MANAGING HYBRID TEAMS

4 top hurdles for hybrid team managers, and how to overcome them.
The global pandemic transformed the workplace forever. A quick glance at the numbers reveals why organisations are moving to master hybrid working.

To get hybrid working right, firms must be flexible and consider the impact on colleagues, customers and other stakeholders. Siloed decisions about hybrid work practices are likely to backfire. Yet avoiding the question of hybrid working is not an option for forward-thinking firms.

### MANAGING HYBRID TEAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>63% of high-growth companies have implemented 'productivity anywhere' workforce models (Accenture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55% of workers globally prefer a hybrid model and a further 25% want to work remotely full time (Stanford)</td>
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<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74% of Gen Z workers prefer face-to-face communication, as do 68% of Baby Boomers and 66% of Gen Xers (Forbes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57% of businesses that implemented hybrid working performed better against workforce performance and productivity targets (PwC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69% of companies with negative or no growth reject the concept of hybrid workforces (Accenture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52% of employers support hybrid working (McKinsey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34% of workers cite face-to-face interruptions from colleagues as the biggest reason they lose focus at work (The Economist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78% of HR professionals believe flexible schedules are effective at increasing retention (Crain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9% of employees relocated to another location during the pandemic, making a return to the office full-time impossible (Apollo Technical)</td>
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Hybrid work represents a significant change to working norms, which means navigating uncertainty. ‘Hybrid working’ is now a familiar phrase, but in many organisations, its definition is still evolving. According to the CIPD, ‘hybrid working’ is ‘a form of flexible working where workers spend some of their time working remotely, and some in the employer’s workplace.’ Hybrid working can also involve other forms of flexible working including time flexibility. For teams and managers, hybrid work represents a significant change to working norms, which means navigating uncertainty.

With many countries putting Covid-19 lock downs behind them, fully remote models have been replaced by hybrid ones. Hybrid is more complex than fully remote work and involves supplanting working norms that have lasted for decades. Hybrid work on this scale is unprecedented. 86% of technology leaders have introducing hybrid working models (Deloitte), and conversations about updating the workplace and workday are underway in less digitalised sectors too.
Understandably, many leaders have resisted hybrid. Introducing the new model makes it more difficult to monitor employee productivity. Yet employee surveillance and micromanagement have never been optimal strategies for maximising productivity. To enable effective hybrid working, companies must revisit their systems of performance management, recognition and reward.

Failure to address the question of employee recognition has seen employees voting with their feet as part of a globalised ‘Great Resignation’, with unprecedented employee attrition across many sectors and geographies. According to Microsoft, half the world’s workforce is on the move. Though recessionary times may curb this trend, a long tail impact of the introduction of remote and hybrid working models is that employers must now compete for talent on a global scale.

**REAL WORLD IMPACTS OF HYBRID WORKING**

The introduction of hybrid working has had mixed impacts on employers and workforces. Commercially, 20% of businesses report reduced productivity as a result of remote working (ONS), yet an Accenture study links hybrid work with high growth. 77% of UK organisations plan to reconfigure their existing office space and half will reduce the size of their office portfolio (PwC), which means at least superficial savings for both businesses and telecommuting employees.
Remodelling the workplace has other implications. Altering organisational footprints presents an opportunity to address geographic and economic equality and improve diversity and inclusion. However, hybrid working increases our reliance on technology, creating different kinds of access (and security) issues. Gartner research reveals a 44% increase in the use of online collaboration tools since pre-pandemic times.

Meanwhile, Gen Z workers who are earlier in their careers are less enthusiastic about hybrid working than older generations. Many are concerned about a lack of professional development due to weakened professional relationships (Forbes). Studies also show that working from home can increase burnout, erode social networks and reduce engagement over time. Deloitte research found that 66% of HR professionals consider integrating new hires in a hybrid setting a major challenge.

Organisations face the opportunity and challenge of rethinking the fundamentals of the workplace. To get the most out of their workforces, businesses must avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach, and instead employ personalisation to maintain engagement as they test hybrid models. This guide looks at 4 key hurdles for hybrid team management, and how your organisation can overcome them.

