

HR Insights

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5 Hybrid Work Model Mistakes to Avoid

The COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses to adapt and test their operational capacities. One of the most common pivots has been remote work.

Now that workplaces are reopening, a significant number of employees want to retain their remote status. In fact, 58% of workers said they want a fully remote position, and only 3% said they wanted to return to fully in-person work, according to a recent FlexJobs survey.

So, how does a business that wants to utilize its in-person workspace deal with employees who want to stay home? For some, the answer is a hybrid work model.

Under this arrangement, employees work in person some of the time and from home the rest of the time. This can be a great compromise for a workplace, and it's gaining popularity among employers. Many organizations are now exploring their own forms of hybrid work models.

While increased adoption of hybrid models is great news for many employees, it only works when implemented properly. That's why it's critical for employers developing hybrid strategies to understand potential pitfalls and adapt as necessary.

To that end, this article discusses five common hybrid work model mistakes and how to avert them.

1. Inadequate Policies

The success of any workplace program hinges on how well it can be executed. When it comes to hybrid work models, employers must have a clearly

defined policy detailed in writing. Otherwise, employees and their managers won't understand expectations, leading to confusion, improper conduct, missed deadlines and other issues.

A good hybrid work policy might include the following details, among others:

- Who is eligible for hybrid work
- How many days a week an employee is expected to work in person
- Which days and core hours an employee is allowed to work (i.e., only Monday-Friday during business hours)
- What technology is available for employees to use at home (i.e., monitors, keyboards and other equipment that may be taken home for remote work)
- Contact point for employee questions regarding scheduling
- How in-person work will function regarding shared workspaces, as applicable

2. Unfamiliar Leadership

While many employees may want to work remotely at least some of the time, that's not always the case with company leadership. In other words, the individuals with decision-making power might not understand what working from home entails. This can be problematic when these same people write and enforce workplace policies.

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To ensure a quality hybrid work model, it's important for policy stakeholders (e.g., management) to try it out as well, even for just a few days. Organization leaders will be better poised to spot policy blind spots after experiencing the arrangement themselves.

3. Inconsistent Communication

Staying up to date on timely developments and communication is a constant struggle for most workplaces. It can be even harder for remote workers to stay updated. This is especially the case when an organization uses varying channels for communication. While multichannel communication is generally an effective tool, employees still need to know where to expect messages to come from.

Employers exploring hybrid work models should consider standardizing which communication tools they use instead of relying on each team to pick their favorite platforms. For instance, a workplace may decide to send all communications through Microsoft Teams and Outlook. That way, employees will know to check those platforms for any critical messages.

Moreover, digital communication solutions are the best option for hybrid employees since they can reach anyone. In other words, utilizing announcement boards or similar in-person methods won't be sufficient for a hybrid team.

4. Inequitable Celebrations

Employee celebrations are an important part of the workplace. Employees need to feel like their contributions are valuable to the organization, and praising their work is a great way to do that.

Unfortunately, not every celebration method is conducive to a hybrid work model. Consider events such as luncheons, team meetings with treats, workplace outings or other such celebrations. Some hybrid employees might not be able to attend these gatherings due to their schedules or work locations.

That's why employers with hybrid workers should consider equitable ways to celebrate employee success. Methods might include virtual events (e.g., Zoom meeting), emails from management or electronic gift cards. Specific celebrations will vary by organization and workforce.

5. Insufficient Equipment

Workers that will be operating from their own homes, even partially, will need adequate technology. Ignoring this aspect can lead to poor productivity and cause a hybrid work model to fail before it even begins.

This means employers will need to consider how to set these workers up for success. Considerations include:

- What technology can workers bring home with them?
- Will workers be reimbursed for purchasing office equipment for their homes?
- Will workers be reimbursed for internet bills?

Additionally, employers should consider what additional training may benefit hybrid workers. For instance, they may need help connecting to an organization's virtual private network on their home Wi-Fi.

Conclusion

Hybrid work models can provide flexibility to workers while still maintaining operational productivity—but that's only when properly implemented. Simply allowing workers to float in and out of the office without a solid policy can lead to a variety of issues.

Reach out to RiskSOURCE Clark-Theders for more guidance related to remote and hybrid work, including resources to help employees succeed in this emerging landscape.