

Episode #55: What Should Your Role Be During the Transition from Remote to Hybrid or In-person Work Arrangements?

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

In today's podcast I pose the question: What should your role be during the transition from remote to hybrid or in-person work arrangements?

I'm your host, Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I challenged you to generate empathy during pandemic-related transitions. I indicated that the odds of a fruitful transition out of working remotely will be higher if the problem or challenge is well explained and reflects the human component.

In particular, I suggested you check on the following potential challenges you and your employees may be facing:

1. Are you and your employees suffering from Zoom and Teams fatigue?
2. How effective have your onboarding programs been for new hires?
3. How productive are you and your employees working remotely?

I also suggested that you do your best to generate and leverage an understanding of your employees' feelings. It will be clearer and easier for employees to understand the purpose of your new workplace policies. And it will increase the probability that it will "be bought" by them.

Today, I want to draw your attention to three areas where you, as a leader, should hold yourself accountable during the transition out of remote work into hybrid or in-person arrangements.

I will once again draw on a series of suggestions outlined by William Bridges in his book *Managing Transitions*.

1. **Do you acknowledge that your role as a change leader has two components?** The first part is to define the outcome of the change being pursued. I think this role is well understood and practiced by leaders. They understand the need to keep reminding and pushing people toward the desired outcome. The second role may not be so well understood and practiced by leaders: it is to lead and accompany people through the transition period.
2. Once you are clear that your role is to lead your people through the transition period, Bridges suggests **finding a way to dramatize the ending of the old way of doing things**. For instance, some sort of ceremony or activity could be planned to send a message that, from now on, working 100% remotely is over. Of course, this assumes that leaders have been engaging with their employees, clarifying what the purpose of the new policies is, a responsibility that we covered in the previous podcast.
An example of this ceremony could be to ask employees to share one element of working 100% remote that they will miss the most and to dramatize their loss in some form.
In my case, once I return to conducting in-person workshops, the element I will miss the most is working in shorts...
My dramatization ceremony could be to give away a few of them to charity....
What would your dramatization ceremony be? Feel free to share them in the comments section of the platform you are using today.

3. As employees go through the transition period, they will struggle to adjust to the changes, and **your role is to listen to their concerns**. Their struggles may come from not feeling in full control of their situation, not understanding what is happening to them, or not having their support systems in place yet, among others.

As you listen to your employees, realize that you may be much more advanced in the transition process than they are. Likewise, you will notice how each employee has their own set of challenges, which may call for a personalized engagement with them during this process.

In a conversation with one of my clients, he told me his company, a large Fortune 500 corporation, had already developed a set of principles for the transition from fully remote to hybrid. These principles had already been deployed to the leaders of each individual business unit. Within certain parameters, and depending on the different employee roles, the business unit leaders were empowered to adjust a few elements of the plan, such as timing and levels of flexibility for remote and in-person work.

This leader had already started to work with his leadership team to engage the rest of the organization. I noticed he was applying at least two of the suggestions shared earlier in this podcast:

- Making leaders accountable during the transition period, and
- Proactively listening to the concerns of the employees.

The other suggestions mentioned in the previous podcast, and in this one, were:

- To generate empathy with employees during pandemic-related transitions, and
- To find a way to dramatize the ending of the old way of doing things.

In our next episode I will share tips on how to conduct successful hybrid meetings.

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Percy's BIO

Percy has been helping hundreds of corporate executives and their teams boost their leadership, teamwork and culture capabilities over the past ten years. Before this, Percy spent close to three decades working for three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, in the United States, and across several countries in Latin America.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC", a Certified "Go-Giver" Speaker & Coach, and a consultant of several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., "Organizational Health", "The Ideal Team Player", "The Motive", "The Truth About Employee Engagement", "The 6 Types of Working Genius", and others).

Percy is a senior partner of Grupo Azimuth, a hub of experienced advisors committed to our clients' long-term success.

Percy has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently. He is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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