



# Hybrid Leadership for the Hybrid Workplace

## Insights from h2h

### Introduction

Late in 2021 we hosted our first fully hybrid Round Table event for a group of inspirational Senior Leaders from our customer community to discuss all things hybrid.

In the UK 59.2% of people began working from home in March 2020 (ONS) and now at least some element of hybrid working is becoming the norm for most organisations. Leaders are at the epicentre of making decisions about the future of their organisations and their people. We therefore reflected upon the organisational learning that we have all accrued as well as exploring the risks, opportunities, and cultural impact.

The organisation development space has never been this exciting and, in this paper, we reflect on what we have learnt so far about hybrid leadership and managing hybrid teams and how systems and processes align with values, culture and behaviour to deliver great performance.

### The Meaning of Hybrid?

Whilst this is an old definition it resonates as we are all in the midst of creating these new structures, objects, and practices

*‘...to designate processes in which discrete social practices or structures, that existed in separate ways, combine to generate new structures, objects, and practices in which the preceding elements mix.’*

Source: N. García-Canclini, in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 2001#

### h2h Top Ten Tips For Hybrid Working

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to reimagine and redesign work and we are currently in the midst of creating these new structures, objects, and practices. There is a lot to take in and a lot to consider. Using our experience based insights, current research and learning from our work with many organisations, we have created our top ten tips for successful hybrid working.

1. Drive connectivity to purpose
2. Invest in trust
3. Envision the new what and the how
4. One size  $\neq$  fit all
5. Embrace opportunities and manage risks
6. A needs driven multi stakeholder approach
7. Organisational learning
8. A route for greater inclusion
9. Invest in hybrid leadership
10. Be your authentic self



## 1. Drive Connectivity to Purpose

According to a recent report by Global Future, 3 out of 4 people are reconsidering what is important in their lives and 39% of employees have stated that they want to find a real sense of purpose in the workplace. With 2.4 million people in the UK planning to follow a different career path, how can leaders ensure that they and their people stay connected to the core purpose of their organisation? We can do this systemically through our business structures and processes and also behaviourally through quality career development conversations and understanding why and how you contribute to the business success.

## 2. Invest in Trust

At our event, trust emerged as a key factor in the hybrid workplace. We now need to truly manage by achievement and output and hopefully the days of over valuing presenteeism are behind us. This may also require an evolved management and leadership capability.

## 3. Envision the new what and the how

The pandemic is 100% proving to be a trigger for unprecedented change. When everything is moving so fast, and you are having to react to a constantly evolving situation it is easy to get transactionally stuck in the right here and right now. Are you able to take some time out to revisit your vision, mission, strategic goals, and values? Are they still aligned? Do they still drive you where you need to be?

Our Top Tip 3 is to sense check this before you move on to the task in hand, so that you stand a much greater chance of success in optimising performance organisationally and on a team and individual basis.

## 4. One Size ≠ Fit All

It is important to recognise that one size does most definitely not fit all. Within your organisation you will now have multiple populations – on one end of the scale there are those who have to work on site at a set time, at the other those who can work anywhere and anytime as well as those who have to work flexibly to accommodate international clients, different time zones and personal responsibilities. Striking the balance between keeping the workforce healthy, happy, and engaged and getting the work done has never been so complex. Your business needs to have protocols and processes in place to ensure that unhindered collaboration and cross- departmental working can take place and that productivity flourishes. Your hybrid framework will be unique to your organisational needs and may require a redesign of how work is done not just when and where.

## 5. Embrace Opportunities and Manage Risks

In January 2019 the World Economic Forum produced a paper warning of the risks that the outbreak of an infectious disease could have on world business and highlighting how ill prepared we were to respond to a significant pandemic threat. It is perhaps not so surprising then how the world of work has been significantly changed as a direct result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

It is vital that we embrace and maximize the opportunities to make transformational change to the way that we work and take advantage of the global talent pools open to us, to re-address work and lifestyle issues once and for all and to put the focus well and truly on performance and output to name just a few.



