

# Effective Leadership

Examining Return to Office Through an Inclusion Lens

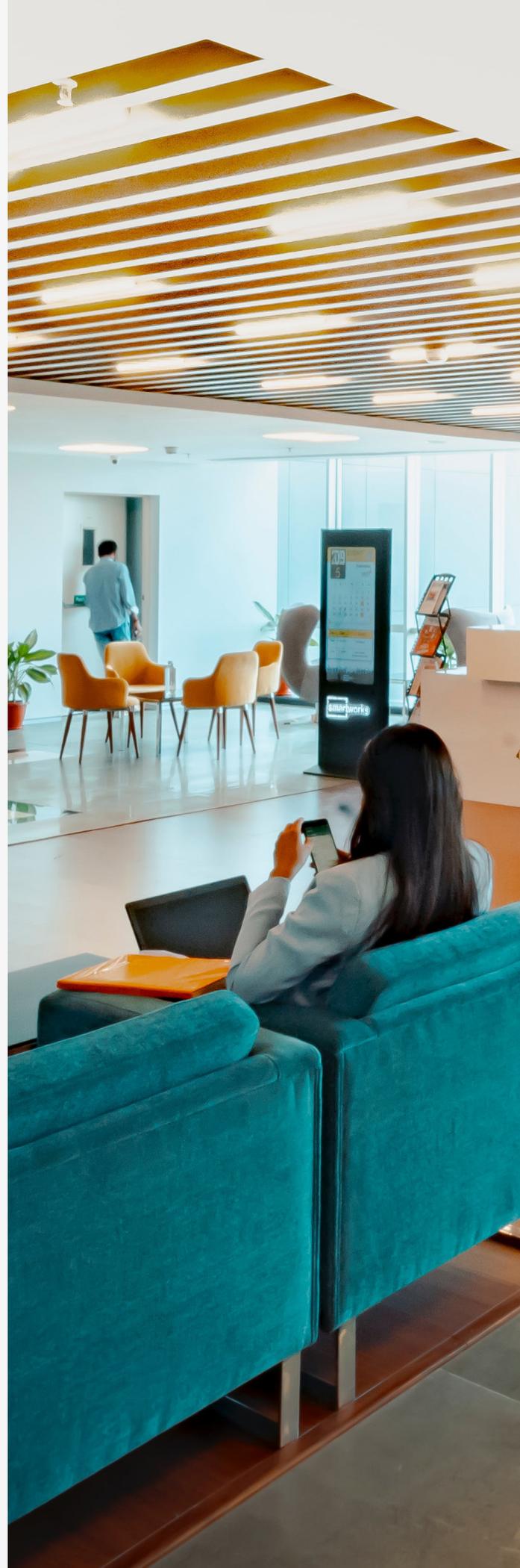
## PART 1 OF 2

Leadership and Communication



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# SERIES BY:



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## **How do we practice inclusion with a hybrid work team that is part in-office and part remote?**

*“When everyone works remotely, all workplace relationships are equally distant, providing everyone with the same challenges and opportunities. When a handful of employees go back to the office it is going to take extra effort to ensure that remote employees are still included in meetings, conversations, and generally kept “in-the-know.”*

- Georgene Huang, Forbes Magazine, “[Going Back to Normal When Normal No Longer Exists, A Guide to Inclusive Planning](#)” May 7, 2020



# Leadership Approach

### **Think about the entire team**

Consider how your managers and leaders can make sure those who are remote are equally considered and included. It is easier to connect with people when they are physically present, whether it is for a casual conversation, seeking input, or even assigning new tasks. Therefore, within the hybrid work environment, embracing diversity and thinking about the whole team requires consideration for both those who are physically in the office and those who are not.

### **Setting expectations**

As teams move to a non-traditional, hybrid structure, it is important to set expectations regarding performance, participation, and accountability. Team members need to understand their roles and responsibilities in this new hybrid structure as well as their role in supporting and fostering inclusion.

### **Equal opportunity**

Don't assume you can shift back into normal communications and work collaboration routines once teams return to office. In situations whereby a portion of team members are working remotely, managers need to recognize and be especially mindful of the subtle and obvious additional advantages "in office" employees may have in areas such as work assignments, access to leadership, and access to professional development.

### **Project assignments and career growth**

Thoughtfully allocating work can help prevent imbalances and dissatisfaction. Maintaining fairness when assigning staff to specific projects or training opportunities are major inclusion and fairness considerations. In addition, creating an environment where team members can advocate for their career growth will make it easier to find alignment and address concerns of inequity.

### **Situational awareness**

While working remotely under exceptional circumstances, we had to accept the blending of work and personal lives. As we move forward, new factors that may be impacting team members work presence, scheduling, and availability will continue. Consideration must be given for those returning to office who may be navigating new challenges such as transit use, those who are still remote and may have the same or different factors affecting them, and those returning after a leave who may need time to catch up on the various workplace changes.

# Communication and Management

## Connecting via effective communications

Consider communication methods used while your entire team was remote and how these can be continued to keep all team members included. Keep in mind that if team connections are done via phone or video tools, remote workers may be missing out on access to senior leaders, sidebar conversations, insider references and comments, discussions, and team events that occur in the primary location. Managers should identify communication and connection approaches that can support the inclusion of all team members.

## Performance management

With a shift to a hybrid work team, managers may have to adapt their communication approach, considering the different factors affecting performance of individuals on your team. Consider if you are being equitable in your performance feedback (both positive and negative) between in office and remote team members, noting that in person interactions allow for timelier and less formal feedback, which is typically easier to deliver. Managers and leaders will need to compensate for this natural tendency by being more intentional about delivering both formal and informal feedback.

## Access to leadership

To support access to leadership, managers should not only ensure that they are available to all team members, regardless of location, but also that employees know how to access other managers. Develop an agreement on how leaders and managers will continue to be accessible to both in office and remote employees.

*Missed the first release of this series? [See here for the introduction!](#)*



## WHAT'S NEXT?

On September 24, 2020 we will be releasing Part 2 of this series which covers Team Dynamics and Tools & Resources.

In October 2020 we are hosting two webinars with authors Marcie Cochrane and Sharon Batchelor to explore the challenges of a hybrid work environment and examines approaches to consider as part of an inclusive return to office plan.