Loop Health

HR Resources

Building Great Culture

Loop HR Guides

Culture

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Why?

At Loop Health, we've reviewed proprietary data from nearly 3,000 partners and found that the most successful HRs and recruiters are deeply tactical. These leaders track project management, cost analysis and map people management metrics to business outcomes. We've decided to share these insights with the HR community at large in order to help practitioners go from HR *analyst* to HR *strategist*. **These guides will be useful for new HR associates who are learning about the world of organizational management, as well as HR veterans interested in elevating their game.**

At Loop Health, we're fortunate to work with visionary HRs everyday. Our HR partners work across their organizations to optimize not only hiring, compliance, productivity and retention, but employee experience, leadership, learning, development and more. It's not uncommon for HR to be at the centre of organizational restructures and establishing company values – and these areas are more important than ever for modern companies. Setting expectations and prioritizing areas to focus on has never been more challenging. With these challenges come significant opportunities for HR leaders.

Before we get started...

At Loop Health, we're building the easiest-to-use health benefit provider in India. We offer free OPD services for all of our partner companies. Learn more at www.loophealth.com or reach out to our Head of Partnerships, Pranaav Marathe, directly at +91 99703 58844

Driving company values

Company culture begins with core values.The selection of your core values must be the product of introspection, deliberation, collaboration, and ultimately consensus among your company's leadership. This process should take time (plan on a two week timeframe for the steps listed below). Crafting meaningful core values will result in a cohesive and inspiring foundation for your company culture. Defining your values begins with having a clear understanding of your company's mission statement. Your values should reflect HOW your mission serves clients, employees, and the community.

Values will vary widely from company to company, but there are some general guidelines to effectively deciding which of them are yours:

1. Choose who should be involved.	- Depending on the size of your company, this could be the founding partners, the management team, or a select committee representing a cross section of your company. - It's critical that these team members are committed to draft and implement your values, and agree that the chosen values will be a foundation for your team going forward.

2. Start with a brainstorm	- The above team should come to a brainstorming meeting prepared with ideas about what is important to them as individual representatives of the team. - Remember, this is an idea generating stage and the goal is to discuss what's important and not important and why. Don't get caught up in selecting the perfect set of values yet. - This session should yield 30-50 words or ideas about values. It's okay if they feel ambiguous. It's also okay if you have more or fewer words or ideas; aim for that range. - Make sure you write this all down!
3. Consolidate, Eliminate, and Define	- Take time with this next section. Plan about one week total for two working sessions and some time to marinate over your initial thoughts, as described below: - Write every one of the 30-50 words/ideas on a post it notes. - Put all the posts it notes on a wall. - As a team, start consolidating them into groups. - For example, you might have a lot of concepts around customer service, or a desire for constant improvement. - You'll see a natural pattern start to emerge - you may need to eliminate outliers (if there is a post it that feels off or out of place, its perfectly acceptable to discard it).

	- Once you have the concepts consolidated into groups, you should "live with" them for a few days. This process can be intense and it's important to get it right. When you're ready to reconvene, discuss which concept groups resonate with the team. - Select 3-5 word / idea groups. - It's important not to have too many - if you value everything, nothing is a true priority. - Choose a word or short phrase for each group, and a 1-3 sentence definition that captures the groups' overarching intention.
4. Frame	- Now that you've selected your 3-5 values and you have a definition for each one, reflect on how you can frame them in a way that is relatable to your company. - For example, at one organization, we initially had "Teamwork" as a value, but we found it was more actionable when we changed it to "Be Collaborative." - Think about what your team will respond to; humor, brevity, action, words - it all depends on the culture you're adopting.
5. Evaluate	View your values as a holistic set and make sure they encompass everything you intend for your company or group. Are you willing to live these values, and hold the team accountable for these values?

Behavioral Rubrics

Once you have established your core values, identify behaviors that describe what detractor, contributor, and leader level behaviors look like for that value. These values must be tangible and understandable by all employees. Think about things that happen every day and how they add to, or detract from, the values you've set out.

Detractor	- Which behaviors do not meet the standards of your organization? - Which behaviors prevent others from behaving in a way that reflects the value?
Contributor	- Which behaviors meet expectations and set a good example for others in the organization? - Contributor level values should be the standard for all employees in their every day interactions.
Leader	Which behaviors demonstrate commitment and mastery of the value, and encourage others to live the value?

