

Presenteeism and Work

In Conversation : A Talking Toolkit



The Champions of Change Architecture Group acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the many Countries on which we live and work and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We recognise that these lands were never ceded. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures and to Elders past and present.

We gladly accept the invitation extended in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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We recognise women in all their diversity

We recognise that efforts to advance gender equality have not lifted all women equally. By highlighting the specific demographics of people who experience exclusion, we increase the issue's visibility and boost understanding of how exclusion is experienced within organisations and in society more generally.

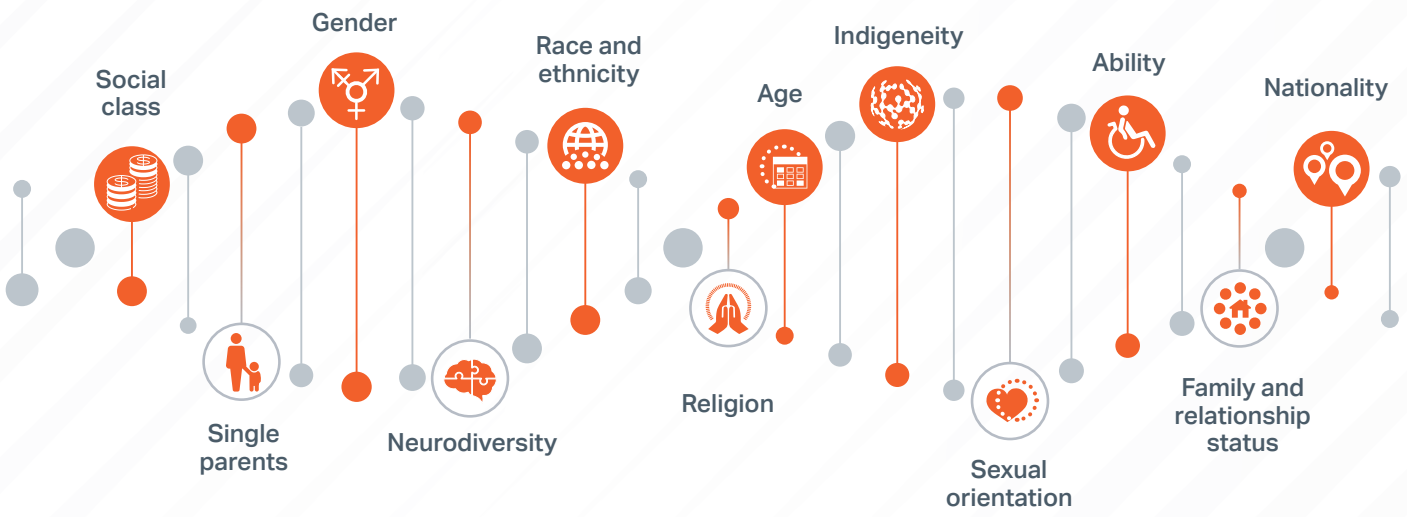
Throughout this document, the terms **women, women in all their diversity, women experiencing intersecting inequalities and diverse people** are used to improve readability. Women includes both cis and trans women.

When referring to **women experiencing intersecting inequalities**, means the structural inequalities and multiple, intersecting and compounding barriers to inclusion and progression faced by:

- **women from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds**
- **single parents**
- **First Nations women**
- **women with disability**
- **ethnically and/or racially marginalised women**
- **neurodivergent women**
- **LGBTIQ+ women.**

When referring to **diverse people**, this means the wealth and variety of people who broadly reflect the diversity of our population.

Inclusive gender equality recognises that diversity, equity and inclusion strategies must consider and engage all genders in global efforts to achieve gender equality, with a particular focus on elevating and advancing currently under-represented and marginalised groups. At its core, the intent is to create respectful, safe and inclusive cultures of belonging for all.



A. Introduction: For Employers and Facilitators

A.1 What is presenteeism?

Presenteeism is usually defined as when employees show up to work despite being sick, injured or otherwise and unable to perform at their best.¹

However, for this toolkit, we need a more specific definition. Here, presenteeism means employees coming to work but not being fully engaged or productive because of the pressure to always be available and visible, rather than focusing on achieving good results.

Purpose of the toolkit.

This toolkit aims to help design practices improve gender equality at work by addressing presenteeism. It does this by increasing the understanding of presenteeism and its impacts on your design practice. It has been designed to enable leaders to have structured conversations with employees: what does presenteeism look like, what does it mean for them, and how could we start to address some of the negative impacts?² It is intended as a conversation starter, to be adapted or targeted to work for you. It should not be used in isolation, and you should still manage any identified risks according to your firm's relevant protocols, policies, and practices.

¹ Refer to the 'Additional Resources' section of this toolkit for further information and materials relevant to the definition of presenteeism eg. Cooper, Cary L. and Lu, Luo, **The Cambridge Companion to Presenteeism at Work**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016; Hemp, Paul, 'Presenteeism: At Work – But Out of It, Harvard Business Review Magazine, October 2004; Robertson, Professor Ivan, 'What is Presenteeism?'; Brouard, Camille, 'Remote workers and e-presenteeism: how to manage it', blog, 10 August 2020, myhrtoolkit, UK; Bright HR, 'The Issue of Presenteeism', Bright HR, 2 February 2022; Honeybee, 'What is Presenteeism in the Workplace (And How is it Affecting Your Business)?', Honeybee, 13 August 2019

² "Talking Toolkit: Preventing work-related stress," The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - GOV.UK. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-approach-talking-toolkit.pdf>. This toolkit was very useful in terms of developing and adapting the format, methodology and with some of the content used in this toolkit. HSE, 'Talking Toolkit: Preventing Work-Related Stress', Health and Safety Executive, November 2021, <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/talking-toolkit.htm>, HSE, UK, November 2021.

Note: This document dealing with presenteeism contains public sector information published by the Health and Safety Executive and licensed under the Open Government License v3.0. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

A.2 What drives presenteeism?

It is important to understand what can trigger or exacerbate the impact of presenteeism. Work practices and organisational cultures play their part. Some industry sectors, workplaces and leaders have not yet embraced flexible working arrangements, whether in terms of working hours or hybrid working models, despite this being critical in attracting or retaining talent. The 'always available' or long hours mindset is the result (or perception) of an organisational culture expecting it, the ready access to remote technology³, personality preferences⁴, or simply the demands of a busy work schedule. Additionally, global businesses may be juggling work and clients across different time zones. Skills shortages and COVID have challenged ways of working and put pressure on individuals to be available, whether physically or remotely, well outside a typical working day.⁵

Working remotely has created its own challenges to people's ability to connect, engage and focus:

"While we might have shed many of the 50–60 interruptions a day that plague the physical office, we're now facing a whole new set of interruptions from our fellow house dwellers. When we're distracted, it can take us about 23 minutes to get back in 'the zone'. Even the slightest distraction, such as the 1/10th of a second it takes to glance at a notification on your smartphone, can add up to a 40% productivity loss if you do lots of this throughout your day..."⁶

³ Anderson, Brad and Patton, Seth, 'In a Hybrid World, Your Tech Defines Employee Experience', Harvard Business Review, 18 February 2022

⁴ Knight, Rebecca 'How to Manage Your Perfectionism', Harvard Business Review, 29 April 2019

⁵ Kinman, Gail and Grant, Christine, 'Presenteeism during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Risk Factors and Solutions for Employers', The Society for Occupational Medicine (SOM), May 2021

⁶ Steve Glaveski, The Remote Work Playbook 2021, <https://www.steveglaveski.com/remote-working-playbook>

Reen has just been promoted into a role as project leader off site. Lee, his leader recognised the importance of providing Reen with clarity around his role and responsibilities. In a recent one-on-one, Reen thanked Lee saying,

“Having clear direction and role clarity has made a real difference. Despite working remotely, I know what I need to deliver and can perform at my best.”

A.3 What are the impacts?

Presenteeism can be harmful to both individuals and practices because it reinforces the idea that being physically present is more important than actual performance.

