



Future of (how we) Work

April 2022 High Level Meeting Takeaways

Topic: Building Effective Hybrid Teams (Solutions)

This month's meeting included two community speakers: Emilia Epstein, Executive Aide to the CEO at CIC, and Elizabeth Lowery, Principal and Director of Interior Architecture at Elkus Manfredi. Emilia shared the evolution of CIC's experience running hybrid meetings, including the advantages and disadvantages of different hybrid meeting technologies, and tips for running smooth meetings. Elizabeth presented data as well as her own observations around workplace productivity. You can see Emilia and Elizabeth's presentations on the Kendall Square Association's [Future of \(how we\) Work webpage](#).

Creating Hybrid Team Culture

Dilemma: Company attempts to provide incentives (e.g. senior leadership visits, events, food, etc.) to encourage staff to be back into the office have largely been ineffective. How are others welcoming staff back?

Solutions:

- One participant shared that her leasing team members submit their in-office schedules on a weekly basis. As a result, they are able to coordinate in-person meetings more effectively and build transparency among teammates. The participant also mentioned that the company pays for team members' lunch (up to \$15) on days they are in.
- A second participant offered how her company distributes paid parking passes to staff who are fully onsite, and provides the option for those who work hybrid to validate their parking.
- Another participant explained how her organization set up a lunch and happy hour schedule, and noticed that these events have become her organization's "anchor days", where more of her team are likely to be in the office together.

Dilemma: Virtual gatherings have also been tough for many companies. Staff are not engaging because they are fatigued from meeting extensively on platforms like Zoom, Google, Microsoft Teams and Webex during work, and they do not have the energy to engage further in social events at work using the virtual platforms. How can companies create and maintain culture online?

Solutions:

- One participant suggested to survey staff. While there are drawbacks to this suggestion (e.g. survey fatigue), the participant mentioned that it is nevertheless important to be aware of what activities are of interest to staff.
- Another participant stated that her company tried various virtual things to engage staff with good success, including a wine and cheese event, and a painting night. She also mentioned sending swag boxes as a way to surprise and delight staff, especially if the

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boxes enhance the experience of a virtual gathering. Outside of events, she suggested creating interest specific group chats for team members as a way to build relationships and create camaraderie.

- A third participant offered the idea of incorporating small impromptu breakout meetings at the end of a larger meeting for staff to talk to each other casually.
 - Building on this, another participant agreed and shared that while her team used to get right to work, they now take the first ten minutes to share personal talk. She has found that prioritizing such connections regularly has worked for her team, while higher profile community building events that require much more extensive planning, such as “game nights,” have not worked.

Hybrid Team Management

Dilemma: How are organizations managing staff’s hybrid schedules?

Solution

- Two participants raised how their organizations track staff’s in-office and remote work days. One of the participants who shared this recounted how their organization has been tracking compliance for the past four months with success. All staff sign a contract and agree to follow the company’s set hybrid schedule (three days work from home, two days work in the office). If a staff member wants to change their schedule, then they need to fill out a new contract.

Communicating Change Management Processes

Dilemma: In general, how have companies communicated big changes and decisions to the rest of the team and departments?

Solution:

- A participant described her organization’s process as one that involves setting up a conference call with all managers involved, regardless of whether or not they are decision-makers. The purpose of including all managers is to evaluate proposed ideas and decisions with them and to solicit feedback. The participant found that this structure has helped her organization to make better decisions. Once decisions are made, her organization passes the information to all managers, who then communicate changes out to the rest of the organization.