On the flip side we need to minimize the risks, many of which we may not be fully aware of yet and to ensure that we have the policies and processes in place to:

- address health, safety, environmental and employee wellbeing concerns
- ensure a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion
- pay attention to emerging case law
- grow and support leadership capability facing ever increasing demands

Risk registers have long been an established part of the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling threats to an organisation's success. Applying a robust risk management process as you make the decisions about hybrid working, will be time well invested.

## 6. A Needs Driven Multi Stakeholder Approach

Over the past few months, you will have no doubt engaged in multiple conversations with your employees on the new ways of working and what good looks like for them. It is vital they are equipped and enabled to do their jobs to the best of their ability. However, we must not lose sight of the many different stakeholder groups who will be directly or indirectly affected by the changes you make to the way that you do business.

What do your suppliers, regulators, local community, and the media have to say about the way you are evolving? What do your customers, investors, and shareholders think about the new processes and frameworks? How do you consult with and manage them? If you have not been able to do so already then, our next top tip is to put this towards the top of your list of your priorities for 2022.

## 7. Organisational Learning

Hybrid presents us with a great opportunity to fully embrace all the benefits that blended learning approach can bring including virtual self-led learning options, mentoring, playlists of resources, bespoke e-learning, tutor-led workshops, and work-based learning to name just a few.

At h2h we have been curating virtual, hybrid and in person learning experiences for nearly 20 years and have learnt that you need to:

- Stick to the original learning outcomes, what you need to learn may not have changed just how you need to learn it
- Get the technology in place and manage the process seamlessly
- Take advantage of both self-led and social learning opportunities
- Keep people connected

The way that learning happens now is different and requires a different level of engagement from learners. Your employees may need help to adapt to a new style of learning where they have more control and responsibility.



## 8. A Route for Greater Inclusion

When 52% of workers fear that working remotely may lead to discrimination, we need to pay attention to this. (*Poly Evolution of the Workplace report*) How are your leaders communicating with those employees in the workplace when compared to those who are now working remotely? It is highly possible that they interact with these two-populations in a different way and that their personal preferences may also influence the many daily decisions that they take. Alongside regular personal interactions, making a concerted effort to use the tech available to consult and engage all staff will support more voices being heard.

Everyone's response to the pandemic and how it has affected their working practices has been as unique and individual as they are. Another top tip from us is to embrace all of these differences as much as you can and to endeavour to:

- address perceived exclusion
- lean in and talk
- deploy strategies for those known to be at risk
- recognise internet poverty
- assume positive intent

## 9. Invest in Hybrid Leadership

The principles of leadership have not fundamentally changed but the way that we work most definitely has. Our next top tip is to invest in supporting your hybrid leaders.

Are you leaders fully equipped to lead a hybrid workplace? Creating a positive and constructive climate for hybrid team working, leading effective hybrid meetings, driving inclusivity, and embracing the multitude of different individual preferences such as personality, neurodiversity; language are just some the issues they will need to navigate. It's a good idea to make sure that they have the opportunity to refresh their skills around social connectivity, effective leadership and hybrid working. Investing in your leaders so that they understand the shift required in terms of their paradigms, behaviours, and impact in order to lead successfully will be inextricably linked to the success of the organisation as a whole.

## 10. Be Your Terrific Authentic Self

The last 2 years have been incredibly challenging on all levels. Our personal and professional worlds have been turned upside down and are at risk of becoming predominantly transactional by nature. It is very difficult at times to be your best self. Our final top tip is to try not let the hybrid process and the tech get in the way and to find a way to be your great authentic self. Your customers and your team both want and need your leadership and guidance.



## Risks and Opportunities

At our event we talked about the great opportunities that hybrid can present for organisations and some of the considerable risks that we need to mitigate. Here is a summary of the key issues, why they are important and how you can start to address these over the coming months.

