# Is E-mail the New Snail Mail?
How Remote Teams Stay Connected

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Who are we?

- Heather
  - Oversee hybrid project management team
  - Direct and indirect reports
  - Member of leadership team & Director's office at Vanderbilt Vaccine Center

- Michelle
  - Manage multiple departmental wide programs
    - Education Program
    - Operations
    - Internship Program
  - Direct and indirect reports
  - Member of the young professionals and women's alliance leadership teams
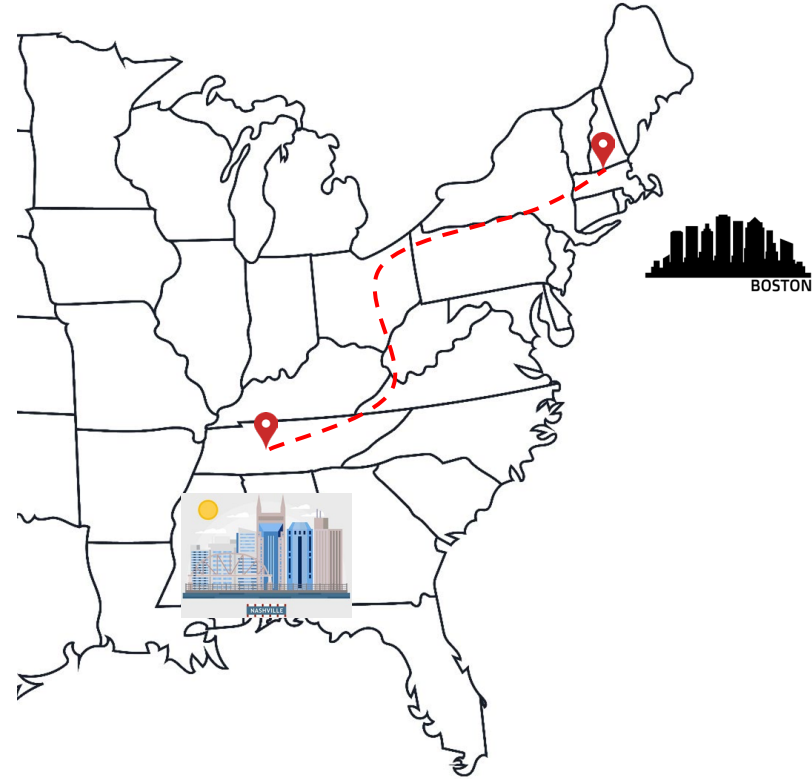
Learning Objectives

- Explore various strategies and methods to create a positive "office culture" that is engaging and exciting for remote and hybrid teams.

- Learn strategies and methods for managers to retain their workforce and account for different generational needs to create a cohesive and diverse team.

Where are we going today?

- Way of the future
- What is workplace culture & why is it important?
- How can managers create a positive work culture in a hybrid or remote workforce?
  - Staying Connected
  - Mentoring, Coaching, Career Development
  - Team Bonding Activities
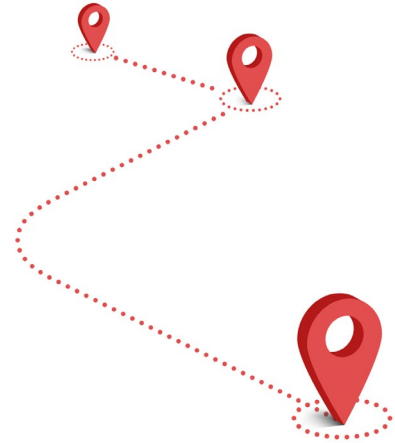
The way of the future:
a hybrid or remote workforce
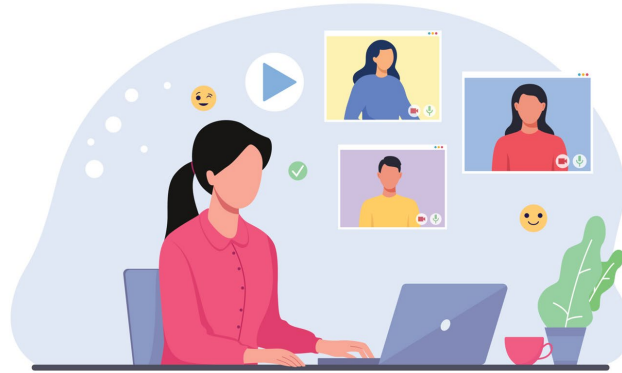
Definitions

Remote: Conducts majority of work from home and may come into a physical space for institutional events, large scale meetings or team bonding activities.

Hybrid: Has a set schedule that is both working in-person or at home. Typically 2-3 times a week in the office and 2-3 times at home.

