place. Identify which work tasks are key for your nonprofit, determine what drives productivity and performance for each, and consider what working arrangements best facilitate them. Note that remote work often is the best option for tasks like research or writing that are best done independently without distractions. Keep in mind that this isn't necessarily true for an employee with a noisy or distracting at-home environment! In-office days will best foster collaboration, like idea sessions and team meetings. Make employees part of the process through surveys and interviews to gauge how and where they work best.

Invest in your people and infrastructure. Train leaders on how to manage hybrid teams. Make sure on-site offices and conference rooms offer remote-capable collaboration stations, allowing remote participants full inclusion in team discussions. Work with managers to understand their new responsibilities to coordinate meetings and schedules, from determining when others are in the office and available to leading hybrid meetings where part of the audience is online. Invest in tools that will help your teams manage their schedules.

Review your hybrid policies and benefits for equity and inclusion. When you survey employees to figure out hybrid arrangements for work tasks, find out who is and isn't taking advantage of remote working options and why. Who isn't reaping these benefits? Will everyone in the organization receive an opportunity for hybrid work? What if team members don't have access to fast broadband Internet or a comfortable home office environment? How will your organization offer as much flexibility and comfort as possible for everyone, from the front lines to the executive team?

Evolve how you measure employee performance. In a hybrid environment, it's especially important to make sure that with respect to salaried employees, your organization measures results, not just the hours employees clock on the job. Develop performance measures that evaluate how well your employees do the tasks that most contribute to your nonprofit's success. Make sure your performance review process reflects this approach, and doesn't overly weight measures like number of hours worked. Keep in mind that *hourly, non-exempt staff must be paid for every hour worked*, regardless of outcomes. Communicate expectations clearly so team members understand how you will evaluate their job performance.

Keep your one-on-one meetings, and use them well. Amid all the changes and adjustments of a hybrid environment, you might be tempted to let one-on-one meetings with team members slide. Don't do it. Regular communication, clarification of expectations, and two-way feedback are more important than ever.

Experiment and iterate. Test how well your processes work in a hybrid environment, invite employees to weigh in, and learn from your results and feedback. This might mean that your organization implements a new process and must quickly make additional adjustments to it.

Resources

- Nonprofit Risk Management Center – A Happier Hybrid: Managing the Risks of Hybrid Work
- Gallup – The Advantages and Challenges of Hybrid Work
- *Harvard Business Review* – How to Do Hybrid Right
- McKinsey – The Future of Work: Managing Three Risks of the Hybrid Workplace