

# Managing Teams in a Dynamic Working environment

Dynamic Working has many benefits both for the University and for individuals. As Dynamic Working develops, our skills in managing and being part of teams who often work at different times or locations need to develop too, in order to deliver these benefits

There's a greater emphasis on being more systematic, and on using new channels of communication effectively.

Here are some useful tips for managing Teams in a Dynamic Working environment:

## **Treat flexibility and virtuality as normal, rather than as exceptions from a regular fixed-time workplace-based way of working**

Work from the basis that flexibility open to everyone in one way or another unless there are business reasons why this is not possible.

In organisations where flexible working is treated as an exception to a default traditional office-based or regular-hours way of working, the benefits of Dynamic working won't be achieved.

There should be a single culture of working for those within your team, with people working in different ways integrated into a single framework with common expectations and methods of organising work. This will create a better and happier work environment for everyone.

## **Look at the tasks involved in a role and in the work of the team when considering where and when people can work**

With 'flexibility as normal', it's a different approach from reacting to requests for flexible working one by one. You can look at the types of activities involved in getting the work done for the whole team, and be more strategic and proactive in supporting different ways of working.

The '7 step approach to considering Dynamic Working' will help guide you through the thought process of considering if and how Dynamic Working works for your team.

## **Role-model Dynamic Working**

Show the team how Dynamic Working works in practice. By showing that you can manage from different locations, you set an example to the team.

This will not only role-model a different working pattern – but how to be well-organised and how to use different collaboration techniques to work more effectively.

## **Set the foundations of trust**

Dynamic Working involves a trust-based culture. This means trusting employees to act as mature individuals who can, with appropriate guidance and agreement, make responsible choices about how to deliver work and carry out their respective responsibilities. Trusted employees tend to have greater loyalty and often a willingness to go the extra mile to deliver the best results.

## **Manage by results, not presence**

Trust is part of the necessary context for managing by results. It means not focusing on employees turning up and sitting at a desk, but on the quality of their work.

This will in many cases require more systematic planning, organising and monitoring of work. And knowing what the outputs and outcomes of people's work should be.

## **Build and maintain team identity**

It is quite easy for people who are regularly working remotely or who have a different time-pattern of work to be left out of things or to feel left out. Measures that can support teambuilding and anchor team identity include:

- Having a Team Agreement, with strong input from the team, covering collective goals and the principle of working together
- Regular calls/conferences, and actively promoting interaction between team members through the range of available channels
- Encouraging team members to help with each other's workload and share knowledge
- Regular flagging up of achievements of the team and of the organisation; for example, how the team has contributed to wider University goals and delivered value to respective customers, and regular flagging up of achievements of team members, to promote a sense of pride in each other's achievements
- Encouraging innovation within the team, and seeing that the ideas are shared
- Use of technologies to promote interaction, not only about work
- Joint non-work actions, for example, supporting a charity, or the charitable activities of individual members; sporting or social activities, etc.

## **Watch out for problems and issues – but don't revert to old ways of working for solutions**

A Manager's role is to watch for problems and challenges when people are working in new ways.

This should involve open conversations with team members and what is or isn't working about the new work arrangements. There may be issues with the work pattern itself, particular issues about the work, or issues from the wider context of their life.

The manager needs to know when it is a problem they can help to resolve, or whether it is something (e.g. in the case of mental health issues) where it is a situation for referring on, or to obtain further advice.

If there are difficulties, resist the temptation to reinstate old ways of working, e.g. by automatically insisting they work back in the workplace where they can be managed by presence. This would compromise your own potential to work dynamically, and if results can't be delivered without being watched, then there are deeper performance problems that need to be addressed in the appropriate way.

## **Celebrate success and acknowledge effort**

When you see team members less often, it's important to recognise their efforts. Saying 'thanks' and 'well done' never goes amiss. If someone is working away from the team, it can be dispiriting to complete a piece of work and have no response to it.

And it's good to celebrate success, both for individual effort and the achievements of the team. This doesn't need an awards ceremony, but just positive feedback when you get together or through established team communications. And perhaps a special get-together if people have really pulled the stops out.