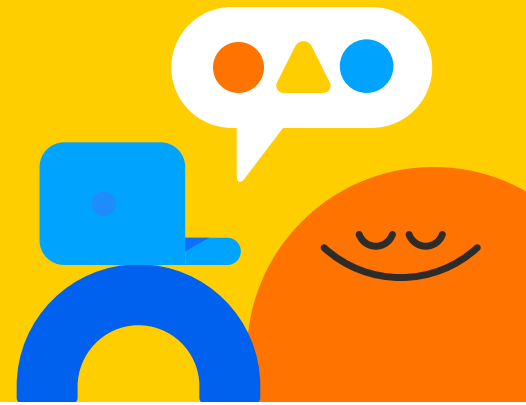


# Redefining Culture for Today's Workplace

## Tips for Promoting an Engaging Culture in a Hybrid Setting



A sense of dread seems to be creeping into the workplace, according to our 2023 Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health report.

It's not a feeling shared by a small minority either. In fact, 87% of employees say they feel some dread at least once a month, with 49% saying it's something they experience at least once a week. And here's the big takeaway – one of the biggest drivers of this dread is a lack of stability at work.

Workers are facing new challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly because many people are managing home-life and work-life simultaneously from remote settings, or they are simply adjusting to “the new normal” – moving to a hybrid workplace or moving back to the office full-time.

This is not only proving challenging for employees in a post-pandemic world, it's also making it difficult for management to create an engaging work environment. Leaders don't always have the one-on-one time to bond with their team, and much can be missed – human to human connection, reading the mood of a team member, or simply being privy to what they might be dealing with outside of work.

Challenges to work culture can arise for all these reasons, but there are strategies to help you create positive change from within, ensuring that no matter where or how your employees are working, they remain part of a happy, healthy, and engaged community.

### 1. Embrace different modes of connection

Hybrid and remote-first workplaces come with new challenges in regard to communication. While leaders can't always swing by someone's desk to have a spontaneous chat, they can look toward other modes of communication to build community with their team. Consider what format is most conducive to the goal you're trying to achieve. Daily group messages about top priorities for the day, or updates on what everyone did over the weekend, can help individuals feel connected without requiring much time or effort. Group video meetings can provide opportunities for facetime, too.



- Allow time for team connection before jumping into the work agenda on meetings
- Have team members share one recent win, thing they're grateful for, or something they've learned in the past week to build connection

Beyond the more obvious modes of digital communication, what other ways can you build community with your team? Consider virtual experiences. With Headspace Culture, our meditation teachers, coaches, and therapists facilitate live sessions and workshops with employees to promote skill-building, and to help foster a community spirit in a safe space.

## 2. Lead with vulnerability and transparency

It's no surprise to employees that each one of us is navigating new challenges with remote and hybrid work. To foster more empathy and openness, consider being vulnerable and transparent with your team in the challenges leaders may face in this new environment. This can create opportunities for connection – 76% of employees say they appreciate it when leaders discuss emotional and mental health.<sup>1</sup>

Leaders can be transparent by sharing their learnings from past experiences, or by sharing a vision for how organizations and individuals can move forward. And it's okay to acknowledge that current times can be hard. Simply naming the present – acknowledging the changes around us and the need to test new strategies – can help bring teams closer together. It can also encourage employees to be more open themselves, providing feedback or new ideas for collaboration and communication.

## 3. Clarity is culture

Fewer face-to-face interactions with team members can bring new ambiguity. It can be difficult to understand the sentiment behind a text message or email, and it's not always obvious what other employees may be working on or dealing with when you can't see it in person.



Confusion can linger in a virtual environment. It can be helpful to get face-to-face time early on after sensing that there may be confusion in order to create clarity and ensure everyone feels comfortable with the topic at hand.

Because of this, it's important to be even more intentional about clarity – in terms of expectations, working styles, and communication. Consider encouraging team members to create “user manuals” – guide books for how and when they prefer to work with others, communicate, and prioritize work. When we understand and trust others, we can lessen the ambiguity.

1 Headspace, 2023. [“Fifth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health.”](#)





Make it a habit to ask back to your team if they have questions or if you're being clear. We can't control how something might be perceived by a receiver, but we can control how clearly we're communicating something and create space for more clarity.

Leaders can also be intentional about the way they communicate expectations for work. Make sure employees understand what their role is, when they should be available, and what other team members are working on. By encouraging clarity around roles and responsibilities, leaders can encourage better collaboration and community.

#### 4. Allow for flexibility

Our research shows managers play a large role in mental health. The top three drivers of managers having a negative impact on employees' mental health are (1) a lack of respect for working hours, (2) a lack of understanding of life outside of work and (3) creating an unsustainable workload. In contrast, half of employees say their manager has *positively* impacted their mental health by being flexible with schedules or projects to accommodate personal issues.

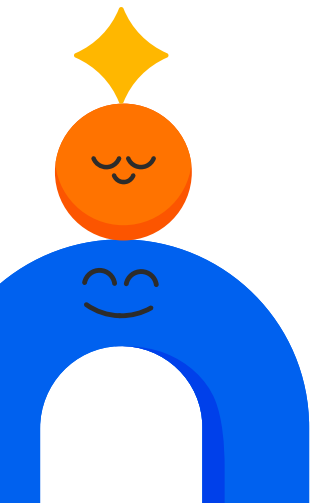


Consider asking what's going on outside of work in one-on-one meetings before hopping into an agenda. Use questions like 'How are you really, really?', and check-in with your team if you know they're going through something.

Help build a level of autonomy and accountability for your employees by being clear about expectations and flexible with schedules or workloads when possible. By trusting employees to get their work done, and offering flexibility when needed, leaders can strengthen relationships and build work environments with compassion, understanding, and engagement.

#### 5. Integrate mental well-being into workplace culture

In working through times of change, it can be especially important to invest in your own mental health as well as support the mental health of your teams. In hybrid or remote workplaces, it may be more difficult to recognize the challenges an employee may be dealing with. This means that it's even more important to ensure they have access to mental healthcare services that's right for them in the moment.





Make sure employees are aware of the support available to them for whatever challenges may arise. Offering services with mental healthcare, childcare, eldercare, and other work-life services can help employees be more present at work.

By providing a variety of modalities of mental healthcare – text-chat coaching, mental well-being content, video-based therapy sessions, and work and life resources – employers can ensure that their employees have the tools at their disposal to care for their mind and bring their best selves to work. Leaders can also model how to prioritize mental health, by demonstrating how they create time to look after themselves. Leading by example helps employees to follow suit.

## Building a productive, engaged workplace – in-person, remote, or anywhere in between

At a time when every one of us is learning to embrace new ways of working, leaders have the opportunity to use this time of change to create supportive, productive, engaging work environments. Leaning into different opportunities for connection and community – whether teams are virtual or otherwise – creates environments of transparency, trust, and flexibility. Embracing improved mental health also allows leaders to create a space where employees feel safe, happy, and engaged. This leads to more connected teams and more engagement.

Interested in learning more about how Headspace helps organizations create work environments that support both employees and the bottom line?

Contact us [here](#).

