

STAR UPDATE

MONTHLY INSIGHTS FROM THE **MRINETWORK** TEAM OF STAFFING PROFESSIONALS, TALENT ADVISORS & RECRUITMENT EXPERTS

How to Build a Hybrid Workforce__

By now you've seen and heard a lot about the hybrid workforce that is destined to be part of the new World of Work for the foreseeable future. As we get closer to a vaccine and the end of the pandemic, it's unlikely that you will go back entirely to the old way of doing things altogether. So what should you be doing to facilitate the safe transition to a hybrid workforce in your organization? Although the prospect offers many advantages, it also comes with complications and difficulties that you should be preparing for now.

"The first thing to remember is that while some of your people love working remotely and want to continue with it, there are many others who truly miss the social aspects of working in a shared office space alongside their team members," says Nancy Halverson, SVP Global Operations at MRI. "Shifting to a hybrid structure can help you to accommodate both groups."

Halverson offers advice on navigating the transition with the least amount of disruption:

Start with your leadership team. Will they work from the office, remotely, or both? "I believe that most organizations will find it most beneficial to have their leaders work in the office at least part of the time," says Halverson. "Before you announce the decision to move to a hybrid solution, work out the plan for your management team and communicate it to the people who work for them to avoid confusion."

Reevaluate your team structure. "In many cases, it's obvious that certain departments and positions have to be on-site, but you've probably already figured out ways to handle those safely," observes Halverson. "For the rest, you need to determine which employees will continue working remotely full-time and which employees will work partly remotely and partly from the office."

While these decisions are also driven by the nature of the individual role, it is also advisable to factor in personal preferences whenever possible. "Another possibility to consider is that people will change their minds," says Halverson. "Some members of your team may ask to continue to work remotely and then find that they want to come back into the office part of the time. Determine how strictly you need employees to follow a specific working style, and communicate this in advance. For instance, will your physical

space allow for flexibility, or have you downsized recently and do you need employees to commit to a specific schedule?"

Confirm your communication platforms. The pandemic has already forced most companies to beef up digital communication and enhance their collaboration tools. Going to a hybrid workforce means that technology will continue to evolve to meet employee and employer needs. Determine how your communication frameworks need to change to reflect your new team structures and to ensure employees don't fall out of the loop or burn out from the pressure of being "always on."

Your IT folks will also need an infrastructure that enables them to manage a remote workforce. This can include increasing cloud storage for more remote storage, enhancing security solutions to manage cyber threats, and implementing remote IT solutions to troubleshoot employee tech issues remotely.

Monitor your allocation of tasks. If your hybrid workforce is going to remain productive long-term, you have to ensure that tasks are spread evenly and fairly across both in-office and remote teams. "Particularly if managers are working from the office, there's a tendency to assign new projects to people working in the same space," warns Halverson. "So be conscious of this potential pitfall and be aware of who is doing what at any given time. The boundaries between personal and professional life are fuzzy now and you need to consistently conduct regular employee-manager check-ins, recognize employees for their hard work, and promote paid time off."

Be wary of favoritism. Not only can a hybrid workforce lead to imbalance workloads, it can also lend itself to favoritism. "As a manager, it's your responsibility to proactively include your remote team members in the fun times as well," says Halverson. "Set up a video conference for your team lunches or happy hours to ensure you have the same opportunity to bond with everyone and that remote workers still feel like part of the culture."

The pandemic has abruptly thrust many companies into this hybrid situation, and while some have seen this time as a growth opportunity, others floundering. Those companies that can adapt to the current circumstances with resiliency and flexibility are most likely to outstrip their competition in our new World of Work.