More than half of workforces are now hybrid or remote.
(Mckinsey)

Most HR professionals struggle to integrate new hires in a hybrid setting.
(Deloitte)
Organisations adopting hybrid working models are at greater risk of employee disengagement. Without the visibility afforded by the office, firms must gain greater understanding of their people in order to tap into their intrinsic motivation. This is different for different people. Are you dealing with an extrovert who will miss the social life an office provides, or a quieter individual who needs to be brought into discussions? How will they cope with uncertainty? To set hybrid teams up for success, managers must recognise how hybrid work impacts the engagement levels of different kinds of people and take steps to reshape the working environment accordingly. Harvard psychologist William Marston identified four broad behavioural preferences in his now famous ‘DISC’ model. Here’s how managers can help each of them vault over the hurdles to hybrid working success.
1 DEMOTIVATING DOMINANT INDIVIDUALS

People who have high ‘Dominance’ in their behavioural profiles are driven to accomplish results. They are focused on expediting action, comfortable with challenge, and decisive. Dominance profiles typically prefer brief, direct communication and are likely to be assertive. More comfortable with conflict than other profiles, dominant individuals can come across as curt or even rude without the context that the office provides, especially by team members with opposing communication preferences (those with Steadiness profiles, discussed below).

As self-starters, remote work is unlikely to demotivate dominant types. Due to their drive to succeed, dominant profiles may also be highly conscientious, the trait that most strongly predisposes an individual to succeed at hybrid working (MacRae). Strong goal orientation and high standards often correlate with professional success but can also lead to burnout which may be less visible in a hybrid setting. Dominance profiles will find the freedom and challenge of hybrid working motivating but are likely to become frustrated if it impedes the delivery of results.

HOW CAN MANAGERS AVOID DEMOTIVATING DOMINANT HYBRID TEAM MEMBERS?

To empower dominant profiles, managers must be direct and results-oriented, and communicate the big picture. Whether in the office or remote, dominant individuals want to get to the point, achieve results, and attain rewards. Rather than issuing commands, managers can motivate ‘high D’ individuals by asking them how they are going to achieve their goals. Providing the right level of challenge, whilst being alert to signs of stress and burnout is a crucial consideration for managers.
Giving more dominant individuals clarity on goals and objectives will help dominant individuals deliver. This may be complicated by changing processes and systems in the hybrid setting. In this context, General Intelligence and Personality assessments, which measure speed of cognition and the traits associated with professional success, can be transformational tools for managers seeking to build, motivate and develop their teams.

“Organisations must cater for personal preferences in order to get the most from each individual, while also maintaining organisational and team priorities. They must also ensure it all hangs together in a way that works for everybody, alongside all the other changes taking place.”

Victoria Robinson, Hybrid Workforce Strategy & Culture, PwC UK

2 IMPEding Influential Individuals

More influential people are motivated by their effect on others. They are skilled at forming and cultivating relationships, generating enthusiasm in co-workers, and often radiate optimism themselves. Animated and enthusiastic, influencers are motivated by building relationships and communicating ideas. Often highly verbal, they are natural networkers and shine in discussions, gaining commitment from others, boosting morale and cultivating relationships.

In a hybrid or remote work environment, influential team members may struggle to maintain motivation due to the loss of the social connection they felt in the office. They may also struggle to maintain concentration if working in isolation for long periods of time without the opportunity to collaborate with others. Whilst Influencers’ need for novelty and creativity may initially make the hybrid environment appealing, they are likely to need some level of in-person interaction to maintain high engagement and motivation in the longer term.
HOW CAN MANAGERS PREVENT INFLUENTIAL HYBRID TEAM MEMBERS FROM FEELING ISOLATED?

Individuals with influence as a working strength combined with high levels of curiosity in their personality profile are likely to be some of the quickest to adapt to new ways of working. Yet many hybrid workers also miss the daily interactions, impromptu conversations and the wellbeing boost of socialising with colleagues, clients and customers. This is especially true for people with influence in their behavioural profile but applies to all hybrid workers. To reduce isolation, prevent new hires from feeling lost, and help employees feel part of hybrid teams, it’s important not to leave employee engagement to chance. Embedding an awareness of behavioural dynamics within hybrid teams helps to create a common language, promoting effective remote and in-person communications.

Influence profiles thrive in a hybrid environment if given plenty of opportunity to build relationships. Influencers are the energisers in your team, so creating outlets for social connection will allow them to shine while raising morale team-wide. Buddy systems, mentoring and coaching, celebrating team accomplishments and creating space for informal discussion during conference calls, will help influence profiles to maximise productivity in a hybrid work context. To engage influencers, managers should check in regularly via video call, and proactively take an interest in them and their feelings.

