



How to create a happier and more productive hybrid team

A research paper by Dr Stewart Desson,
Dr Joana Suta, and Dr Tatiana Schifferle Rowson

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Researchers



Dr Stewart Desson

PhD, FCIPD

Stewart is an experienced Business Psychologist, the CEO and founder of Lumina Learning, and the author of the innovative Lumina Spark psychometric. He has a PhD in Business Psychology and is a Chartered Fellow with the CIPD. His PhD has shown that 'adaptive' and 'maladaptive' traits can be measured at both ends of the Big Five's polarities. He created the hugely successful Lumina Spark psychometric which is used with clients across the globe.

Stewart has a passion for building a community of like-minded professionals innovatively applying Lumina Learning's suite of Products and Solutions. He is particularly focused on looking at how personality can help and hinder people's application and effectiveness in terms of personal and professional development, innovation, leadership, engagement and dealing with pressure.



Dr Tatiana Rowson

PhD, Fellow, UK HEA

Tatiana is Lecturer in Coaching at Henley Business School and a business and coaching psychologist with international academic and consulting experience.

Originally trained as a counselling psychologist, Tatiana worked for over 12 years in industry. Her area of practice includes executive coaching, executive assessment and learning and development solutions.

Tatiana has acted as a consultant for high profile organisations in the UK, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates, ranging from national, international, public and private and operating in various sectors including banking and finance, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, media, energy and manufacturing. In 2014, Tatiana joined academia, where she combines her practical experience and academic knowledge in her teaching.

Tatiana is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Her research interests are in the areas of ageing, career and wellbeing.



Dr Joana Suta

PhD, BPP University

Joana is a Business Psychologist with international experience in consultancy and research, particularly in Italy and the UK. During her career as a consultant and a researcher, she has managed projects while delivering and sharing results with stakeholders, helping them to gain new insight on their business and organisation efficiency. She has worked for private and public sector organisations providing high-impact organisational efficiency solutions. She is also involved in voluntary activities with the Albanian community on wellbeing.

Joana is a lecturer with the Department of Psychology at BPP University in London, UK. Her research interests are in the areas of individual differences, inclusivity, and wellbeing.

Research Population

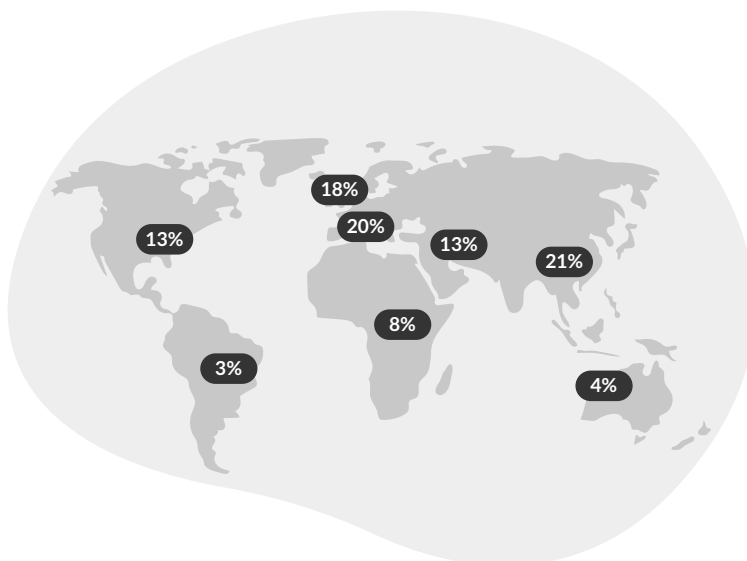
- SMEs and Large Corporations asked to make available to staff
- Sectors: Government, Technology, Banking, Manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals, Education
- 5 continents, translated into 10 languages
- Global reach across Americas, EMEA & Asia Pacific
- Focus on Leaders, Managers & White-Collar workers
- Data was gathered between May and September 2020