The ‘always available’ mindset can have a significant impact on both people and workplaces. The blurring of boundaries between work and home life can show up in the after-hours checking of emails, in multi-tasking while working remotely, and (ironically) in people not being reliably available to their teams.

For individuals, the pressure to be visible and visibly performing can diminish a sense of control over their work environment and lead to a lowered sense of wellbeing, loss of work enjoyment, burnout, stress, and mental wellbeing.

For companies, the consequences are significant: low employee engagement translates to increased turnover, absenteeism, failure to keep or attract key talent, and to reduced productivity and efficiency. Ultimately, the quality of work suffers, people are less likely to ‘own’ it, and a vicious circle of poor engagement and poor design outcomes sets in.

Career advancement, networking, mentoring, and training have typically been offered to people who are more visible and seen to be available.

“This makes presenteeism a gender issue in our industry where more women are part-time. Research also indicates that the impact of presenteeism, particularly for women, may be greater.”⁷

⁷ Symmetra, ‘The Conundrum of Workplace Flexibility: Why do leaders advocate flexible work and then scorn those who use it?’, Symmetra White Paper, 5 February 2014. Diversity Council Australia, ‘Seven myths about flexible working and how to debunk them’, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia; Featherstone, Tony ‘Presenteeism’ Is No Gift for Employees’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 2019, 9,29 am; HR Review, ‘A Culture of Presenteeism Is Damaging Productivity in UK Offices’, posted by Editor, (hrreview.co.uk), HR Strategy News, Feb 28, 2014; Kinman, Gail and Grant, Christine, ‘Presenteeism during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Risk Factors and Solutions for Employers’, The Society for Occupational Medicine (SOM), May 2021; Martin, Gary, ‘How is presenteeism affecting your workplace?’, HRM, the news site of the Australian HR Institute, 23 January 2018

B. Using your Talking Toolkit

Introduction

This toolkit is designed to help start conversations about presenteeism at work. It can support people leaders, line managers, human resource practitioners, and employees to

- Talk about presenteeism.
- Suggest practical solutions and actions that could be taken.

The approach is consistent with the Champions of Change 'listening and learning' method.⁸

B.1 Contact details if an employee needs help

If you think that an employee is having problems, encourage them to talk to someone, whether it is their leader or manager, their People & Culture representative, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or a General Practitioner.

Information on where to go for help should be provided at the beginning of the discussions and at the conclusion of the session. Remember that, although employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work, diagnosing and treating stress is not their responsibility.⁹

B.2 What is out of scope

This toolkit and the discussions associated with the toolkit do not seek to directly address any specific individual/employee issues relating to sickness, absenteeism, stress, depression, or sickness absence. In such circumstances, such matters should be addressed as per your firm's policies and practices.

⁸ Champions of Change Coalition, 'Why is listening and learning personally led by the Champions?', Association of Consulting Architects, 2023; Champions of Change Coalition [Monica Edwards], 'Listening and Learning – How it works', Association of Consulting Architects, 4 April 2022.

⁹ ISO 45003: 2021, 'Occupational Health and Safety Management – Psychological Health and Safety at Work – Guidelines for Managing Psychosocial Risks'; <https://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html>. See also, Safe work Australia, 'Model WHS Regulations', <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-whs-regulations>, 14 April 2022.

C. Introducing the Topic of Presenteeism

Introduction

This toolkit enables practices and people to be aware of (and assess) the risk of presenteeism in the workplace and put steps in place to address this risk. Using a structured 'listening and learning' approach, the discussions should encourage collaboration, and the sharing of ideas and solutions which will help both the business and employees.

There is no set format for these conversations, or how the facilitator or leader should conduct them. The layout of this toolkit is a guide to support a flexible approach. An employer could ask for a session to be held once a week or once a month. The conversations could focus on just one topic or cover all nine. The conversations can fit into an existing one-on-one, they could be built into the next training day, or a new meeting could be set up solely to talk about presenteeism and how to address it, should it be an issue.

Whether one-on-one or in small groups, the key to a successful workshop will be to 'listen and learn'. Importantly, employers should make sure that there is time available for managers and employees having these conversations. The toolkit also relies on both managers and employees having an open and honest conversation. Facilitators should listen to what is being said rather than trying to offer excuses or explanations. Action points and solutions should be agreed together.

The important thing is to start talking and to start planning.

"Jo is always seen working late in the studio but the results aren't there. Robin on the other hand is not always visible but works efficiently and gets great results. In my organisation, focusing on great outcomes and timely delivery regardless of location is the basis for recognition and reward. That's why Robin was promoted - she delivered."

WHY

Why are we discussing the topic of presenteeism?

Presenteeism has a significant impact on individuals, teams and companies. Whether part of a large global firm or a small architectural business, you should be aware of the risk of presenteeism, understand and assess the issues it creates, and be able to put steps in place to address them. The discussions you have with your staff are critical to understanding and to action.

Setting the scene for the discussion

The facilitator should take the opportunity to introduce the session/discussion using the following notes as a guide, to help focus the discussion on better understanding presenteeism, how it manifests itself, and to provide a collaborative environment in which participants may provide suggestions and possible solutions. Set out below are some notes that may assist facilitators in 'setting the scene'.

WHAT

What are we doing? What is the scope? What are the priorities?

Presenteeism is not a new phenomenon. There is an increasing amount of research and complex debate on the topic. For this reason, it is important to spend some time with participants looking at the definition of 'presenteeism at work' and perhaps exploring how they would define it. This will help everyone understand the complexity of the topic but at the same time, appreciate both the commonalities and diverse perspectives of different people. ¹¹

Who to contact if someone needs help?

The earlier a problem is tackled the more impact it will have. If you think that an employee is having problems, encourage them to talk to someone, whether a team leader, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), General Practitioner (GP) or their People & Culture representative. These contact details should be provided when introducing the discussions and at the end of the session.

Remember that, although employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work, diagnosing and treating stress is not their responsibility.

HOW

How are we doing it? Who is involved?

Facilitators can be anyone in a leadership, management, or HR role. They should be selected based on their experience and skills, ideally with previous experience in facilitating groups to understand the issues being addressed and to deliver outcomes. It may be appropriate to bring external consultants/ experts into the process to support or co-facilitate – that will be a decision for your own practice depending on skills and availability of in-house leaders.

There are no fixed rules about who contributes to the discussion and how you put groups together. Participants may be invited to share their perspectives around (for example) gender, culture, age; around level of experience and responsibility; around client sectors or design disciplines.

WHEN

When are these discussions happening? What is the roadmap? What is the schedule?

Discussions should be planned and scheduled ahead of time, so that those participating have an opportunity to understand why they are being held, what actions and outcomes are likely to transpire and in what timeframes. As part of the invitation to participate, a brief overview of this information is recommended.

Sessions should be voluntary. We suggest small groups need 60-90 minutes to encourage participation, ensure the main topics are covered, and establish an action plan.

Confidentiality

Honest feedback is valuable. To this end, it is important to communicate to participants that you will guard their confidentiality and will not disclose the names of those individuals who have given specific feedback unless they give permission for you to do so.

A one-on-one discussion may be useful in situations where individuals do not feel comfortable talking in a larger group or perhaps are particularly impacted or sensitive to the topic. These too must be confidential.

“As a leader, I've always thought that there is no substitute for face-time and I've had the expectation that all our people need to be in the office full-time regardless of the work. But recently I've come to realise it's about working in the right place, in the right way and this is what really supports creativity, productivity and teamwork”.

WHO

Who does this impact and benefit? Which cohorts are impacted and how?

For some, the impact of these sessions and expected outcomes may be more than for others. For example, research has shown that presenteeism is more likely to be an issue for women, amongst teams with more traditional leadership styles, in certain industry sectors or in a range of organisations/teams where engagement is low and employee turnover is high. For this reason, you should try to hold discussions with cohorts likely to be impacted to a greater extent, along with those who are not.