“The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.”

Phillip Douglas Jackson, American former basketball player, coach and NBA Executive
3 STEAMROLLERING STEADIER INDIVIDUALS

People with ‘Steadiness’ as a working strength deliver consistently through processes and teamwork. They tend to focus on the job at hand and diligently see work projects through to completion. Taking a methodical approach to managing their workload, steadier individuals can persist where other personality styles might more quickly become distracted or lose interest.

Team members who are high in steadiness can help to stabilise teams that are undergoing change. However, people with this personality trait can also be disrupted and demotivated by rapid changes in their working environment. Their levels of emotional resilience and conscientiousness are often deciding factors in their ability to manage disruption.

Individuals with a preference for steady behaviours and low tolerance for stress (adjustment) are likely to find new work environments challenging. In the longer term however, they may find that remote work relieves some of the stressors present in traditional working environments, such as workplace conflict, interruptions from colleagues and commuting.
HOW CAN MANAGERS AVOID UNSETTLING STEADIER TEAM MEMBERS?

Steadier individuals thrive in a secure environment that affords them the psychological safety to raise their concerns. Employees with high steadiness may consider organisations that justify their hybrid working strategies using specific employee survey results to lack empathy. For more steady and compliant behavioural profiles, maintaining engagement and wellbeing in a hybrid environment means complementing traditional listening mechanisms with new forums for sharing. Leaders who can model emotional intelligence, fireside chats and reverse town halls can all be beneficial.

Emotional Intelligence assessments reveal how your people will approach challenges, how resilient they are, and how they cope with stress, pressure and difficult situations. They can be essential tools for managers looking to provide tailored support to their team members with high steadiness levels, helping to ensure that changes in the workplace are successful. Steadier types may prefer to listen than speak, and managers can support their characteristic thoroughness by maximising their ability to concentrate, whether that means muting Slack or helping them plan and structure their work.

“Technology is dramatically changing the way people work, facilitating 24/7 collaboration with colleagues who are dispersed across time zones, countries, and continents.” Michael Dell, CEO, Dell

CREATING CHAOS FOR COMPLIANT INDIVIDUALS

People with ‘Compliance’ as a working strength are excellent fact-checkers and risk assessors. Detail oriented, these individuals are typically focused on maintaining and improving standards, analysing information and monitoring and controlling quality.

In a hybrid work context, compliant individuals may be more easily derailed by disruption to existing systems. High change work settings may be stressful and ultimately demotivating for people with this behavioural
preference. However, compliance is also critical to successfully managing change, contributing in-depth analyses, enforcing quality standards, assessing risk and exercising diplomacy.

Hybrid workers’ tolerance for ambiguity is an important consideration for managers, but one that is especially relevant to individuals with a tendency towards compliant behaviour. People who can tolerate ambiguity without losing focus on detail and quality can be immensely valuable in agile workplaces. Compliant team members who find ambiguity challenging will need support to succeed.

HOW CAN MANAGERS AVOID DISRUPTING COMPLIANT HYBRID TEAM MEMBERS?

To set compliant individuals up for success in a hybrid team, managers must protect them by providing detailed updates, reassurance and clearly defined objectives. Assigning logical, analytical tasks and providing materials in advance of face-to-face meetings will help to get the most out of compliant types. Lack of context in hybrid teams can increase inaccurate perceptions and assumptions, most often between opposite personality types, such as Compliance and Influence. Compliant individuals may be frustrated by Influencers’ spontaneity and prioritisation of people over policy, while Influencers may perceive Compliant individuals as closed off and uncreative. Shared awareness of differing communication styles can unlock higher levels of team performance.

Without a playbook for what hybrid working should look like, organisations are forced to adopt a test-and-learn approach. To highly compliant individuals, this can feel chaotic, so it is important that firms take a scientific approach to experimentation, communicating results sincerely, continuously and logically to their more compliant staff. Behaviour and personality assessments can provide an indication of the kind of communication that your team require. As organisations seek to manage core HR processes such as recruitment, onboarding and professional development in a hybrid environment, these insights are especially valuable.

“Remote work is this incredible invitation to really get good at building inclusive cultures.”

