

Navigating the Hybrid Workplace



Meet Our Team



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Introduction:

Hybrid Work is the New Normal

The workplace has permanently changed. What started as a pandemic response has evolved into a long-term redefinition of where, how, and when work gets done. Hybrid workforce adoption was accelerated during the pandemic as an experiment of how to utilize employees for the benefit of all parties involved. Now, in 2025, it's the primary model for more than half of remote-capable employees, combining the structure of in-person collaboration with the flexibility of remote work.

Yet despite its dominance, hybrid work still feels unsettled. Many organizations are caught between honoring employee expectations for autonomy and managing leadership discomfort with distributed teams. Hybrid workplaces can unlock incredible potential when it's intentionally designed and led with clarity.

Our [2025 Workplace Trends Report](#) showed that hybrid work arrangements offer clear advantages.

- Increased employee satisfaction
- Reduced turnover
- Cost Savings
- Broader access to talent

This report explores how forward-thinking organizations are bridging those gaps. Through practical strategies and insights from our research and podcast discussions, we'll help you move from "hybrid by necessity" to "hybrid by design." The goal is to create a sustainable work model that supports employees regardless of their location.

The 3 Biggest Challenges of Hybrid Work

While hybrid work offers flexibility and freedom, it also presents complex challenges that many organizations are still learning to navigate. What began as a temporary solution has now become a permanent structure that organizations need to plan for and design with a multifaceted approach including equity, culture, onboarding, and leadership.

1. Uneven Access to Opportunity

One of the most cited challenges is the risk of proximity bias, where in-office employees receive more recognition and advancement than their remote counterparts. When leaders default to noticing and rewarding those they see most often, remote and hybrid workers may find themselves left out of new assignments, real-time feedback, spontaneous brainstorming, and even casual recognition.

Without internal policies and leadership training, hybrid structures can inadvertently create two-tiered experiences within the same team. Over time, this leads to fewer developmental opportunities and ultimately, disengagement.

“The most successful companies in 2025 will prioritize both employee autonomy and the real value of in-person connection...ensuring equitable access to career growth for remote and in-office workers alike”

H3 HR Advisors 2025 Workplace Trends Report

This is especially concerning for underrepresented groups who may disproportionately opt for remote work due to caregiving responsibilities, health concerns, or previous workplace trauma. The challenge for organizations in 2025 is to design for fairness and not just access.

This means:

- Evaluating performance based on outcomes, not face time
- Ensuring meetings are hybrid-friendly with equal speaking opportunities
- Creating transparent and inclusive processes for feedback and promotions
- Training leaders to spot and interrupt proximity bias in their decision-making

On a recent [HR Means Business podcast episode](#), a guest noted:



“Hybrid isn’t one-size-fits-all. It’s about tailoring flexibility to how your people actually work, using both space and tech.”