It is important to explore all viewpoints to ensure a representative sample. It is also important to be upfront with participants about how the information will be used and what they can expect to see in relation to next steps, actions, or outcomes. Once discussions are completed, the findings analysed and communicated, and solutions and actions have been agreed upon, it is likely that a communication and change management plan will need to be developed for people leaders and employees. A change management program may include senior executive communications to show support for the initiatives, people leader and employee briefing sessions, training and awareness materials, FAQs, and scenarios/examples.

You may also need Champions of Change, advocates, and key influencers (in addition to people leaders) to help embed the changes at a local level. This is particularly important if your firm is large and across different locations, and/or if the outcomes of the discussions around presenteeism are likely to have a high impact or will have significant cultural change. In these instances, all senior leaders, line/people managers and employees will need to understand any changes or initiatives being introduced to reduce the impact of presenteeism where it is an issue.

Communication may also need to be targeted, particularly in instances where the impact is felt most. For example, you may wish to hold 'lunch and learn' sessions with women across your teams and/or firm. Champions of Change and key influencers, regular monitoring of actions and further discussion may also prove useful in these instances. Measurement and metrics may also support such change and enable the business to monitor progress. Regular opportunities to continue the discussions will also assist in refining and embedding approaches into the daily activity and work practices.

“Parker fully utilises our Working Flexibly Policy and has achieved great results. As his manager, I regularly check in to support Parker to not work excessive hours and encourage him to take regular breaks. Parker says he really appreciates my support and feeling connected.”

Opportunities

What happens next? What does the future state look like?

These discussions should result in:

Simple, transparent, practical and relevant practices which are openly discussed and communicated

- Ensuring easy to use, efficient practices and processes to mitigate the risks associated with presenteeism are available to leaders and employees.
- Responding to employee engagement feedback including (but not limited to) organisation culture, leadership wellbeing, work practices and people processes.

Relevant approaches and 'best in class' work practices and/or people management processes

- Reset for relevant approaches to work practices and people processes affected negatively by presenteeism e.g., from scheduling of meetings and hybrid working through to leadership styles, career development, promotion, and progression, learning and development¹²
- Enable operational efficiency e.g., measurement and monitoring of key metrics including personal leave, stress, EAP usage, employee turnover, absenteeism, business efficiencies and effectiveness, engagement surveys, excessive overtime, burnout and so on.¹³
- Employees' day to day team leader will play a vital role in helping to implement actions to address presenteeism. Access to training, tools, resources, guides, and metrics can help support these leaders in doing so, as can regular feedback and coaching on their progress.

After the relevant conversations are completed, you should have built up a picture

of the potential causes of presenteeism within those groups participating.

The Talking Toolkit can form part of a firm's response but should not be used in isolation as the employer's only measure, approach, or program of work to address presenteeism. It is just one step on the journey towards understanding and bringing in measures needed to address the risks associated with some forms of presenteeism and enable businesses and employees to benefit from doing so.

There are suggestions throughout this toolkit on tackling the issues associated with presenteeism. You may decide to implement some of these – a lot of these will be in the solutions – as discussed previously. You could also refer to other Champions of Change material on related topics, including:

- Flexible work arrangements.
- Inclusive cultures and leadership.
- The key elements of employee engagement.
- Measurements and metrics including personal leave, absenteeism, employee turnover, impact of working arrangements on promotion, progression and career development.

Approach

The approach taken should:

- Help identify and manage those factors associated with presenteeism.
- Provide advice on how to build the business case for actions.
- Enable the management team and all employees across your firm to work together to tackle the problems.
- Involve your employees in gathering information on problems by organising focus groups, surveys and working groups to identify solutions which are relevant to the business or team.

“Since Covid, most organisations say they have flexible work arrangements, but the reality is different. I joined this organisation because its culture is truly inclusive. It works for me because of the support I have from leaders and colleagues to work remotely.”

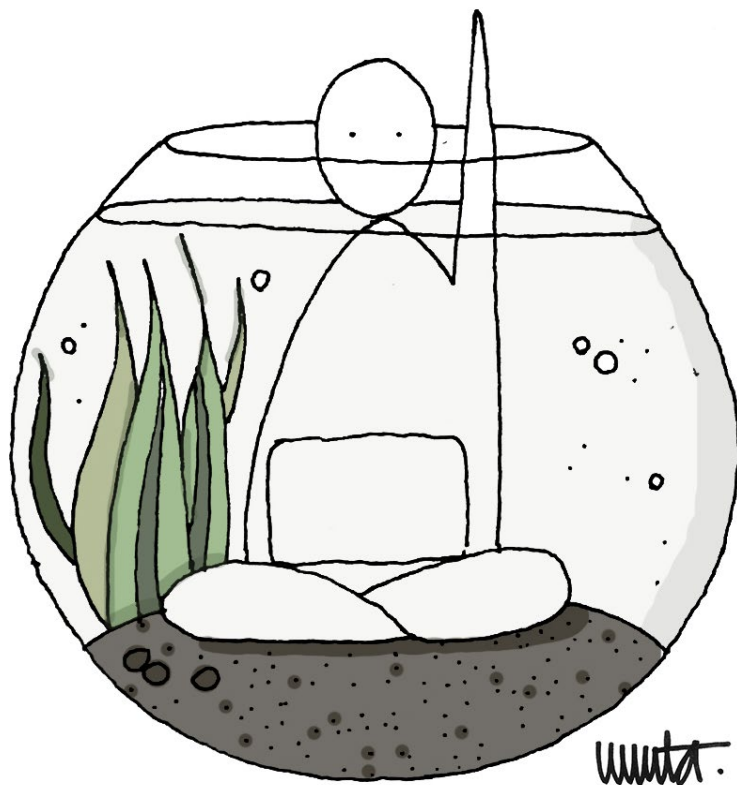
¹¹ Some of the topics to cover could include: What is presenteeism; what is its cause and effect; how should it be measured; to what extent does presenteeism directly result in absenteeism and increased costs including medical benefits; does presenteeism lead to sickness and depression; can the impact of presenteeism be measured in terms of reduced productivity and efficiency; is presenteeism necessarily a 'bad' thing; who does it impact most; is it more prevalent in certain industries; to what extent do different leadership styles impact on its prevalence in the workplace; and what impact does it have on career advancement and development? The 'Additional Resources' section of this toolkit provides a diverse range of materials and resources in relation to these topics and questions.

¹² For more information and ideas refer to the 'Additional Resources' section of this toolkit, including Robertson Cooper, no publication date, accessed 21 March 2023. Arnold, Steve, '5 Ways to Promote Productivity over Presenteeism', AIHR, 9 Jan 2020; Erdmann-Sullivan, Heidi, 'Presenteeism is Scary - Here Are 7 Things You Can Do About It', Care.com for Business, 24 October 2017 10:30 AM; Gratton, Lynda, 'How to Do Hybrid Right', Harvard Business Review Magazine, May-June 2021; Haas, Martine, '5 Challenges of Hybrid Work — and How to Overcome Them', Harvard Business Review, 15 February 2022; Review, 17 May 2021; Be The Business, 'How to Break the Culture of Presenteeism In A Busy Workplace', Be The Business, UK, circa 2018-19; Lancefield, David, 'Stop Wasting People's Time with Meetings', Harvard Business Review, 14 March 2022; Microsoft, 'Learn about Hybrid Meetings in Teams', Microsoft Support, accessed 22 March 2023; Gibson, Travis, Commercial Manager, Randstad, 'Getting More Work Done: How Absenteeism and Presenteeism Affect Productivity', Randstad, blog, 20 April 2021; Lohaus, D and Habermann, W., 'Understanding the Decision-Making Process Between Presenteeism and Absenteeism', Frontiers in Psychology, 20 July 2021; Smith, David J., 'Absenteeism and "Presenteeism" in Industry', Archives of Environmental Health: An International Journal, Vol 21, Nov 1970, Published online 1 May 2013, pp. 670-677; Michelsenorcid, Clive, 'Measuring Employee Risk for Burnout', Psychology, Vol 12, No. 14, April 2021, Center for Research and Development, Sciens College, Malmö, Sweden. Abstract provided in Scientific Research; Korn Ferry, '5 Ways to Create Better Work Boundaries', This Week in Leadership, 28 Feb – 6 March 2022.

