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**Amy Vetter** • Sep. 08, 2021



With the Delta variant and the end of summer ensuring that we're still a long way off from "back to normal," whatever that even means at this point, most firms will be dealing with a hybrid work environment for at least the rest of the year. While we've all had time to adjust our own personal working habits to the unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic, many businesses are still figuring out how we can best work together while most of us are still spending a lot of time apart. Putting a comprehensive plan in place can be the difference between seamless hybrid collaboration and endless back-and-forth frustrations.

Creating an ideal foundation for teamwork requires leaning in on a combination of

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The first step toward fruitful collaboration is ensuring that all team members feel comfortable. Maybe you're fortunate enough to have an entirely vaccinated staff who all feel okay about working in the office. Most workplaces aren't so lucky, though. And if you try to force people with different views about health and safety to comply with a unilateral policy, you're only going to cause resentment and foster antagonism. Your strategy needs to allow for the entirety of the team to feel secure, whether that means allowing everyone the option to work from home or only opening the office to those who are vaccinated or test negative for Covid.

### **Make time for small talk**

With everyone's calendar full of Zoom links, it's obvious that we've figured out how to have meetings remotely. But what do those meetings look like? Does everyone arrive in time for a formal discussion and leave as soon as it's over? If so, you're losing the benefits of casual conversation, which can sometimes generate powerful and important ideas. Try leaving 10 minutes at the end of the meeting for an unguided session of chit-chat. You may also want to leave open sessions for members of teams to get together if they want, creating a [virtual water cooler](#) of sorts, a place where people can freely collaborate without the pressure of a formal meeting.

### **Use asynchronous tools**

[Asynchronous collaboration](#) means allowing collaborators to work on the same project at different times. A classic example is the relationship between writers and editors. In many working relationships, a writer submits a piece, an editor edits it, and it's then sent back to the writer. This process can happen in all sorts of team environments, especially in a world where we have the tools to share nearly everything over the cloud. Sometimes, everyone on a team will need to work on something simultaneously. But more often than not, giving folks the time and space

to work on projects when it makes sense for them will yield better rewards. Users can

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to their team on a one-on-one basis to check in on everyone. These check-ins will make team members feel seen and heard, but they may also provide crucial feedback about improving your hybrid policies.

### **Maintain a flexible mindset**

I probably don't have to tell you at this point that everything regarding work policy is subject to change at a moment's notice. Hybridity allows us to adapt quickly, but only if we're willing to do so.

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