



A STUDY ON IT EMPLOYEES EXPLORING HYBRID WORK AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR CAREER GROWTH

Ms. Veena R * Dr. BharathKumar K K**

*Research Scholar, Department of Management Sciences, Maharaja Research Foundation, Maharaja Institute of Technology Mysore, Karnataka, India.

**Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences, Maharaja Institute of Technology, Mysore Karnataka, India.

Abstract

COVID-19, has condensed a huge section of the employees unable to commute to work, as to moderate the spread of the virus. This has resulted in both employers and employees seeking substitute work arrangements, particularly in fast-paced metropolitan cities. Due to the pandemic, most if not all workers experienced work from home. Hence forward work from home has developed a program priority for most governments. The policies must be ready keeping in mind the pragmatism for both employers and employees. However, this existing condition delivers in imitable vision into exactly how well occupied from home works, and may play a dynamic role in future policies that redesign the present structure of working hours, probably permitting for additional elasticity. Using an investigative outline and a SWOT analysis, this study examines the continuing practice of the employer and employees face in metropolitan cities. A critical understanding and related recommendations have been advanced for upcoming program decisions. It will also critically scrutinize if this work arrangement will continue as a temporary element responding to the exceptional circumstances, or whether it could be a permanent arrangement.

Keywords: Covid-19, Employees, Career, Hybrid Work.

Introduction

Many organizations and companies have turned to the use of hybrid and remote work software to effectively manage their remote workers and increase the productivity of their employees. Using hybrid work method to create an optimized digital workplace can assist workers with many aspects of hybrid working. Work coordination is essential to a productive workforce structure. According to Reworked.co, software programs like Smart sheet promote coordination by organizing employees' work around a centralized task. Communication and collaboration are made simpler for remote workers through Intranet programs like Powell Software, which allows for interactive communication between staff members. In addition, digital adoption platforms like Walkme and other training software like ezTalks Cloud Meeting help teach skills or conduct lessons to train staff members. The Covid-19 pandemic forced many employers to set aside fears about remote work. Productivity remained strong while many employees worked independently from home, and most of them appreciated new flexibility and autonomy. But employees also missed many aspects of being in the office, such as in-person collaboration, social interaction, and spontaneous encounters. While technology can facilitate some of these moments, it simply cannot replace the in-person work experience that's instrumental in shaping workplace culture—the shared times that connect people, teams, and organizations.

How Hybrid Work is Shaping Career Development

In today's labor market, as we continue to navigate the Great Resignation, companies have to do everything they can to keep their employees engaged, satisfied, and committed to their roles and that means investing in their career development. "Career development is a necessity, rather than a perk, to retain top talent," said Julia Blandin Wiener, organizational development specialist and founder of organizational development consultancy Julia Loves Orgs. In the past two years, the world of work has changed dramatically, and many organizations have shifted to a hybrid work model with some employees working remotely, some working in-person, and some splitting their time between the two. And today, the career development strategies that worked for supporting a fully onsite team may not be as effective in a hybrid work environment. Below, we'll take a closer look at how hybrid work is shaping career development, and, more importantly, what organizations can do to support their employees' career growth no matter where they're working.



Career Development in the Era of Hybrid Work

The COVID pandemic and the resulting shift to hybrid and remote work haven't been easy on employee career development. According to BambooHR's *COVID-19 and Careers: The Effect of the Pandemic on Career Progression Report*, a whopping 78% of remote workers said their career development was negatively impacted during the first year of the pandemic, and 36% experienced pay or promotion freezes during that same time period which, on average, they estimated cost them \$9,000 in lost compensation. And 32% of the workers surveyed reported that they were expecting promotions, but those promotions had been delayed or denied. Even though their career progression has stalled in many cases, employees are still working harder than ever. According to the same report, 56% of employees surveyed put in extra hours, 50% volunteered for extra projects or responsibilities, and 38% worked on their days off with 23% even working while they were out on PTO! As a result, workers are understandably feeling burned out. BambooHR's research found that 79% of remote employees reported feeling burned out monthly, while 53% said they experienced burnout on a weekly basis. And 21% of workers reported feeling burned out *daily*. But after putting in so much hard work and not seeing the results they deserve, many workers are getting fed up. According to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a record 47.8 million people quit their jobs in 2021. And that trend is set to continue into 2022 particularly for employees who feel like they're not developing in their careers. The BambooHR report found that more than a quarter of remote workers (27%) plan on switching careers or looking for a new job in the next six months and a full 40% of those workers said the reason they planned to look for a new job is that they felt "stuck" in their current role. In this landscape, prioritizing employee career development is a must if you want to keep top talent at your organization. Here's how to do it successfully in a hybrid work environment.

