Managing a Technical Team in a Hybrid Work Environment

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Team Three for All

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Research Goal

Research **challenges** and **solutions** that come with managing a technical team in a hybrid workplace.
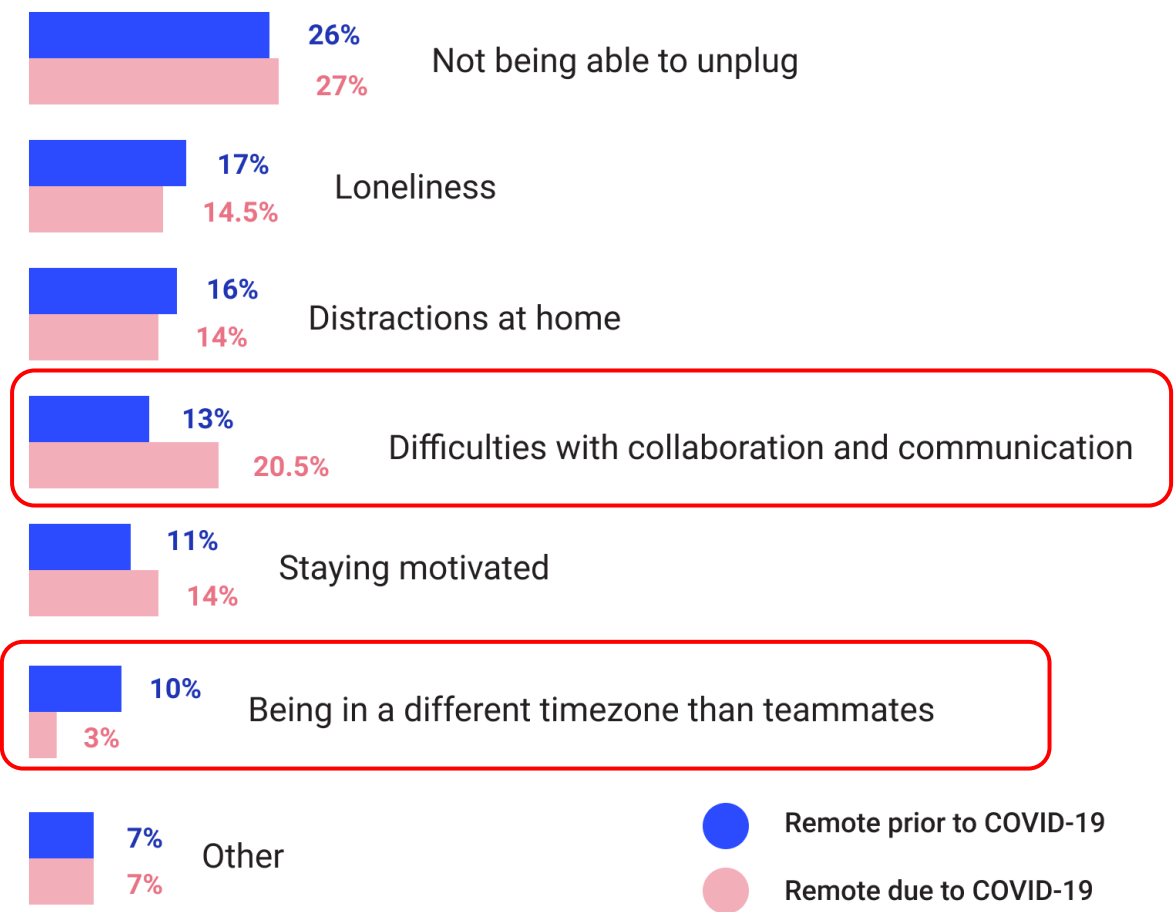

Communication Challenges

Team Inclusion

Setting Team Expectations

Team Building

Remote Communication Challenges

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?

- Not being able to unplug — 26% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 27% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Loneliness — 17% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 14.5% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Distractions at home — 16% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 14% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Difficulties with collaboration and communication — 13% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 20.5% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Staying motivated — 11% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 14% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Being in a different timezone than teammates — 10% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 3% (Remote due to COVID-19)
- Other — 7% (Remote prior to COVID-19), 7% (Remote due to COVID-19)

Legend:
- Remote prior to COVID-19
- Remote due to COVID-19

Chart #12 from reference [9]   Confidential © 2019 | 3

Team Communication Challenges

What are some of the communication issues teams encounter with remote work:

- Different Geographic / Time Zone Locations
  - Work Schedules
  - Meetings
  - Weather or other localized issues