### Risks

RISK	WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	HOW TO MITIGATE IT?
1. Lack of formal contractual policies around hybrid working.	It creates ambiguity and uncertainty which can lead to inconsistent in practices.	<p>Make it a priority to write a formal hybrid working policy.</p> <p>This should be a living document that is frequently reviewed, consulted upon and updated.</p> <p>Make sure employees are clear on the basics e.g.: hours of work, place of work, equipment, expenses, travel, insurance, data protection, risk assessment of home working space, termination or adaptation of hybrid working arrangements to list just a few.</p>
2. Creation of a two-tier workplace – those who can work flexibly and those who cannot.	Division between workplace populations is generally bad news for both the organisation and workplace representatives. Employee discontent can lead to accusations of discrimination and high staff turnover.	<p>Be aware of the of the multiple working populations that you have in your organisation – do they have any specific needs or support that you are able to facilitate?</p> <p>In addition to a clear hybrid working policy as listed above, companywide initiatives that enable employees to connect and engage are a useful tool.</p> <p>Consider redesigning how work is done to so that more people are enabled to work flexibly.</p>
3. Loss of connection to your organisational culture and purpose.	When connection to purpose is weak or lost, employee engagement, collaboration and knowledge sharing are all negatively impacted.	<p>Revisit your organisation's core purpose, vision, values – are they still valid in the post-pandemic world? Do they need a refresh?</p> <p>Remind your employees of all of the above and help them to understand the contribution they are making to the business.</p>
4. Leadership burn-out.	Burn out is a problem for any employee –but when this happens at leadership level the effects are significantly more widespread. It can facilitate slow and uncertain decision making and lack of confidence which creates a negative ripple effect across the whole organisation.	<p>Invest in Leadership nourishment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• revalidating your leadership behaviours or competencies.</li><li>• understanding and addressing leaders' issues, concerns, and opportunities, delivering personalised leadership development and resilience training, coaching/mentoring etc.</li><li>• encouraging and creating opportunities for peer networking.</li></ul>



## Opportunities

OPPORTUNITY	WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	HOW TO MAXIMISE IT?
1. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to re-design HOW we work.	64% of hybrid workers believe office culture has changed forever. There has been an increase in organisational complexity and people are ready and open to change. We may be able to create a more effective and productive business model.	Concentrate on HOW your organisation gets work done rather than just WHEN and WHERE to help craft your organisational design and get your hybrid working principles right.  Consult and engage with the workforce at all levels of the organisation so they are fully involved in the process.
2. We can truly focus on productivity, output, and performance.	It helps organisations improve what they are doing and connects employees to the company, their vision, and values. What's not to love?	Invest in your leaders and line managers and enable them to give clear direction and set team and individual goals.  Continually measure and monitor progress using both leading and lagging measures to monitor progress.
3. Employees can readdress work and life imbalances to better suit their lifestyle.	Striking a good balance between work and lifestyle/ values helps reduce stress/burn out and make for a happier, more engaged workforce.  Happy employees tend to be more productive, more connected and stay with their employer for a longer period of time.	There are many examples of how to support the wellbeing of employees including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating as much flexibility around when people work as the business will allow.</li><li>• Focussing on productivity rather than activity.</li><li>• Regularly reviewing workloads.</li><li>• Leading by example.</li></ul>
4. Businesses can benefit from wider talent pool.	A flexible people-friendly work policy opens up the recruitment market and gives you access to a more diverse demographic and candidates with different skill sets.  It gives you a competitive edge and can help to improve retention rates.	Review how you recruit and adopt a robust hybrid recruitment and onboarding processes.  Make the experience more accessible and effective.  Invest in your employer brand and be strategic about what you can offer to give you a competitive edge.



