

Tips for Managers Supporting Hybrid and Remote Employees

As we continue to embrace our new work environment that supports hybrid and remote work for our employees across the University, it is important to remember that flexible work arrangements come with both benefits and challenges. How can we best support employees and ensure that flexibility works well for us all? Here are some useful tips for managers to think about and implement as we move forward (and always!)

Always Remember:

- Be mindful of when meetings are scheduled to ensure that they do not spill over into personal time (e.g. evening hours or lunch time).
- Create a culture that is respectful of personal time by labeling emails sent during non-traditional work hours with expected response times (e.g. “For tomorrow” or “For Monday”).
- Reassess goals and priorities frequently to ensure that the needs of the school/department are being met and that employees’ workloads are manageable.
- Encourage staff to take breaks throughout the day and to use Paid Time Off to support overall well-being.

Please read the full recommendations below to help manage ongoing hybrid, remote and flexibly working employees.

Communication is Key

As a manager, being accessible to all of your team members is vital to their success and the success of the team, school, or department. Regular one-to-one check-ins using either in-person meetings or video conferencing, in addition to other phone calls and emails, will help maintain open lines of communication. Reassess the meetings on at least an annual basis to ensure that the schedule still works for your staff. As always, it is best practice to avoid scheduling meetings during non-work hours, unless discussed and approved by all meeting participants.

When possible, try to schedule full team meetings in-person on days when the whole staff is on campus. Of course, it is always helpful to continue using video conference tools, like Zoom, as needed to maintain communication among your team on hybrid/remote days.

Email and Phone Culture

Working flexibly allows for work to be done during non-traditional work times. While working outside of “regular” work time may be right for some, it is important to clearly state expectations of workflow. For example, if a manager prefers to work late in the evenings or on weekends, it is helpful to include a note on emails stating “For tomorrow” or “For Monday” at the start of the subject line so that employees do not feel that they need to step away from personal time to reply. Certain email systems also allow for message delivery to be scheduled

so that you can draft an email to be sent during the regular work day. Calling employees outside of work hours should be avoided whenever possible, unless previously discussed or in an emergency.

These practices will help to create a culture of respect for the separation of work and personal time.

Assess and Re-Set Expectations as Needed

With hybrid/remote work, as with more traditional schedules, it is helpful for managers to provide a sense of structure through clear roles and responsibilities, precise objectives, and performance measures. Flexible work may also require periodic adjustments to ensure that goals and objectives are being met.

- Have ongoing conversations about goal setting and project prioritization to help employees manage their work and monitor their own performance.
- When work and personal situations shift, expectations, priorities, and timelines may also need to be adjusted.

Be Understanding and Flexible

While maintaining formal work schedules as much as possible ensures that employees understand what is expected, being flexible is essential for their success and the success of the whole unit.

Acknowledging that many hybrid and remote employees have very fluid boundaries between their personal and professional lives when working regularly from home, it is important to:

- Clearly communicate work and life needs and, if work is being done outside of traditional hours, be mindful of expectations around response times.
- Encourage employees to stick to a schedule with allocated work blocks throughout the day and week.
- Maintain communication about the employee's work schedule, keeping in mind it may change on a daily and weekly basis.
- Share the schedule with other team members who may rely on the employee for meetings and other collaborative work.
- Encourage employees to take lunch and other breaks throughout the day to maintain overall well-being and avoid burnout.
- Remind employees that they should "shut work off" to rest and recharge at the end of the day, whenever that may be.

Provide Regular Feedback and Inspiration

To maintain motivation and engagement, employees should be recognized and rewarded for their successes, both individually and publicly. Remember to let employees know how their

work is important to the bigger picture - how it contributes to the success of the team, school, department, and/or the broader university. Make these celebrations part of the team's culture by acknowledging individual and team wins during larger meetings and gatherings, either in-person or virtual.

Flexibility Supports Columbia's Sustainability Plan

Flexible Work Arrangements also support the [University's Sustainability Plan](#) and its subsequent commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from commute travel and peak- hour congestion as a result of university operations.

Questions?

Contact the Office of Work/Life at worklife@columbia.edu

*Adapted from

[https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications3/researchreports/Tip%20Sheet %20Managing%20Remote%20Workers.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications3/researchreports/Tip%20Sheet%20Managing%20Remote%20Workers.pdf)