In-Person: Scheduled to work in-person every day of their normal work schedule (ie. often doctors, nurses, clinical staff).

Do you work remotely, hybrid or in-person?

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Employee benefits of remote/hybrid work

- Gain greater work-life balance

  - Reduce Burnout

  - Time savings on a commute

  - Increased productivity

  - Fewer distractions

  - Cost savings - parking, gas, transportation

  - Flexible schedule for appointments, picking up kids
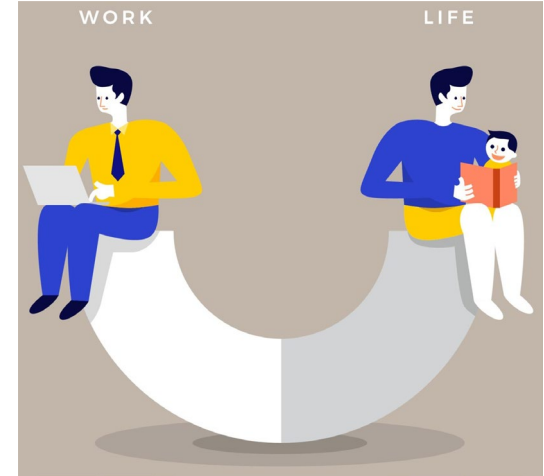
Manager benefits of a remote/hybrid team

- Ability to attract talent from across a greater geographical area

- Be competitive in the job market

- Engage multiple generations

- Reduce office space needs

- Retain your workforce

What is workplace culture and why is it important?

What is workplace culture?

"Work culture is a collection of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that make up the regular atmosphere in a work environment."
~Indeed

"The shared values, belief systems, attitudes, and set of assumptions that people in a workplace share"
~ Forbes

How do you describe a good workplace culture?

What words would you use to describe a bad workplace culture?

Research by Deloitte shows:

- 94% of executives and 88% of employees believe a distinct corporate culture is important to business success

- 83% of executives and 84% of employees rank having engaged and motivated employees as the top factor that substantially contributes to a company's success

Why is workplace culture important?

- Attracts & retains employees

- Increases employee engagement

- Boost morale

- Employees have pride in their work and workplace

The Best recruitment strategy I know: Treating people so well, they tell Everyone about you.

How can managers create & maintain a positive work culture in a hybrid or remote workforce?

Pre-COVID Workplace Culture

- Managers would visibly see their employees everyday

- Depending on the size of the institution, employees could walk next door and talk to an employee

- Informal hang-outs were more common

- Coffee machine chats

Ways to create a positive work culture

- Ensure employees feel connected to their team and the institution.
- Have the resources they need to succeed

Professional Development Resources

- Have realistic and attainable goals
- Receive regular reviews and feedback

SMART GOALS:

S — Specific
M — Measurable
A — Achievable
R — Relevant
T — Time-based

Creating a positive work from home culture - Managers

- Ensure your employees stay connected to the institution and your team

  ○ Have regular meetings with your direct reports

  ○ Provide welcome gifts with institutional branded items to new employees

  ○ Build psychological trust

  ○ Ensure your employees stay connected to the institution and your team

Creating a positive work from home culture - Employees

- Have an effective work-from-home space

- Create and stick to a schedule (allowing for flexibility)

- Attend team bonding and institutional-wide events

Setting up an effective work from home space

- Employees should have a dedicated work from home space
- Ensure employees have supplies to effectively work from home

Physical Space: Desk, Chair, Office Supplies

Technology: Laptop, Monitors, Docking Stations, Headphones, Webcam, Printer, Paper Shredder

Verify comfort of work from home

- Respect working hours
- Calendar blocking
- Utilizing signature line

"My work hours may not be your working hours. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your normal schedule"
~Neil Peterson, Microsoft

Psychological safety and trust

Psychological Safety	Trust
Not punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, mistakes	Can rely on another person or team
Comfortable expressing self without fear of negative consequences	Sense of predictability and reliability in behavior of others based on history
Empowers risk taking, innovation, contribution to group success	Critical for building positive relationships, effective teams, achieving shared goals
Will OTHERS give you the benefit of the doubt when you take a risk?	Will YOU give others the benefit of the doubt when you take risk?

"The academic research is overwhelming: when people believe they can speak up at work, the learning, innovation, and performance of their organizations is greater. Teams and organizations in which people believe that their voices are welcome outperform their counterparts."

