



Beware These Red Flags of a Toxic Hybrid Workplace

Remote-work experts share warning signs that an organization isn't prepared for hybrid work.

The “great work-from-home experiment” caused by the pandemic has led many organizations to go hybrid, with 83% of workers now viewing the hybrid workplace as optimal, according to a McKinsey report. To clarify, a hybrid workplace combines aspects of both in-person and remote workplaces.

Although it's becoming the norm, many organizations aren't prepared for this transition. While nine out of 10 organizations plan to move to some form of a hybrid model, 68% don't have a detailed plan in place nor have they communicated yet on what it will look like, the McKinsey report reveals.

Hybrid workplaces can be toxic on a number of levels if they're not carefully managed. Below are some glaring red flags that a hybrid workplace will be toxic:

There's no real plan for creating a functioning workforce. Winging it isn't an option when it comes to designing a high-functioning and fair hybrid workforce. The organization must be committed to creating a clear set of actions to integrate remote and hybrid teams, build a hybrid work culture, and treat hybrid and in-office workers inclusively.

There are no senior leaders who work remotely. An organization that truly values remote work will have people

at all levels – including at the senior leadership level – who work remotely. If only lower or mid-level employees work remotely and all senior leaders work in the office, it's unlikely that this will be a healthy, equitable place to work.

Digital communication tools haven't been prioritized. In a hybrid or remote work environment, people can't just pop into someone's office to check on things or have impromptu conversations. This, of course, can put remote workers at a disadvantage. However, there are plenty of communication and collaboration tools to address the gaps that can occur when some people aren't physically present. If digital tools haven't been set in place or people haven't been advised on how to optimize them, employees aren't being equipped for success.

Celebration, praise, and rewards happen only in the office. A big part of a good organizational culture is having celebration, praise, and reward activities to show appreciation for employees and make them feel valued. A warning sign is if these things take place only in the office and there aren't strategic efforts to make people working remotely feel included as well.

With technology tools and platforms such as Slack and Zoom it's easy to share praise and encouragement for the whole organization to see. There are many easy events and activities that can be done virtually as well. Organizations

that take the time to do these are showing their commitment to the remote work environment.

There's no solid communication plan for remote team members. Hybrid teams need to pay particular attention to communication, making sure to include remote employees in any meetings or activities being held at the office. Morale will plummet if people feel left out of the loop.

Information isn't accessible. If information isn't shared on some sort of digital platform for everyone to access, remote employees can miss something that's vital to their work. An organization that's doing hybrid work well shares information rather than hoarding it. Such sharing could take place through an internal e-mail newsletter, an intranet, a shared drive, or some other digital platform.

Remote workers aren't given the appropriate equipment. With a hybrid model, organizations can no longer think only about what equipment and technology are physically present in the office. They need to provide remote employees the same tools and resources as they do for in-person staff. This could be through a home-office stipend, loaned equipment that can be taken home, or accommodations for employees to work at co-working spaces. A successful hybrid organization will ensure that employees everywhere have access to the tools they need to do their jobs successfully.

It's important to note that a toxic workplace may not have all these red flags. Some may have only a few. Likewise, if your organization has one of these warning signs, that's not necessarily proof of a toxic workplace but could instead show

Making Adjustments

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How Can You Keep Your Remote Workers Productive? (Vol. 38, No. 3)

Don't Let This Crisis Go to Waste (Vol. 39, No. 1)


Work Going Hybrid? What You Need to Know (Vol. 39, No. 1)

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Use Humor to Conquer Zoom Fatigue (Vol. 39, No. 1)

Life after the Pivot: Storytelling to Refresh Your Nonprofit Outreach (Vol. 39, No. 2)

that the transition to hybrid is still bumpy and that you need to put more energy into detailing – and communicating – a functional plan. 

This article was prepared by FlexJobs (flexjobs.com), an online job service for professionals seeking flexible work, specializing in full-time and part-time remote jobs, employee and freelance jobs, and on-site jobs with flexible, part-time, and alternative schedules. For more information, contact Kathy Gardner at kgardner@flexjobs.com.

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