Education

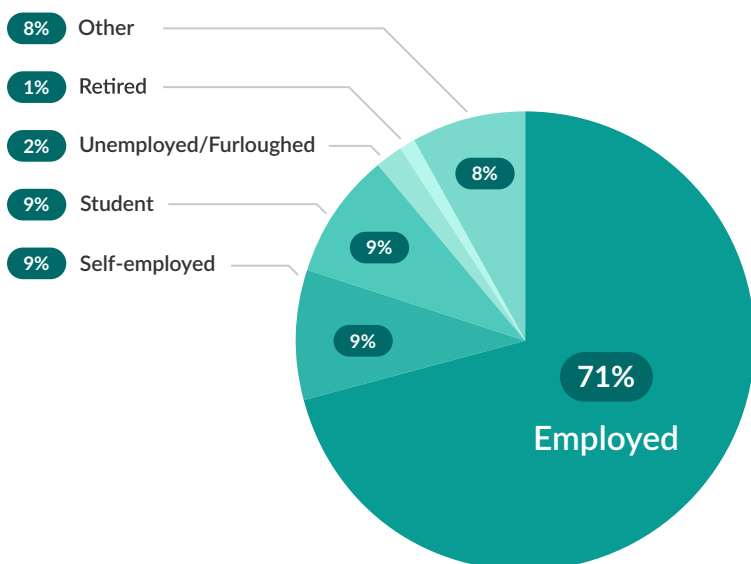
- 82% Have a degree
- 18% Do not have a degree

100% Total

Global Breakdown of Data, N > 5,000 Participants



Employment Status



Percentage of people who experienced a mental health issue during lockdown

- 17% Australia
- 16% India
- 16% Hong Kong
- 15% Canada
- 14% South Africa
- 11% United Kingdom
- 10% United States
- 10% Mexico
- 9% Taiwan
- 9% Poland
- 6% China
- 5% Albania

11% Global Average

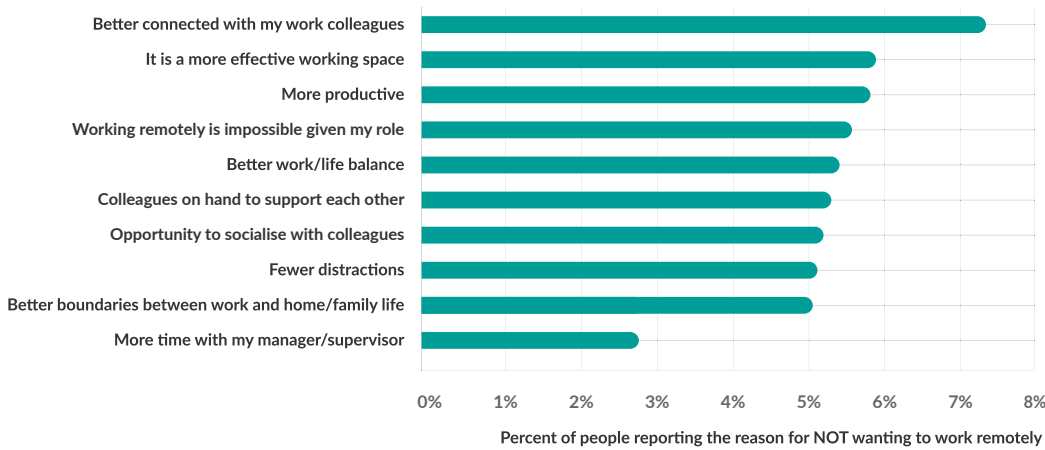
The Genie is out of the bottle!

- 90%** of staff who experienced remote working for the first time want to continue working remotely
- 10%** however, hate it and never want to leave the office

