20 Culture Hacks to Improve Hybrid Workplace Adoption and Efficiency

Gavin Tay

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More Than Nine in 10 HR Leaders Will, or Already Have, Implemented Hybrid Work

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Changing Corporate Culture Feels Like a Never-Ending Climb

- Resistance to Change
- Daunting Scope
- Multiple Agendas
- Lack of Agreement on End State
- Constant Effort

Tackling It All at Once Is Likely to Fail

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Rather than trying to change everything at once …

… Begin with small things that are easy to change.

Look for
culture hacks.

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Don't Just "Change Manage" Your Way to a Better Culture

Change Manager
Decide Categories

Minor → **Change Manager** Authorize and Plan Changes

Significant → **Change Manager** Consult With Executives and Define Change Plan

Major → **Executive Team** Authorize and Direct Changes

Change Advisory Board
Evaluate Impacts on Resources, Confirm Priority and Plan Change

Authorized?

No → **Report Back to Initiator**

Yes → **Execute**

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Not Culture Change

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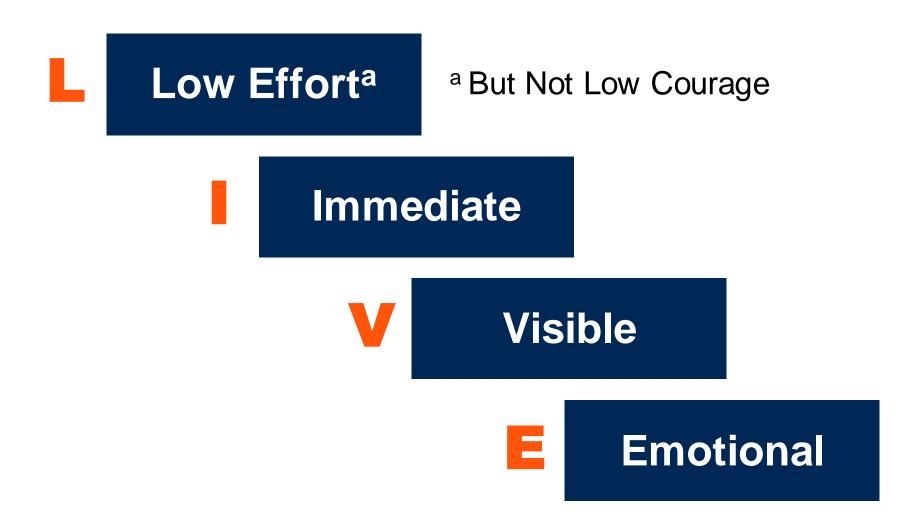# Hack Your Culture Instead

Culture Hack — Exploiting a Single Point Where a Culture Is Vulnerable to Deep Change

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A Culture Hack Is

L | **Low Effort**[a]   [a] But Not Low Courage

I | **Immediate**

V | **Visible**

E | **Emotional**

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Do's

- Do start with a hack that is fun and not too scary.

- Do start today.

- Do start small.

- Do know what goal you are hacking toward.

- Do surprise people.

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Don'ts

- Don't choose something complicated like "let's overhaul our governance approach."

- Don't choose something that needs outside approval.

- Don't use hacking to push a personal agenda.

- Don't do something illegal.

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Automate Drudge Activities

Don't just respond with an air horn blast sound clip when someone sends another email.