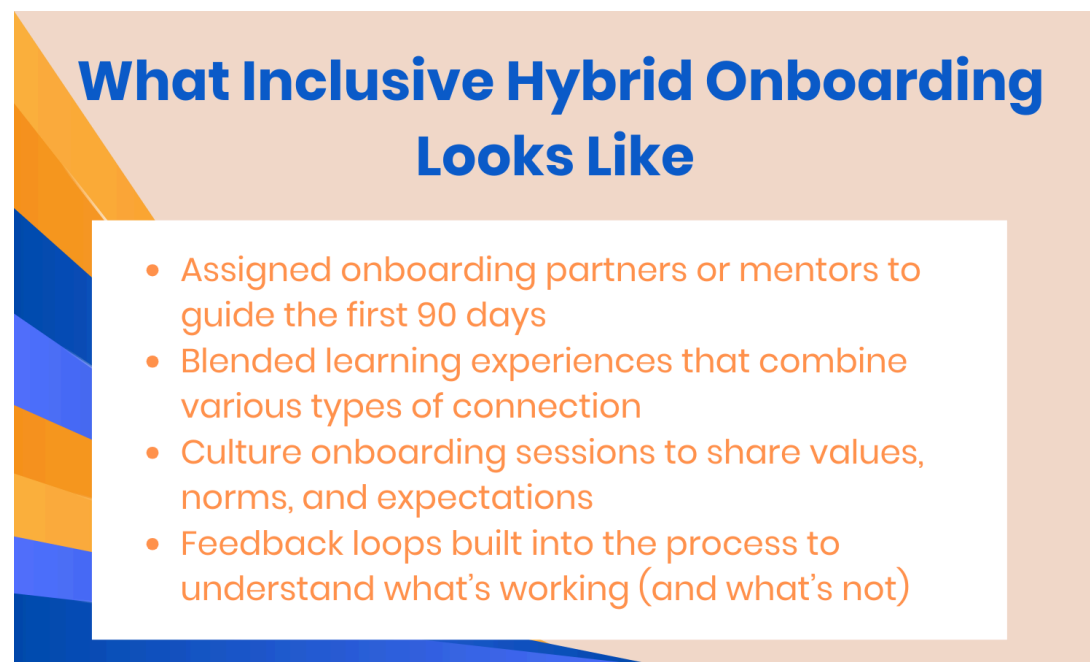
2. Inconsistent Onboarding and Inclusion

In hybrid workplaces, onboarding has become one of the most inconsistent experiences of the employee journey. While many organizations quickly adapted to virtual hiring, far fewer have redesigned their onboarding processes to reflect the realities of hybrid work. The result is that new hires often feel disconnected or even excluded from the team from day one.

In the 2025 Workplace Trends Report, this issue is called out as a key vulnerability:

“Organizations are increasingly aware that onboarding in hybrid environments must be redesigned, not only to deliver logistical clarity but to foster connection, inclusion, and early belonging.”

Many hybrid onboarding programs still rely heavily on passive materials that fail to build genuine relationships or help employees understand the cultural norms of their team. Remote new hires may miss out on informal introductions and impromptu guidance that naturally happen in person. This lack of connection can quickly lead to disengagement.



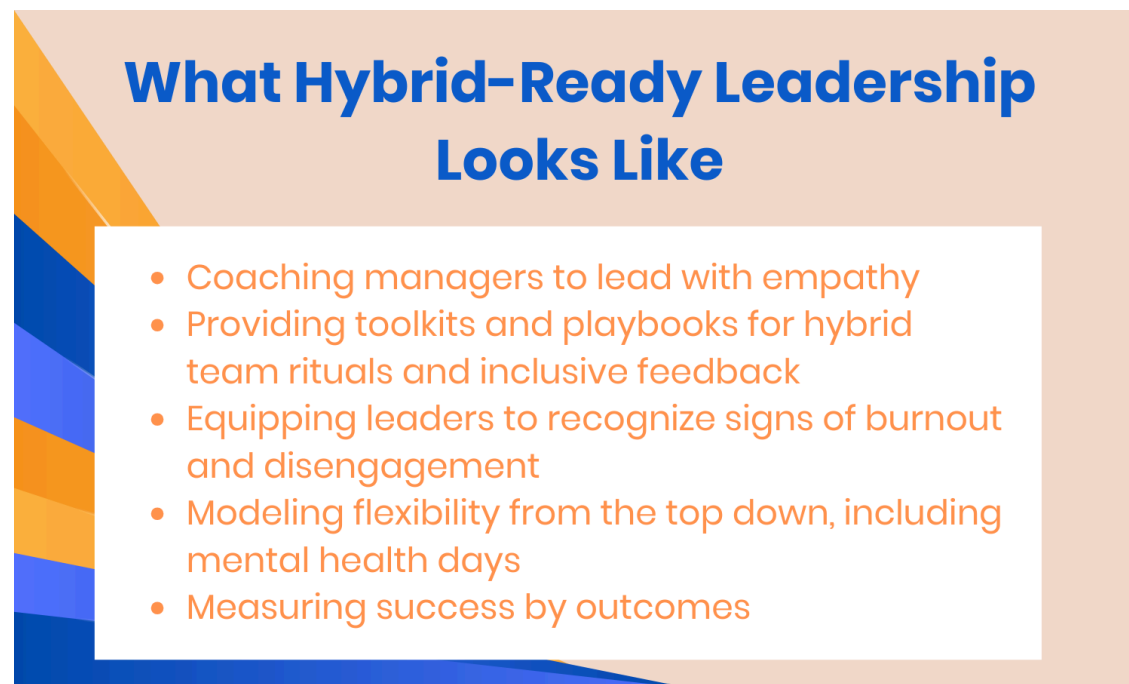
When hybrid onboarding is designed with inclusion in mind, new employees feel more confident from the start. The first few weeks can make all the difference!

