Getting it Right: Best Practices for Teleworkers and Their Managers

A presentation of the Twin Cities Telework webinar series
Meet our presenter, Elham Shirazi

e-planning Principal Elham Shirazi is a nationally-recognized telework expert who has more than 30 years of experience in the field of telework.

Nationally, she has advised the White House and US Congressional leaders in the interest of telework policy development.

She is a frequent consultant for Commuter Services. She has also consulted with hundreds of companies, including Minnesota’s Best Buy, SuperValu, Welsh Companies and the City of Bloomington.

Welcome, Elham!
Your questions, our answers

- A recording of this training and the slide presentation will be provided to all attendees within a week

- Questions will be answered at the end of the webinar

- To submit questions you may:
  - Use the Q&A tool on Zoom to enter your written question
  - Email questions after the webinar to Kate Meredith at kate@494corridor.org and we will get back to you

- Please refrain from using the Chat option to submit questions
Best practices for a hybrid workplace

- Executives
- Managers
- Employees
Microsoft 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report

Employees want the best of both worlds: over 70 percent of workers want flexible remote work options to continue, while over 65 percent are craving more in-person time with their teams. To prepare, 66 percent of business decision makers are considering redesigning physical spaces to better accommodate hybrid work environments. The data is clear: extreme flexibility and hybrid work will define the post-pandemic workplace.

Leaders are out of touch with employees and need a wake-up call

Many business leaders are faring better than their employees. Sixty-one percent of leaders say they are “thriving” right now — 23 percentage points higher than those without decision-making authority. They also report building stronger relationships with colleagues (+11 percentage points) and leadership (+19 percentage points), earning higher incomes (+17 percentage points), and taking all or more of their allotted vacation days (+12 percentage points).

The business case for teleworking

- Productivity
- Flexibility
- Recruitment and retention
- Morale
- Overhead savings
- Reducing commuting hours and stress
- Organizational resilience
High productivity is masking an exhausted workforce

Self-assessed productivity has remained the same or higher for many employees over the past year, but at a human cost. Trillions of productivity signals from Microsoft 365 quantify the precise digital exhaustion workers are feeling.

Microsoft 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report

**Authenticity will spur productivity and wellbeing**

As people navigated unprecedented stress on the frontlines, balanced childcare and homeschool, worked from living rooms, quieted barking dogs, and pushed away curious cats, something changed: work became more human. One in five have met their colleagues’ pets or families virtually, and as we clung to each other to get through the year, one in six (17 percent) have cried with a colleague this year.

This number was even higher for those in industries hit hardest during this time, like education (20 percent), travel and tourism (21 percent), and healthcare (23 percent).

What's at stake?

- As the world opens up, more employees are evaluating their next move

- Research shows that 41 percent of the global workforce is likely to consider leaving their current employer within the next year, with 46 percent planning to make a major pivot or career transition

Microsoft 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report

The way forward

▪ Create a plan to empower people for extreme flexibility
▪ Invest in space and technology to bridge the physical and digital worlds
▪ Combat digital exhaustion from the top
▪ Prioritize rebuilding social capital and culture
▪ Rethink employee experience to compete for the best and most diverse talent

Talent is everywhere in a hybrid work world

One of the brightest sides of the shift to remote work is that it widens the talent marketplace. Remote job postings on LinkedIn increased more than five times during the pandemic, and people are taking notice. Forty-six percent of remote workers we surveyed are planning to move to a new location this year because they can now work remotely.

People no longer have to leave their desk, house or community to expand their career, and it will have profound impacts on the talent landscape.

How to sustain company culture in a hybrid work model

The most important thing to realize about hybrid working is the intentionality and effort necessary to maintain culture. Nothing will be automatic, and it will be nearly impossible to have a positive culture by default.

- Leaders will need to be intentional about articulating purpose, discussing the big picture of the overall goals and ensuring people feel their work is uniquely connected and necessary to the success of the organization. Managers will also need to ensure people have a sense of shared purpose—not just how a team member’s work is connected to overall outcomes, but how the work of the team as a whole is important.

- **Accountability** is key to an effective culture because it reminds people their work matters, and it reminds them how important it is to the company and the team... Effective hybrid cultures must ensure performance for the benefit of individuals and teams as well as the organization as a whole.

