

Hybrid team development

When thinking about teams it is important to start with the recognition that your teams needs will be varied. Some will have caring responsibilities, some health related issues. Some will be eager to get back on campus, some will feel anxious and resentful having to come back. And some will feel at a disadvantage professionally working from home. As a leader it is your role to manage these varied circumstances to ensure you treat everyone fairly.

One of the key aspects you need to look out for is proximity bias, in line with the Universities value of Inclusivity. This can show up as an “us versus them” attitude. You need to be on the lookout for this in your team, and importantly, in yourself. This is a kind of presenteeism that can exist physically and virtually.

To get the best out of your team there are a number of recognised good practice steps;

Offer support – the key role of any manager is to offer support to your team to get the best out of them. To do this you need to know their individual circumstances, and you need to check in with this continuously. This is especially important if we spot signs of burnout. You need to pay close attention to each individual. People who are normally chatty might become quieter. People who are calm may become irritable.

Set expectations – discuss these with your team, especially in relation to new practices and protocols. Set the culture, especially in relation to communication; the how and the when. It is important we vary our communications depending on the need and that we don’t fall back on meetings for meetings sake (see Collaboration and hybrid working Hits and Tips sheet).

Prioritisation – one of the best ways to support your team is by having clarity around priorities so everyone knows what is important even when things get turbulent. This also allows for team members to know what needs to be picked up should others need support.

Emphasise inclusion in line with the Universities value of Inclusivity – this is especially important when considering proximity bias mentioned above, and the mistaken assumptions this can lead to. A basic recognised good practice is having all-team meetings on Teams or Zoom, even though some people may be together in the office. Hybrid meetings are unfair to those not physically in the space, and all in-person meetings are unfair to those who cannot make these for whatever reason.

Make it fun – but it is worth remembering that one person’s fun might not be another person’s. Do not make assumptions. But where possible, find times where there is no agenda, where people can chat about books they’re reading, their family, or their latest TV or film obsession — this needs to be open to everyone on the team regardless of where or when they are working, and purely voluntary.

There are also some things not to do. So don’t;

- Be rigid. Everyone needs to be flexible. It is important we drop the tendency to micro-manage (see point 6 in [Managers Toolkit and Resources](#) on LPP website).

- Ignore signs of stress from your team. Be empathetic. Help people prioritize what's important.
- Forget about fun. Look for appropriate ways to enjoy connecting with your team and bring some playfulness into the workday.

There are some basic team development models you might want to consider, such as Bruce Tuckman's Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing group development.



Karen Ferris offers an updated model, based on Forming, Norming, Storming, Performing that highlights the key skills, attitudes and approaches required to lead a hybrid team effectively.



It is worth reminding ourselves, this is not easy. There will be bumps along the way. Be humble, and be patient. It is worth reviewing 'Holding a crucial conversation' Hints and Tips sheet' which is based on the premise of being humble and tentative in your approach.