TIPS FOR MANAGING & LEADING IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

Many organizations are reimagining their workplace and embracing hybrid work, in which employees will spend some time working in the office and some time working from home. However, in order to implement a successful hybrid work environment, organizations must set up the right infrastructure, employees need to adopt new work behaviors and skills, and managers need to lead differently. We focused a number of action steps on organizational infrastructure needed, including: Creating a Successful Onboarding and Integration Program, Building Your Training Program to Support Your Post-Pandemic Hybrid Work Environment, Maintaining Mentoring & Connection in a Hybrid Environment, and Overcoming the Myth of the Loss of 5Cs By Building the Right Flex Infrastructure. We produced an action step last month on ways individuals can set themselves up for success in a hybrid environment: Tips for Individual Success in a Hybrid Environment. Now we want to focus on ways managers can lead most effectively in a hybrid environment. Here are the Alliance's recommendations:

1. **Set the Tone:** Managers and leaders must set the tone for their teams and organization. We urge managers and leaders to act with empathy in order to support employees in this new environment, to check in regularly with them to see how things are going, and to act on feedback in order to make necessary changes and gain employees' trust. Managers and leaders must be mindful of their actions in addition to their words – employees will look to them for cues as to what is acceptable. If a team manager never works remotely, then employees on the team may feel uneasy doing so as well. Additionally, organizations and leaders must work with resistant executives to get them on board – show these executives the business case in a variety of ways.

2. **Create Opportunities for Connection**: Managers must be intentional about creating ways to build connections and relationships, both in person and virtually. Leaders must think through how to run meetings in the most productive and equitable fashion – Should meetings be done virtually so all can participate equally? Should meetings be held when all are in the office? What are ways to gain participation in virtual meetings (i.e. chats; break-out groups, etc.)? Leaders must think through new ways to mentor as well – Can you hold open office hours? Have you thought about virtually debriefing after a client meeting? Have you considered virtual and in-person mentoring meetings?

3. **Allow for Collaboration:** Managers must be thoughtful about collaboration in a hybrid environment in order to have meaningful learning opportunities and make sure that

collaboration is equitable. Have you utilized virtual collaboration tools (i.e. padlet; whiteboarding; track changes; etc.) to allow for team members to work together most effectively? Do you set aside some time when employees are in-person for collaboration and meetings (i.e. in-person brainstorming sessions; client events)? Have you utilized tactics to make sure to capture thoughts from less vocal employees (i.e. ask for comments before and after meetings; utilize chats; manage speaking time in meetings by asking specific employees for feedback)?

4. **Leverage Technology:** Managers must leverage technology to lead effectively. Consider utilizing Zoom instead of phone calls for team brainstorming and collaboration sessions. Create a collaborative environment when team members are virtual, including utilizing the chat function, incorporating virtual collaboration tools, sharing screens, etc. Talk to other managers and employees about what types of technology has helped most, and seek their input for additional platforms or technological tools that could help the team.

5. **Set Communication Norms:** As a leader, you must set communication protocols for your team. Who should team members inform regarding work locations (i.e. assistant; team members; supervisors; administration)? How should team members inform others regarding work locations? What is the default expectation regarding availability (i.e. should team members be available during business hours and inform supervisors if there are constraints during this time regarding availability)? When should team members communicate via e-mail vs. phone vs. video vs. instant messenger? Are there times employees should text? Consider implementing systems to make team communications seamless (i.e. specific directions on communicating location; team availability tracker; rules for what mode of communication to use and when).

6. **Provide Meaningful Opportunities for Contribution:** Provide all team members with growth and development opportunities. Think through stretch projects that employees need to grow. See if you can include employees in client meetings – sometimes virtual environments make doing so easier as travel costs will not be incurred. Make sure to continue to debrief with colleagues/team members after important meetings. Provide feedback soon after projects/milestones are completed so that employees can understand their successes and work on development goals.

7. **Interrupt Bias:** As a leader in a hybrid environment, you should expect unconscious bias to take place. Employees who previously faced bias, including women, diverse employees, and caregivers, will continue to face bias and such bias may be magnified in a hybrid setting. When you see or hear unconscious bias, you should interrupt it in various ways. Serve as an ally and speak up against bias. Implement systems to

overcome bias, including feedback mechanisms, work allocation procedures, and checks on the evaluation and advancement processes.

8. **<u>Respect Boundaries:</u>** While remote work proved to be very productive for many industries during the pandemic, employees have also mentioned a high rate of burn-out. To combat fatigue and overwork, managers need to intentionally support employees and respect boundaries. Managers may want to consider the following: Do you mention when a task is not urgent or let employees know the deadline upfront? Have you developed trust with your employees such that they will voice to you when they are overworked? Can you work with someone from Talent to help identify employees who have been working hard and check-in with them? Rather than send e-mails out in the middle of the night or in early morning hours, can you schedule e-mails to go out during the business day?

The Alliance is here to help provide guidance on ways your managers and leaders can succeed in a hybrid environment. Members have access to several Alliance resources as part of their benefits: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). Take a look at our action step, <u>Leverage Alliance Benefits</u>, which discusses ways to partner with us and most effectively utilize your benefits. To discuss specific strategic advice/resources, contact [Manar Morales](#).