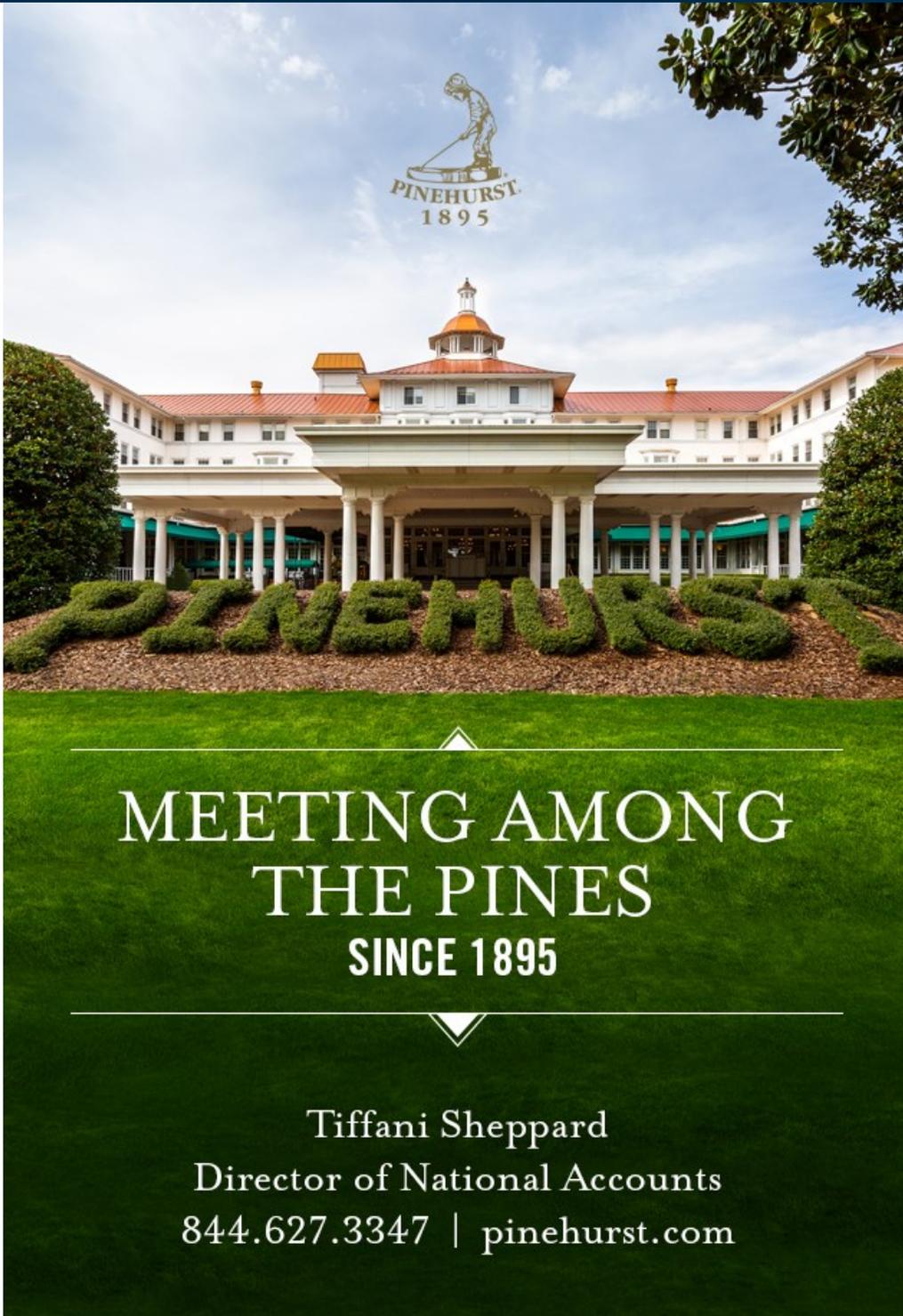


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# Educational Article

## Hybrid and Remote Work Tips

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## Hybrid and Remote Work Tips

### Remote Work the Right Way

There is no doubt about it: the working world has changed. Whether leaders like it or not, remote and hybrid work are becoming the new norm. Unfortunately, no matter their stances on remote work, leaders had little time to transition to this new state, and therefore the careful planning that normally would have taken place went by the wayside. As we look forward, it is important to learn from our mistakes and also from our successes to build an ongoing program that serves our employees, leadership and customers.