¹³ Kessler, Ron et al, 'HPQ Short Form Questions and Scoring', Harvard Medical School, Department of Health Care Policy, [HPQ: World Health Organization, 'Health and Work Performance Questionnaire'], 8 March 2003; Lohaus, D and Habermann, W., 'Understanding the Decision-Making Process Between Presenteeism and Absenteeism', Frontiers in Psychology, 20 July 2021; Michelsenorcid, Clive, 'Measuring Employee Risk for Burnout', Psychology, Vol 12, No. 14, April 2021, Center for Research and Development, Sciens College, Malmö, Sweden. Abstract provided in Scientific Research.

Presenteeism and Work

Nine Conversations



Conversation 1: Work Demands and Work Life Balance

Introduction

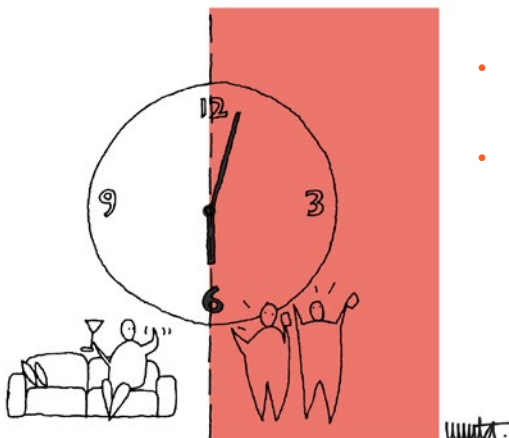
This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and work demands. The section on 'Ideas, Actions, Support, Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering work demands.

Why this conversation?

Presenteeism or an 'always available' culture may disrupt a healthy work-life balance for all employees and disproportionately affects women.

Discuss some or all the following questions

- In what ways is work life balance encouraged in the organisation/team?
- What does your manager/leader do to help ensure you have a balanced workload?
- To what extent do you think that flexible work practices help balance work and life? Or do you find it hard to separate work from home when working from home?
- To what extent do you feel that the amount of added time you dedicate to work impacts on other aspects of your life?
- Do you think that your current project deadlines are achievable within a working week?
- How do you know if you have realistic deadlines?
- What do you do when you have two conflicting priorities and can only deliver one on time?
- If you **receive** emails requests, texts, phone calls out of hours or on weekends, how do you manage these?
- Do you **send** emails requests, texts, phone calls out of hours or on weekends? What is your expectation in terms of actioning?
- Does the business have an overtime policy and time-in-lieu policy? Is it widely communicated and understood?



Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to work demands?

Thought starters...

- Employees are not expected to work excessive hours outside of contractual hours to be seen as 'present' and 'hardworking'. Employers have flexibility policies and leaders support flexible work practices.
- The firm's policies and practices that address work life balance are proactively communicated and promoted.
- People are able to deal with the demands of their role (including peaks and troughs, skills and abilities).
- A supportive environment with available and approachable managers/ leaders.
- Demands are achievable in relation to the contracted hours worked.
- Concerns about work environment are addressed.
- Employees are encouraged and supported to have social and recreational activities outside of the office.
- Employees should take regular breaks, especially when the work is complex, detailed or emotionally demanding.
- Management of deadlines that does not foster an environment of staff working overtime.
- Use of email signatures for those working outside the regular hours.
- Regular meetings are held, both with individuals and as a team, to discuss anticipated workloads (and to address any potential peaks).
- Training is prioritised to help employees do their work more efficiently and effectively.
- Training or coaching is available to help employees deal with, defuse, or navigate demanding situations or conflicts.
- Actions are taken to reduce unwanted distractions and disturbances.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience?

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures

Conversation 2: Trust, Autonomy and Support

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism, trust, autonomy, and support. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support, Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering trust, autonomy, and support.

Why this conversation?

'... Always available culture is often a result of command-and-control style management. Research from Google shows that teams that index the highest on trust and psychological safety are 40% more productive.'

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Discuss some or all the following questions

- What level of autonomy do you have to make decisions on how you get your job done?
- How 'empowered' are you and others when it comes to making your own decisions and acting on these decisions?
- Does leadership provide you with the opportunity to make decisions on projects? Does leadership 'back' you in your decisions?
- What level of involvement do you have on how decisions are made about your job? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how you are consulted and whether you have opportunities to give input.
- Can you give examples of how employees are encouraged to share their thoughts and views with their managers and senior leaders in our organisation?
- To what extent do you feel enabled to offer ideas to improve organisational outcomes?
- What is the nature and frequency of performance feedback available to you? For example, do you have regular one-on-one sessions, formal performance reviews, planning and project meetings, discussions to consider methods of working?
- To what extent do you believe people are encouraged to pursue projects or ideas that may add value?
- To what extent can you depend on your leader to manage a critical issue on your behalf? Is it clear when to elevate or escalate issues?
- What are some of things people in your team do to support each other to get the job done?

¹⁴ Shivangi Gautam, "3 new rules for leading a hybrid team in 2023", <https://www.infeedo.ai/company-culture/rules-for-leading-a-hybrid-team>

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements

- When needed, what discretionary effort do you think people are willing to put in to get a job done?
- In what ways are you encouraged to share your thoughts and views with your team, manager, and senior leadership?

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to trust, autonomy and support at work?

Employees are:

- Consulted about the way their work is organised and undertaken, e.g., Through regular meetings, one-on-ones, performance reviews, coaching, feedback.
- Clearly briefed on the project, their role/responsibilities, the deliverables, and timing. They are encouraged to use their expertise and initiative to do their work.
- Consulted over things affecting their work.
- Encouraged to develop new skills and undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
- Supported with the demands of their role (including peaks and troughs).
- Provided with achievable demands in relation to the hours they work.
- Have the skills and ability to manage the demands of their role.
- Feel safe to raise concerns and confident that those concerns will be addressed by leadership.
- Feel supported by their leaders, managers, and colleagues.

Communication

Communication is critical when it comes to building trust. Here are some suggestions to promote better communication.

- Hold regular project meetings to help encourage employees to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken.
- Regularly hold one-on-ones with team members to provide feedback (positive and constructive), role clarity, development, and performance. Also don't forget to 'check in' on how the individual is going generally.
- Hold regular discussion forums during the planning stage of new work to talk about the anticipated methods of working.
- Allocate responsibility to teams rather than individuals to take projects forward.
- Provide a program and outlook for deliverables that allows employees control over the timing of their work.

Decision Making

Having both autonomy and support are key to empowering employees in making quality and timely decisions. To assist in this process, it is important to, for example:

- Clarify and agree the process for decision-making.
- Allow and encourage people to participate in decision making, especially when it affects them.
- Be accountable. Avoid blaming others when things go wrong, but rather, learn from the mistake.

Skills and Training

Providing support to use one's abilities and skills will not only build trust but also give employees a sense of autonomy. For this reason, it is important to:

- Understand the skills people have and encourage them to use these skills to build confidence.
- Discuss how people would like to use their skills.
- Consider personal development/training plans to develop skills.

Other improvements or support?

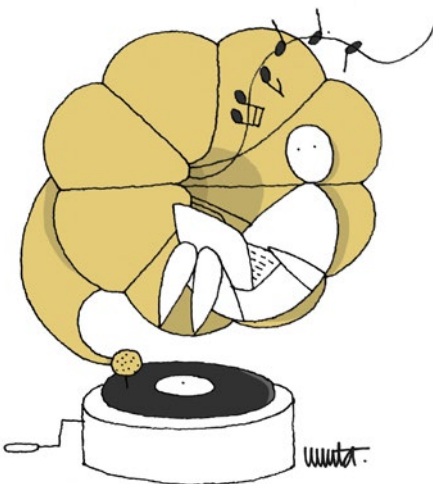
What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures



Conversation 3: Feeling Connected

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and feeling connected. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support, Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism and considering how to feel connected.