- Different Cultures / Languages
  - Clear communications
  - Translation

- Different Department / Technical Expertise
  - Understanding technical concepts
  - New communication tools
  - Setting up contracts and other official documents

- Different Priorities
  - Communications
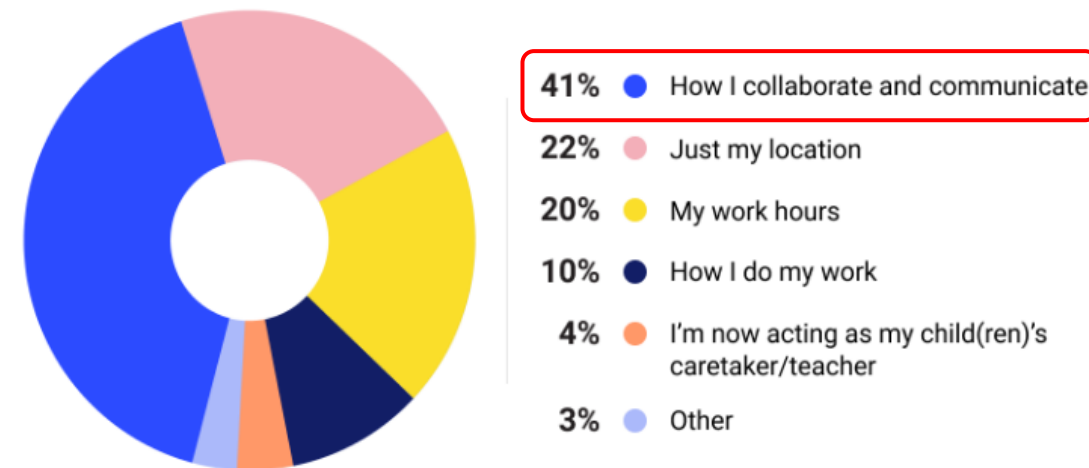 - Building trust / following schedules
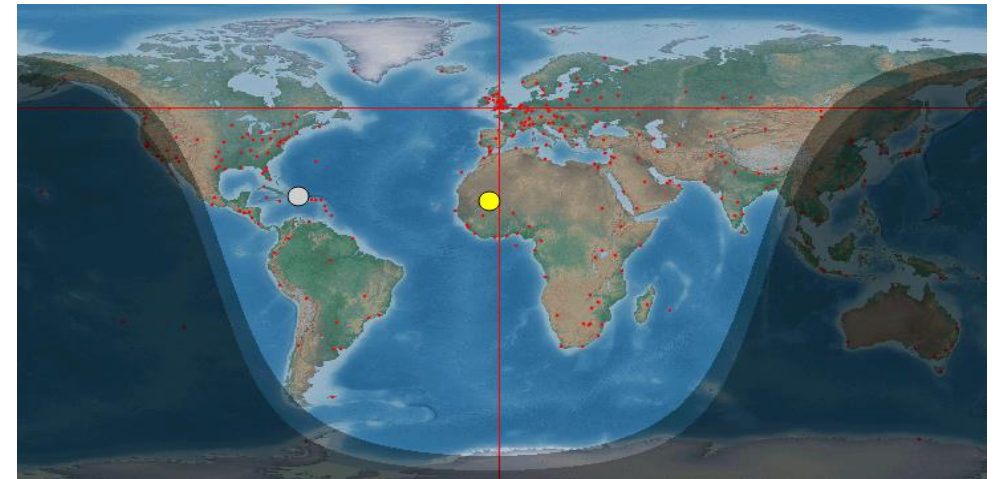
Remote Communication Challenges

What communication areas are most likely to be lost by remote working? What are some possible solutions?

- High Band-Width Sharing
  (Face-to-face communication including non-verbal and supplementary communication from multiple senses)

- Passive Knowledge
  (Knowledge that is not directly communicated to you)

- Casual conversation
  (Water cooler talk)

- Immediate Responses
  (Time dependent conversations)

- Verbal Commendations / Reinforcement
  (Accolades)

What has changed the most about your work now that you work remotely?

- 41% — How I collaborate and communicate
- 22% — Just my location
- 20% — My work hours
- 10% — How I do my work
- 4% — I'm now acting as my child(ren)'s caretaker/teacher
- 3% — Other

Chart #8 from reference [9]

Remote Communication Challenges

How do managers select the best communication methods and technology platforms?

