

*For leaders ready to make flexibility a trust strategy rather than a policy debate.*

### LEADER'S CHECKLIST

#### **Define outcomes, not hours.**

Publish one to three measurable results per role per quarter. Review progress regularly. Outcomes over observability is not a philosophy. It is a management practice.

#### **Remove ambiguity about working practices.**

Document core hours, meeting norms, async protocols, and response expectations. Make them visible to the whole team. Ambiguity defaults to distrust.

#### **Reset performance expectations for hybrid.**

Evaluate on impact and deliverables. Avoid face-time proxies. Proximity is not a measure of contribution.

#### **Be transparent and context-rich.**

Over-communicate priorities and trade-offs to reduce second-guessing and proximity bias. People fill information gaps with anxiety when leaders go quiet.

#### **Design for inclusion across distance.**

Rotate facilitation. Capture decisions in writing. Track who is being heard. Distributed teams require intentional inclusion, not accidental visibility.

#### **Invest in psychological safety.**

Model candor. Invite dissent. Normalize the fact that employees have lives. Safety is strongly associated with better performance regardless of location.

### CRAFT GUARDRAILS

#### **Do not manage by monitoring.**

Surveillance intended for control backfires. It erodes trust, lowers morale, and often provokes the disengagement it was designed to prevent. Use data for support and capacity planning, not for watching.

#### **Do not confuse flexibility with invisibility.**

Set explicit availability windows and escalation paths. Flexibility works when expectations are clear on both sides.

#### **Do not mandate presence to solve connection.**

Build connection intentionally through rituals, shared documents, and regular one-on-ones rather than relying on proximity alone.

## **Do not ignore proximity bias.**

Track opportunities, recognition, and promotions across locations. Train managers to counter it. The office should not be the default path to advancement.

### **REFLECTION PROMPTS**

#### **Would your team still function well if your most reliable in-person person worked remotely?**

If the answer is no, examine what that dependence is actually based on.

#### **Where are you equating availability with dedication on your team?**

Identify one place this week where you could measure output instead of presence.

#### **What is one working norm your team uses that builds trust across distance?**

If you do not have one written down, write it down together.

### **SOURCES AND FURTHER READING**

- Harvard Business Review — Making Hybrid Work Actually Work
- APA Work in America 2024 — Flexibility, Safety, and Performance
- McKinsey & Company — The Real Cost of Workplace Monitoring
- BCG — Employee Monitoring, Privacy, and Morale Research
- The Campbell Institute — Proximity Bias and Opportunity Distribution
- Inspiring Workplaces — Flexible Work, Respect, and Reciprocal Commitment