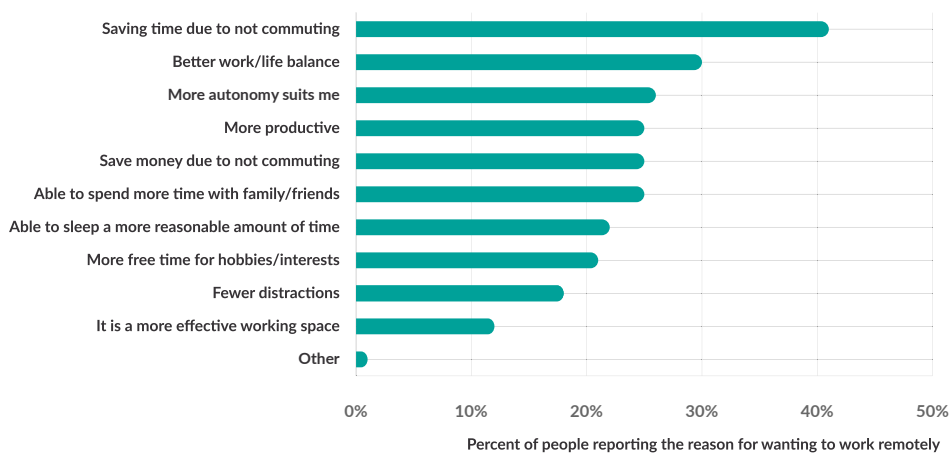
After the COVID-19 crisis is over, would you prefer to work remotely?

- 10%** I do not want to work remotely at all
- 48%** I want to work remotely some of the time
- 30%** I want to work remotely most of the time
- 12%** I want to work remotely all the time

Reasons for not wanting to work remotely



Reasons for wanting to work remotely



In summary, the benefit of remote working is saving time on the commute, which can be reinvested into:

- 1. Family and Friends/Hobbies**
- 2. Sleep**
- 3. Working Longer Hours**

During lockdown, those still in work are earning less money and working longer hours for it

Has your household income changed in the last 4 months?

- 21% Decrease by over 35%
- 26% Decrease by 5-35%
- 46% Remained roughly the same
- 6% Increase of 5-35%
- 1% Increase of over 35%

While working remotely during the last 4 months, how would you describe the amount of time you work each day?

- 43% Working more hours
- 36% Working roughly the same hours
- 21% Working fewer hours

Personality Factor:

Discipline Driven (High Conscientiousness) correlates positively with working more hours ($r=.126^{**}$)

Inspiration Driven (Low Conscientiousness) correlates negatively with working more hours ($r=-.125^{**}$)

And our personality impacts how we respond to the crisis

- Some of us are more prone to becoming workaholics
- While others are prone to becoming less productive
- Your personality is a highly predictive of whether you wear masks and socially-distance, or whether you have a strong desire to take risks and break rules
- Extraverted people were found to be more optimistic of the crisis resolving itself and getting back to normal
- While others could become more pessimistic and depressed about the situation

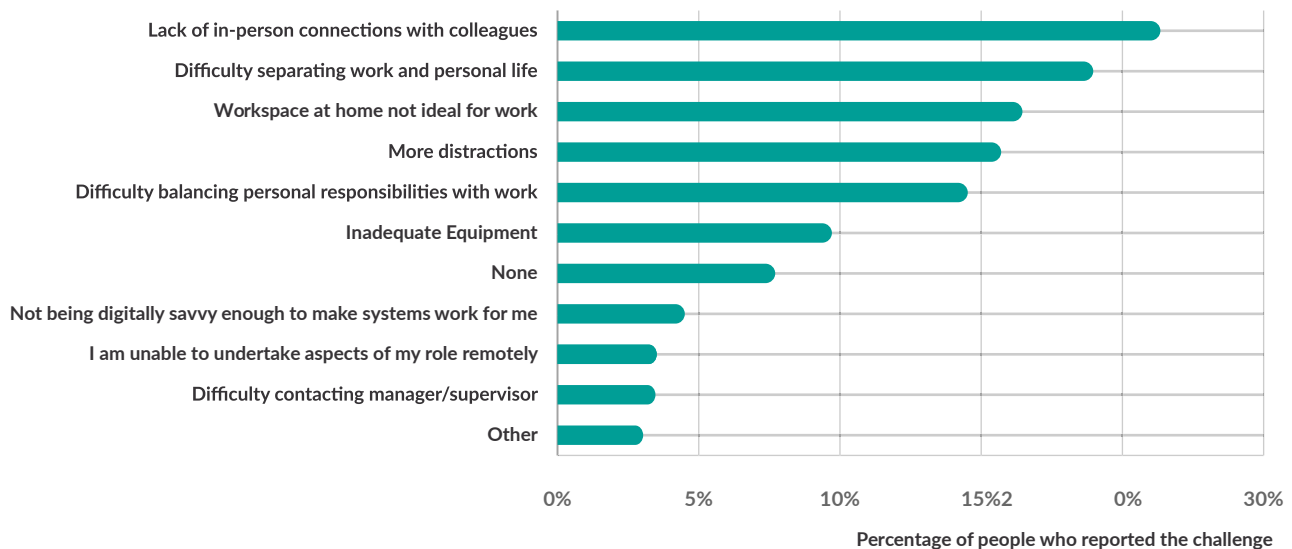
Employers need to support their new-found remote workers with:

1. Increased communication with colleagues and managers

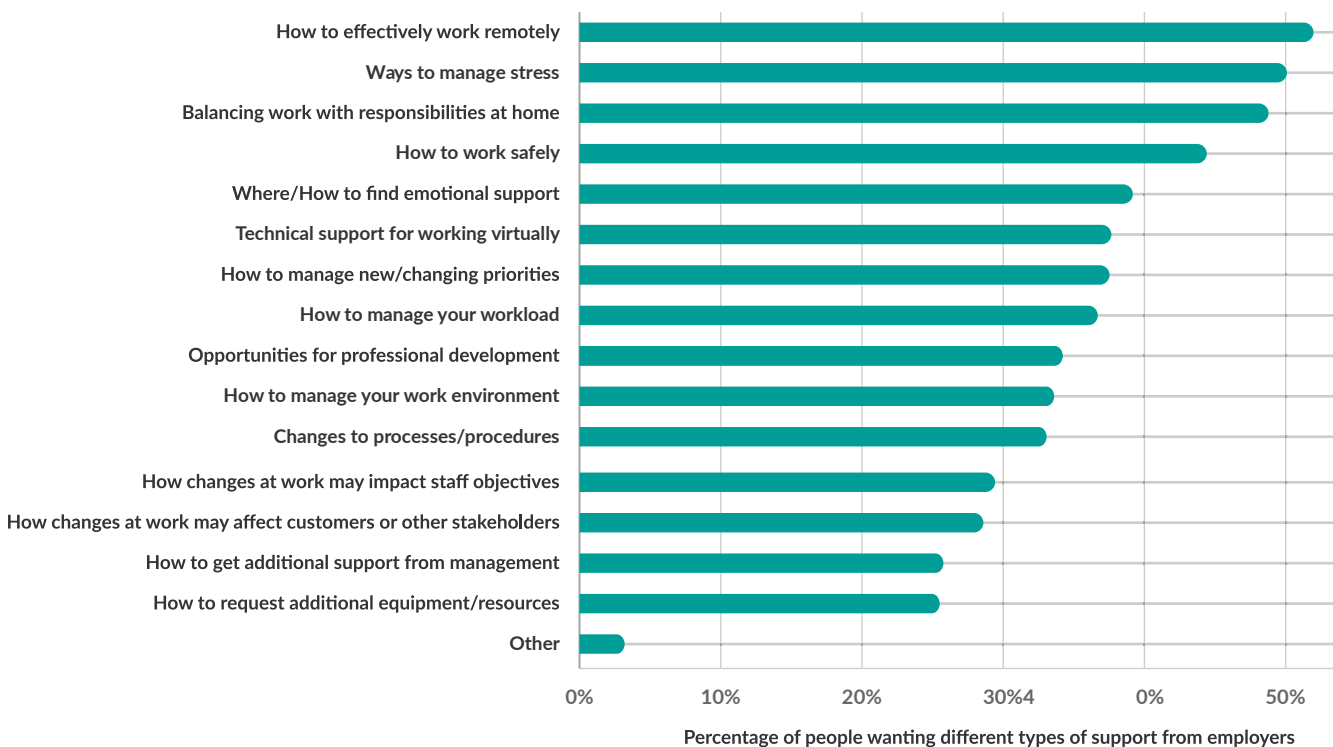
2. Coaching for Emotional Well-Being

3. Enhanced practical support on how to work effectively remotely

What challenges have you faced since starting to work remotely?



