

Help your team thrive in

The Hybrid Working World

8 tips to boost engagement, collaboration, and morale

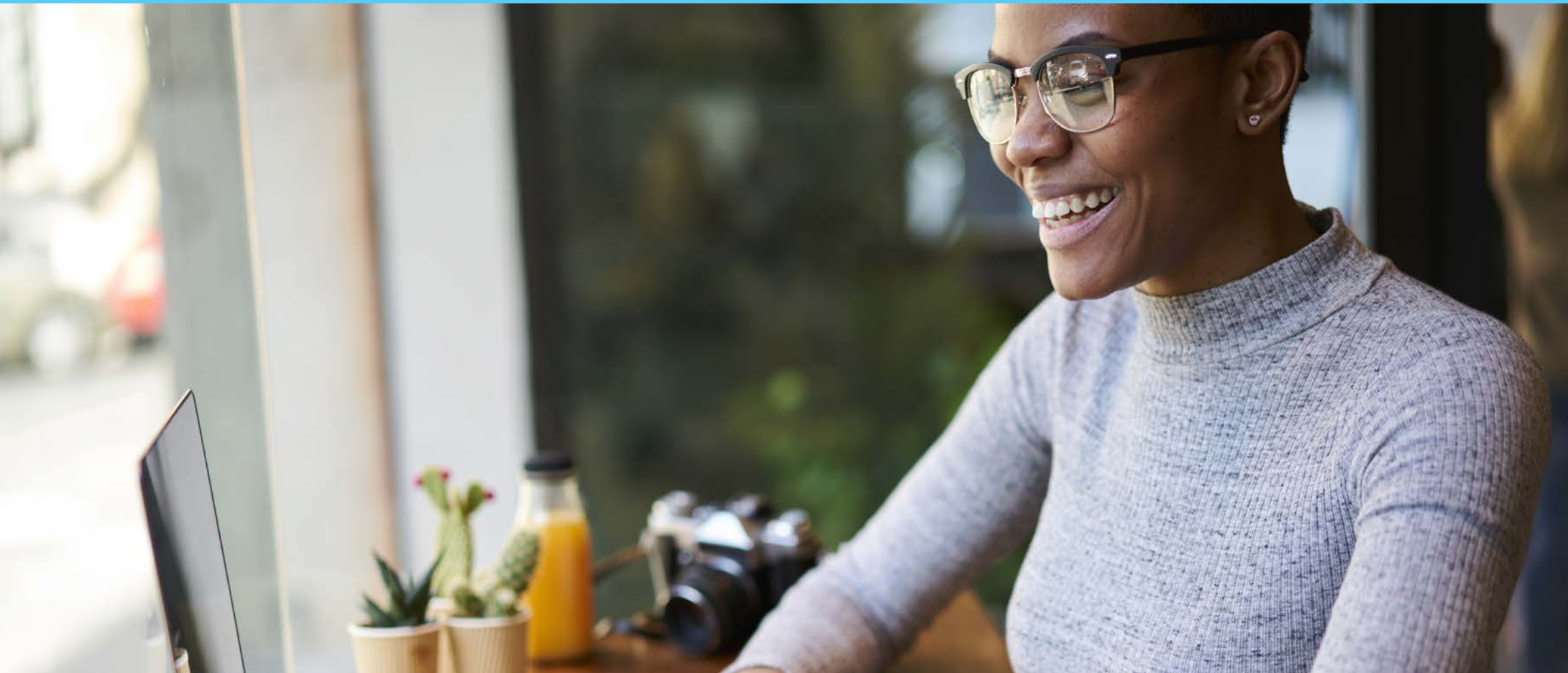


As companies embrace the advantages of having hybrid workforces where possible, it can be challenging to manage teams. Essential human skills like emotional intelligence, proactive problem-solving, building high-trust relationships, and self-leadership don't come easily to everyone on a given team. Yet they're critical to achieving an organization's most important goals. You need one comprehensive program to help everyone gain and improve these essential abilities. Managers may feel powerless to maintain group cohesiveness and productivity faces new challenges both in

the office and for those working remotely. Just like working in the office, distance working has its challenges and cultural issues.

Managing teams that comprise both in-office and remote workers adds another wrinkle to the process.

So, how might you manage meetings and communications to avoid co-located or remote team members feeling isolated?





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Are the 7 Habits® as relevant today as they were when they were first created? Absolutely, they are more relevant than ever before. The greater the change, the more difficult the challenges, the more relevant the 7 Habits become. Why? Because they are based on principles of effectiveness that endure.”

– Stephen R. Covey

1. Openly discuss the benefits and challenges of remote work.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win®

Habit 4 is valuable for leaders managing hybrid teams, where the dynamics between in-office and remote workers can create unique challenges. Thinking Win-Win helps leaders manage hybrid teams by fostering a culture of fairness, collaboration, and mutual benefit. By applying this habit, leaders can ensure that both in-office and remote workers feel valued and empowered, leading to higher productivity and a more unified team.



Discuss solutions to challenges, such as time-zones and tech issues.

