

IDEAS AT WORK

Strategies for a Successful Hybrid Team

Takeaways

- Identify the tech tools your hybrid team needs to be successful
- Set up communication protocols to keep teams connected
- Be intentional about building a culture for all employees

In February 2020, nearly everyone on the Tarkenton team was working in one place. We all came into the office five days a week, from the start of the day to the end. Little did we know that just a few weeks later, that would change – and that shift has continued to this very day.

Like many companies around the world, we embraced remote work and eventually hybrid schedules. At first it was out of necessity, but now it's because we've seen how effective it can be. I still like to come into the office almost every day, but that flexibility has helped our team grow and succeed.

Over the past few months a lot of companies have been bringing more of their people back into the office. But as this article shows, in the right situation and with the right approach a flexible hybrid schedule can be a huge advantage.



Jon Tarkenton

Strategies for a Successful Hybrid Team

Today's headlines tell the story. Amazon, BlackRock, Disney, and JPMorgan are all calling their employees back into the office – and the transition has been a challenging one for many.

Meanwhile, other businesses have opted for hybrid work schedules to maintain the flexibility their workforce has come to love during the pandemic. In many industries today, the employment market demands it. Attracting, retaining, and motivating top talent today often requires offering the flexibility of a remote or hybrid position. So how do leaders today manage the balancing act of a split workforce, combining remote and in-office team members? How can your organization pivot in this new era to offer the desired flexibility and create a cohesive team, all while meeting your business objectives?



Effectively managing a remote or hybrid workforce requires intentional planning and foresight. You will need to implement the appropriate tools, expectations, and protocols to ensure your team can achieve the same success in a remote environment that they can in person at the office. Today, companies that are taking a thoughtful, deliberate approach to hybrid work are reaping the benefits for both individuals and the entire organization.

When planning for a remote or hybrid workforce, there are three main areas business leaders must consider for success: tech tools, communication, and culture.

Setup for Success: Remote Working Technology

For starters, it's important to choose and adapt the right technology for your team's needs. This means that your remote hybrid workforce will need more than the traditional phone line and email address to connect and work effectively.

In addition to the traditional tools you would use in your office, we recommend implementing tools for video conferencing, instant internal communication like Slack or Teams, and a virtual Training/Learning Management System.

Beyond providing access to the technology, it's even more important to set expectations for how you expect technology to be used. For example, is it expected that employees have their cameras on and add to the discussion during video conference calls, or are those meetings intended for unidirectional information flow from leader to employee? At Tarkenton, we address this need by beginning all new hire training with lessons on functionality and etiquette for the technology we use in-house.



Staying in Touch: Communicating with Remote Workers

Communication can be one of the biggest challenges with remote and hybrid teams. Even when you have the technology in place, you need to establish standard protocols to ensure that communication is happening.

At the higher levels, managers and leaders must pay attention to the needs and habits of the individuals on their teams. That means regular check-ins – at both the individual and group level. But don't check in just for the sake of checking in; have a specific agenda and list of goals for every contact with a remote worker.

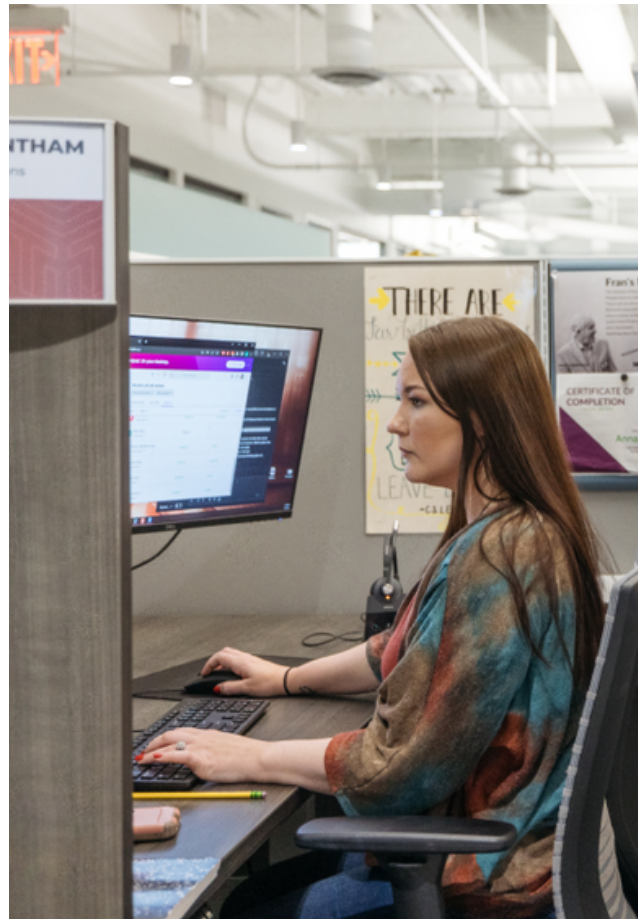
During team-wide communications, it helps to have a standard protocol. For example, you could implement end-of-day check-ins for everyone to share what they accomplished, or early-morning discussions of the day's goals. End-of-week check-ins should preview the focus for the coming week. Whatever schedule you set for yourself and your team, building that routine keeps people connected to the larger group. You'll make up for people being in different locations, and keep your team's efficiency high.

