Evaluate Adaptability of Roles and Employees

As you brace for the new normal, it’s time to take a closer look at the adaptability of the roles in your organization, as well as the employees who fill these roles.

Not all job profiles are well-suited for remote work, but some tasks within those roles might be. There may be varying degrees of independent and collaborative work for a single position that provides some flexibility. Break down all the roles in your organization to determine what type of hybrid work model is practical.

Involve employees throughout this process. You can send out a Working from Home Questionnaire to gauge interest and what options employees are interested in. Use this feedback with your evaluation of roles to create different options that could work for each role. We recommend that you present employees with choices and the freedom to opt into hybrid work arrangements to account for individual preferences and productivity needs. For example, some employees may not have adequate space in their homes or may have too many distractions to be productive from home. Others might find it stressful to cope with the inconsistency in their weekly schedule under a hybrid model and prefer an exclusively remote or onsite arrangement. Providing employees with the autonomy to select a work model tailored to their needs and preferences not only enables them to be their most productive but is becoming a common expectation for employers to offer post-2020.

Consider Employee Tools and Resources

To secure your hybrid work model’s success, you need to ensure that you have the proper tools and resources to support employees. Technology plays a central role here. Account for the following categories:

- Portable hardware, such as laptops, printers, and Internet access;
- Collaboration software to support chats, video conferencing, and file-sharing;
- Cybersecurity: private networks, backups, security software, and more; and
- Extras like project management tools and performance and engagement tools.

In addition, assess:

- How accessible is your hybrid work plan?
- Will you provide funds for home-office equipment?
- Will adequate workspace be available to employees when they work onsite?

If your hybrid model doesn’t take these into consideration, employees will likely run into issues. If you don’t already have one in place, check out our Working from Home Policy and Work from Home Agreement (Telecommuting) to cover your bases.

Review your budgets and move funds around to account for your hybrid work model. Many organizations using a hybrid model find they need less physical space, freeing up money to be spent elsewhere to support employees, such as a home-office budget or travel reimbursements. Get creative and look at what other companies have implemented that you can also adopt.

Strategize for Company Culture

Another key aspect to consider when building your hybrid model is company culture. Hybrid models are attractive because of the flexibility they provide individuals, but you need to have systems in place to counteract the physical disconnect of a scattered workforce. Of course, a drastic change will affect company culture, especially a change to work structure. Be intentional about what you want to keep and what you want to weed out, thus reinforcing your work culture. View this as an opportunity to enhance company culture rather than a challenge to overcome. Again, feel free to look to other organizations with remote or hybrid models to see some of the creative ways they’ve embraced change. You can learn more in our Organizational Culture Training course.

Update Policies, Practices, and Employment Contracts

Take care of any necessary administrative tasks before you launch your hybrid plan. Prepare a policy that outlines the details of your hybrid model, including guidelines and expectations for performance, productivity, timekeeping.
management, and program benefits. Reach out to Consulting Services for policies tailored to fit your organization.

Don't forget to review any existing policies or practices that might affect the new work model, and adjust accordingly.

Employment contracts are crucial, too. Changes to employment conditions, such as moving from a traditional work model to a hybrid one, can affect the terms of agreements. You might want to contact an employment lawyer to review existing contracts and draft revisions to ensure the agreements are still valid. Get everything in writing up front so that you aren't trying to figure out these issues later.

**IMPLEMENT PLAN AND MONITOR**

Communicate your hybrid model to the organization when all the pieces are in place and you’re ready to launch. Allow for some time between the announcement and implementation so that employees can ask questions and prepare for the changes. Following a turbulent year, consider rolling out your plan in phases to ease this shift for employees. Additionally, you can offer Handling Change at Work – Training for Employees to help them practise skills for coping with sudden changes to working conditions.

In the initial stages of the hybrid model, managers should take more frequent pulse checks with their employees about the adjustment to offer support and address any questions or concerns as they arise. Consider collecting regular feedback from the organization to assess the initial, short-term, and long-term effects of the plan.

Lastly, remember that work models don't have to be static. Adjust your model as necessary to reflect employee needs and respond to the external environment.

**FINAL THOUGHT**

As we eagerly await a return to some form of normality, employers must address how their post-pandemic work model will look like. For those hesitant or unable to adopt a fully remote model, hybrid work options offer an appealing degree of flexibility to both employers and employees. Start planning early to determine what will work best for your organization, tailor accordingly, and review its effectiveness over time. Being mindful of your work model will set your organization up for success.

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