Value	DETRACTOR	CONTRIBUTOR	LEADER
	Does not meet the standards personally and/or detracts from others meeting the standards	Meets expectations and practices leadership by example	Demonstrates commitment and mastery, encouraging others to do the same
Make room at the table We're committed to growing & empowering a more inclusive community within our company, industry, & cities. We believe that true innovation happens when everyone has the tools, resources, & opportunity to thrive.	• Is dismissive or critical of input from others • Communicates without recognizing the impact on relationships • Takes action before understanding all stakeholders and their requirements, expectations, and needs • Under or over informs stakeholders about business actions & results • Doesn't demonstrate diversity in actions • Believes every voice must be heard in every conversation • Participates in preferential treatment	• Is welcoming of input from others • Contributes to an environment of authenticity • Communicates with regard for the impact it has on relationships • Understands stakeholder requirements, expectations, and needs • Informs stakeholders appropriately about business actions and results • Prioritizes equity over equality • Is not egocentric; allows colleagues to shine	• Actively seeks input from a diverse audience • Is a role model for effective communication • Takes a proactive approach to manage stakeholder expectations after understanding their needs, expectations, and requirements • Consults with stakeholders on their preferences for staying informed about business actions and results
Think outside the room Our organization is decentralized so considering other teams & hearing from other locations is critical for success.	• Operates in a silo, not seeking to maximize efforts across departments • Defers decisions unnecessarily, or does not seek the proper input from stakeholders • Makes decisions that impact other departments without consulting affected teams • Engages in groupthink • Assumes every office location is the same	• Consults with other departments to add cross functional value • Gains input from appropriate stakeholders before taking action • Seeks out different perspectives • Is empathetic • Practices inclusivity in every respect • Treats cross functional partners as customers / clients	• Actively identifies cross-functional opportunities for efficiency or better results • Models quality decision making for others, explaining their rationale and reasoning • Actively includes and keeps in the loop non team stakeholders
One team, one fight We're in this together, and both success and failure are shared. We are intentional about creating a high-accountability, no-blame culture.	• Avoids giving feedback, or seeking feedback from others • Engages in conflict in a way that will not lead to productive outcomes (puts people on the defensive, is emotional, too accommodating, insensitive, etc) • Stays silent to not ruffle feathers • Ignores our unique differences • Prioritizes "getting along" over resolving conflict	• Believes in doing things for the greater good • Acts on feedback regarding leadership behaviors as well as tactical skills • Appropriately delegates or shifts decisions to others • Engages in productive conflict, finding common ground and driving toward solutions • Recognizes others' accomplishments • Gains trust and support from peers	• Creates healthy forums for blame free post mortems • Actively seeks feedback to improve their leadership, and follows through with plans for improvement • Uses delegation as an opportunity to actively and deliberately progress careers and development of others • Models productive conflict and diffuses high-tension situations effectively

Using the behavioral rubric

- Print and laminate a copy of the values for every member of your team. I use a dry erase marker on the laminated page in almost every conversation I have with a direct report. This drives clarity and understanding of the values, and helps employees live them every day.

- Using the rubric in all conversations makes the values livable. Use it to identify leadership behavior as well as for tough conversations.The rubric depersonalizes behavior and can help remove bias and opinion out of performance conversations. By using the rubric, everyone understands expectations and can see a straight path between where they are today and where they need to be to advance their career

- Use the rubric during formal performance reviews to help employees understand the link between how they do their work (their behaviors) and what work they do (their objectives and KPIs).

How to make remote work awesome

Overview

This remote work guide reviews the processes necessary for making remote work awesome for individuals and teams:

- Mitigate remote work drawbacks
- Manage meetings with remote workers
- Manage remote team communications
- Ensure accountability
- Manage remote employees

Benefits and drawbacks of remote work

Pros	Cons
Reduce or eliminate your commute.	May be out of sync with coworkers due to time zone differences.
Work on your own schedule.	May need to adjust your schedule to accommodate different time zones.
Less distractions from coworkers.	More distractions from family, the guy at the table next to you, social media, etc.
Less expenditures (e.g., travel, eating out, etc.)	Less opportunities for interactions with coworkers.

You don't have a direct supervisor.	You don't have a direct supervisor.

Mitigate remote work drawbacks

While there are clear benefits from remote work (e.g., save money and time from skipping that two hour commute), there are challenges that should be addressed to keep your remote work experience awesome.

Managing time zone differences.	- Be efficient in asynchronous communications. - Be specific and provide sufficient details about questions and problems you need assistance with to ensure the response meets your needs and does not require scheduling a 4AM call to clarify things.
Managing distractions.	- Sources of distraction are myriad and you are responsible for managing them as a remote worker. - You'll need to be your own supervisor and stay on track when it matters. - Set boundaries so that while you are maximizing time with family, that they are aware of times when you need to focus on work. If you have a home office with a door, simply closing the door could signal "Do Not Disturb." If you work in a shared space, putting on headphones could be your "Do Not Disturb" sign. If working from home proves to be nonfunctional, working from a coffee shop, library or other public space with wifi is a common tactic for both remote workers and on-site workers that need to escape the distractions of the office. If you'd prefer a more professional alternative, coworking spaces offer an office