How to sustain company culture in a hybrid work model

- One of the most important elements of effective leadership is when leaders are perceived as present and accessible. This is harder to accomplish virtually, but even more important in a hybrid model. Visibility is also key—both in terms of leaders being visible and in terms of how they keep team members central.

- Closely related to visibility and accessibility is the need for plenty of open communication and transparency... As a leader, be sure you’re keeping people in the loop, sharing constantly and making a point to ensure your team members are in the know about as much as possible—the good, the bad and the ugly. This openness is a primary ingredient of trust which is critical to constructive cultures.

While the hybrid experience is likely here to stay, leaders can also build strong cultures by creating places where people want to be.

This means influencing offices that help people work better through spaces to collaborate, focus, learn, socialize and rejuvenate.

What does it mean to be a manager today

To be successful in this new environment, managers must lead with empathy. This will require organizations and their HR functions to develop their managers’ skills, awaken their mindsets to manage in new ways, and create the capacity across the organization to enable this shift.

https://hbr.org/2021/06/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-manager-today
How to manage a hybrid team

Utilize asynchronous communication
There will be a temptation to send out messages, schedule video calls, or arrange presentations at synchronous times immediately. You might expect that members of the remote team should answer your messages as quickly as someone in the office. But that probably won’t be the case. On their end, they might have problems accessing information or keeping up with meetings and conversations.

To prevent this, follow the basic rules of asynchronous communication:

▪ Constantly over-communicate with context
▪ Reduce the length of meetings and eliminate unnecessary ones
▪ Set agendas beforehand and ask for availability before scheduling anything
▪ Record meetings and document work
▪ Use specific outlets for communication

https://hive.com/blog/what-is-hybrid-team/
# Measuring productivity

How is productivity measured when employees are teleworking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness of employee (e.g., how quickly employee responds to e-mails, returns phone calls)</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line manager/supervisor establishes specific goals/parameters with the employee</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the honor system; there is no standard mechanism in place to manage/measure productivity for telecommuters</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our standard methods for measuring productivity are effective for both telecommuters and on-site employees</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee records time worked on a timesheet or other logging system</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee reports progress against assigned tasks on a scheduled basis</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization is still working out how to manage/measure productivity for employees when they telecommute</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization monitors employees via software (e.g., software that tracks and records computer behavior)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SHRM Survey Findings: 2014 Workplace Flexibility — Overview of Flexible Work Arrangements
How to manage a hybrid team

▪ **Ensure leader buy-in:** Create an enabling environment that provides and supports both in-office and remote workers alike.

▪ **Invest in the best tools:** The tools your team use will influence how productive they are.

▪ **Always include remote workers:** Even though they’re not present in the office, you should let remote workers feel like part of the team.

▪ **Have flexible working arrangements for different types of workers:** Find out what times and work patterns that work for different members of your team. With this in mind, set expectations and deadlines that suit them. Make sure to focus on results instead of processes.

▪ **Encourage visibility and openness in your team culture.**

https://hive.com/blog/what-is-hybrid-team/
Train team leads and managers: 40% of 215 managers surveyed in a Harvard Business Review study doubted their ability to manage remote staff. It is unrealistic to expect managers to know how to lead a hybrid team without training. While a lot of their expertise will come from experience, there is a need to actively learn about it. A great way to do this is to study how other hybrid companies work and adapt the lessons to your team.

https://hive.com/blog/what-is-hybrid-team/
# Telemanaging through goal setting with teleworkers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist</td>
<td>Assist employees in organizing work through scheduled meetings by phone or video to decide on scope of work for the week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Define objectives and deliverables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Establish timeframes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask</td>
<td>Ask for an email outlining the agreed upon goals and deliverables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Review status by end of the week or periodically</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Coach employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>Repeat for following week</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Every employee is different

- Directing
- Coaching
- Advising
- Delegating
Template deliverable-based form. This can keep employees accountable and managers aware of the work that is being done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Estimated hours</th>
<th>Actual Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Establishing communications standards

- How might teleworking change communications?
- What happens to impromptu communications? Electronically
- Is it OK to interrupt?
- What types of communication channels are to be used?
- Can there be flex hours while teleworking?
- Can there be core hours?
Teleworkers and communication