Shane Metcalf, Founder, 15Five
Holding effective meetings in a hybrid environment is challenging. To create equivalence between virtual and in-person team members, fairness must be reflected in technologies, processes and cultural changes. Technology is an important enabler of hybrid working, but communication is often harder online, so an awareness of team behavioural preferences can be transformational.

Different behavioural profiles add value at different phases in the lifecycle of an idea. For example, where dominance drives results, compliance rigorously examines the facts. You can use the quick reference guide below to facilitate more productive and engaging hybrid meetings.

### How to communicate with remote workers

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<tr>
<th>DOMINANCE</th>
<th>COMPLIANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular, concise updates will be preferred, either in writing or on a call.</td>
<td>Provide detailed updates and ensure materials are provided in advance of face-to-face catch-ups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask them what they need from you to help you deliver results.</td>
<td>Ensure they have easy access to as much detail as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<th>INFLUENCE</th>
<th>STEADINESS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allow for regular face-to-face calls and impromptu catch-ups.</td>
<td>Define a structured plan of face-to-face updates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give them time to talk through their work and projects. Let them verbalise their thinking.</td>
<td>Focus your time on them; how they’re structuring their work and the support they need from you and others.</td>
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“During Covid, HR really stepped to the forefront in terms of organising what the world of work looked like. I don’t think HR has ever been more important than right now. We decided to put the Behaviour assessment out to the entire workforce. We use it for recruitment to give us a good understanding of how someone is going to behave when they are here, as well as where the gaps are in a team. The assessments have been really helpful for understanding our people, and we use them across the club.”

Michelle Butler
DIRECTOR OF HR
SOUTHAMPTON FOOTBALL CLUB

“Zoom and Teams have transformed the workplace. But I think that you lose something by not meeting face-to-face. Getting people inducted into the organisation’s culture and values is quite tricky if you’ve never actually met them and they can’t physically experience the environment.

We use the Thomas PPA [Behaviour assessment] to talk about our different styles and how we can work together to make the most of our different skills.”

Sarah Houston
HEAD OF HR
MAYFLOWER THEATRE

“Line managers receive the ‘How to Manage’ report on their staff every year, which is very useful. We’ve also found the assessment beneficial for talking to teams within our business about how they work together, how they can better communicate with each other by understanding other people’s working styles and how to tailor their behaviour to facilitate those. Holding team workshops around the PPA is particularly helpful if we have a new member of staff that comes into a team as it allows us to see how they fit into the dynamic.”

Dan Jarvis
TECHNICAL & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
PLASTRIBUTION
OUR ASSESSMENTS
Psychometric assessments provide an objective source of rich information about an individual’s performance at work. They provide insight into an individual’s fit within a team, team dynamics, strengths and development areas, facilitating conflict management and increasing self-awareness within your organisation. Get more out of your hybrid teams today.

**PERSONALITY**
Our Personality assessment is grounded in the ‘Big 5’ model, assessing traits that predict professional success and risk for derailment. With their personality profile, you can identify candidates with the highest potential for workplace success and achievement.

**APTITUDE**
The General Intelligence or Aptitude assessment provides an objective picture of a candidate or employee’s speed of cognition and learning. The assessment can also assist in removing bias from recruitment processes and widening your talent pool.

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**
Our Emotional Intelligence assessment measures 15 emotional traits concerning wellbeing, self-control, emotionality and sociability. These traits will help you to provide targeted support that will enhance your highfliers’ ability to deliver organisational outcomes.

**BEHAVIOUR**
Our Behavioural assessment provides deep insights into a person’s behavioural preferences, strengths, limitations and communication style. This helps to increase self-awareness and provides a vocabulary for discussing nuanced behavioural dynamics.

**ENGAGE**
Our Employee Engagement assessment establishes the level of engagement within your organisation, and identifies strategies to improve employee wellbeing, motivation and productivity. This helps to identify the areas in which to focus engagement initiatives.

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Beating Bias in recruitment.
Managing Hybrid Teams for sustainable success.

We’d love to hear from you. If you would like to discuss anything covered in this guide further, or find out how we can work together to develop your people strategy, please reach out to your customer success manager.

Alternatively, you can get in touch to request a one-to-one chat with our experts by clicking here.

You can learn more about our psychometric assessments.
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