	setting (WeWork, etc.), but at a cost.
Less interactions with coworkers.	- If you are used to the social interactions with human beings and you suddenly find yourself working at home, alone, the transition can be difficult. - Setting up times to video chat with coworkers is one way to keep a connection going and have relevant work-related conversations. - Your company should also provide meetup opportunities (see the section on Meetups, below). - Coffee shops and coworking spaces also provide opportunities to interact with people or at least be in a space with more than your thoughts and the cat. If you are really looking to connect with people in your field of work, social media from Facebook to Meetup provide opportunities to connect with people that share your interests.
No supervisor.	- Not having a supervisor requires you to put on your own supervisor's hat. - If your team does scrum-style development, you may already have an accountability model worked in. - If you find that your productivity is slipping, setting up accountability sessions with a coworker or remote supervisor might be worth exploring. Provide a daily update of tasks completed and tasks to be started the following day posted to a Slack or Teams chat with your supervisor. Follow this up with a weekly review.

No office.	- Home office. Create an office space and set it up for comfort and efficiency. - Get a good desk and chair, an internet connection, lighting, any equipment you might need for video conferencing, etc. - Some progressive companies will even purchase home office equipment for their remote workers. - Use meetup opportunities to get human interaction. - The coffee shop. This works for some as an ideal workplace and is too distracting for some. You'll have access to (generally free) WiF and opportunity for human interaction. - There is an expectation that you will pay "rent" by purchasing coffee and food. - Coworking spaces. These can provide temporary or dedicated desk space along with office support services such as mail service, photocopying, and provide an opportunity to socialize with people. These spaces do, however, cost for the services provided.

Meetings

Effective meetings should:

1. Respect the allotted time.
2. Have an agenda.
3. Have a coordinator.

When recurring meetings lack agenda topics...	● Cancel them.
In cases where an agenda is defined...	● The designated meeting coordinator helps keep the discussion on topic, limits rambling commentary, and makes sure the meeting time limit is respected. ● Topics not addressed can be slated for a subsequent meeting, or interested participants could extend the meeting at their discretion with other participants dropping off.
If the team engages in daily updates...	● Use the scrum or daily standup model to stay efficient and keep on track. The point is to keep these team meetings short, with 15 minutes being a long standup meeting. The basic template standup is as follows:A meeting coordinator (scrum master) is responsible for keeping members on track and on time. It is their job to ruthlessly make sure no one goes over their allotted time.All team members provide a one or two minute (maximum) update on tasks completed yesterday, tasks being worked on today, and any challenges or blockers.After the update, actions to help team members overcome blockers can be defined.At this point the stand up meeting is done. Further discussions can happen after the update and may lead to team members interested in the

	topic remaining on the call/in the meeting while others may then drop off.
	• Use this format of "Done, Doing, Blocked" in a virtual format where team members can post their daily standup report in a dedicated team chat channel. If using this virtual format is helpful to still define a time for the update to be posted, say between 9-9:15 AM. This allows everyone to get the standup information promptly and also take action on helping to resolve blockers.

Managing Time Zones

When meeting across time zones, it is always good to be clear about which time zone a meeting date/time is being set for - PST, EST, etc. Any modern calendaring application (Google Cal, Microsoft Outlook, iCal, etc.) allow users to set meetings in their local time zone and allow participants to see the time in their local time, just make sure that your settings are correctly enabled.

Time zones can be especially challenging to remote workers if the most other co-workers are many time zones removed. Generally, teams will try to accommodate peripheral time zones, but there are times when the odd man out will need to get up early or stay up late to meet with the majority. In these cases, carefully consider when the remote worker's attendance in these meetings is actually required and making use of asynchronous communications as a standard communication alternative.

Remote team communications

All of the tools below can be used on a one-to-one or group communication mode. The tools below are listed in order of least urgency to most -- that is, how quickly do you expect a response from one of the methods below.

Note: Some tools that allow adding members to ongoing conversations. In certain situations, this may reveal sensitive information that was not intended for the new additions. As always, know how your tool works and share with care.

Email

When to use	● To provide a traceable record of communications.
Benefits	● Great for longer form communications that exceed the expectations or limits of texts or direct messages.
Drawbacks	● Can be time consuming to craft when dealing with complicated topics. ● Not always considered time sensitive. Urgent communications can get overlooked in the inbox.
Best Practices	● As a remote worker or remote worker manager, set clear expectations. For example, work related emails should be checked twice a day or responded to within 24 hours.