5 Ways to Support Career Development for Hybrid and Remote Employees

1. Create Competency Matrices: When employees work in an office, they often get an idea of what it will take to progress in their careers for example, by observing which people tend to thrive within the company, or through spontaneous conversations with managers or company leadership. But when employees are working remotely (either fully or partially), they can miss out on that context; they may not know what skills and competencies it actually takes to excel in their roles and advance in their careers. That's why competency matrices are critical for career development in a hybrid work environment. A competency matrix (also known as a skills matrix) clearly outlines all the skills necessary to excel in a role or project. Employees can then review the matrix, compare it to their own skillset, and identify any gaps they need to fill in order to achieve their career goals.

2. Individual Development Plans: If competency matrices lay out the general skills an employee might need to develop their career, individual development plans help create a roadmap for how they're going to get there. Individual development plans (IDPs) clearly define your employee's career development goals, and then outline specific, actionable steps they can take to reach those goals. Going back to the previous example of the employee looking to land a promotion to a marketing director position, their individual development plan should include action items that align with the position's competency matrix, like "Lead a project team of at least three people," "Volunteer to write a technical marketing document," or "Take a training course on XYZ content management software." With that plan in place, the employee has clear direction on what they need to do to attain their career development goals and, as their manager; you have clear direction on how you can best support them.

While this is always important, it's especially important in a hybrid environment. For remote employees who aren't working face-to-face with their managers and colleagues, it can be easy for career development goals to fall through the cracks. Creating individual development plans with your fully remote and hybrid employees helps ensure you're on the same page with your direct reports about how they want their careers to grow and what they're going to do to get there, which can increase the likelihood of success even if you don't work together in person.

3. Offer Learning and Development (L&D) Stipends: When your team shares an office space, organizing learning and development (L&D) opportunities is fairly straightforward. For instance, you might hire an outside consultant to lead a "Lunch and Learn" session on industry trends, or have a career coach come in once a month to work individually with employees. But offering those same opportunities to a hybrid workforce can be



tricky. In-person learning and development programs don't always translate well to a remote environment, and coordinating schedules between in-person and remote employees, especially when some workers may be in different time zones, can be a logistical nightmare. When it comes to L&D, in order to fully support your hybrid team's career development, you need to think outside the box. Instead of solely creating learning and development opportunities in-house, allow employees to choose the best opportunities for themselves, and then give them a stipend to cover the costs. Offering L&D stipends not only makes it easier to get your hybrid team access to learning and development opportunities, it also allows each employee to tailor their learning and development to their unique career development goals, which can put them in a better position to progress in their careers. Remote, hybrid, and onsite employees all have different needs and learning and development is no exception. That's why your company's L&D strategy needs to take this into consideration and provide opportunities that best suit each of your employee's needs in a hybrid workforce. Providing L&D stipends is an effective way to accomplish this.

4. Prioritize Remote Visibility: Many employees who are working remotely struggle in a hybrid environment, particularly when it comes to visibility. In the BambooHR report, 21% of respondents said remote work made their contributions less visible, and that the lack of visibility negatively impacted their career development. "Where employee growth and development is concerned, [remote work] can bias the process against those who are in the office less frequently," cautioned Amie Devero, executive coach, management consultant, and founder of consultancy Beyond Better Strategy and Coaching. That's why it's so important for leaders and managers to prioritize their remote workers, and make sure they're getting the same visibility and opportunities as the employees who spend more time working in the office. Do this by actively looking for ways to increase visibility for your remote employees.

5. Schedule Regular One-On-Ones to Support Career Development: In a hybrid environment, "lots of managers skimp on one-on-ones or skip them altogether," said Devero. Data backs this up: The BambooHR report found that 42% of remote workers said they were meeting with their direct supervisor less frequently than prior to the pandemic. Scheduling more one-on-one time with your employees can have a positive impact on their career development; according to BambooHR's research, employees who met more frequently with their direct supervisor had greater rates of career progression. As a manager, one-on-ones give you the opportunity to connect with your employees, review their individual development plans, and discuss how you can help them reach their career goals. This can help drive engagement and keep your employees moving forward in their careers, so make sure to schedule regular career development-focused one-on-ones with your team members particularly when they work remotely. "Require managers to have a specific number of one-on-ones with their direct reports," recommended Devero. "[Too few one-on-ones] can translate into high visibility for team members [who] are in proximity, and little or no visibility for remote employees.

Supporting your employees' career development in a hybrid work environment can be difficult, but learning how to navigate these challenges is crucial for keeping workers engaged and satisfied at your organization and progressing toward their career goals. By employing these expert strategies to support the career development of your hybrid and remote employees, you'll be able to help *all* your team members grow and progress in their careers — regardless of where they're located.

Conclusion

For any work environment whose stakeholders intend to transcend the expectation of the constantly evolving workplace, the future of work should be a priority. Although some countries have relaxed the lockdown in their states, businesses are taking their time to set up a more formidable work arrangement. Many are already operating the hybrid system while others are running fully remote. The pandemic has taught the workplace a lesson of preparation and planning and given the reality check to keep up with the technological and management related advancements to ensure productivity and growth. Beyond that is also the lesson of flexibility and adaptability in the workplace. In prioritizing the future of work, there is the need to embrace the hybrid workplace model. Indeed, the future of work would likely be the hybrid workplace mode.



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