

IT'S NOT *WHERE* YOU WORK, IT'S *HOW* YOU WORK

Team Dynamics in a Hybrid Environment

By Roberta Moore, founder of EQ-i Coach and author of *Emotion at Work: Unleashing the Secret Power of Emotional Intelligence*



In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, our work environments—and the ways we interact with one another in them—have changed, likely forever. Before COVID-19, only 20% of Americans were working from home all or part time; today, it's over 70%. A recent [survey from Gartner](#) suggests this trend isn't going anywhere, even as offices reopen: 82% of company leaders said they plan to continue allowing employees to work remotely at least part time.

Since the widespread shift to working from home, some teams are struggling to manage hybrid environments while others are thriving more than ever. What makes the difference for the 40% that have *increased* productivity in this new landscape? It turns out their success can be attributed to continued collaboration and [high employee engagement](#). The key, then, is not in *where* your team works, but *how* they work—and to build the healthy team dynamics that lead to success in a hybrid environment, both your team and your leadership must practice emotional intelligence.

Keeping Your Team Together (When They're Not *Literally* Together)

There can be many hurdles to overcome for remote or hybrid teams when communicating from afar without the aid of body language or the ease of sharing ideas more spontaneously. After a year that completely upended most of daily life, many remote workers are also struggling with the [emotional toll](#) of working from home at a time when they're already feeling isolated. For leaders, helping teams stay productive in the face of change is as much about emotional awareness as it is about strategic planning and digital tools.

High-performing teams show patterns of trust, productive conflict, accountability, and commitment to shared success—regardless of where they are (or aren't) physically working. Understanding these patterns—and the EQ skills needed to achieve them—is critical for giving teams the support they need to thrive in any environment:

- **Empathy:** Empathy helps individuals understand, respect, and appreciate the feelings and experiences of their teammates. In virtual or hybrid environments, it can be more difficult to read others' emotions or body language cues, so leaders of hybrid teams must set a standard for every individual to acknowledge and validate each other's input. Being able to truly listen to one another will make your

team better able to have an open exchange of ideas. That means better collaboration, more dynamic problem-solving, and an overall increase in team trust. When every member of a team is able to trust that their ideas will be heard, they'll be far more likely to share them—whether it's from behind a computer screen or across the conference table.

- **Flexibility:** Working remotely requires a lot of independence, which means that your team members are probably experiencing more stress as they deal with the burden of greater responsibility. As a team leader, helping your team develop a more flexible approach to work can help ease some of the stresses of trying to balance structure with adaptability. This flexibility on an individual level will also contribute to the team's flexibility—allowing them to quickly and collaboratively adapt to meet new goals or adjust their strategies as a team when priorities shift.
- **Assertiveness:** There is not the same back-and-forth over video and phone conferences as during in-person meetings, and for many people this translates to becoming more passive. The uncertainty created by the addition of virtual communication tools can make it harder for teams to communicate and collaborate—especially when they are split between employees who are working together in-person and those who are working remotely. For teams and their

leaders, building and practicing assertiveness—the ability to clearly and confidently articulate one’s feelings, beliefs, and thoughts—is key to keeping conversations productive and everyone on task when people are working from different locations.

- **Social Responsibility:** At the heart of any productive team is a sense of shared responsibility. Teams that form true connections—ones that blur borders between the virtual and the physical office—are those that win, lose, and problem-solve *together*. Every individual must be as committed to the entire team’s success as they are to their own—whether they are actively collaborating or are completing independent tasks. As a leader, nurturing a sense of social responsibility—the feeling that the whole team is in it together, even when they’re not *literally* together—will help every member stay invested and focused. When team members have high levels of social responsibility, they cooperate more productively, contribute more actively, and offer feedback more constructively.

We anticipate three distinct work environments to exist moving forward: in-person, remote, and a hybrid between the two. There are unique challenges and advantages that come with each of these environments—and strong emotional intelligence skills are what will help teams develop the healthy, collaborative dynamics they need to thrive no matter which environment they’re operating in.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Shifting to a remote or hybrid work model has been an **effective move** for many business owners, allowing them to decrease operating costs, hire talent from around the country (or internationally), and even improve employee retention rates. But as teams begin to settle into a new work routine—whether that means returning to the office full-time, part-time, or not at all—leaders need to be aware of the complexities that come along with managing teams in this new normal. For some people, the idea of returning even part-time to the office will be exciting after feeling isolated at home; for others, the flexibility of working from home has become a coveted part of their work culture. As a leader, it is important to give every individual the space they need to cope with their feelings—while still motivating them to do what is best for the team as a whole.

Changing times have put leaders in the perfect position to set a standard of empathy, trust, and collaboration in the workplace. While it may be challenging to navigate a hybrid environment at first, teams can find the keys to success in practicing emotional intelligence skills that will help them stay collaborative, accountable, and engaged regardless of their physical location. Doing so will create a sense of shared responsibility—and shared accomplishment—that will make for a more cohesive team and, ultimately, and more successful company.

About Roberta Moore



Roberta Moore, founder of EQ-i Coach and author of *Emotion at Work: Unleashing the Secret Power of Emotional Intelligence*, utilizes her extensive background as an accomplished business executive and licensed therapist to help executives, business teams, and sales teams achieve workplace and personal success. As a therapist for nearly two decades and a member of the Forbes Council of Coaches, Moore’s experience has taught her that the key skills responsible for successful personal relationships are the same ones that spark workplace success. With this discovery, Moore has been able to help companies succeed by focusing on emotional and cognitive intelligence behaviors and tools. By using specific, practiced skills, individuals learn from Moore the EQ skills needed to inspire, engage, relate, and ultimately increase productivity and profitability. For more information, please visit www.eqicoach.com.