Use rules, scripts, low code, no code to **automatically perform routine tasks** in the same way an employee would.
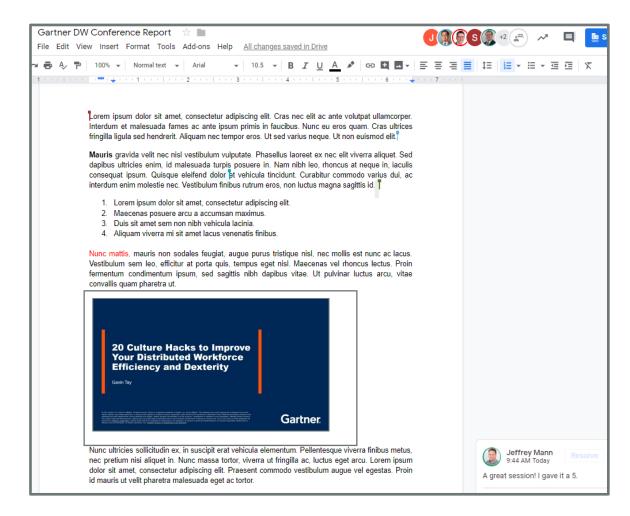
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Drive Collaboration Equity

Create **equal opportunities** to influence decisions
and actions.

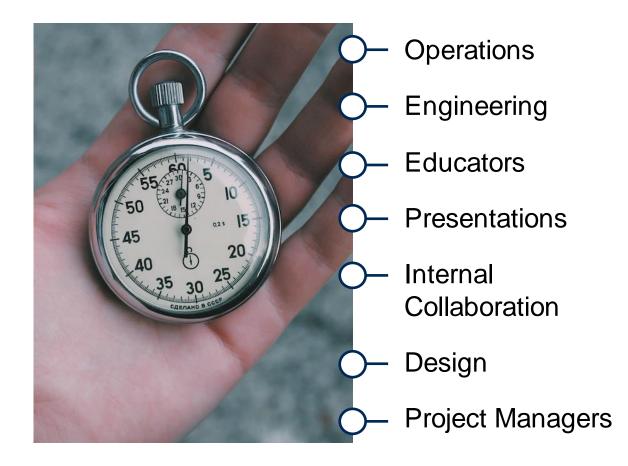Take notes in a **shared** document when at virtual or
physical meetings.

Asynchronous and Real Time

Reward a team that leverages **visual collaboration tools.**

Multiple users can interact on the same virtual canvas **simultaneously.**

Drive **interactive** and **dynamic** engagement.

- Operations
- Engineering
- Educators
- Presentations
- Internal Collaboration
- Design
- Project Managers

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Small Dosages of Generative AI

Acquire generative AI interaction skills, and **understand the limitations** and potential of the technology.

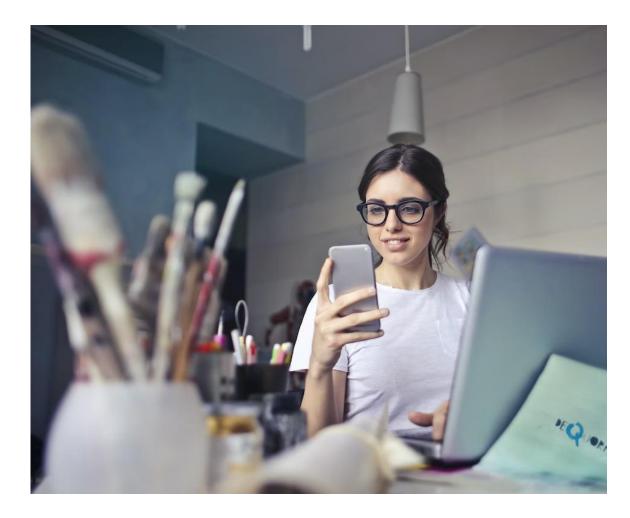Exploit as a **pulse check and balance** on what is being said, discussed, advised or plain nonsense.

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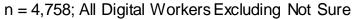
Nudge Employee Experiences

Hybrid workplaces are distributed.