3. Leadership Gaps in Hybrid Environments

While the workplace has changed dramatically, leadership and training expectations have often remained stuck in traditional and office-focused models. The result is a growing gap between what hybrid teams need and what many leaders feel prepared to provide.

Managing hybrid teams requires a new set of competencies: the ability to build trust across distance, foster inclusion without relying on visibility, communicate clearly in digital-first environments, and evaluate performance based on outcomes rather than presence.

Unfortunately, many leaders default to outdated cues, like who's most "visible" in meetings or who responds fastest on Teams. Others struggle with overcompensating through micromanagement or undercommunicating with remote team members altogether. In both cases, the employee experience suffers.



Without the right support, even well-intentioned leaders can unintentionally reinforce inequity between in-office and remote employees. That's a complicated business risk. Organizations that invest in hybrid leadership development create stronger and more resilient teams that advance further.

Designing Hybrid Intentionally

In 2025, success in hybrid environments depends on intentional design. The most effective hybrid strategies are rooted in business goals, team dynamics, and employee input.

On a recent [At Work in America podcast episode](#), a guest noted:



“There is magic that happens when you engage your people in this process. Where leaders go to their teams, prepare their managers to say ‘we’re supporting you to think through the way work can be done’...employees come to the table, engage in the process in good faith, and you get so much more engagement out of them.”

This approach shifts the conversation from where people work to how they work best. It also recognizes that not every role, task, or team within an organization functions in the same way.

A Role-by-Role Approach

Not all jobs benefit equally from remote or in-person work. Leaders should assess:

- Which tasks require synchronous collaboration or face-to-face interaction
- Which roles are outcome-driven and independent by nature
- What level of structure or flexibility supports high performance

This level of clarity prevents the one-size-fits-all mandates that often backfire.

Engage Employees in the Process

Top-performing organizations are designing hybrid work policies with their employees. That might include:

- Surveys or listening to sessions to understand what's working
- Pilot programs to test different hybrid arrangements
- Flexibility to adjust based on team norms or individual needs

Employees are far more likely to adopt and support hybrid models that they helped shape.

Build Infrastructure That Supports Flexibility

Intentional hybrid design also means ensuring employees have the tools, training, and spaces they need to do their best work, wherever they are. This includes:

- Strong digital collaboration platforms
- Clear communication norms and boundaries
- Purposeful in-person time for onboarding, innovation, and connection

Hybrid is a full strategy that touches culture, operations, leadership, and well-being.

When hybrid work is thoughtfully designed, it becomes an organization's competitive advantage. It empowers employees, increases retention, and strengthens alignment between how work is done and what outcomes matter most.

Training for Hybrid Leadership

Hybrid work has fundamentally shifted the leadership landscape. In the past, leaders could rely on physical proximity and informal touchpoints. Now, in 2025, leadership demands a deeper focus on communication, trust, equity, and clarity in ways that are delivered intentionally across space and technology.

