SCHOOL OF THE WILD

FREE GUIDE

How to Do Hybrid Well

Practical Strategies that Strengthen Collaboration and Culture in Hybrid Teams

Thanks for downloading this Free Guide!



INTRODUCTION

With an estimated 22.1 million British people, or 40% of the population, working from home at least some of the time, it's clear that hybrid working is here to stay.

While hybrid working offers flexibility and autonomy, many teams find it's not as simple as splitting time between office and home. The real challenge is making sure collaboration, trust, and team culture don't affect growth or innovation. When asked, 78% say hybrid working improves their worklife balance, but 48% say that it's harder to work with others (ONS 2022).

Without the right structures and habits, hybrid teams risk fragmentation, unnecessary competition and silent voices, which can lead to frustration and disconnection, a lack of commitment and difficulties working together. So how can you cultivate a strong, healthy culture when people are working from different places?

This guide explores three key areas that will help you do hybrid well - building trust, making space for healthy conflict and breaking silos - that will keep your people connected, and build a thriving productive culture - wherever your team works from.



The tips below are based on many of the actions our clients have come up with together in the woods. They've reported back to us that they work.

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1 Building Trust in a Hybrid Team

In hybrid teams, trust doesn't happen by accident — it has to be designed into the way you work together. When people aren't always physically present, it's even more important to create consistent moments of connection and openness.

Trust is the foundation of any high-performing team, it's the glue that holds a team together. Employees who trust their organisations show higher engagement, creativity, and productivity. Those who don't experience more stress, increased burnout, and are more likely to quit.

Trust creates an environment of psychological safety, where your team members feel secure enough to take risks, admit mistakes, and learn from failures. Fostering trust, therefore, is a crucial imperative for any leader looking to create a good culture and a high-performing team.

Yet trust can be harder to establish and maintain when people aren't sharing the same physical space. Without casual interactions and shared experiences, tensions caused by undiscussed differences can grow, and relationship frustrations can intensify.

What helps?

Teams thrive when there is high psychological safety combined with high accountability. Try these Actionable tips:

- **Consistent, intentional and transparent communication** – Trust grows through regular, open conversations. Greater transparency doesn't just foster trust — it's also been shown to fuel creativity, performance, and profitability. Try these:
  - Share team goals, individual progress, and organisational updates openly.
  - Schedule structured check-ins and make time for informal chats.
  - Encourage 'virtual watercooler' moments to keep connections alive. This helps maintain a sense of connection, even when you're not physically together.

- **Psychological safety** – People need to feel safe to be able to speak up, share ideas, and feel able to make mistakes - a prerequisite for creativity and innovation.
  - Lead by example - share challenges, model openness and vulnerability, admit mistakes and be honest to create a culture where honesty is valued.
  - Appreciate colleagues - appreciation strengthens relationships, boosts morale and helps people feel valued.
  - Show empathy - leaders who show empathy help team members feel heard, regardless of where they work.

- **Reliability and follow-through** – Trust is reinforced when people do what they say they will. In a hybrid setting, this means being clear on expectations and ensuring accountability without micromanaging.

- **Create shared experiences** - Arrange regular socials (eg Team Fridays) organise team building, away days, and offsites to foster bonding (like our unique outdoor team-building programme days in Nature).

How we can help

Our outdoor, reflective team-building programmes help establish deeper trust in ways a virtual or office-based meeting cannot replicate:

> *School of the Wild's approach is so human-centric, and hugely effective in bringing about open and healthy conversations across the organisation.*
>
> SC, PEOPLE MANAGER

2 Making Space for Healthy Conflict

In hybrid settings, conflict is easy to avoid - and that's exactly the problem. Leaders need to create safe, structured spaces where tensions can surface and be addressed before they escalate or silently linger underground.

Spending less time together in person and without the nuances of face-to-face interaction, means small tensions can escalate more easily in a hybrid team. Tone and intent can be lost in calls and emails, people can get left out of small exchanges and minor decisions, and assumptions and misunderstandings can breed resentment. Some team members may feel less confident to share over screens. Others may feel sidelined.