### Why Jump on the Bandwagon?

If you haven't chosen to embrace hybrid work, CareerBuilder's May 2022 survey found that:

- 67% of employed adults want to work remotely at least three days per week. 28% want to be fully remote.
- More than half of Millennials say they would quit if they could not work remote.
- 77% of employed job seekers place at least some importance on having remote work as an option and 21% say it is extremely important.

Remote work is more important to most employees than job security, company culture and advancement. On the other hand, 29% feel remote work can make teamwork difficult, and 23% feel isolated and 18% feel unsupported.

It is important to be aware that employees now have choices and are not stuck working for you if you continue to offer only in-person work. The vast majority of employers are moving to a hybrid work model. Littler conducted a 2022 employer survey and found that while only 6% of companies are fully remote, only 14% of companies offer no remote work.

### Each Workplace Experience is Different:

We have all heard horror stories about remote work, yet many companies find it is a benefit to their organization. Why the difference of opinion? It has to do with the work itself, the workforce and the leadership skills of managers.

If the work itself is primarily manual for example, obviously the job may not be suited to remote work at all. Other tasks that can cause remote work to result in loss of productivity or effectiveness are ones that CAN be done remotely in a crisis, but are better done in person – coaching, counseling, providing advice and feedback, as examples. A recent report from McKinsey analyzes industries by a variety of factors to help companies understand if they will be able to adapt easily to remote work.

Companies often agree that some of the tasks which managers do frequently are best done in person, yet the staff they serve or supervise may be fully remote. If all of their staff are remote and their need for collaboration otherwise is limited, remote work may be the only and best solution.

Otherwise, you may choose to have certain days where all staff get some face time with management. The key is to understand your workplace and be intentional.

### **Learn from Others:**

Other tips from the experts (and from employers who have successfully transitioned to hybrid or remote) are:

- Set rules up-front. Do you really want to have to negotiate California laws if your remote staff decide to move westward?
- Your executive staff need to demonstrate that they embrace remote work, not just say they do. If your CEO and VPs are still in their offices from 8 to 5, other people will feel they have to be there as well, and the in-office staff will likely find preferential treatment in terms of promotions and projects. Employees should feel that working hybrid is acceptable and welcomed.
- All levels of managers from the CEO down need to be trained on how to manage hybrid workers and need to have other basic leadership training as well. If your leadership team is unsure what a successful leader in your company looks like, how can they hold managers accountable for poor leadership skills?
- Make sure each job has measures of success that employees understand. Managers should be checking on employee progress and tracking these measures, while also demonstrating trust and a respect for privacy. Often managers express concerns that their employees are unproductive at home; rarely do they have the proof to back this up.
- You can no longer assume people will pick up the company culture and values from others in the office. It is more important than ever to integrate values into everything you do and to document exactly how those values play out in the workplace. Using internal social media technology to allow for employee appreciation based on the values can be helpful.
- Plan for connection, and plan for disconnect time as well. For pure remote environments, one company that has been successful in the remote world has put out a playbook which may be helpful for some organizations: <https://learn.gitlab.com/allremote/remote-playbook>. Rethink every meeting being a Zoom meeting. Zoom fatigue negatively impacts employees who feel they have to be “on” even more than in an in-person meeting because they see their face on the screen throughout the session. Remember phone calls? Use other collaboration tools but be intentional. Having twenty different tools to connect means that people will not find one another.
- Building a culture is also about staff connecting casually. Social media options can help, as can building in a short “coffee time” at the beginning of group meetings.

### **Build the Right Plan for You:**

It is interesting that while remote and hybrid work are a huge concern for many employers, we rarely hear of employers with remote work committees. Remote work committees can help keep you on track, paring away pieces of your plan that don't work and researching and identifying new tools to help smooth the path. They can also arrange for employee surveys and focus groups to make sure that your grand new plan is one that genuinely works for everyone.

In the new world of work, flexibility is key. It isn't a new desire on the part of the “younger generation”; it is something that most workers want. Remember that being flexible may not mean remote work for all. It may mean four-day weeks, shared jobs or reduced schedules. Keep your mind open. If your plan is strong and your management trained, you will eventually find the best way forward for your organization.

About the Author: Kathryn Sears, SPHR is a Catapult HR Advisor with over 20 years of experience in human resources management and recruiting. She provides expert guidance for Catapult's Members on compliance, employee relations, recruiting, benefits, FMLA, training/coaching, and workers comp. Kathryn is frequently a host and speaker on Catapult's Answers at 8 webinars, writes content for various publication, and is a guest speaker for numerous chambers, business groups and other associations. If you have questions about retaining top talent and/or exit interviews, please contact a member of Catapult's Advice Team at [lets@catapult.org](mailto:lets@catapult.org)

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