Group Chat

When to use	● To provide a traceable record of communications.
Benefits	● Direct messaging capabilities, audio and video calls. ● Channels where people can communicate on specific topics. ● Customizable in limitless ways. For example they can be:Project-based (XYZ Application Development Project)Topical (Website Production Team)Non-work related (Remote Worker Socials) ● New additions to these channels can review past communications and get a sense of what is going on.
Drawbacks	● Busy channels can become a source of distraction. ● Multiple channels can be distracting.
Best Practices	● Consider what you post, as many of these tools preserve the history of all the communication of these channels, even after members have left. ● Many chat apps have a way to message all members. Use this sparingly.

Direct message

When to use	● When you want to communicate privately with an individual or small group (much like a group text).
Benefits	● Direct messages are generally treated as important/urgent by recipients. ● Can provide a conversational back and forth that bridges between the typical timing found with email

	and a live conversation.
Drawbacks	• Notifications can be disruptive if working across timezones.
Platforms	• Most modern business communications platforms provide direct messaging features. Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Google Hangout Conversations.
Best Practices	• Depending on how your team manages brief communications, something that is Twitter length or that you could envision texting is appropriate for a direct message. Note: Some tools allow members to add new members: unless these new additions are somehow blocked from seeing prior communications, they may be able to review the discussion prior to their addition. • Be clear about response time expectations and boundaries. Some tools allow settings to snooze notifications outside of your local working hours to help maintain work/life boundaries.

Text message

When to use	• When you want to receive a reply fast. • When the recipient may not be immediately available for a phone/video call and the message is important to deliver.

Benefits	- A reply can be expected in a short timeframe. - A good way to get a response for an urgent matter. - Asynchronous - even if the recipient is not available when the message is sent, the message should get a response when read.
Drawbacks	Can be challenging to use across time zones, especially if you are not sure of the recipient's current time zone (i.e. Is the recipient travelling or at the workplace?)
Best Practices	Usually a form of escalation after trying one of the other options above (especially if you are texting someone's personal number).

Phone Calls

When to use	- Replacement for in person meetings for remote workers. - Can be expected to be a regular part of a remote workers day.
Benefits	- Immediate response as long as the recipient is available. - Highly effective as long as care is taken that participants are in locations with good reception (if on a mobile device) and minimal background noise.

Drawbacks	● Can be challenging to use across time zones, especially if you are not sure of the recipient's current time zone (i.e. Is the recipient traveling or at the workplace?)
Best Practices	● Unplanned calls are another form of escalation if other contact methods have failed, or the matter is urgent. ● Scheduled calls on your calendar and add a notification just prior to the call. ● Take the time prior to the call to assure you are in an area with minimal noise and good connectivity.

Video Calls

When to use	● Scheduled video calls can replace meetups.
Benefits	● Adds visual cues to the communication process. ● A great way to increase communication clarity between team members.
Drawbacks	● Video and audio settings need to be setup correctly. ● Video can take up a lot of bandwidth and a suboptimal connection can cause a choppy video and audio stream that is difficult to understand. ● Care must be taken to assure that no sensitive (business or personal) items or information are visible in the video view.

Platforms	• Set up a person to person video chat with your phone's native video service (e.g. iPhone's Facetime). • Tools that support video communications: Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Go to Meeting, and Zoom. • Many support basic functionality for free, with paid versions adding features like multiple participants and session recording.
Best Practices	• Unplanned video calls are generally to be discouraged, unless team members have set expectations that these sorts of calls are expected. Even if they are, team members should always have the option of joining even video conferences in audio only mode at their discretion. • Users should take time to set up and validate their video setup: Make sure audio and video work.Verify that you have enough lighting.Make sure anything in the video view area is ok for any participants to see.

Meetups

When to use	• Social team-building events that focus on building bonds between on site and remote team members. • Work-focused events with social aspects being secondary. • For strategic planning. • For "hackathons" like intensive problem solving or

	development events.
Benefits	• Typically improves the connection between team members for the better.
Drawbacks	• There is some cost in travel time and transportation. • Additional costs can be incurred for larger events. • Poor planning (meetups with no clear understanding of costs and benefits) can easily result in net negative outcomes for the business.
Best Practices	• Depending how distributed your remote team is, differing cadences of in person meetups can be implemented:Weekly. Some remote workers find frequent time away from their real (remote) office disruptive. In other cases, weekly face-to-face time can be a huge benefit for collaborative work. Determine whether weekly meetups are a plus or minus for the productivity of your remote employees.Monthly. Depending on project requirements, teams may meet up on a monthly basis, sometimes flying remote workers in from remote locations. The benefit of this meeting will need to outweigh not just the money spent on travel, but also the cost in time (productivity) spent travelling. Have a clear goal (outcome) for these meetup sessions. Monthly meetups are an opportunity to build team spirit among remote and on-site employees through social interactions and events. Annually. Be clear on why you are putting the effort into bringing the team

	together in order to determine how effective the outcome of this special event will be. • Note: Regardless of how often your remote team is on site or a fully distributed team comes together for a meetup, it is important to be clear about meetup objectives. Social events have a purpose, but having a remote employee show up in the office just "to see their face" is a poor objective.