The gap between leadership expectations and reality is now one of the biggest threats to hybrid success. Managers are often tasked with supporting autonomy while maintaining accountability even though they were never trained to do any of this.

Leadership training that hasn't evolved with the workplace trends risks reinforcing outdated behaviors that diminish performance and fracture trust.

The Hybrid Leadership Skill Set

To lead effectively in a hybrid environment, managers must build and strengthen five core competencies.

1. Trust-Building Across Distance – Trust is cultivated through consistency and safety. Hybrid leaders must check in with intention and create the space for honest and open dialogue.

- Show your team you trust them by focusing on results and not where they are located
- Use regular 1:1 meetings to ask about blockers
- Share information transparently so that everyone feels informed

2. Equitable Engagement – Hybrid work can easily create a visibility gap. Leaders must ensure that remote team members aren't excluded from decision-making, projects, social interactions, or meetings.

- Track speaking time in meetings to ensure balanced participation
- Celebrate wins in written and verbal formats
- Assign mentors to integrate new hybrid hires

3. Digital Communication with Empathy – Hybrid leadership lived in the inbox, on video, and across platforms. Every message and meeting is an opportunity to communicate and include everyone.

- Set communication norms
- Use tone-conscious language and check for understanding often
- Create rituals that bridge distance

4. Performance Based on Outcomes – In the hybrid model, facetime can not be counted on. Leaders must clarify expectations and explore ways to evaluate fairly.

- Align on goals and progress metrics collaboratively
- Use performance check-ins to coach employees
- Recognize that quiet productivity can be just as valuable as visible busyness

5. Modeling Boundaries and Flexibility – Employees take cues from their managers. Leaders who respect time off and are open about their own needs help to create psychologically healthy teams.

- Model flexibility by taking breaks and honoring availability preferences
- Lead with empathy during change
- Encourage team norms that protect deep work and personal time

Podcast Resources on Hybrid Work

Designing Work that Can Work for Everyone

Making Hybrid Work Effective

Mastering the Dynamics of Hybrid Work

Embracing Flexibility and Remote Work

Navigating the Shift to Hybrid and Flexible Work

Making Culture Stick with a Hybrid Workforce

Culture is often described as “what happens when no one is watching.” In hybrid work environments, that phrase takes on a new meaning because, most of the time, no one is physically watching. With fewer shared spaces and spontaneous moments, leaders are left asking how to maintain a strong culture when employees are not in the same location.

The truth is, culture doesn’t disappear in hybrid settings. It shows up in digital conversations and video meetings. It’s on shared calendars and in the choices that leaders make about inclusion and recognition.

“A culture that was once held together by daily presence must now be reimaged through new rituals, tools, and leadership behaviors that transcend location.”

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The strongest hybrid cultures aren’t just digitized versions of an office. Culture in a hybrid environment must be thoughtfully constructed to embed values into the flow of work.

Culture is developed in the hybrid world when mindset is shifted.

Participation > Presence

Impact > Intention

Reinforcing Culture Across Distance

1. Redefine rituals to create shared moments like virtual team shoutouts or digital welcome kits for new hires.
2. Celebrate micro-moments using company tools to spotlight behaviors that reflect your culture in action.
3. Anchor culture to purpose by revisiting your mission regularly and making sure every employee understands how their work connects to it.
4. Equip people managers with the tools and language to reinforce belonging, trust, and clarity.
5. Embrace inclusivity when building rituals around time zones, neurodiversity, language, and tech access.

The Hybrid Employee Experience

As hybrid work becomes the dominant model for remote-capable roles, organizations are learning that flexibility alone isn't enough. Employees now expect a work experience that is intentional and supports both their professional goals and personal well-being, no matter where they work.

While logistics like scheduling and office attendance policies are often the focus of hybrid strategies, the real differentiator is how the experience feels to the people living it. Does the employee feel seen? Trusted? Supported? Connected? These are the new markers of success in a hybrid-first world.