Leverage nudge tech to **deliver serendipitous experiences.**

n = 4,758; All Digital Workers Excluding Not Sure
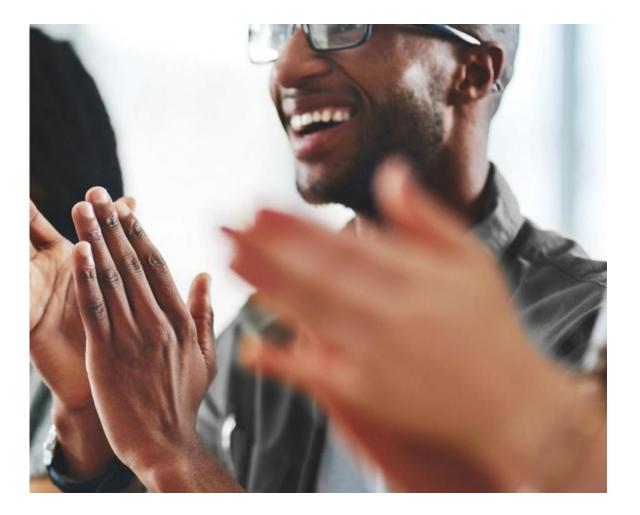Q: How would you mostly prefer to arrange your hybrid work schedule?
Source: 2022 Gartner Digital Worker Survey

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Measure and Continually Improve

Improve transparency into technology **performance** and **adoption.**

Identify and **eliminate technical issues** that create digital friction.

Uncover **actionable insights** and enable intelligence-driven automation.

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Break Down Virtual Barriers

Wave, raise your hand, gesture in agreement.

Show the artifact and **interact as you would in person** when virtual.

Source: Freepik

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Reduce Meetings

Declare one or more **"meeting-free workdays"** per week, or one week per month, and **cancel meetings with no agenda.**

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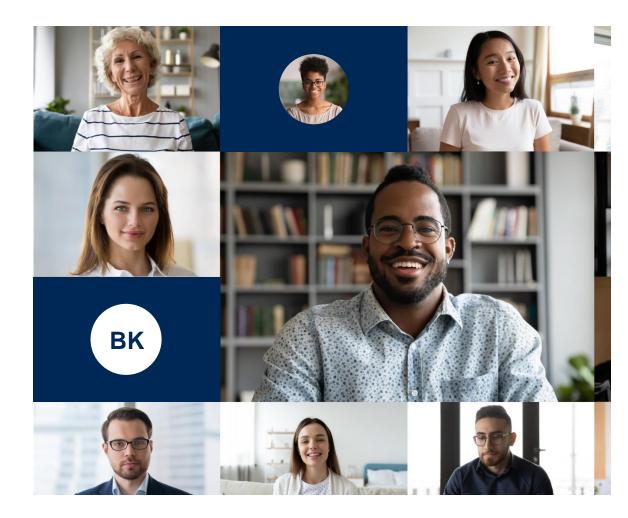# Demonstrate Respect of Time

Schedule meetings for **30 minutes or less.** End five minutes before the half-hour and start five minutes after the half-hour.

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Flexibility Fuels "Human Deal"

Radical flexibility and **shared purpose** let employees bring their full selves to work so they **feel valued.**

n = 4,861; All Digital Workers

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Don't Fall Prey to Quiet Quitting

Expectations of your employers have shifted.

Design a "human centered" EVP to provide an **exceptional life** (rather than just work) **experience** and acknowledge employee emotions.

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Meeting Productivity

Plan for a **five-minute summary** at the end of every meeting to say:

- What did we decide?
- What did we deliver?
- What did we assign ourselves?

Productivity of Different Meeting Types

Most Productive

Meeting Type	Percentage
In-Person Meetings	46%
Virtual Meetings Using Audio and Video	23%
Hybrid Meetings	17%
Virtual Meetings Using Audio Only	13%

0%   25%   50%

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Embrace Human-Centric Design

The **individual** is the stable pillar we design work processes and space utilization around.

For every new process that seeks to **improve the employee experience,** we discard one that does not!

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Employee-Driven Town Halls

Offer an **online Q&A** with leadership. Employees vote on questions asked, and **executives answer the questions** with the highest votes.

Repeat every month or quarter.