Why this conversation?

With flexible work practices becoming the new normal, feeling connected is crucial to avoid negative impacts of presenteeism.

Discuss some or all the following questions:

- What strategies are in place for helping people feel connected in flexible and hybrid working environments?
- What things can people do to have presence or be 'seen' in virtual working environments?
- How important are informal catchups or check-ins initiated by leaders or managers?
- How important are relationships when it comes to presenteeism?

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to feeling connected at work?

Thought starters...

In 2016-17, on average, 24 working days were lost for every case of stress, anxiety or depression caused or made worse by work. ¹⁶

- Flexibility policies are implemented as a consistent approach to support employees feeling connected.
- The firm has systems in place to enable and encourage managers to support their employees and for employees to support one another.
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.
- They do not feel the need to be 'always available' to have a sense of job security or belonging.
- Communication is open and honest.
- The firm is regarded as a great place to work.
- Mentorship and sponsorship are provided and creates an environment which is encouraging, respectful and builds meaningful connections based on trust.
- Ensure the same level of support and communication is available for employees who work remotely, in remote locations or who have a flexible working arrangement.

-
- Encourage effective communication and provide training to help, such as listening skills, confidence building and assertiveness.
 - Encourage discussion around the organisational values and the behaviours that drive them.
 - Find ways to celebrate success that are inclusive and consider different employee needs.
 - Hold regular check-ins with employees to maintain an open dialogue for feedback within their current working situation, and conversations about the future that consider short and long term.
 - For new and early career employees ensure they have access to executives and senior leaders to foster relationships and understanding. Reverse mentorships may also be useful to consider.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support that could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures



“

"89% of HR leaders agree that ongoing peer feedback and check-ins are key for successful outcomes. Employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work".¹⁵

”

Conversation 4: Organisation Culture, Leadership & Work Ethic

Introduction

For Leaders

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with leaders, employees, small groups of leaders and/or teams about presenteeism, organisation culture, leadership and work ethic. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering organisation culture, leadership and work ethic.

Why this conversation?

"If flexible working patterns are to become the norm, the 9 to 5 contract is outdated. 81% of leaders agreed in a global survey in 2021 that outcomes rather than time spent working should be the measure of performance. But there was a disconnect: only 36% of non-managers felt their managers were assessing their performance based on results rather than the number of hours worked."¹⁷

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

Discuss some or all the following questions:

- How can different leadership styles support or hinder an expectation of presenteeism?
- Do leaders proactively manage client/project expectations to reduce overtime and encourage your staff to work reasonable hours (broadly aligned to their contracted hours of work)?
- Are people rewarded and recognised as being 'dedicated' by the number of hours or overtime they do vs being effective and efficient when meeting or exceeding project objectives?
- Is there a culture of trust for tasks to be completed when working remotely?
- As a leader, do you feel comfortable arriving and leaving 'on time'?

Other improvements or support?

- What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures

¹⁷ The Adecco Group, 'Resetting Normal: Defining the New Era of Work 2021', The Adecco Group, Zurich, 2021. <https://www.adecco.com.au/resetting-normal>.

Conversation 5: Role Clarity

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and the importance of role clarity. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering role clarity.

Why this conversation?

Insecurity perpetuates presenteeism. If people have clarity about their role, they are empowered, have autonomy, and feel valued.

Discuss some or all the following questions:

- To what extent do you understand your role and responsibilities?
- How well do you understand the role and responsibilities of team members?
- To what extent would you agree that you are clear on your performance objectives and development goals?
- What does success look like for you, your area, team, department, and the organisation?
- How is work structured and delivered in your department/team and in the wider organisation? Do you know who is doing what, why and how your role fits in?
- Suggest one thing about role clarity that would enable a more effective and efficient approach to work and reduce the negative effects of presenteeism?

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to role clarity?

Thought starters...

- Employees understand their role and responsibilities.
- Role requirements from the organisation are clear and documented.
- People understand how their role contributes to the organisational goals.
- Employees can raise concerns they may have in relation to their role and responsibilities.
- Roles in a project (which may differ to organisational role) are clear, communicated to the employee, team, and client.

Other suggestions?

Improvements or support that could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Thought starters...

New Starters

- Provide inductions to new employees including policies and procedures. Include details of where to get support or who to speak to about their role and work.

Communication

- Provide clear work objectives.
- Define work structures clearly so that all team members know who is doing what and why?
- Hold regular one on one and team meetings to ensure people are clear about roles and responsibilities.
- Agree specific standards of performance for individual tasks and review regularly.
- Display organisational targets and objectives.
- Discuss and agree on performance objectives and development goals.

Role

- Introduce personal work plans which are aligned to the project plans, objectives of the team/organisation.
- Introduce or revise job descriptions to ensure the core functions and priorities are clear.
- Review job descriptions regularly, especially following change.
- Ensure relevant learning, development and training programs are in place and feedback on development is provided regularly.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience?

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures

Conversation 6: Hybrid Working

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and hybrid working. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering hybrid working.

Why this conversation?

Creating a sense of belonging regardless of work setting is key to wellbeing and a positive organisation culture.

Discuss some or all the following questions:

Managing Expectations

- Is there a flexibility policy that sets out procedures for hybrid working? Are there minimum time requirements expected to be physically in the studio?
- How do you set yourself up to be productive if you choose to work outside the studio?
- How do you stay in touch with your team leader and team wherever you are?

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

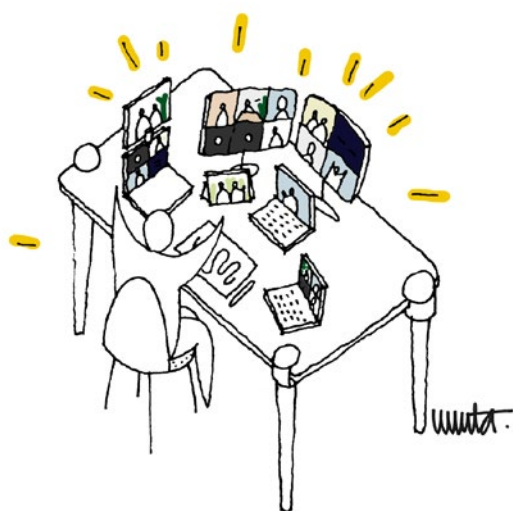
What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to hybrid working?

Thought starters...

Positive Collaboration

- Be flexible to adjust or increase time in the studio if the need arises and appropriate notice is given.
- Coordinate your days in the studio with your team, project team and client to enable collaboration.
- Attend and prioritise scheduled practice-wide events.
- Take responsibility for delivering work and outcomes as agreed with your project leader regardless of where you are undertaking this work.
- Set up an optimum workspace at home and report any potential hazards or workplace health and safety incidents.

Policies and practices relevant to flexible working arrangements may differ across organisations, departments, teams, and projects. There may be specific roles in a practice that require people to be in the studio full-time, including certain operational, administrative and technology roles. Project teams may also be required to be in the studio during certain phases of the project. Please check with your Project Leader or People & Culture representative to confirm if you are eligible to work under a hybrid working or formal flex model.



New Starters

When making your decisions to work hybrid, please consider your team and project/role requirements and always communicate to your team where you will be working from beforehand. Mutually beneficial flexible work arrangements are underpinned by effective communication.

Collaborating in Hybrid Teams

- Encourage cameras on when in virtual meetings to provide a better connection with your colleagues. If someone in your team have their camera off, please message them directly to understand why. There may be other factors which impacts an individual making them choose to have their camera off.
- Recognise that certain phases of projects may require face to face collaboration (i.e., competitions, early concept stages etc.).
- Remember to be inclusive of those working remotely when collaborating in the studio.
- Consider face time with clients and key meetings and presentations where physical attendance is required.

