

# Negotiating flexibility with your employees as you plan to return to work

84% of employees wish to maintain a mix of working from home and going into the office. Employers need to start reimagining the workplace experience of the future and put more inclusive practices in place as they prepare to open up. Circle In research also found that manager support is critical to making flexibility work, but is largely absent. 54% of people say their managers are not equipped to lead a flexible team.

**Try our three-phased approach to get started!**

## Phase 1: Survey your employees

Do a quick survey. Treat this as a pulse check for your organization. Your survey should cover the following key categories:

- Engagement - How engaged are they in your vision, values and purpose?
- Safety & Belonging - Do they feel a sense of belonging at your company?
- Enablement - Is the current way of working enabling them to meet work challenges directly?
- EVP - Do they feel heard?
- Connection - Do they feel energized to go the extra mile?

## Phase 2: Dive deeper with focus groups & ideation sessions

Dive deeper into feedback received in the survey and gain a deeper understanding of your employees' needs with regards to working arrangements.

- Work with your department heads to find a good mix of employees across different levels and job types to participate in the focus groups.
- Create multiple groups of 6-10 participants to attend these sessions.
- Promise anonymity of feedback and create a safe space for employees to share their views.

**Tip: It helps to hire an external facilitator to avoid bias. This also puts your teams at ease to share candid opinions.**

### Some sample questions:

- What tools and resources help you do your job effectively and what's creating noise or should be re-assessed?
- What haven't we asked that you think that you think we should know or explore regarding our future culture and ways of working?
- Considering your current experience, what should we pay attention to when shaping our culture and ways of working in the future?
- What should we continue, stop, start or do differently?

## Phase 3: Defining your ways of working

With insights from your focus groups and ideation sessions, start to map out the logistics of your future workforce. Create a handbook with some basic guardrails and a checklist for every team lead to follow. Depending on the size of your organization, this can be rolled out on a company-wide level or a team level.

Here are some sections to include in your handbook:

### How we work

- Define roles for tools and technology
- How to build tool usage into team operations
- How to revisit planning and prioritization (using an activity-based working model)

### Where we work

- Define What are your WFH / office plans for the future? (to be agreed at a team level)
- What are your strategic partner / co-working space agreements, practices and costs? (to be agreed at a company-wide level)
- Are your employees setup in their remote locations for long-term use?

### When we work

- What are some flexible working principles you can embed into your teams?
- Can you agree on collaboration and planned meeting times vs, deep focus and unplanned work times?
- What are your core working hours? (e.g. 7am to 7pm or 10am - 2pm)

### Culture

- Appoint a team to act as cultural champion
- Continue work around social connection, fun and all things culture.