~ Dr. Amy Edmondson

Source: Science For Work

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Staying Connected

Remote communication & data management

- Communication Methods: Slack, Zoom, Teams, Trello
  - Picture of the day
  - Fun Friday
  - Dog of the week , etc.
  - Virtual daily huddle
  - Consider some random 1:1 meetings about how their dog ate a tennis ball… etc.
  - Discuss ways to complete continuing education

- Data Management Programs:
  - DropBox
  - Google Drive
  - Shared Drives, VPN systems

Effective communication

- Meetings with a purpose
  - Send agenda in advance, come prepared to meetings
  - Carefully consider length of meeting time
  - **Can cancel if unnecessary or a solution can be found via email instead**

- Encourage collaboration
  - Within the team
  - Across different working units/departments
  - Shared knowledge and expertise

- Get feedback often and adjust accordingly

- Show appreciation
  - Thank you emails, gifts, team lunch, pins, birthday cards

Communicating with different generations

- Different generations will have different ways of communicating with each other
  - Technology Methods
  - Meetings, emails, zoom, slack, in-person meetings
  - Language in emails

- Phone call versus email versus texting

- Utilize the subject line, especially for deadline dates

- Tell people why you want to meet - don't just send a calendar invite "urgent meeting"

Mentoring, Coaching, Career Development

Departmental or Institutional Programs

- 1:1 Mentoring Programs

- Lunch and learn

- Peer Buddy Program
  - Matching new employees with current employees

- Institutional wide offerings
  - Educational sessions or seminars

- Career Coach
  - May be available through many Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Nationwide Programs

- Conferences

- Workshops

- SRAI Odyssey Program

Considerations:
- Offering professional development funds annually to employees
- Employees can attend conferences virtual and/or in-person

Personality testing

- Jung Typology Test
- Myers Briggs
- SurePeople
- Working Genius
- Enneagram

Considerations:
- ○ Find strengths of team members
- ○ Be open to idea of shifting work around to fit strengths
- ○ Just because it isn't a strength, doesn't mean they are incapable of certain tasks
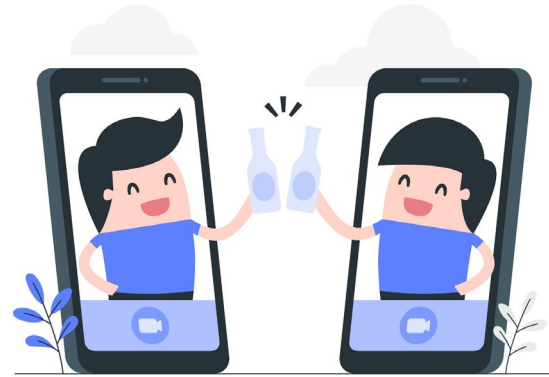
Team Bonding Activities

Team bonding activities – Remote

- Ensure all generations are engaged in team bonding activities

- Activities in meetings - ~10 mins per 1 hour
  - Icebreaker questions
  - Shoutouts for recent successes
  - Discuss favorite local spots
  - 2 truths and a lie

- Continuing education together
  - YouTube
  - Case studies
  - Ted Talks
  - LinkedIn Learning

- Year in review

Team bonding activities – Remote

- Trivia
- Kudos
- Campfire night
- Celebrate life events & milestones
  - Birthday cards - sendwellwishonline.com
  - Work anniversary
- After work Zoom social hour
- Harry and David gifts

Team bonding activities – In Person (Vanderbilt)

- Retreats
- Movie at theater
- Holidays
  - Research Administrator Day
  - Pumpkin carving
  - Cookie decorating or exchange
  - Ornament painting
  - S'more making
  - End of year
- Superbowl party

Team bonding activities – In Person (BCH)

- Team Lunches
- After work appetizers
- Volunteer or exercise together
  - Animal shelter
  - 5k walk/run
- Mario Kart Tournament
- Museum of Science
- Duck boats

Institutional wide activities

- Create connections within the larger institution community
    - BCH has a RedSox Day
    - Corporate Cup - Field Day
    - Tours of different departments
        - 3D printing lab
        - Immersive design system lab (simulation lab)
        - Zebrafish lab
        - University baseball stadium
        - Campus tour with botanist
    - Attending institutional wide events - ie. ribbon-cutting ceremonies

Trial & Error

- Events that didn't work due to multiple generations

  - Holiday Party at a Bar

  - Pizza party

  - Wine tasting

  - Karaoke

  - Beach volleyball

  - Food Pantry

MISTAKES ARE PROOF THAT YOU'RE TRYING

How to know if your remote team is successful

- Employee survey results

- Quarterly check-ins

- Ask for feedback

- Employee turnover reduction

- Employees voluntarily attend in-person networking and team bonding events

Questions?

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https://www.vecteezy.com
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Reference Materials

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- [Leading Remote Teams: Embrace the Future of Remote Work Culture](#) https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-nurture-strong-remote-workplace-culture-john-s-todorovic/
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