- Project Management software best for the Team's project application

- Remove any communication barriers.

  o Schedule blocks of time for communication meetings

  o Address deficiencies that cause communication issues

- Utilizing Asynchronous Communication (Email, Collaboration Documents, and cloud technologies)

- Develop a Procedure and expected Communication Criteria

- Utilize technology that employees have been properly trained to operate

- Support Structure

Does your company encourage asynchronous communication?
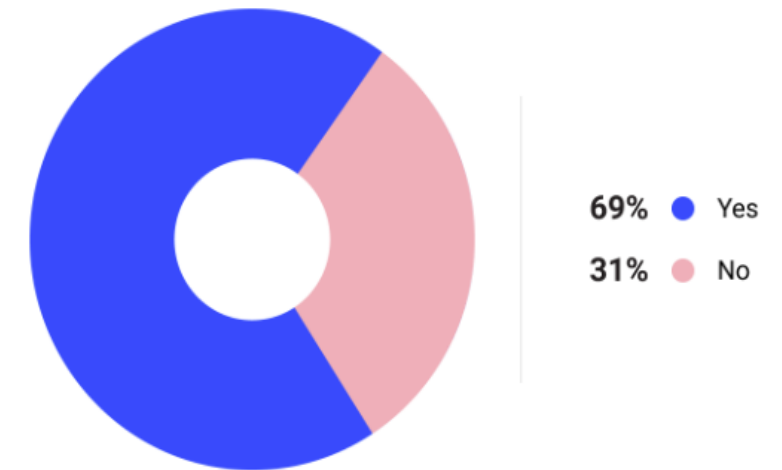

69% ● Yes

31% ● No

Chart #20 from reference [9]

Communication Challenges

How can teams address technical issues for remote working?

- Be clear on who is providing parts of infrastructure / tools that are needed

- Early in transition to remote work, plan extra time to fix problems.

- Virtual or online training on use of software and hardware for using remote communication tools

- Hiring IT support

- Cyber Security
  - Company provided equipment
  - Guarding against electronic attacks

Team Building

How do team leaders ensure that they are building a strong team in hybrid environment?

- Scheduled Check-ins

- Video meetings and group communications

- Include everyone

- Create Team-Building Activities

How do team leaders maintain a team as it transitions to a hybrid workplace?

- Find a suitable Project Management Tool

- Build an Environment of Trust

- Still have occasional physical meetings

Team Inclusion

How do managers make sure everyone is included in a hybrid workplace

The employee experience should be the same if you are in the office or virtual.

- Hold regular meetings.

- All should connect to the meeting virtually.

- Have great audio equipment or each have a headset.

- Avoid meeting after the meeting.

Team Inclusion

How do managers ensure engagement

- Encourage all employees to turn on their video. Video encourages us to be more professional

- Dress for success

- Get out of your pajamas! It can affect productivity.

- Encourage team to stay focused.

- Allow each person a chance to talk. Ask the shy ones.

Team Inclusion

What is the role of a manager

A hybrid environment requires a manager to be fully supportive and understand the differences between remote workers and on-site workers.

- The manager must continue to apply rules fairly to everyone.

- The manager must reach out since employees can be are under immense stress.

- Manage time zones.

- Avoid the "us versus them" mentality.

- Setup a system to allow easy collaboration such as MS teams.

Team Inclusion

What leadership frameworks perform best in this environment

- Servant leaders are excellent listeners and overall communicators. Communication is very important in hybrid environments.

  - Serves others.

  - Shares power & control to drive engagement.

  - Measures success via growth & development.

  - It's not about them.

  - Strong with emotional intelligence.

TRADITONAL LEADERS

Sees leadership as a rank to obtain.

Uses power & control to drive performance.

Measures success through output.

Speaks.

Believes its about them.

SERVANT LEADERS

Sees leadership as an opportunity to serve others.

Shares power & control to drive engagement.

Measures success through growth & development.

Listens.

Understands its not about them.

Setting Team Expectations

Have work hours changed?

- Hours and days should remain flexible – days in the office and remote.

- Be sensitive to diversity and inclusion.

- Consider a rotating schedule to connect with some face time.   This can affect promotions.

- Keep in mind the time zone issues.

- Consider keeping leadership out of the office to avoid bias against remote workers.

Setting Team Expectations

How does leadership drive expectations?

- By setting the example.

- Foster communication practices for status, time-off, contact information are important.

- Treat everyone with respect.

- Get to the meeting first.

- Everyone should have a plan to grow using goals including the manager.

Setting Team Expectations

How do hybrid teams collaborate to achieve a common goal?

