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Making Hybrid Work Successful UVA HR Talent Community of Expertise

TRANSCRIPT

This session will provide an overview of best practices to assist employees to successfully operate as part of a hybrid workforce, and prepare for the logistical, cultural, and interpersonal challenges that are inherent with this structure. In this session, we're going to look at four key tenets that will help you be more successful within a hybrid workforce.

First is flexibility. A hybrid workforce grants flexibility, but is itself a highly flexible construct. Next is communication. Communication is essential to the success of a hybrid work model. The frequency, tools, and techniques all require deep consideration and planning. Then we have accountability. Accountability looks a little different in a hybrid model, and is again reliant upon your established communication plan. And ultimately, we have productivity. This builds off communication, and accountability. Showcasing your progress to your manager and your team is crucial when working in a hybrid environment.

So what is a hybrid work model? A hallmark of a hybrid workforce is flexibility. However, flexibility does not mean free form. A well-designed hybrid work model relies on significant evaluation of which roles require employees to be on-site, and how often they should be on-site, and which roles are more conducive to remote work. This evaluation process is ongoing, iterative, and reliant upon operational needs. Given this deep reliance upon operational needs, this model can shift at any time and the capacity for a role to function fully remotely or in a hybrid manner might shift too.

When you're not physically in an office to influence spontaneous informal communication, sometimes referred to as water cooler moments, you must be intentional about weaving it into your day. So think of communication as asynchronous by default, right; in today's world, we might always think that we have to be "on," but this doesn't mean that there's an expectation that you should always be online or that you'll miss out on important discussions because you're taking time offline.

While we have the technology to support the connectivity issue, conversations between team members, particularly using chat tools like Microsoft Teams, can quickly become fragmented and difficult to follow later on. So be intentional with any communication, and instead of reacting in real time to debates or topics that are not time sensitive, gather and refine your thoughts in writing, allowing those not currently online to catch up and contribute when they're next online. Think about all the different ways that you can leverage the communication technology that's out there. So schedule regular coffee chats with people using video conferencing technology like Zoom or WebEx or Microsoft Teams. Create regular co-working video conference rooms that you and your teammates can work from and collaborate.

Talk about what you normally would. If sports, vacation plans, movie reviews, are common water cooler material, work with your team to establish a chat channel to discuss things outside of work. The medium might be different, but the connection is still the same. And be an advocate for

yourself, and be proactive about scheduling regular meetings and check-ins with your teammates and manager. And consider using technology-based project management tools like Trello, Microsoft Planner, Google Workspace, to share project progress with your team in an always visible and accessible way.

High accountability: balancing your work between locations and working remotely more generally requires high amounts of self-discipline and accountability. It's easy to let our work be structured by our meetings, and not by our mission. That is, we might view the phone or web meetings on our calendar as the big items of our day, instead of seeing our most pressing or largest projects as our biggest priorities. After you conduct a weekly review of the projects that are most pressing, these suggestions might help:

Identify the three biggest project tasks that you need to complete each day, not including those meetings. Make a commitment to complete these tasks, and deliver results to another person. Find that accountability partner. Check in for a follow-up after making the delivery of whatever the deliverable item is. Have a proactive conversation with your team and manager regarding how you'll report out on each project completion. Will it simply be an email, will it be a daily update on a communal page like a team's channel or some sort of virtual kanban board? Establish clear expectations on how you will communicate your progress with your manager and team, and how often you'll communicate it. And if you have to miss or move a deadline, communicate the reason for the shift immediately, and commit to a deadline that you can meet.

Have a proactive conversation with your manager and team regarding your work schedule. One of the flexible elements of a hybrid design is the ability to work during slightly different hours than would have historically been possible working your quintessential nine-to-five. So establish your core working hours with your manager and team to ensure they meet operational needs, but give yourself permission to fully unplug outside of those agreed-upon hours. The ability to disconnect from work, especially when working remotely, allows your brain time to re-energize and ultimately do your best work.

And lastly we have productivity. Being your most productive depends on several factors, but they're all based on you and your unique approach to work. When designing your productivity plan, consider the following questions: What time of day are you most focused? What does your ideal work environment look like? Does it vary based on task? What days of the week are you most efficient? What days will your family members or roommates be home, and when will your colleagues be in the office?

Once you know the answers to these questions about yourself, it's easier to set up your schedule, plug in your daily tasks, and have a conversation with your manager about which tasks are best suited for each setting. Be cognizant of the fact that what works in the office might not work at home, and vice versa. It will take you a little bit of time working in both settings to set up the best situation for you, your team, and your manager.

And consider your physical office too, especially when working remotely. You want to be able to define clear boundaries, and find a stress-free zone where you can concentrate. If you don't have a separate room, find an area with minimum traffic flow or a corner of a room off the main area. Set tight physical boundaries around your designated workspace that is off limits for your housemates. If possible, only go to that designated space when you need to do work.

Hybrid work is a work in progress. There's lots of information here and many things to consider when it comes to hybrid working. Remember, this is new. You won't have every single thing figured out on day one and that's okay. The purpose of this session is to make you think in advance about what might come up, and what you need to do to be your most productive. But you might not think of everything right now. Give yourself some time to sink into your new routine. Go easy on yourself with this new working world. Don't forget to take breaks throughout the day. Thank you so much for watching, and good luck!