

A silhouette of a man in a dark suit stands with his back to the camera, looking out a large window. The view outside shows a city skyline with various buildings, including a prominent one with a diamond-patterned facade. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime.

Leadership in a hybrid workplace

2024-04-02

By: Lina Hjalmarsson,
Peter Robertsson
and Vibeke Stadling

**DREES &
SOMMER**

Drees & Sommer Sweden
info.sweden@dreso.com
dreso.com/se
gotowork.se

It is time to talk about your leaders

Given the last two years and counting since we exited the pandemic-era with a radical movement towards working from home, we think it is time to stop arguing whether there is a return to office movement happening or not.

Hybrid* is here to stay!

This according to lots of data points from acknowledged institutes, expressed in long reports by most of the large global consulting firms, cheered on by players like Microsoft and everyone in the digital meeting business.

**“Why
are some leaders
still fighting a war
they can’t possibly win?”**

We dare to say we indeed have a new normal or rather, a “never normal” implying we need to learn to be even more flexible and diverse in how we adapt and learn new things. Just look at AI. Not even the people in the fore front developing LLMs* know where this is going. So why are there still some fighting the development digitalization brings and the desire from employees to have a choice to do their work from anywhere?

Now a dilemma appears

You as the reader might be one of those leaders we are addressing below as being part of the problem. If you are: You have two options while you continue reading. Either you get angry and disagree or you deal with it in a more open-minded manner. **Your choice.**

Change of fear

We do have a clue, of course, as to what the reasons are behind some leader’s desire to force employees back to the office. Maybe you do as well.

But the point here is not to list them one by one. Instead, we will direct them as a more general fear of change. These leaders are just being humans trying to keep “status quo*”.

Stay or go?

No matter the reasons, we believe it is time to embrace the evidence you see before you and start acting in a growth mindset manner.

If you are unable to do so, have a talk to your manager about doing something you are better at doing. Yes, you read right. Quit your job as a leader and do something you are more applied to do. Leaders of today and going forward, really need a set of different skills.

Copy and paste?

Let's begin with a baseline for most organizations. We say "most" because there really is no "one size fits all". It begins with your purpose and goes on to what you actually do and then how it is best done. Almost every skilled leader knows that winning in any market does not mean you do things like most do. It means you do things your own way and hope it is the very best way.

This is the same for how you do your work. Don't try to copy and paste solutions. Do your due-diligence before you get to work.

Do the tests!

See the below like a checklist or a little test for things you need to look into. Find out how you actually perform and find out how you need to perform to be competitive tomorrow (and be honest!).

If you have more than 80% "Yes", We say you are in a good place. Anything below would be an indication of how much of a challenge you have going forward when it comes to developing your work environment in order to keep up with the demands of the future.

Excercise 1

Workplace specifics:

1. Our office has an optimal location
2. Our office offers a diverse and varied seating
3. Our office has up-to-date technology supporting hybrid work
4. Our office is well designed with things like plants, art-work and nice social areas
5. Our office offers places for focused work

Do take the time to involve your team in this exercise. In striking the right balance for your organization, you will find that you alone will not be the best judge of what works best for everyone. People tend to be happier at work if they are trusted to participate in shaping their work methods according to a great body of research. Some suggested reading can be found in the footnotes below.

Excercise 2

And then a few questions on how you do things:

1. We let people have a free choice where to do work
2. We let people have a free choice of when to do work
3. We lead with accountability and responsibility
4. We are strong self-leaders in our organization
5. We trust each other
6. We share all information openly (if not restricted by security etc.)
7. We have agreed ways of working hybrid beneficial for our output
8. We have efficient meetings
9. We have effectful meetings
10. We have the right amount of meetings
11. Addressing faults and point out opportunities for improvements is encouraged valued

Moving forward

And one final note that we can all take some comfort in:

Nobody has had all the answers since the start of the pandemic. We all have to learn new ways of working as we go along. The only thing that will be “wrong” going forward is believing that you are always “right” (and that you therefore have no reason to change).

*Words explained:

Hybrid = Is generally referred to as a cross-over or mix of something and in this context it is used to refer to mix of working at a designated office-space or somewhere else, which is not the designated office space.

LLM = Large language model which is the basis for Microsoft Copilot, Chat GPT, Bard, xAI Grok and the likes of other interactive interfaces with conversation-like functionality.

A few sources on the topic

Trust, Employee Engagement and Well-Being:

Trust and well-being are not only desirable in themselves but are also instrumentally important in enhancing the recruitment, performance, and retention of employees. Subordinates' trust in their supervisor positively influences all three components of work-related well-being. Gallup's research shows a clear link between employee engagement and well-being, with managers serving as a conduit between the two. Engaged employees are more than twice as likely as actively disengaged employees to say they're comfortable discussing their well-being with their managers.

(2023). *From Praise to Profits: The Business Case for Recognition at Work (EMEA)*. Gallup, Workhuman.

<https://www.workhuman.com/resources/reports-guides/from-praise-to-profits-workhuman-gallup-report-emea/>

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.

Scott-Jackson W & Mayo A. (2017). *What are Engagement, Happiness and Well-Being?* Springer Link.

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-56145-5_2

Manager's Role:

Managers are pivotal to engagement and well-being. Research funded by the CIPD and led by Affinity Health at Work through a consortium of employers and other stakeholders, has brought together two existing frameworks of management behaviors and competencies that enhance engagement and prevent and reduce employee stress.

Health A. (2012). *Managing for sustainable employee engagement*. CIPID.

<https://www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/reports/engagement-management-guide/>

Companies Could Benefit When They Focus on Employee Wellbeing:

This study examines the impact of managerial trustworthy behavior on employees' engagement and the mediating role of perceived insider status. The article discusses how companies could benefit when they focus on employee wellbeing.

Liu D, Bakari H, Niaz M, Zhang Q & Shah I. (2022). *Impact of Managerial Trustworthy Behavior on Employee Engagement: Mediating Role of Perceived Insider Status*. *Frontiers*.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/>

The Impact of Engaging Leadership on Employee Engagement and Team Effectiveness:

This longitudinal, multi-level study investigates the mediating role of personal- and team resources in the impact of engaging leadership on work engagement and team effectiveness.

Mazzetti G & Schaufeli W. (2022). *The impact of engaging leadership on employee engagement and team effectiveness: A longitudinal, multi-level study on the mediating role of personal- and team resources*. *Plos One*.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article>

Maximizing Productivity: Integrating Employee Engagement and Wellbeing:

This article discusses Gallup's research into employee engagement and wellbeing in the peri- and post-pandemic years.

Nguyen A. *Maximizing productivity: Integrating employee engagement and wellbeing*. *Time Doctor*.

<https://www.timedoctor.com/blog/employee-engagement-and-wellbeing/>

The Relationship Between Employee Well-Being and Organizational Trust:

This paper discloses the relationship between employee well-being and organizational trust in the context of sustainable HRM.

Vaskeviciute V, Stankeviciene A, Diskiene D & Savicke J. (2021). *The relationship between employee well-being and organizational trust in the context of sustainable human resource management*. *Business Perspectives*.

<https://www.businessperspectives.org/index.php/journals/problems-and-perspectives-in-management/>

DREES & SOMMER

Drees & Sommer Sweden
Medborgarplatsen 25
118 72 Stockholm
+46 851 51 93 30
info.sweden@dreso.com
dreso.com/se
gotowork.se