Don't assume team members share the same view of the impact of hybrid work. Initiate group discussions—perhaps via quarterly video lunches—about what hybrid work means for everyone, fostering greater understanding, sympathy, and accommodation for each other.

Discuss what tasks may best be done together, in real life during in-office days and how technology can keep teams running smoothly when working remotely.

Try saying something like:

“Many of you are working hybrid, and I thought it might be helpful for the whole team to check in about what’s working well and what we might do differently to improve things for each other. Okay?”



Hybrid work habits continue to evolve as new tools and norms are created. Be prepared to adapt, change, and grow.

2. Actively facilitate virtual meetings.

Habit 1: Be Proactive®

Habit 1 is about taking responsibility for your actions and decisions, focusing on what you can control, and acting with intention. This habit is essential for leaders managing hybrid teams, as it empowers them to anticipate challenges, create solutions, and lead by example.



Set up and test your technology in advance.

We all know that virtual meetings can be frustrating. When co-located workers forget to look at the screen, they can alienate those who are not in the room. It can be tough to know when to jump in to make a comment when you're working remotely.

Being an active facilitator, or assigning that role to someone, can help avoid such troublesome issues from derailing your meetings and causing a build-up of low-level friction between remote and co-located teammates.

Focus on the issues specific to virtual interactions:

- Set up and test technology before the meeting and act as a fixer when technical issues arise. For example, if you hear audio feedback, remind people to mute their microphones.
- Act as the eyes for remote workers, explaining and interpreting what's happening in the room. Simple comments will help keep the meeting flowing and interactive. (For example, "Rosa is nodding in agreement," or "Chad just drew a 2x2 matrix on the whiteboard.")

- Ask follow-up questions, encouraging everyone to speak. This is critical and requires knowing which questions are most relevant, keeping track of who hasn't spoken yet, reining in meeting monopolizers and pulling everything together in the moment.
- Set ground rules. Let your team know that you'd like them to speak up and be part of the conversation, and encourage the use of the meeting's chat features and icons.
- Be seen! Create a culture where everyone is expected to join virtual meetings with their video camera on. Even when some workers are in the same room, this approach lets team members connect with each other and see each other's responses.



Overcome fears about new technology with effective training aimed at reducing biases toward new ways of working.

3. Set hybrid expectations around using communication tools.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win®

Habit 4 helps leaders set hybrid communication tool expectations by fostering a collaborative environment where the needs of both remote and in-office workers are met. It ensures that communication practices are inclusive, equitable, and mutually beneficial, leading to a more cohesive and effective hybrid team.



Set the tone with regular updates of your calendar and status.

Remote team members can not see when an in-office colleague steps away from their desk for a moment, or when an in-office manager is in a meeting for an uninterrupted hour.

When remote employees are helplessly waiting for replies or hesitating over whether to reach out, they are not being their most productive. Here are a few ways to increase visibility for everyone:

- Share your calendars and set team standards for how your team blocks time for projects and meetings. This approach allows the team to be adaptive as they schedule time together.
- Adopt standard online status labels, such as available, lunch, BRB (“be right back”), on a call, coding, travel, or whatever makes sense for your team. Discourage people from using an “invisible” status.

- Set the tone by conscientiously updating your own calendar and status.
- If some team members drag their feet about adopting another tool, make time to help them to learn how to use it.
- If direct reports do not follow a team practice, remind them why it’s important:

“Posting our working location and updating calendars helps everyone know when we’re accessible, and helps remote team members feel included.”



Facilitate effective behavior by holding all team members accountable for using digital tools.

4. Use digital channels to share news, and encourage others to post, too.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win®

Think Win-Win promotes a culture where everyone benefits from each other's contributions. Leaders should model this behavior by regularly sharing relevant and valuable news themselves and encouraging others to do the same. By showing that contributions are appreciated and valued, leaders help establish a reciprocal environment where team members are motivated to contribute.



Summarize and post news that's relevant to remote team members.

You probably don't realize how much daily news you receive that never makes it beyond the office.

- Imagine most of your colleagues are in the office when your manager stops by your team's area and shares their takeaways from a key meeting. Or, you take a tough customer call that your co-located colleagues can hear and learn from.
- Remote employees are almost always the last to know, limiting their opportunities to expand, elevate, or deepen the team's conversation.
- Don't ignore this. Instead, leverage your online collaboration tools to summarize and post news and updates that are relevant—or just plain interesting—to remote employees.



Give remote workers the trust and attention they deserve. Doing so can make them your highest performers.”

– Kory Kogon
Bestselling Coauthor, *The 5 Choices*

5. Pair up team members for in-person or virtual chats. **Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw[®]**

Leaders can use Habit 7 to ensure that the pairing process supports work-life balance. By considering each team member's workload and personal development goals, leaders can schedule in-person or virtual chats at times that are convenient and beneficial for everyone involved, avoiding additional stress and promoting well-being.



Pair work buddies to facilitate coaching.

Gallup contends that having a best friend at work is among the better predictors of employee engagement and productivity. Human connection invigorates us and brightens our days.

