



**Managing Remotely:
Seek More to Understand
Than Be Understood**

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Dear Springboard:

With many companies calling employees back to offices, it seems the most common arrangement is the hybrid option with three days a week in the office. That means managers still have considerable time managing their teams remotely.

We're hybrid here. I'm mostly OK managing remotely but feel I could definitely be more effective. Any suggestions?

Sign me,

Having Hang Ups With Hybrid

Dear HHUWH:

The objectives of managing, whether it be remote or in person, is essentially the same.

We still want engaged, motivated employees who are productive, efficient, and work well with their colleagues.

The distance does create some new challenges and that invites us to adapt to be effective leaders.

Some of the core issues to address include: good communication, appropriate supervision, helping people to feel a part of, project oversight and managing the distractions at home such as children, pets -- and even partners.

As leaders, we need to provide clear direction, the necessary resources and information, some emotional support plus access for scheduled and impromptu meetings.

Compared to managing in person, managing virtually has to be more intentional to be effective.

Best practices include setting clear expectations, conscientious follow up, predictable check-ins, regular 1:1 meetings, weekly team meetings and prioritizing outcomes over of busyness



In [last month's Harvard Business Review](#), Raghu Krishnamoorthy, a retired chief human resources director at GE, shared research findings and noted a subtle and important shift: employees want their managers to *micro-understand* their work rather than micro-manage them.

He found that employees “wanted their managers to be present, hands-on, and operationally vigilant without being intrusive.”

Micromanaging is irritating, constricts growth for both the manager and their report, undermines trust, requires time-consuming approvals, slows down progress and, I would add, stymies innovation.

Micro-understanding, on the other hand, is about being nearby and available when needed but otherwise delegating, providing direction and support, and thus demonstrating the trust to let employees have the space to get their jobs done without undue interference.

The article notes that managers can be enablers, not enforcers. Another analogy suggests it's "like being a coach who is very much in the game but not on the field."

To be clear, it's not about checking out. Instead, it means being visible, easily available, removing obstacles, and being ready to engage while not hovering or meddling.

Employees want managers to "shift from managing time, activity, or physical presence to managing results and outcomes."

Personally, I like this approach of being one step removed while maintaining an attentive and light touch.

It sounds like it would work well in many circumstances and, in fact, is what we frequently encourage managers to do: delegate and let go so the team members grow professionally, while also making space for the manager to stretch to their next level.

The article also notes the extra degree of intentionality is helpful in setting goals, deadlines, and accountability.

Plus, the author writes, "Checking in is about fostering interpersonal trust and connection. . . Unskilled managers often end up making check-ins look like check-ups, making employees feel that they are being monitored." Connecting is best when it is encouraging and empowering.

Another component that makes micro-understanding effective is increased compassion and understanding.

When a manager shows they genuinely care, it goes a long way to boosting motivation and helping someone feel that they matter.

Lawrence Hedbloom