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Don't Exclude Passive Workers

When hybrid, explicitly reach out to someone new each day. Complement a **video conversation** with an **in-person catch-up** instead.

n = 4,653; All Digital Workers, Excluding "No Answer"

Q: If you had the choice of meeting types, what proportion of time you would like to spend in each of these types of meetings?

Source: 2022 Gartner Digital Worker Survey

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Adopt a Test-and-Learn Culture

Encourage colleagues to share **mistakes** they made and how they learned from them:

- Enable experimentation.
- Change perception of failure.
- Start with senior executives.

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Enable Digital Side Hustles

Create **videos** of discovery or lessons and circulate that on employee communication applications to **build a sense of community.**

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Keep Creativity Alive Longer Term

Ask "why?" and "why not?" **Curiosity** is a primary motivator for innovation.

Add **five minutes** to meetings to surface and discuss new approaches.

Hackathons are a popular activity for **culture hacks.**

Source: Microsoft Teams Blog

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Hack Your Hybrid Culture

Design **radical flexibility** over where, when and with whom.

- Implement **"do not disturb"** (DND) periods.

- Offer monthly **"shadow passes."**

- Make yourself **vulnerable,** create the option to **schedule "safety cone"** 1:1s.

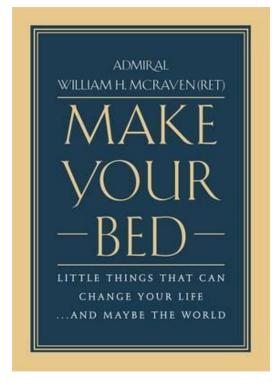- Set up offline **content breaks.**

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First Change Yourself

"If you want to **change the world,** start off by making your bed.

If you can't get up in the morning and make your bed, **what else are you incapable of doing?"**

Admiral William H. McRaven (Ret.)

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Digital Skills

Personal and Team Growth

Culture and Community

1. Automate Drudge Activities
2. Drive Collaboration Equity
3. Asynchronous and Real Time
4. Small Dosages of Generative AI
5. Nudge Employee Experiences
6. Measure and Continually Improve
7. Break Down Virtual Barriers

8. Reduce Meetings
9. Demonstrate Respect of Time
10. Flexibility Fuels "Human Deal"
11. Don't Fall Prey to Quiet Quitting
12. Meeting Productivity
13. Embrace Human-Centric Design
14. Employee-Driven Town Halls

15. Don't Exclude Passive Workers
16. Adopt a Test-and-Learn Culture
17. Enable Digital Side Hustles
18. Keep Creativity Alive Longer Term
19. Hack Your Hybrid Culture
20. First Change Yourself

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Recommendations

- ✓ Use **culture hacks** as part of your culture change program.

- ✓ Check that you have a clear goal. What **specific behavior should start or stop?**

- ✓ Design culture hacks that help people work **synchronously** and **asynchronously,** no matter where they're located.

- ✓ Consider what to do if the hack backfires. How would you **contain the consequences?**

- ✓ Transform successful hacks into **repeatable habits.**

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Recommended Gartner Research

🔍 **[What Workers Want: Top 10 Insights From the Digital Worker Experience Survey](#)**
Tori Paulman, Jim Murphy, Gavin Tay and Lane Severson

🔍 **[Quick Answer: How Can the Digital Workplace Make Hybrid Work Successful?](#)**
Gavin Tay, Tori Paulman, Tapan Upmanyu and Hao Yin

🔍 **[Hybrid Work Doesn't Have to Be the Death of Your Culture](#)**
Jennifer Carter, Apoorva Chhabra and Mary Mesaglio

🔍 **[The Culture Hacking Roadmap](#)**
Mary Mesaglio, Elise Olding and Erik Van Ommeren

🔍 **[The Art of Culture Hacking](#)**
Mary Mesaglio and Darren Topham

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Keep Attention

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- Blow an air horn at the end of a presentation to make sure people are **energized.**

- **Dance** to your favorite tune with your fellow peers and colleagues — wherever.

Source: Airhorn; Dance Music

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