Making space for healthy debate and addressing conflict proactively helps maintain a positive and productive work environment where team members feel safe enough to be vulnerable and become comfortable with disagreement. The good news: true collaboration is often on the other side of conflict.

What helps?

High-performing teams are three times more likely to begin by first discussing how they will work together, paving the way for fewer misunderstandings and smoother collaboration down the road.

TRY THESE ACTIONABLE TIPS

- **Set clear norms for communication** – Agree which platforms to use for different types of discussions. Encourage video calls for sensitive conversations where tone and intent matter. Ensure everyone knows how and when to communicate, especially in shared projects.

- **Encourage direct and compassionate feedback** – Normalise feedback as a tool for growth rather than criticism. Equip your team with the skills to address issues early and constructively. Use feedback frameworks like SBII (Situation-Behavior-Impact-Intent) or Non-Violent Communication (Observation-Feelings-Need-Request) to structure feedback clearly.

- **Foster empathy and perspective-taking** – Make time for team members to share their challenges and wins. Understanding each other's realities helps reduce friction and create stronger connections.

How we can help

School of the Wild's experiential programmes provide a safe space for teams to practice open, honest communication, and build the connections that enable your team to resolve conflict more easily:

> *we took a lot from it... repairing the friction and conflict that existed between two team members. And I learnt how important team dynamics are to a high performing business.*
>
> MC, CEO

3 Breaking Down Silos in a Hybrid Team

One of the biggest risks in hybrid work is the formation of silos - where teams or individuals become disconnected, leading to missed opportunities, duplicated efforts, and reduced collaboration.

What helps? Try these Actionable tips:

- **Create opportunities for cross-team connection** – Regular all-hands meetings, mixing cross-functional teams in projects, and informal virtual meetups can help break down barriers.
- **Make collaboration visible** – Use shared documents, project management tools, and open communication channels to keep work transparent and aligned.
- **Celebrate shared wins** - Showcase achievements that result from collaboration across departments. Show and tell meetings of what people are working on.
- **Break hierarchies in meetings** - Level the playing field so all voices are heard. Invite contributions from all members, eg's structured sharing, chair asking quieter voices for contributions.
- **Bring people together in-person when possible** – While remote work is effective, periodic face-to-face gatherings can reinforce relationships and refresh team cohesion.

How we can help

Our unique programmes focus on dismantling silos by fostering authentic conversations and cross-functional understanding in the woods. Getting totally away from the office reduces barriers that come up in the workplace.

Final Thoughts

Doing hybrid well is about more than the right tech and flexible working - it's about culture, trust, and connection. These are human issues that require human solutions, wherever your people are working from.

A good hybrid culture doesn't just happen - it's shaped by daily habits, interactions, and leadership choices.

A healthy culture needs to be intentional. By focusing on trust, communication, and connection, you can create a hybrid team that is not just productive but also engaged and thriving.

Want to explore this further with your team?

Book one of our outdoor team sessions in London and the South East to experience how nature-based activities can strengthen team culture in meaningful ways.

Get in touch to find out more! →

About School of the Wild

At School of the Wild, we have been running transformative outdoor programmes for purpose-driven businesses and organisations since 2019.

We specialise in team building, away days, and company retreats that weave together your team's needs with enjoyable activities and reflective conversations and exercises that result in positive changes in the way you work.

Taking inspiration from Nature and designed around your objectives - it is a mix of bringing people together to build connections, and facilitating space to think differently - about culture and/or strategy.

We work in London and the South East with forward-thinking, purpose-driven organisations of varying sizes from small tech startups to large corporates and charities including including a Top 10 UK University, an outstanding NHS Partnership Trust, award-winning tech agencies, and teams from corporates, charities and NGOs.

FEEDBACK ON OUR PROGRAMMES FROM RECENT CLIENTS

> *"I've never been to an away day like it. The whole team has said repeatedly how inspiring and wonderful it was."*
>
> ESME JONES, MARKETING DIRECTOR, TREES FOR CITIES

> *"The best time spent together as a team in the history of the business"*
>
> REBECCA SMART, CEO, AUTONATIVE

Want a healthier, more positive and productive culture in your team?

School of the Wild

weaving together teams, nature and meaningful change

www.schoolofthewild.com

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