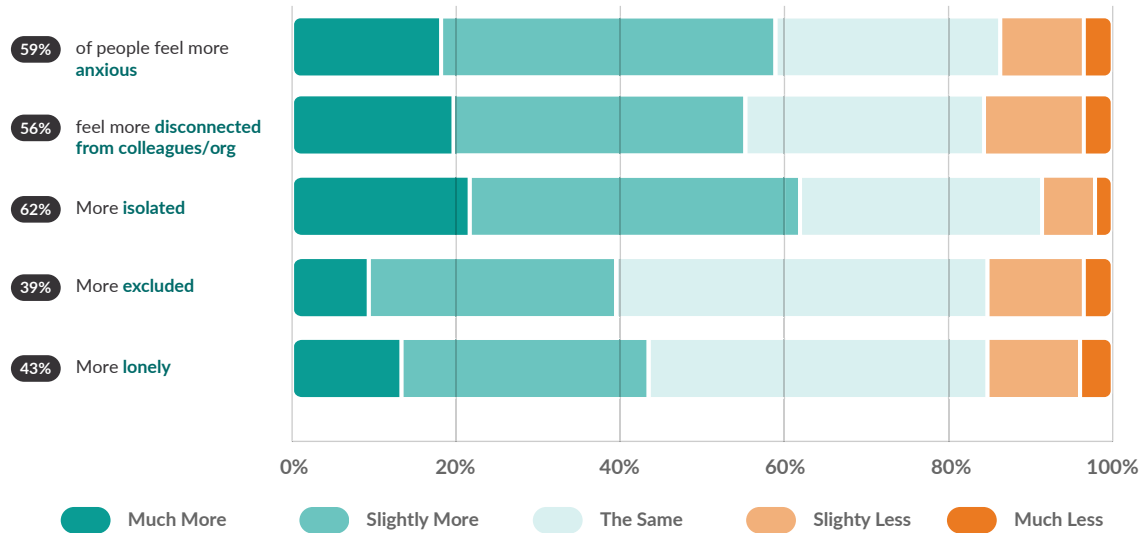
What kind of additional support should employers provide their employees with?



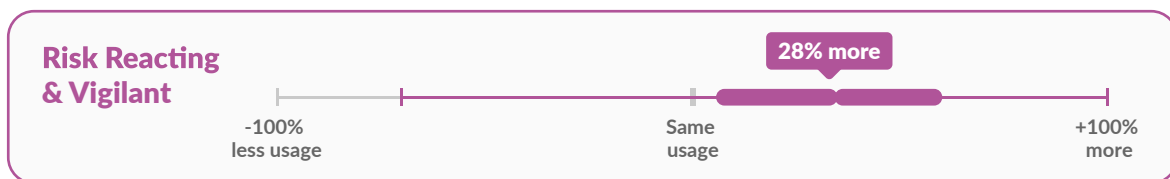
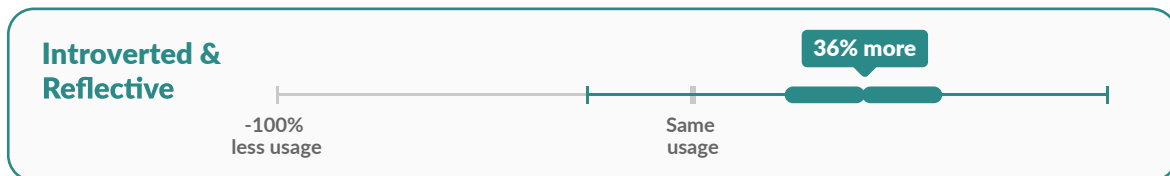
The crisis has also impacted our personality

- We are less extraverted and less spontaneous than we were before
- We are more reflective and vigilant
- However, negative feelings of anxiety, disconnection, and isolation have spiked