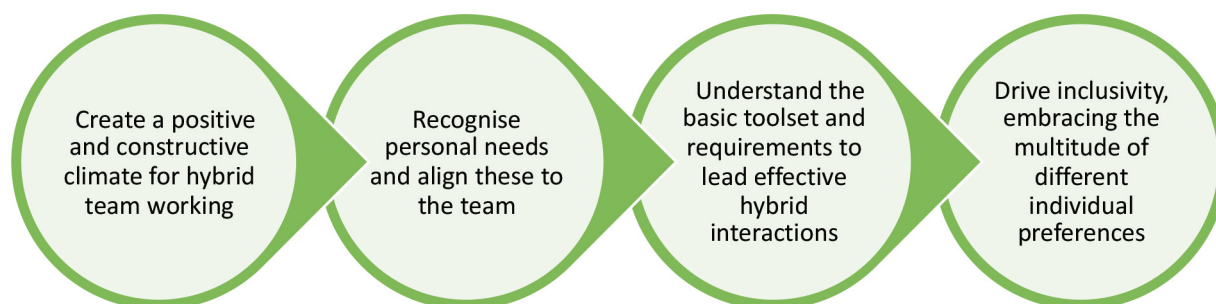
## Developing Your Hybrid Workforce

Using our learning over the past two years we are now supporting organisations to evolve their culture with independent, focussed support and guidance. Our aim is to equip and engage leaders and team members so that they can better understand the hybrid workplace and how to make it work for them. The ethos and framework that supports hybrid working needs to be accessible and applicable across all levels of the organisation and we design our solutions to meet the needs of a variety of different audiences including:

### LEADERS - How to Lead in the Hybrid Workplace

The transition to hybrid can be complex and in order to lead effectively in this environment it is vital that leaders understand their mindset and recognise the skills they need as both a member and leader of a hybrid team.

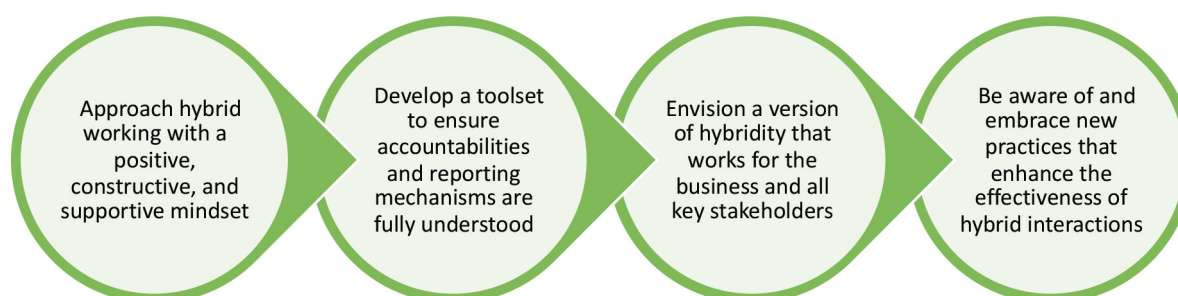
We are working with several organisations to enable their managers to carefully consider and better understand the behaviours, impact and paradigm shift required to make hybrid work effectively. In order to do this, we believe, leaders need to:



### TEAMS – Working in a Hybrid Team

It is equally important that all employees understand the parameters, benefits, and disadvantages that hybrid working can bring so that they can better understand the frameworks and the contribution that they make to the business. We are now working with intact teams to address the basic differences in hybrid working, optimise the opportunities and identify specific needs to be as effective as possible in the environment.

In order to do this, we believe, teams need to:







## About us

At h2h we believe that an effective people strategy lies at the heart of all successful and enduring organisations. We have created a range of solutions that can be tailored to the needs of your organisation, enabling business success through the development of and investment in your people. Using decades of experience and honed insights, h2h delivers high impact, tailored organisation development solutions with integrity and commitment.

The unique development programmes ensure:

- Leaders achieve greater commitment and performance from their teams
- Employees are more engaged, stimulated and prepared to go the extra mile
- Tangible business benefits are realised

The skilled h2h team achieves these results by:

- Working with businesses at a strategic level to facilitate organisational change
- Providing high impact business coaching
- Designing and delivering bespoke leadership and management development programmes
- Enhancing a variety of personal and professional skills needed by key teams

If the information in our report has given you useful insights and practical suggestions to stimulate your thinking, please do reach out to us at [enquiries@h2h.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@h2h.uk.com) to discuss any hybrid leadership, organisational design, and people strategy needs.