Communication

- Foster a culture of effective and respectful communication.
- Create a psychological safe workplace to maintain regular dialogue and constructive feedback.

Building Authentic Relationships

- Showing kindness and genuine interest in the people you work with.
- Encourage face time with social initiatives outside of project demands.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience?

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures

Conversation 7: Be Organised

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and being organised. The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism and being organised.

Why this conversation?

Feeling overwhelmed can lead to lack of productivity and effectiveness. Being organised can reduce distractions and help people to approach their working day in a calm and focussed manner.

Discuss some or all the following questions:

Thought starters...

Approach

- How do you use your scheduling system (Outlook, Teams etc) to organise and manage your time at work?
- Are there other ways in which you organise and manage your time?
- Do you add reminders or structure your calendar for personal items (i.e., drop off kids, go to gym, have lunch, socialise)?
- Do you share or make visible your calendar including your personal items?
- How often do you check your email? Do you ever get distracted from the task when checking emails?
- Do you have notifications on (visual, vibrations, audio) for texts, emails etc.?
- How often are you on a virtual meeting but working on your tasks at the same time? How much do you absorb/contribute to the meeting and how effective are you at focusing on your task while listening to the meeting?

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to being organised?

Thought starters...

- Agree on times when everyone works in the office/studio.
- Individuals coordinate scheduling systems (Outlook, Teams etc) to organise and manage effective time at work.
- Individuals feel comfortable sharing calendar events for work and personal items with team and leader support.
- Emails and other distractions are managed to maximise focus and effectiveness.

-
- Individuals and teams feel that their work and contributions are productive and valued.

Improvements or support that could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Employee

- Maintain an Outlook calendar to communicate whereabouts and focus time etc. (i.e. Outlook, Teams etc.) to organise and manage your work time. For example, you may use the 'Do not disturb' functions for focus time or use task lists to focus your day/week.
- Look for systems or software to monitor the number of times we check our email to avoid distractions and increases focus time.
- Communicate with your leader your understanding of deliverables and time frames.
- Speak up and liaise with your leader if you are struggling to organise and prioritise tasks.

Project Leader

- Hold regular one-on-one meetings to ensure people are clear about what is planned for the coming weeks/months.
- Forward plan to minimise the potential effects of flex/hybrid working within the project team.
- Endeavour to hold meetings which suit flexible working arrangements to ensure effects on presenteeism are minimised.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience?

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures

Conversation 8: Meetings

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and meetings. This includes the following.

- In-person meetings: All meeting participants are in the same location at the same time.
- All-remote meetings: All meeting participants are remote using an online tool.
- Hybrid meetings: Some meeting participants are in the same place while others are not.

The section on 'Ideas. Actions. Support, Improvements.' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering meetings.

Why this conversation?

Setting the meeting purpose, choosing the setting and the right participants will help tackle many of the issues raised by presenteeism – inclusion, efficiency, networking, and respecting people's time.

Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of in-person meetings?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of all-remote meetings?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of hybrid meetings?
- Do we need to create times when everyone is together in the office? How often and for what tasks/events?



Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to hybrid working? The below chart provides examples of how to choose: in person, all-remote, or hybrid.¹⁸

In-person	All-remote	Hybrid
When it's important to build and maintain relationships, onboarding of new staff.	When the audience is large, broad, and not in the same place.	When you collaborate with teams in different time zones.
When it's a complex topic or sensitive subject matter.	When the meeting or event can be viewed at any time or needs to be recorded.	When the meeting topic is not complex or sensitive.
Creative and collaborative workshops.	Pandemic lock downs, natural disasters (floods etc), traffic strikes.	When you collaborate with team members working hybrid or flexibly or reduced hours.

Improvements or support that could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Employee

- Consider meeting room set up to ensure those joining online are not excluded from the experience. For example, giving remote participants a 360 view.
- Collaboration tools to enable co-authoring of shared documents via channels and chats.
- Communicate the advantages and disadvantages of in-person/remote/hybrid meetings for you and the team (i.e., Ease of communication, facetime or mentoring, travel time, note taking, screen grabbing).

¹⁸ Adapted from Microsoft, 'Learn about Hybrid Meetings in Teams,' Microsoft Support, accessed 22 March 2023,

Project Leader

- Inform participants ahead of time regarding the meeting format, time and purpose of the meeting.
- Make sure the participants are visible and give equal visibility to remote participants.
- Encourage the chat function for remote participants to convey statements or requests.

Organisation

- Allow participants to record and rewatch certain meetings later at leisure and to suit flex working arrangements.
- Consider the appropriate meeting format and individual personal preferences for delivering one-on-one and sensitive feedback.

Other improvements or support?

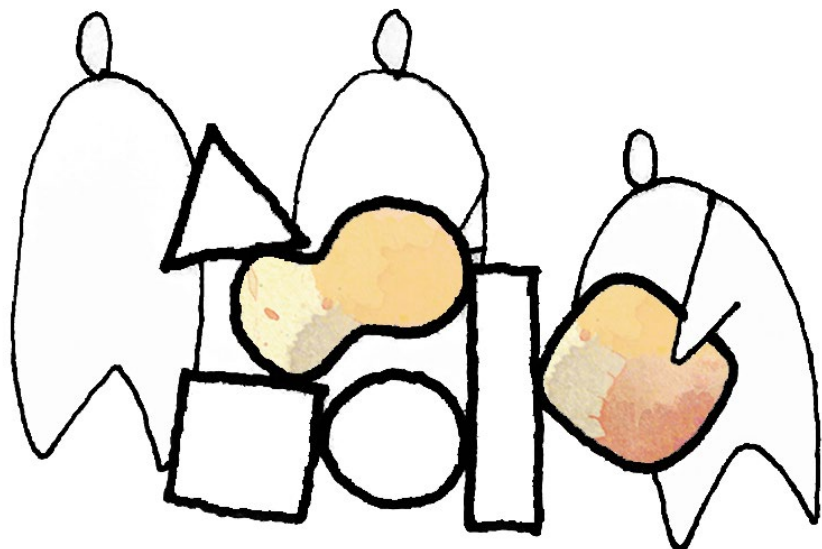
What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience?

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
- Accountability
- Activities
- Success Measures



Conversation 9: Visibility

Introduction

This conversation guide gives the people leader/facilitator a series of questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about visibility. The section on 'Ideas, Actions, Support, Improvements,' and the 'Action Plan' template have been designed to help facilitate a discussion with the employees to develop ideas and actions to address presenteeism considering visibility.

Why this conversation?

Every employee should be seen, heard, and given opportunities to contribute, regardless of where and how they work.

Why This Conversation?

Discuss some or all of the following questions.

- Do you think that remote/hybrid working has had influence on either your or others' visibility in your practice? Are you more, or less confident to reach out and ask for help in the office vs online?
- What do you think are the different challenges between being effective and being seen to be effective in those different environments?
- Are there ways that we can 'create' the water cooler moments in the office within the online experience? Can we/How can we recreate the 'in-person experience' of seeing what others are working on? (i.e., in the office, see over the shoulder on the screen, printout at the printer, pin-up on the wall).
- How much do you think promotion depends on visibility? And do you feel pressure to be present in the office/studio, or make more effort if not, to be noticed or rewarded?

*"US research, which compared a sample of employees over a 5-year period, suggests compelling advantages for those involved in mentoring programs. Both mentors and mentees were 20% more likely to receive a pay increase than those who weren't involved. Mentees were promoted 5 times more often than those without a mentor, and mentors were promoted 6 times more often than those who didn't formally mentor junior staff. Retention rates for mentors and mentees were much higher than for employees who weren't involved in mentoring programs."*¹⁹

- They say 70% of mentoring happens on the job. Do you think working remotely can compromise this?

¹⁹ Parlour: Gender, Equity, Architecture, 'Mentoring', Guide 10, Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice, p. 2, <https://parlour.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Guide10-Mentoring.pdf>

Ideas. Actions. Support. Improvements.