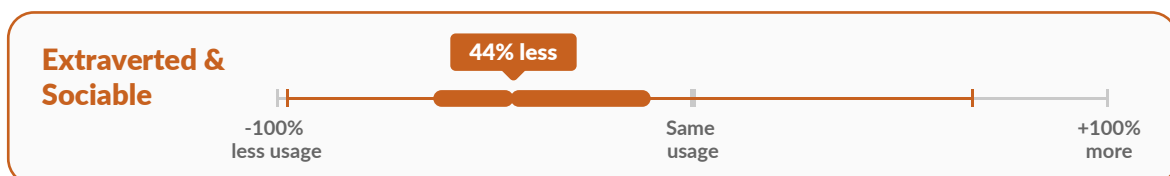
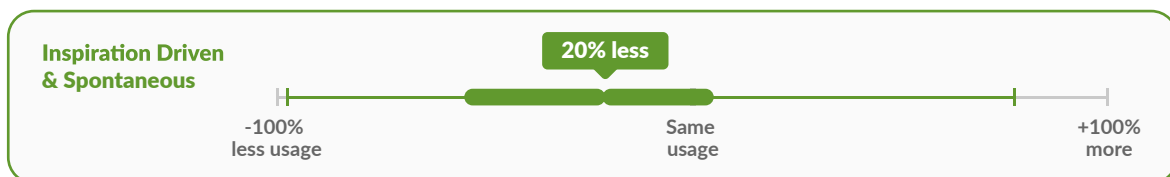
Negative Feelings have **INCREASED** during the crisis - compared to before the crisis



Increase in 2 Key Personality Traits During the Crisis



Decrease in 2 Key Personality Traits During the Crisis



So where are hybrid teams three years on?

Three years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we work has transformed significantly. Initially, the move to remote work was seen mostly as a positive shift, with benefits such as increased flexibility. However, subsequent research and experience have shown both the challenges and benefits in greater depth (Bloom et al., 2020).

Post-COVID work models vary considerably, based on company and employee needs. Choudhury et al. (2021) discussed how factors such as company values, job roles, and technology readiness play significant roles in determining the most suitable work model.



Understanding the Psychological Impact

The emotional and psychological effects of remote work have been a focus of multiple studies:

Adaptation

Employees, through trial and error, have adapted to the new normal. Bapuji et al. (2020) found that employees rely heavily on technology to stay connected and maintain collaboration.

Work-Life Balance

Kniffin et al. (2021) discussed the initial struggles in establishing work-home boundaries but also highlighted the strategies employed by workers to successfully separate their personal and professional lives.

Career Concerns

There's a growing sentiment that remote workers may have fewer career progression opportunities due to decreased visibility. Wharton's research (2021) supports this concern, noting the potential for remote workers to miss out on in-person networking and mentorship.

The Challenges and Benefits of Hybrid Work Today

Hybrid work presents its unique dynamics:

Collaboration

Maintaining collaboration is crucial. As noted by Gorlick (2020), the effectiveness of team collaboration is a determining factor in the success of hybrid models.

Resource Management

Efficient resource allocation is imperative. Research from Gartner (2021) emphasises the importance of balancing resources for both in-office and remote environments.

Maintaining Company Culture

With dispersed teams, retaining company culture is a concern. Borys (2020) discusses the nuances of ensuring a consistent and inclusive company culture across different work setups.

Technology's Evolving Role

Technology has remained at the forefront of facilitating the new work paradigms:

Virtual Reality Meetings

Companies are moving beyond traditional video calls. Research from Aragon Research (2022) suggests that VR meetings might soon become the norm due to their immersive nature.

AI Tools

Artificial intelligence assists in improving remote work efficiency. McKinsey (2021) points out that AI can analyse work patterns and suggest improvements, playing a crucial role in optimising remote work strategies.



So how should you focus on a hybrid strategy fit for today?

Three years post-pandemic, the nuances of work continue to evolve. The studies referenced highlight the multifaceted nature of remote and hybrid work. For organisations, the emphasis should be on adaptive strategies, addressing both operational concerns as your processes, and employee wellbeing as your people.

Our top tips to make a more productive and happier hybrid workplace

For creating a remote working policy that enhances productivity, communication, collaboration and engagement, you'll need to show some love for your people in the support they need, which is a little different to the traditional face to face format. Likewise, you'll need to finetune processes for working to be adapted too, ensuring people are enabled to work comfortably in a way that engages them fully.