“Workers are not just seeking flexibility. They are seeking fairness, growth, and a sense of belonging. The hybrid employee experience must reflect that.”

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The employee experience spans every stage of the employee lifecycle and in a hybrid environment, each of the stages must be thoughtfully reimaged to ensure consistency and connection across distributed teams.

What Today's Hybrid Employees Want

- Autonomy with clarity
- Equitable access to growth
- Belonging and visibility
- Support for mental health and boundaries
- Cultural consistency across locations

Autonomy with Clarity

Employees deeply value control over their time and environment. Without clear expectations, autonomy can quickly turn into confusion or anxiety.

Organizations that lead in this space:

- Define what success looks like by role
- Set and communicate consistent team norms
- Provide visibility into how decisions are made and how contributions are measured

Equitable Access to Growth

Career development in hybrid environments must be designed for success. Many remote workers fear being “out of sight, out of mind” when it comes to mentorship, leadership opportunities, and role advancement.

To combat this, high-performing organizations:

- Track development opportunities across modalities to ensure balance
- Use digital platforms to surface and assign stretch projects
- Deliver feedback through scheduled and thoughtful channels

Belonging and Visibility

Hybrid employees want to feel as important as the in-office employees. They want to contribute in meaningful ways and build relationships that go beyond their task list.

Strong organizations:

- Create shared rituals
- Normalize hybrid-friendly recognition
- Facilitate collaboration to expand networks and reduce silos

Support for Mental Health and Boundaries

Hybrid work can blur the lines between home and work life, making burnout more likely if boundaries are not respected. Employees want to know that their well-being matters and that rest is encouraged.

Progressive organizations:

- Offer mental health benefits such as counseling, days off, or mindfulness resources
- Encourage digital detox norms
- Train managers to check in on energy levels and not just performance

Cultural Consistency Across Locations

Company culture must be deliberately extended to include employees in the office and working remotely. This means translating values into digital behavior and holding leaders accountable for inclusive decision-making.

Successful hybrid cultures:

- Make values visible in every interaction through the employee journey
- Revisit their rituals and redefine them to meet the needs of all employees
- Collect regular feedback to ensure the culture being lived matches the culture being claimed

When organizations invest in the hybrid employee experience, they reap the rewards in retention, performance, engagement, and trust. The most successful companies in 2025 understand that all employees need to be connected, supported and empowered in their role.

Action Plan:

5 Steps to Make Hybrid Work in 2025

1. Assess Where You Are

Goal: Build a shared understanding of what's working, what's not, and where you need to focus.

- Use pulse surveys and listening sessions to uncover pain points and bright spots
- Analyze turnover, promotion, and engagement data for signs of inequity
- Review onboarding and development processes to see if they work equally well for remote and in-office employees

2. Train and Equip Your Leaders

Goal: Build confident, capable leaders who can reinforce culture, equity, and clarity in a hybrid work setting.

- Scenario-based training that reflects hybrid challenges
- Toolkits for equitable performance management and communication norms
- Coaching that helps leaders build trust across distance and lead with empathy

3. Design with Employee Collaboration

Goal: Increase buy-in and ensure policies reflect real needs and not just preferences.

- Running employee design sessions or feedback forums
- Piloting flexible scheduling approaches and gathering feedback
- Clearly explaining how decisions are made and adjusted over time

4. Build an Inclusive and Connected Culture

Goal: Make every employee feel seen, valued, and included.

- Redesigning rituals to work across all company locations
- Equal recognition for in-persona and remote contributions
- Facilitating moments of human connection that are sometimes planned and sometimes organic

5. Measure, Learn, and Adapt

Goal: Build a flexible and resilient approach that grows with your organization and its people.

- Define clear success metrics
- Collect and act on employee feedback regularly
- Stay open to iteration as needs and technologies change

Don't worry about getting everything right on day one. Start with intention, stay committed to the process, and invest in your employees through care and inclusion.

Partner with us in 2025



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