Team members don't want to let down a trusted colleague—especially someone who has shared a major milestone or life event with them. However, it's often harder for remote workers, who are physically isolated, to cultivate strong working relationships.

To help foster connections, consider pairing work buddies based on coaching opportunities. For instance, you could ask a remote sales veteran to mentor a new hire.

Or, simply pair team members for co-mentoring or virtual coffee chats, perhaps changing partnerships quarterly to build stronger overall team connections.

Don't assume someone is self-sufficient or too difficult to befriend. That just perpetuates a cycle, for instance, if a coworker is considered independent, shy, or grumpy, no one may get to know them, leaving them isolated.



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It's not just the people, but the nature of relationships between people that truly establishes an organization's competitive advantage.”

– Todd Davis
Bestselling Author, Get Better

6. Encourage feedback between people in different locations.

Habit 1: Be Proactive®

Being proactive means creating structured processes for giving and receiving feedback. Leaders can set up regular feedback sessions, such as weekly check-ins or bi-weekly reviews, where team members from different locations can share their insights and suggestions. Establishing a routine for feedback helps normalize the practice and ensures that it becomes a regular part of the team's workflow.



Because they are not in the room, remote workers can miss important, spontaneous feedback.

A lot of feedback happens on the fly—for those in the room, that is. Employees working remotely frequently miss these spontaneous moments (“Hey, got a sec?”), as well as opportunities to weigh in on group decisions.

This isn't just bad for remote workers but for the entire team, which may miss out on the different perspectives remote team members may bring to various projects. Explaining an idea over the phone or online helps remote workers since they can't rely on nonverbal cues and visual aids.

Seek opportunities to build a robust feedback culture on your team. When team members have an interesting idea that might benefit from further input, suggest they present it to a remote peer. Model this behavior yourself and give reinforcing feedback when you notice someone proactively involving colleagues, regardless of their location.



Make sure you have a virtual process for team members to give each other feedback. They'll do it if you make it easy.

7. Devise celebrations to include remote team members.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw®

When in-office team members achieve something, they get high-fives, applause, or even a toast. Sharpen the Saw involves focusing on individual needs and preferences. Leaders can personalize celebrations to cater to the preferences and interests of remote team members. This might include sending personalized gifts, organizing virtual shout-outs, or celebrating personal milestones in a way that resonates with each individual, making the recognition feel more genuine and appreciated.



Urge your team to suggest creative ways to celebrate the achievements of remote colleagues.

But employees who have to work remotely are more likely to get a few generic words on chat or on video conferencing. Over time, this massive inequity can breed resentment, causing your remote employees to feel underappreciated and eroding their motivation.

Wise managers are proactive about leveling the playing field a bit. For example:

When remote team members are back in the office, revisit some of their previous, bigger accomplishments—the ones that were only celebrated virtually.

If your team likes getting creative, urge them to come up with ways to share the love, despite the distance. You could even make it an informal contest, voting on ideas—from the thoughtful (a signed card and gift card), to the silly (a singing telegram), to the personalized (a video message from the team posted to your team's chat channel).

Include remote team members when celebrating the accomplishments of team members who may be back at the office too—live over video or with follow-up posts.



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People want to win.
When you or your team
achieve success, celebrate
it.”

– Scott Miller
Bestselling Coauthor, *Everyone Deserves
a Great Manager*

8. Regularly review your team's remote culture.

Habit 1: Be Proactive®

Be proactive to ensure your team's remote culture remains vibrant and effective.



Set a recurring quarterly reminder to assess your team's remote culture, focusing on both strengths and areas for improvement.

Set a recurring calendar reminder—perhaps quarterly—to assess and refine how your team operates in this hybrid environment. Build this review into your regular team evaluations, focusing on what's working well and what needs improvement. Be open to exploring new tools or strategies that can enhance your team's remote interactions, whether it's a new virtual meeting platform or a more efficient way of tracking progress.

Remember, the hybrid work world will continue to change, but the timeless principles of the 7 Habits will always apply—albeit in slightly different ways. By regularly reviewing and optimizing your team's remote culture, you'll be better equipped to lead them through these changes. Adopting these effective habits ensures that you have the tools and strategies to help your team thrive, now and in the future.

Unlock Potential. Unleash Performance.

We've reimagined the *7 Habits* course to be even more relevant and impactful for today's workers.

Among the benefits on a personal level are the principles that can increase individual effectiveness, build strong character, and change behavior in ways that are authentic and lasting. The *7 Habits* are based on universal truths and enduring principles. They're grounded in decades of research and development—and based on the best-selling business book of all time. In fact, it's been the top leadership training framework for over 35 years.

FranklinCovey is the most trusted leadership company in the world, with operations in over 150+ countries. We transform organizations by building exceptional leaders, teams, and cultures that get breakthrough results. Available through the FranklinCovey All Access Pass[®], our best-in-class content, experts, technology, and metrics seamlessly integrate to ensure lasting behavior change at scale. Our approach to leadership has been tested and refined by working with tens of thousands of teams and organizations over the past 30 years.

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