On Your People



Incentivise your people, as individuals, not groups of at-home vs in-office

Offer as much flexibility as possible, ideally with options of full time at-home, full time in-office, and the mix of both. The unique preferences of your people and the blend best for them, will influence their productivity, their wellbeing, and with that, the effectiveness of your hybrid policy. Getting it right will likely increase their loyalty, boost retention and add an attractive workplace benefit to talent considering joining you. Surround your people with a constructive culture that lets them know you're doing what you can to make hybrid working, smooth, enjoyable and accessible.

Even the most positive and popular workplace changes can be a real cause of stress, impacting wellbeing, engagement, and productivity. Although popular, not everyone prefers to work hybrid. Highlight the attractive benefits: lack of commuting, more sleep, more time with family and friends, the ability to work some extra hours on work projects they're passionate about with the freed-up time (if they choose to do so).

Adapt your Personal Development & Leadership Training

Traditional personal development learning experiences are often emphasised by physical presence. Modern training should incorporate leading remote teams, maintaining engagement online, and leveraging digital communication tools effectively. There isn't a 'one size fits all' way of doing this, but test what works for your people and go with what sticks.

Mental Health Support & Coaching for Wellbeing

With isolation and rapid change being challenges for many hybrid workers, organisations should enhance their mental health support provisions. This could be in the form of regular check-ins, the offer of coaching sessions, access to counselling, or mental health days. Consider what your organisation is doing to ensure your people are coping with the stress that can be triggered.

Cultural Cohesion in Hybrid Models

Promote initiatives that foster community and belonging, even when teams are dispersed. This could include virtual team-building exercises, remote onboarding programmes, or hybrid team retreats.

Trust is Everything

With remote work, micromanagement can be detrimental. Encourage managers to trust their teams, focusing on outcomes rather than hours worked.

On Your Processes



Communication with Managers and Colleagues

Introduce extra catch-ups, regular team meetings and the ability to contact managers directly with ease. Zoom, Slack, and Microsoft Team chat channels are ideal for this, but there are many more options too. Consider adding some social catch-ups or events that don't relate to work either - it's a great way to incentivise people to experiment and participate in digital communication and connect with one another remotely without the weight of work upon them.

Practical Support & Training

Remote working brings new demands on employees for time management, communication, collaboration and the upskilling to use extra technologies in the workplace. Surround your employees with practical support on these challenges. Consider Learning Management Systems (LMS), team meetings to showcase technical training and offer one-to-one support from whoever is championing your new remote working policy.

Emphasis on Digital Wellbeing

With screen time increasing due to remote work, employees face challenges related to digital eye strain, mental fatigue, and work-life imbalance. Encourage regular breaks and offer access to digital wellbeing resources or workshops. (Reference: *Microsoft's 2020 Work Trend Index* which highlighted the importance of wellbeing in the digital era.)

Re-Examine Performance Metrics

Traditional performance metrics might not capture the full range of contributions from remote workers. Incorporate metrics that account for collaborative efforts, adaptability, and self-management. (Reference: *Gallup's 2020 report on performance management*).

Enhance Flexibility in Learning & Development

We touched on this for our tips on helping your people, but we'll say it again because it matters so much. L&D initiatives should be optimised for both in-person and remote access. Consider platforms that allow for asynchronous learning, so employees can learn at their own pace.

Rethink Workspace Design

For companies maintaining physical spaces, re-evaluate their purpose. Spaces can be reimaged as collaboration hubs rather than regular working areas. Incorporating these recommendations, backed by research, will allow organisations to better navigate the evolving landscape of remote and hybrid working. However, it's crucial for professionals in HR and L&D to stay updated with emerging research to ensure their strategies remain relevant and effective.

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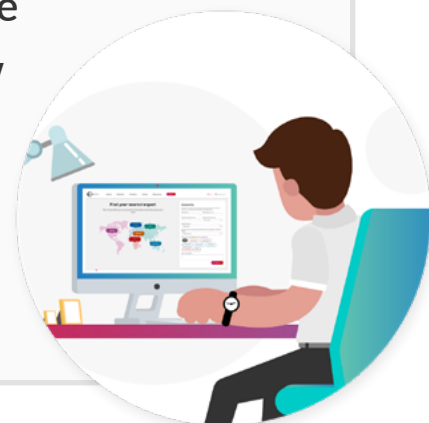
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