What would a positive employee experience be characterised by when it comes to visibility?

Thought starters...

- Employees feel connected to each other, even if physically apart.
- Employees believe they can thrive and succeed in their organisations – and achievements and contributions are publicly acknowledged across teams/organisation.
- There are different pathways to promotion articulated in the organisation's recruitment and development policies, including for diverse work practices.
- A strong network of peers (mentors and mentees), and access to career champions and sponsors inside and outside the organisation.
- A culture of regular and outcome-focused feedback.

Other improvements or support?

- What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

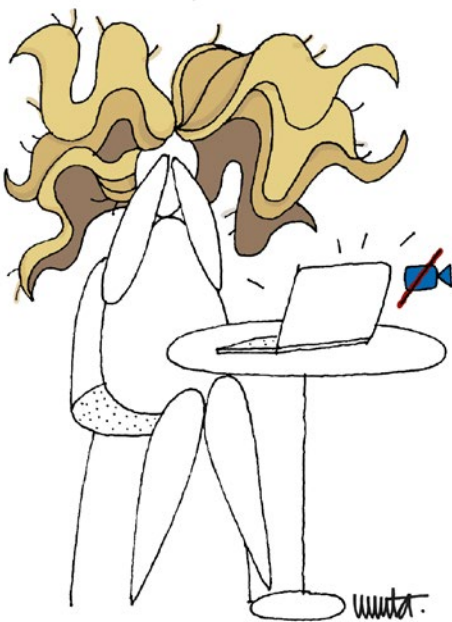
Thought starters...

Communication

- Set up regular, informal team catch-up meetings (eg. at the beginning of the week) that aren't necessarily project related. Set agreements with everyone to encourage participation from all.
- To ensure visibility in an online working environment, check in daily (at least) with individuals to identify any pressures.

Participation

- Have juniors shadow seniors for key internal and external meetings and introduce them.



-
- Support team members to participate in 'non-billable' activities like lunchtime talks, seminars, research, industry events.
 - Use digital platforms like the company website and LinkedIn to feature team achievements and individual thought pieces.

Organisational initiatives

- Look inside the organisation before you look outside, for potential leaders. Create strong messaging around the company's commitment to growing people, not just importing them.
- Promote quality and value over time productivity to measure success – and train leaders to recognise and reward it.
- Train managers in how to 'check in' rather than 'check up on', for example with regular, short feedback sessions that focus on agreed goals and outcomes.

Mentoring

- Develop/change mentoring programs to accommodate online as well as in-person connections.
- Develop mentoring agreements with employees around their communication preferences that clearly define when and how people will be available and allow flexibility for changing working patterns.

Support mentees to be more visible by:

- Identifying their goals and aspirations.
- Setting up opportunities for them to shadow leaders, contribute in a supported way, and participate in activities that interest them.

Other improvements or support?

What other improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about to enable a positive employee experience.

Think about you, your people leader, manager, your firm.

Agreed Action Plan

Agree on two to three actions and set a date to revisit suggestions and discuss progress.

- Action
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E: Facilitator Guide and Template

Overview

This toolkit is intended to enable businesses and/or teams to be aware of (and assess) the risk of presenteeism (where it is an issue) in the workplace and put steps in place to address these risks. Using a structured and collaborative 'listening and learning' approach, the discussions should encourage collaborative discussion, and the sharing of ideas and solutions which will benefit both the business and employees.

Regardless of whether you are leading a business, dealing with cultural change, or supervising a team, the overall desired business outcome of this collaborative 'listen and learn' approach and process is to promote a positive organisational culture and better business outcomes.

These discussions can be facilitated either as a one-on-one discussion or in small groups. The key to a successful workshop will be to 'listen and learn'.

There is no set format for these conversations, or how line managers should conduct them, and the layout of the toolkit is not prescriptive. For example, the questions have been designed to be 'open' (i.e., they do not result in a 'Yes' or 'No' response) to encourage discussion.

Importantly, employers should make sure that there is time available for line managers and employees to have these conversations. The toolkit also relies on both managers and employees having an open and honest conversation. You can use all or some of the templates depending on the situation, the issues being addressed and the time available.

The facilitator guide and template, as well as other sources of information on presenteeism and work, can be used by facilitators for two purposes.

- 'Starting the Conversation'.
- 'In Conversation' sessions based on the Conversation Starter guides provided in Section D of this toolkit.

Tips for Facilitators

Facilitators are encouraged to:

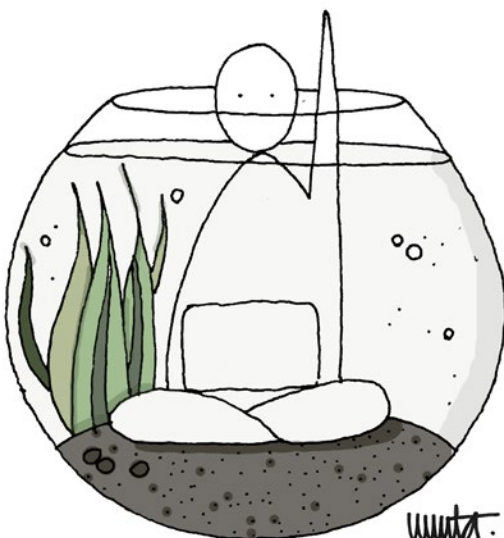
- Read the introductory section of the 'Presenteeism: In Conversation' toolkit prior to running a workshop, and
- Be across the nine key Presenteeism themes.

This will assist in facilitating the process of determining the key one to two areas to prioritise. For example, if several participants have experienced issues in developing or maintaining relationships because of not being available or 'present' to the same extent as other colleagues, the conversation priority for the group may be on Conversation Three - 'Feeling Connected'.

The people leader/facilitator may start the discussion with participants about presenteeism and work by asking a series of questions. A good question to start the conversation is 'What has been your experience of presenteeism at work?' or 'How would you define presenteeism at work?'

How you approach the discussion will depend on the specific issues of the group and individuals. Here are some options to encourage discussion:

- Ask the whole group what they think and note down the responses [making sure everyone has the opportunity to speak].
- Break into smaller groups and ask participants to nominate a spokesperson to summarise their discussion of their experience, and where they will focus future discussions.
- Perhaps give some examples relevant to the nine Presenteeism themes provided in this toolkit to encourage discussion.



'Starting the Conversation': Guide for Facilitators

The aim of this first discussion (one-hour if required) is to provide participants with a brief overview on presenteeism ahead of a facilitated discussion to agree on one to two topics of the 'nine conversations' which are particularly relevant to the group.

Facilitators can customise the facilitator guide template provided in the toolkit for this initial conversation. Outlined below are some talking points which can be used by the facilitator for this purpose.

A. Introductory Discussion Points (5-7 mins)

"I am keen to hear from you on the topic of presenteeism. To give you a few minutes to settle in and perhaps reflect on your perspectives on this topic, I'm just going to cover off a few points that may also help set the scene for you. Recently the Champions of Change (Architecture) published a toolkit of information on the topic of Presenteeism and Work aimed at:

- *Encouraging people in our workplaces to talk about presenteeism, and*
- *To suggest practical solutions and actions that could be taken to address issues relating to presenteeism at work.*

The toolkit not only includes a brief presentation on the topic of 'Presenteeism and Work' – what it is, what it isn't, some key statistics and its impact – but also a 'Talking Toolkit'.

- *It includes nine conversation themes and has been developed to encourage discussion between people leaders and employees to better understand their perspectives on presenteeism and work, how presenteeism impacts people, and how these issues could be addressed.*
- *These conversation guides cover a range of topics to start discussions with employees about presenteeism and work, including:*

- 1: *Work Demands and Work Life Balance*
- 2: *Trust, Autonomy and Support*
- 3: *Staying Connected*
- 4: *Organisational Culture, Leadership and Work Ethic*
- 5: *Role Clarity*
- 6: *Hybrid Working*

7: *Being Organised*

8: *Meetings*

9: *Visibility*

So today, the intent is not to cover all topics, but to perhaps agree on which one to two of these conversations you would like to discuss further and pull together an action plan to address the issues.