- Accessibility
- Contact number
- Ongoing communication within reason
- Election calendar
- Work and meetings
- Personal, non-available time
Communications, continued

Integrate your teleworkers in innovation exchanges such as brainstorming: virtual water cooler

Face time helps build relationships

Use the telephone when possible
Impact on teamwork

- Clear direction from management on attendance
- Every meeting should have a lead with an agenda and clear topics
- Conduct 15-minute team huddles as needed
- Working alone for days without interaction can result in depression
- Teleworkers should be adequately trained on collaborative technology
- Send them tutorials and give them time to learn the tools
Tips for managers

Consider conducting short team huddles, virtual coffee breaks, share personal information during company time

Build trust through interaction so that teleworkers will tell you about problems, and involve you in solutions
Tips for managers

- Send weekly messages to employees to improve morale and optimism
- Make sure that employees maintain work/life balance
- Ensure that you are problem-solving issues as they arise
The teleworker’s role

To create and maintain a safe, quiet and productive work environment at home while developing a trusting relationship with their supervisor through open communication.
Adjustments for employees

IMPACT ON TEAMWORK?

HOW WILL MY MANAGER KNOW THAT I AM WORKING?

INCREASED ISOLATION FROM CO-WORKERS

DEVELOPING GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT
### Teleworking through goal-setting with managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Define objectives and deliverables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Establish timeframes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>Send an email or have a conversation on goals and deliverables to get agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Review status by end of the week or periodically with your manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>Develop a better understanding of what can be done remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>Repeat the process on a weekly basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helpful tips to get started

- Have a morning ritual
- Get dressed, not dressed up
- Schedule virtual breaks with coworkers
- Take breaks to get up and move around
- Eat lunch away from your desk
- Go for walks
- Meditate if possible
- Stay away from the news and radio while working
- Have an end of the day ritual
- Take vacation or personal time off
Teleworkers: Getting organized

Employees should:

▪ Pick a dedicated workspace at their home that provides a safe environment for working

▪ Establish a routine – start at the same time, take breaks, lunch, and end at the same time (this may vary from employee to employee)

▪ Organize their work schedule and tasks based on organizational needs
Ergonomics

Employees would have:

**Desk**
- Ensure a comfortable height

**Chair**
- Adjustable seat, both for height and angle to provide support. An ergonomic chair is preferable (prevents injury)

**Lighting**
- Light should be directed toward the side or behind line of vision
- Direct sunlight should not be used on work surfaces
Ergonomics

Employees would be conscious of:

**Safety**

- Electrical support needed for equipment when configuring workspace
- Cover interconnecting cables to avoid tripping
- Place equipment close to electrical outlets
- Use surge protectors
- Place heavy items on sturdy stands close to walls
- Provide enough air space around computer. Keep out of direct sunlight and away from heaters

**Noise**

- Work quality and perceptions may be impacted by the sounds of crying children, barking dogs, vacuum cleaners, etc.
Teleworkers: training family and friends

- The message to family and friends is that you are at home **working**!
- Decide what interruptions are OK – emergencies, etc., typically they are the same as those OK in the office
- Set rules for office materials
- Understanding that many employees will have children home during this time, agree upfront how your staff can balance time during the day
Suggestions on how to maintain health and wellness

- Keep a regular schedule
- Stay connected with family, friends
- Keep your immune system strong
- Prioritize personal hygiene
- Exercise and stay active
- Get fresh air
- Stay informed
- Limit media consumption
- Set boundaries on work schedule
- Distract and redirect: engage in activities that benefit your well-being, bring you joy and distract you from existing challenges.
- Get creative: share tips with co-workers and friends on what’s working well for you and encourage them to do the same

What can managers do to support employees?

- Show empathy and be available
- Stay connected with communication and meeting tools
- Recognize the impact of isolation and loneliness
- Encourage online training: this is a great time to encourage employees to sharpen their skills with online training
- Check in with your Employee Assistance Program or HR to confirm their availability and to coordinate support for employees
Telework resources through Commuter Services

Announcing the launch of our new Twin Cities Telework website!

Visit [www.tctelework.com](http://www.tctelework.com) to find your work from home materials:

- Commuter telework resources
- Employer telework resources
- Twin Cities Telework webinar series
- Coming soon: Twin Cities Telework newsletter
Questions

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Thank you!