While communication within individual teams is critical, don't overlook the importance of leader-wide chat channels, either. When division heads get a bird's eye view of the company, they will see opportunities for growth. Visibility at that level is a crucial tool.

Good Vibes: Building a Strong Hybrid Work Culture

A common concern with business leaders is office culture. With a remote or hybrid team, they fear, the sense of culture is lessened or lost. But while it is true that culture can develop more easily and organically when people are together every day, that doesn't mean your culture is doomed when you go remote or hybrid. It just requires intentionality and focus.

How do you replace watercooler conversations that help to organically build culture and connections in the traditional office? In today's remote or hybrid world, those technology solutions and communication protocols can help keep the conversation going. Depending on what tools you've chosen, you can set up specific channels and/or dedicated times for exactly those kinds of culture-building meetups.



For example, you might allot extra time to a weekly meeting, set aside for non-work discussions. Or you could create a chat channel dedicated to the hot topics of the week, where team members can check in and contribute throughout the day when they need a few minutes to decompress. Which part of Barbenheimer were employees more excited about? Who do they have in the big game this weekend? What are people's favorite weekend trip spots? Who can win this week's trivia challenge? When done thoughtfully and intentionally, you can even create a more inclusive conversation and culture than one built around the coincidences of who takes coffee breaks at the same time.

And just because your team isn't together every day, doesn't mean you can't set aside days and times when everyone is together. You can plan special events that bring people together and give you unique opportunities to build an in-person culture with a hybrid or remote team. Just schedule it in advance so that everyone can attend – maybe even employees who live too far away to commute regularly.

Finally, how you handle new hires goes a long way toward establishing a successful remote or hybrid culture and team. Here are three things we do at Tarkenton to start building the culture from a new employee's first day:



1

Start their tenure in-person.

New employees can feel disconnected if they start a new job entirely remotely. We have all new employees come into the office every day for the first few weeks. This helps new team members acclimate faster in a hybrid environment. People might be on different schedules and not all in at the same time, but if a new employee comes in every day for a few weeks, they'll be able to piece together the overall dynamic and culture.

2

Involve the team in training.

While there is typically one person who primarily oversees a new employee's training and onboarding, we make a point to involve a variety of employees in the training process, presenting material in training videos and holding one-on-one meetings to serve as the subject matter expert with the new employee. New employees feel more comfortable as they learn who's who and put faces with names – and as a bonus benefit, current employees feel empowered when they're chosen to participate.

3

Send out log-off reminders.

As we all know, technology can easily lead to being "on" 24/7, but that can quickly cause burnout. We use daily end-of-the-day reminders to encourage everyone to log off and live their life. When you hire a new employee, you're not just hiring a resume; you're hiring a whole person, and it's important to preserve and even encourage time for outside interests. In the long run, that benefits everyone.

Balance Gives an Edge

Putting effort into balancing remote and in-office employees will yield great rewards and strengthen your company for the future. Yes, it does take effort. But the rewards are worth it.

You will have access to a larger more talented candidate pool from which to hire as employers compete to hire the best. Including a remote, flexible working component could give you the edge in creating the most attractive employment package.

Perhaps the most important benefit you will gain is the sense of security for your mission. Your team can't be thrown off track again by an unforeseen circumstance. You can pick right up and work from anywhere if another disaster occurred. And your clients will still get the outstanding service and attention they deserve, as you now have a way to work and communicate from anywhere.

Interested in working with Tarkenton? Our highly skilled team is ready to help you scale opportunities and accelerate speed to market. [Contact us](#) today!



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Anna Grantham serves as a liaison between Tarkenton and our partners for ongoing service, product, and growth initiatives, and manages day-to-day operations within Tarkenton, including the support team. She also leads partner sales and service team trainings, and provides internal team training on new initiatives.