Ensure accountability

The biggest shift in dealing with remote workers is how to manage accountability. As your employee is no longer in sight, it is more difficult, though not impossible, to know if they are on task or not. Having an explicit project management process (see the next section) can help keeping track of task progress of the entire team. Regular meetings or virtual updates can provide both a means to keep team connected and provide accountability for continued progress.

Self-accountability

Keeping yourself accountable is a challenge many remote workers don't count on. Setting your own schedule can make it tempting to take off more time than you should, or procrastinate on moving forward on assigned tasks.

Scheduling

Scheduling working hours for yourself is a way to define your working life from your personal life. Although flexibility of time is a big benefit of many remote work positions, it is a good idea to set yourself regular working hours. They don't map the standard 9 AM - 5 PM model, still, defining working hours will help you know when to start and when to finish! Although most people use some form of digital

calendar/planner, there are some that still use a physical planner. Find what works best for you.

Task Management

Keeping track of your job tasks helps with planning and reporting and also simplifies answering the 'What's next?' question. In a simple, analog form, using notecards or PostIts can be a way to set up a To Do, Doing, and Done categories. Tools like Trello and Wunderlist make it easy to set up or update tasks, set due dates and reminders, and aggregate tasks into categories.

Limit your daily task load. When considering your well organized list of "To Do's" it is tempting to pile many things into your "Doing" list. You will be more efficient if you rather limit yourself to three or even better a primary and a couple of backups. This will ensure you focus rather than jumping across a larger number of tasks. Decide on your primary task for the day and try your best to get it done. The other two tasks for the day can be addressed after you complete your primary, or in the case that you get blocked.

Hourly Employees

It is not unusual to have employees that will have a certain number of hours of work assigned and require some form of reporting on time-based effort. To track this, ask employees to provide a written report of hours and activities, possibly in spreadsheet form. There are also time tracking applications (e.g. Toggl) to simplify this process.

Note: Assure that remote workers are applying themselves to work related tasks after clocking in. Be clear about defining specific objectives to be met on a weekly or even daily basis to ensure touch points that validate progress and provide

notice of productivity slumps.

Salaried Employees

For salaried employees, hours are not a critical metric for accountability: it becomes important to be clear about expectations for goals and timelines. Be clear about specific tasks that a remote worker needs to accomplish and the expected timelines to keep accountability expectations clear. Have good communication practices in place so that if the situation warrants, timelines can be adjusted.

Managing remote employees

When managing remote employees, one of the biggest tasks is to have clear accountability measures in place. Make sure that employees understand expectations and have a clear means of reporting progress and setbacks.

Project Management Methodologies:
There are a wide range of project management methodologies in use today, many of which are variations on a theme. These methods for both remote and onsite workers provide

1. A clearly defined framework for defining expectations of progress.
2. A means to communicate progress and issues that need resolution.
3. Frequent (and expected) opportunities to ask for help.

The two of the most common project management methodologies are waterfall and agile.

Waterfall

When to use	For projects that have a set of discrete, ordered steps that need to be followed.
Process Overview	Typically these projects are clearly defined before the tasks begin and all team members are all moving to complete one of the stages synchronously.
Benefits	Provides clear guidance to the team about project status: what is completed, what is the current task, and what comes next.
Drawbacks	Assumes the project works best in a linear, step-by-step progression, so going back to a previous step or working on multiple steps in parallel is not supported.
Best Practices	Everyone works on part of a single stage together, so communication about progress and blockers is required to keep the entire team moving forward.

Agile (includes Scrum and [Kanban](#))

When to use	- Projects in which parts can be reworked and dependencies between parts are loose enough that they can be worked on in parallel. - Good for projects where iterative improvements to different parts is possible or desirable.

Process Overview	• Team members might be working on different stages of a project, so each member generally accepts one or a few specific tasks to work on. • Periodic meetings are set to keep track of progress and identify bottlenecks as a form of team accountability.
Benefits	• Allows rapid delivery of functionality with subsequent improvement or upgrade of project parts. • Can support parallel development of project parts to accelerate delivery. • Planning requirements are less stringent than in a waterfall model. • More flexibility in what tasks are worked on and previously completed tasks can be brought back for improvement.
Drawbacks	• The lower level of project planning needed for Agile makes it difficult to assess the actual time and effort required to complete the task. • The ability to redefine and rework previous tasks can repeatedly shift delivery dates.
Best Practices	• Scrum is specific in its communication methods: daily ~15 minute meetings are used to keep the team in sync and assure that team members remain accountable and engaged.