- One of the biggest hurdles affecting hybrid work is effective collaboration.

  - Know the dealines and agree to them

  - Have equal access to the manager.

  - Clear expectations on your availability response times.

  - Interpersonal relationships need to flourish.

Professional Interviews – Methodology

1. **Communication** - What are the biggest communication challenges you have faced with your team going to a hybrid workplace? What are the best ways you found to overcome those challenges?

2. **Team Building** - How do you ensure you are building/maintaining a strong team chemistry in a hybrid workplace?

3. **Inclusion**- How do you make ensure engagement from your team? How do you make sure everyone is included in the decision-making process?

4. **Setting Expectations**- How have day to day expectations shifted? Work hours, travel, physical workspace, ect.

Interview Panel

Kyle K.
- Senior Manager - Technical Solutions Hub for Campbell Soup Company
- 6 Years Management Experience
- 1.5 Years Hybrid

Sacha D.
- R&D Manager - Campbells Foodservice Division
- 7 Years Management Experience
- 1.5 Years Hybrid

Lisa S.
- R&D Manager - Campbells Soup R&D
- 32 Years Manager Experience
- 1.5 Years Hybrid

Professional Interviews – Communication

What are the biggest communication challenges you have faced with your team going to a hybrid workplace? What are the best ways you found to overcome those challenges?

"We were bombarded with meetings … with the new way of working over communication is probably better than no communication, but I think it left the team a little bit squeezed to get actual like physical work done"

"I would set up monthly calls. And I would say, pretend we're all at my desk. Please have your video on and lets all chat and I I did that for a little bit and I will tell you that there were some team members that still did not turn their video on."

"I think understanding people's needs and level of comfort levels of communication was a critical part to kind of balancing things out as we went forward."

"Just get on your computer and just do video chats. Even if someone sitting beside you. That's in the same meeting 'cause it's just. It's much easier to make that technology work. The technology in the conference rooms isn't up to par yet."

"We did a lot of surveys asking like how often do we want to meet as a team?"

Professional Interviews – Team Building

How do you ensure you are building/maintaining a strong team chemistry in a hybrid workplace?

"We played games like 20 questions, or, you know, silly things that people can kind of drop their guard and get comfortable and that can help up"

"I think the other thing that helps too is like kind of accountability partners. This this notion of where you have like a buddy."

"We even tired by these virtual happy hours they were, they were cool at first and then they were just like oh another one."

"I started a Friday gathering so we do like 1/2 hour on Friday mornings. It's not like necessarily work focused. It is you kind of get to know each other better. Talk about where you came from, your favorite music, your same favorite road trip we've done, you know, strange exercises like try to teach an alien that doesn't speak English what we do for a living."

"...the biggest thing is I've I've created this real flow to the work model.."

Professional Interviews – Inclusion

How do you make ensure engagement from your team? How do you make sure everyone is included in the decision-making process?

"We try to really recognize those milestones for people."

"We use the DAIO decsion making process. We set the expectations ahead of time and meetings or product cuttings and of what decision needs to be made and by who."

"It is more important than ever to over communicate and bring team members along on the journey"

"With like senior leadership, really tried to feature, you know, create talking spot for everybody."

Professional Interviews – Setting Expectations

How have day to day expectations shifted? Work hours, travel, physical workspace, ect.

"...It doesn't matter, as long as you're getting the job done well, right? So you work whatever hours you need.."

"My concern for me is like do I have enough work for everybody? .... The other thing I don't really want people doing is like working extreme hours."

"I enjoy working from work and having more of that clear separation between work and home. It's a little easier to shut it off."

"It's a different thing. You stopped the five... you close your computer and you leave. So I think there's a different level of commitment when you're home."

"...as long as they're getting what they need done, I'm extremely flexible."

"...you have to be flexible. You can't be too rigid."

QUIZ TIME

Which of the following communications is an example of High Band-Width Sharing?

A. Email with details about project ideas

B. Post-it note with project ideas on the wall

C. 1 on 1 meeting in the hall with a team member to discuss project ideas

D. Phone Call with all department heads to discuss project ideas

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What leadership framework performs best in the hybrid environment?

a) Any framework was recommended.

b) Servant leadership

c) Entrepreneurial Leadership.

d) Fiedler's Contingency model.

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From the interviews conducted, what was the biggest take away from *The Team Buidling* Interview question?

a) Virtual happy hours are always really fun!

b) It is important to set aside time to talk about anything but work.

c) Team building isn't that important.

d) Hazing new employees is a good team building method.

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Thank You!

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