

Best Practices for a Hybrid Workplace

Leadership:

- **Connection to Strategic Goals:** Too often, hybrid work is managed at a tactical level. While important, it is also critically important to ensure a future vision is part of the mix. Ensure that the vision, goals and objectives for the department are inspiring and that they are strongly linked with strategies for hybrid work. Consider how hybrid work will support a meaningful strategy, enable rewarding work and contribute to the culture.
- **Lead by example:** Be flexible in coordinating how work gets done by the team, focusing on outcomes. Performance is assessed on contribution, not the individual's location.
- **Engage:** Build engagement through collaboration and open dialogue. Be conscious of collaboration equity and avoid favoring in-office participation due to their physical presence in the workplace. Focus on active listening and facilitative behaviors that elicit different viewpoints and encourage participation.
- **Building Community:** We are one community at Wellesley and it is important for each of us to support flexwork as part of our culture of well-being. We should remind ourselves that immediate responses from our colleagues are not always necessary and we should respect the boundaries of work and life outside of work.
- **Reinforce the value of on-campus presence:** As a residential college, we have a responsibility to sustain a vibrant campus community where in-person engagement is essential to student success and to institutional effectiveness. Another primary reason people want to be in the office is to reconnect with their colleagues. They want to feel connected to a social fabric that nurtures them and lets them feel known and appreciated. They want to expand their learning, since growing skills together is one of the most effective ways to learn. People have an instinct to matter, and work is a powerful way people express their talent, apply their skills and contribute to communities. When people come into the office and share their positive experiences, it creates forward momentum for others to join

in—seeking to be part of the culture, connections and camaraderie. Activities that involve brainstorming or collaborative group work tend to be more successful in person. Managers should think about the specific function of their teams and determine which activities would benefit from being accomplished in the office.

Trust:

- Cognitive trust, which is grounded in the belief and the understanding that others are dependable and have the competencies to be able to collaborate effectively on a common task. Resist the temptation to micromanage to “compensate” for not being onsite; instead lean towards the use of collaborative tools and clearly documented and socialized goals/expectations.
- Emotional trust, which is grounded in the belief that employees feel that managers have care and concern for them. Increase your awareness of Work/Life and Whole You programs offered by Wellesley College.

Teambuilding:

- Consider allocating time for the team to talk about non-work-related topics.
- Celebrate successes of individuals or the team.
- Be open with your team that hybrid work is new and different. Talk about what is working and what isn't. Make adjustments as this continues to be an iterative process.
- Managers should participate in ongoing education and training in managing a hybrid work environment and goals should be articulated that relate to ongoing development in this area.
- If space allows, consider a day a week when all team members are on campus and schedule the time with team/community building activities. Office time can be used for individual meetings to develop the supervisor-employee relationship. Time spent in the office can also be used to develop positive team dynamics,

team morale, overall engagement, setting group expectations and informally communicating and establishing workplace culture.

- Employees who are on-campus serving constituents should avoid saying that their colleagues are “not in” on a given day when they are working remotely. Instead, the on-campus employee should tell anyone inquiring that their colleague is working off site and offer to connect both parties by sharing contact information.
- Discuss what work employees should do in which location. Recommend that individuals be intentional about where they’re working for given tasks and suggest teams have discussions about the points in their projects when it is best to be face-to-face, all-remote or hybrid. For example, people may want to come into the office when a project requires complex problem solving and face-to-face collaboration. Being together in the office may be better for tough conversations or resolving prickly issues. People may also want to be in the office to build relationships with colleagues, or when they want to tap into the energy of being around other people. And they may want to stay home for more routine work or tasks which don’t require a lot of different perspectives.
- Examine work processes to ensure that they are not dependent on team members being co-located.

Wellness:

- Talk to team members regularly about how they are doing. Check in often, even if it is for 10-15 minutes. If you are on-campus, go for a walk or grab a coffee and encourage that of others.
- Physical distance can lead to psychological distance. It is much easier to see if an employee is struggling if they are in person. Be deliberate about reaching out to check on remote workers .

Team Communication:

- Discuss methods for communication with the team and understand individual preferences.
- Consider use of google chat for quick questions
- Schedule a “check-in” meeting with the entire team on a regular basis
- Capture hybrid schedules in a shared document to provide clarity on who is available and when they are available.
- Find asynchronous ways to stay connected on a collaboration project. For example, encourage team members to provide access to working versions of documents.

Recruitment and Onboarding:

- Review hiring practices. While zoom interviews are here to stay, some candidates represent very differently in person. A blended process that includes both zoom interviews and in person interviews is recommended.
- It will be important for new employees to spend some time in the office as they go through the onboarding process. Make this expectation clear to final candidates when offering the position. It’s a great opportunity for new employees to meet peers, supervisors, and managers, as well as to get a firsthand understanding of the College and its culture.
- Select a buddy for new employees who can answer general questions and introduce them to others.

Meetings:

Zoom Meetings: There are advantages to maintaining zoom meetings, even if some team members are in the office. It reduces the risk of prioritizing those in person and does not single out those connecting via zoom.

Hybrid Meetings:

- Always provide a zoom link and physical location for all meetings.
- Set the expectation that those who are on campus will meet in person.
- Allow for 5-10 minutes in between meetings to give those who are remote and in person time in between meetings.
- Consider the physical location of a hybrid meeting to ensure you have the proper technology.
- The organizer should connect the remote individual as the first order of business. You will want the remote individual to be included in any small talk that occurs as individuals enter the room.
- The expectation is that cameras will be on during a hybrid meeting. The reason for this is because we had a pre-existing sense of community where we meet and greet each other face to face and this should continue in a hybrid environment.
- When you have a discussion during the meeting, make sure to ask for questions from the remote individual. Either ask them first, or at least be balanced between the two audiences. Ask the remote individual to use Zoom's raise hand feature to indicate that they would like to say something. The organizer or their designee needs to pay attention to this.
- Do your best to allow for the remote individual to see everyone in the room and visa versa.

- Focus on the needs of the remote employee equally to the needs of the in-person employees.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, survey the group about the experience in order to improve future meetings.