Time Management

How to take control of your time

When we think about productivity, you shouldn't think about the hours in a day you spend "working" as a sign of productivity. Rather, you should consider the real signifier: the results of your efforts.

I had to learn this the hard way: in my corporate job first, and in my first job later on, I worked longer and longer days, and went home with a feeling of not having accomplished much. I was playing the "busy" game, and feeling frustrated day in and day out. It's when I switched my thinking from cramming more into my day to setting my day up for success that things changed.

In this actionable guide, we're going to look at how to focus on output rather than input. It's about how much work you get done, not how much time you spend working. To do that, we're going to break down how to get back in control of your available time.

Know what you're trying to accomplish

If you're the CEO or founder of a growing business, you always have enough work to fill up your entire day. However, not all work is created equal. If you want to achieve more, then you should think about what, exactly, you're trying to achieve:

- What work is an immediate priority?
- What work should you contribute to now and finish later?

- What can reasonably be held off for now?

Clearly marking your goals allows you to set a map for the future, defining where you should focus your efforts. Otherwise, it's easy to get bogged down by whichever task catches your attention next, which can make it hard to achieve anything of importance.

For this first step, it's important to look at objectives instead of tasks: *"What are you going to finish?"* instead of *"What are you going to do?"* For example: You could decide to spend the morning checking and replying to your emails, or you could use the next 2 hours to finish the pitch deck to send to investors. In one case, you are starting from tasks hoping for them to move you in some direction; in the other, you are picking a clear outcome and focusing only on action that will take you closer to it.

In order to prioritize, look at those activities that would have the biggest impact on your business: like in a domino effect, they would have positive ripple effects on other areas of the business. Then, look for those activities only you can work on, so you can avoid duplicate work and make the most of every team member's contribution.

List the activities you're working on

Now that you have figured out what your goals are, it's time to take a closer look at what you're currently doing with your day. List all the current projects you're progressing in, as well as the regular and recurring activities in your day. In this list, include the following:

1. Your work projects
2. Social engagements

3. Time spent learning
4. Time-wasting activities

If you compare that list to the goals that you're working towards, you're likely to see that your current workday is missing work towards those goals and that you could easily free up time to make room for it. Go back through the activity list and think about what you can cut from it to free up some time.

Activity name	Time in hours
E.g. Emails	3
Briefing the team	4
Lunch breaks	5
Reading	2
Communicating with suppliers	11

Your turn: Download this template so you can follow along with this exercise. It's a great way to realise how little we actually know about how we allocate our time, and to reconcile our actions with our priorities.

When I started my first business, I was working on a physical product, and all that mattered at that particular stage was to get a small prototype to test with potential customers, in order to validate the offer and also set up the manufacturing process.However, when I listed all the activities I was working on, I was shocked: I was spending entire days on promotion, outreach, planning, emails...all things that I couldn't really do much with anyway until I got the prototype ready. That's when I realized that 'hustling' was actually holding me back from my goals, and keeping me 'busy' on the wrong things.

Track how you spend your time

For this step, you want to choose any regular work week where you expect to have as much free time as ever. Choosing a disruptive week, such as one with a conference or launch event, isn't going to work for our purposes. What we want to do here is keep track of how you spend your working day for a week or two. You can easily keep your own logs using spreadsheets or use a handy app like Toggl, Hours, and Timeular makes it a little easier to track your time.

½ hour increments	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
06:30	Get ready	Get ready	Get ready
07:00	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
07:30	Read	Read	Read
08:00	Family	Family	Family
08:30	Commute	Commute	Gym
09:00	Commute	Commute	Gym
09:30	Briefing	Supplier meet	Emails
10:00	Emails	Supplier meet	Emails

Keep your record or diary as honest as possible, and don't worry about writing down when you waste time. We're here for the insight, first and foremost.

Go back and compare

When you have a week or two's worth of your working schedule, go back and compare it to the list of activities you think you get done on a daily basis. This step is likely to be a bit of a shock. Unless you're effectively managing your time already, there's a good chance you don't get as much work done in the day as you think you do. With the insight from your time-tracking efforts, update your daily activity list. Then compare that to the goals or high-priority work that you actually want to spend your time on. Figure out what low-impact activities you can cut from your current working schedule to make room for them.

This step can be a game changer: one of my business coaching clients realized that he wasn't allocating almost any time to his biggest priority: a new product launch. He was very frustrated and almost angry at first, but seeing what was actually going on allowed his to swap unimportant activities for others that would bring actual progress, and launch the product within a few months. That's the power of taking back control of your time.

Set your week for success

Now that you have a better understanding of your working habits, you should be able to reconfigure them to allow for greater productivity. The most effective way to do this is to plan your day in advance by using time blocks. This means breaking your entire working day into clear, measurable blocks of time. Each block of time should have an objective or task tied to it, and you should be ready to devote the entirety of the block to that one task.

This should be done on at least a daily basis, with your time blocks set in place in the morning, right at the start of the day, or the night before. However, you can create a whole [Week Map](), too, and standardize your weeks to be ready for success. Even if you can't define clearly what you'll be doing five days from now, you can set an agenda for the week that makes it easier to decide on the time blocks for each day.

Time blocks allow you to:
1. Prioritize the goals that matter to you the most.
2. Be realistic with your expectations of what you're going to get done during the day.

Any founder or CEO is going to be able to find overflow in their schedule; you are

going to have to skip some tasks to work on some others. What matters most is that you're spending time on what brings forward your business goals and objectives rather than busywork.

Make sure the team is on board

Now that you have a clear goal to focus on, and a better understanding of how you spend your working day, you can improve not only your own productivity but the whole team's. Communicate with the team about the goals that you're going to be focusing on throughout the week. Foster a productive environment by encouraging them to make a habit of setting their own daily schedule as well.

If you're an employee proposing this new way of working, you may want to take small steps:

Step 1: Run an experiment yourself.
Step 2: Share the findings with your team or your manager.
Step 3: Propose to use these principles as a team.

This way, you are guiding everyone through the steps, instead of proposing something radical that might be met with a pushback. If you're an entrepreneur, CEO, or manager, get your team used to this new way of working by starting with 1-2 days a week, and then keep communication going within the team so that everyone can share progress and setbacks, and not feel like they're doing something wrong. This way, you'll empower your team to feel comfortable with a new way of working together.

The more people adopt the habit of dedicating blocks of time to specific tasks, the easier it will be to sync up with them, to avoid interrupting critical work that demands their attention, and to keep each other accountable to positive behavior.

Setting the example is the best way to get them following your lead, first and foremost.

Your turn: Ready to take back control of time?

Increasing your output by mastering your time takes effort and thought, but in the end, the sheer increase in productivity is worth it alone. Think about it: would you invest a few hours of your time once to get back the equivalent of a day a week, every week?

That's the power of taking charge of your time and your actions: learn the habit of auditing your time now, and you will know how to work productively for the rest of your life.

Manage misogyny in the workplace

Align management with anti-sexism policies and practices

Require all managers to complete unconscious bias training that is grounded in specific scenarios they will experience in their role (hiring practices, gendered language, giving feedback).

- Include specific training on understanding microaggressions, how to receive feedback from teams and colleagues that calls them out for biased behaviors, and how they should identify and step in when they notice this happening.

Hold managers accountable to how they work with their teams by requiring [360 feedback](#). Include questions about whether their direct reports or colleagues feel:

- Safe and encouraged to have candid, open dialogue on gender diversity issues.
- If management provides guidance on how to improve gender diversity.
- If gender-biased language and behavior are challenged when they happen.
- If management works to ensure that diverse voices are represented in decision-making.
- Include the same 360 questions specific to manager performance in your

culture engagement surveys.

Establish guardrails

Don't	Do
- Say you want to have gender diversity a priority, but don't include an intersectional group of women as part of your company's leadership. - Put women in the position of taking on the emotional labor of raising the issues they face, only to act on changes when male leaders get involved. - Expect this effort to happen naturally, or come from the bottom up. Misogyny will thrive when there aren't leaders in place to hold their teams accountable. - Think that this is not as important as other business metrics you hold your organization accountable to. - Think you are aware of how your employees understand or experience misogyny without	- Have women in leadership positions across the company. - Believe and act on the pain points raised by your female (and female identifying) employees. - Make all senior leaders and managers champions of diversity by holding them accountable to gender diversity goals in [performance evaluations](#). - Set gender diversity as a company priority, with measurable metrics across your recruiting, hiring, and staffing efforts. Require leaders to treat it is as imperative to business success. - Set a baseline for where the company is by running an anonymous employee engagement survey.

having a safe way to collect their feedback.	

Step	Best Practices
Ensure you have women in positions of leadership.	Not only should they be part of the leadership of your company because of their skills: they can also help identify how, when, and where these issues can be combated.
Make a gender-equal workplace a company priority, on par with other business metrics like revenue growth.	Without the issue being treated as a business level priority, you will not see employees at any level committed to changing behavior.
Document what respectful, anti-sexist behavior looks like for your employees and what the consequences are when those expectations are not met.	Talk about it again, and again, and again. Make this a topic of regular conversation, so that working through these issues becomes normalized.
Make your senior leaders and managers accountable.	Do 360 reviews and monitor gender diversity performance goals to ensure compliance.
Gather data on whether employees feel like the culture around them lives up to the values you talk about.	Regularly run anonymous employee engagement surveys (using this template) to set baseline action plans for what you will do with the results.

Regularly review your company policies to make sure they are in line with the values you talk about.	This includes employee handbooks, Terms of Service, promotional practices, etc.
Get help from outside the company.	If you don't have the expertise internally to develop equitable policies, manage engagement surveys, develop plans to measure growth over time, and hire someone to help (such as a Head of Diversity & Inclusion).
Have your male leaders publicly talk about their support of and belief in gender diversity.	Male allies are an important part of guarding against misogyny and affecting change.

Make anti-sexism a company priority and part of your work culture

Step	Best Practices
Hire experts.	Hire experts that can provide guidance on policies that will work specifically for your business. Getting outside help can provide a mirror to your leadership team in ways that might be missed.
Be accountable to employees.	Use the results of your engagement survey. Report back to employees where you are at on actions needed progress regularly (quarterly): what you've implemented, what's in progress, and what's next.

Talk about it.	"See something, say something:" Make it safe for employees to call out biased language and behavior when they see it by holding managers accountable to providing an environment where this is expected, and offering public and anonymous forums for discussion.

Company policies

What gets measured and rewarded is what drives behavioral change across your company. When employees understand the expectations you have of their conduct, you can hold them accountable to it.

What you should look out for:

● Does your company policy reflect the actions you want to see from all employees, including leaders, managers, and individual contributors? If it's not written down, employees are far less likely to engage especially since there isn't documentation to hold them accountable.
● Are all candidates and employees evaluated and promoted based on the same criteria? Men are often hired and promoted based on their potential while women are often hired and promoted based on their track record.
● Are the working norms across your company accommodating of working parents? Taking care of home life (things like childcare and caring for older parents) affect the perception of women's ability to handle the expectations of higher level roles or strategic projects.
● Does your business strategy reflect the values you want represented by your employees? Don't ask your employees to act one way, then allow your customers to use your product in ways that contradict your internal values. Wordpress.com and Mailchimp both list clear expectations for content not

allowed on their platforms in their acceptable use policies.

Policies	- Have a code of ethics for employees that sets clear guidelines for what collegial and respectful behavior looks like as well as unacceptable and uncivil behavior. Be clear in the consequences for demonstrating unacceptable behavior. - Require acknowledgement and training on your code of ethics, and set periodic reminders to review with old and new employees. - Have a set of values and ethics in place to use for how your customers use your products. Reflect those values in your terms of service and strategic business direction. Use these values when making hard, nuanced decisions about company direction.
Hiring	- Use tools like Gender Decoder to remove gendered expectations and language from your job descriptions. - Use tools like TalVista to give you a "blind" resume reading experience to reduce bias when reviewing resumes. - Standardize interview questions and feedback loops, focusing on the qualifications that have a direct impact on performance - Set diversity requirements for each state of the application pipeline.

Promotions and compensation	- Hold managers and senior leaders accountable to gender diversity (e.g., for their consciousness of gender in their performance evaluations). - Make career ladders, promotional practices, and compensation policies publicly available to all employees. - Make promotional ladders, specifically for leadership roles, focused on outcomes (not potential) to level the playing field for women and female-identifying employees.
Training	- Provide unconscious bias training to all members of your organization. Systemic sexism is hard for many to identify, let alone know how to push against. - Give all employees to tools the need to understand what bias is, why it is important to identify, how it takes shape in the workplace, and how they can adapt their behaviors. LeanIn has a [free version and guide to using it.](#) - DON'T: let this training be high level. Capture specifics around subtle or complex instances of bias. - Coach employees on ways to respond to feedback when they are called out for exhibiting biased behaviors. The response to that feedback needs to be an openness to hearing that they misstepped, not defensiveness, and a desire to educate themselves on how to change their

	behavior.
	- DON'T: put the emotional labor on women to explain how those they are sharing feedback need to make changes.

Support employee's lives at work

Societal expectations of women affect their ability to actively participate in the workplace, causing them to often be held in comparison to men who do not have similar expectations. Things like childcare, household work, taking care of aging family members, and more, still disproportionately falls onto the plate of women. Create role expectations and policies that allow women the flexibility to fit work into their lives.

This could include:
- Telecommuting / remote working policies (that allow flexibility in taking care of home emergencies).
- Emergency backup child-care services.
- Programs to smooth transition to and from extended leave.
- Company subsidized or on-site regular child care.
- Provision of a selection of feminine hygiene products in company bathrooms (for free).
- Insurance coverage for gender reassignment surgery (including everything from therapists, to hormonal treatments, to surgery).
- Medical insurance for any and all family planning options (including coverage for egg freezing, IVF treatments, pregnancy prevention procedures, and all other forms of birth control).
- Offer family leave policies that extend beyond legal requirements (including time off for those who become parents by traditional and non-traditional

means–adoption, fostering, and surrogacy).