If you would like to review this information in more detail, [you will already have received a copy of this in your meeting invitation] or [it will be sent to you after this session]."

B. Overview of 'Presenteeism and Work' presentation (5-7 mins)

You may wish to spend about five-seven minutes taking the participants through the Champions of Change PowerPoint presentation on 'Presenteeism and Work.'

"As the focus of this session is to hear from you, I am not going to spend too long on running through the Presenteeism and Work presentation, but I would like to just highlight a few points of interest from this presentation: How we are defining presenteeism and some key statistics."

ASK: *Do you have any questions about the content of the presentation?*

C. Questions to Ask (25 mins)

Here are some questions you could ask to encourage discussion in the group. Also, you should refer to the questions posed within the nine Conversations.

1. *What does presenteeism mean to you?*
2. *What has been your experience of presenteeism at work?*
3. *From the nine general presenteeism themes listed, what do you think are the top two to three presenteeism topics you'd like to discuss and address? Why?*

OR

4. *Based on your experiences with presenteeism at work, what would you like to explore and address further? Why?*



D. Action Planning (10-15 mins)

Facilitators should listen to what is being said rather than trying to offer excuses or explanations. Action points and solutions should be agreed together. The important thing is to start talking and to start planning.

As a group, agree on one to two areas of focus and next steps. Depending on approach taken.

1. **DO:** List key experiences and feedback from participants/groups. This will assist the participants consolidate and agree on themes/key areas of discussion and action.
2. **DO:** List one to two presenteeism themes the group has agreed to focus on and why [There may be more than one to two themes].

E. Wrap-Up (5-10 mins)

- Highlight key presenteeism experiences of participants.
- 'Presenteeism Conversations' topics the group has agreed to progress.

ASK: *Do you have any questions or final comments?*

- Re-confirm the presenteeism topics that the group has agreed to prioritise and address.
- Outline next steps eg. logistics around next presenteeism 'In Conversation' discussions, accountabilities, timings, communication from facilitator around what has been agreed.

'In Conversation': Guide for Facilitators

1. **DO:** Follow up on any issues, actions or questions that need to be addressed with individuals.
2. **DO:** Provide information on where to go for help at the conclusion of the session.

"If this session raises any concerns or issues for you and you need more help, can I encourage you to talk to someone, whether it is your people leader or line manager, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), GP or your People & Culture representative/occupational health team."

Facilitators can also customise the following facilitator guide template for all subsequent discussions relevant to presenteeism and work, selecting from the nine Conversation Starter guides provided in the toolkit. The aim is to help facilitators have further conversations to better understand how presenteeism in the workplace impacts them, and to identify possible actions and solutions.

These discussions should result in:

- Simple, transparent, and relevant practices which are openly discussed and communicated.
- Actions that are practical and can be implemented at an individual or team level.
- Ideas and solutions that may also be considered at an organisational level.
- Relevant approaches and best in class work practices and/or people management processes.

Talking points for those facilitating 'In Conversation' employee sessions on presenteeism and work themes are incorporated in the following 'Facilitator Guide Template'.

Facilitator Guide Template

Presenteeism and Work

01 Purpose of Template

The purpose of this template is to help facilitate a dialogue with employees to better understand their perspectives on presenteeism, how it impacts them and how this may be addressed.

These conversations should not be used in isolation and are intended only as a way of starting conversations to better understand presenteeism in your workplace and identify possible solutions. You should still manage any identified risks according to your firm's relevant protocols, policies, and practices. The template can be used for two purposes:

'Starting the Conversation': Introducing Presenteeism

You may choose to have an introductory session first. The aim of an introductory discussion (if required) is to provide participants with a brief overview on 'presenteeism and work' and have a facilitated discussion to agree on one to two topics which are particularly relevant to the group (based on the nine 'Conversation Starter' guides have been provided in this toolkit to support these subsequent conversations). You can use this Talking Toolkit Facilitator template for that purpose. Possible content for this initial conversation can be found in the previous section titled: 'Starting the Conversation: Guide for Facilitators'.

'In Conversation'

Facilitators can customise this same template for all subsequent discussions relevant to presenteeism and work, selecting from the nine 'Conversation Starter' guides provided in the toolkit. The aim is to help facilitators have further conversations to better understand how presenteeism in the workplace impacts them, and to identify possible actions and solutions.

These discussions should result in:

- Simple, transparent, and relevant practices which are openly discussed and communicated.
- Actions that are practical and can be implemented at an individual or team level.
- Ideas and solutions that may also be considered at an organisational level.
- Relevant approaches and best in class work practices and/or people management processes.

02 Session Outline

Resources Checklist

Material	Equipment
Facilitator Guide	Paper
Copies or access to presentation (.ppt)	Pen and markers
Participant handout of relevant Conversation Guide – A4	Teams Live, or Zoom
Action Plan template (refer Conversation Guide)	Music playlist (optional)

The session outline provides some templates and suggested approaches to facilitating a 'Starting the Conversation' session and 'In Conversation' sessions.

'Starting the Conversation' session

This first session is about setting the scene, starting the dialogue, and deciding on which conversations should be a priority. You may wish to use the following agenda for this purpose.

Agenda

Session outline	5 mins
Starting the conversation: An overview	10 mins
Prioritising the conversations	40 mins
Wrap-up and next steps	5 mins

'In Conversation' session and outcomes

Subsequent sessions focus on the specific conversations and themes agreed by the participants. Again, the facilitator guide template can be customised for this purpose.

Agenda

Setting the Scene	10 mins
In Conversation	40 mins
Action Planning and Wrap-Up	10 mins

By the end of these subsequent conversation sessions, leaders and participants will be able to:

- Better understand what presenteeism means and its impact in the workplace (noting that this presentation need only be delivered once to participants).
- Talk about some of the key issues which can sometimes cause or result from presenteeism at work.
- Discuss and agree on areas of priority for further conversations (e.g. selection of one to two topics from this guide, specific approaches, and commitments) and agree on two to three actions.
- Agree on discussion outcomes, the Action Plan, and next steps.

These discussions should result in:

- Simple, transparent and relevant practices which are openly discussed and communicated.
- Actions that are practical and can be implemented at an individual or team level.
- Ideas and solutions that may also be considered at an organisational level.
- Relevant approaches and best in class work practices and/or people management processes.

Pre-work (if any)

You may choose to circulate the presentation as pre-reading.

Group and Participant Profile

You may choose to hold group sessions with employees and/or one on ones. Ideally, group sessions would be an hour in duration, ranging in size from 6-15 people. Group sessions may be selected according to the needs of the business, demographic, or employee group – team, function, level, gender, a mix of people from across the business, similar or diverse roles and functions. The profile of participants will be dependent upon the outcomes and issues relevant to individuals, teams, and businesses.

Invitation Templates

To assist in setting up the first one-hour discussion and subsequent sessions, refer below for draft invitation templates which you can customise as required.

1. 'Starting the Conversation' session: Invitation Template

Subject: Presenteeism and Work: Starting the Conversation

Hi Team,

A subgroup of the Architects Champions of Change (Woods Bagot, SJB, DesignInc, BVN) have developed a 'Presenteeism Talking Toolkit' to support architectural practices in having informed conversations about the impacts of presenteeism in their organisations, teams, and individuals, and how these may be addressed.

The purpose of this initial one-hour meeting is to:

- Take you through a brief presentation on the topic of presenteeism (refer attached if you are interested to know more about the topic), and
- Encourage you to talk about what presenteeism means to you and what one to two topics of conversation you would like to focus on, some of which are listed below.

Presenteeism 'In Conversation' Topics

- 1: Work Demands and Work Life Balance
- 2: Trust, Autonomy and Support
- 3: Staying Connected
- 4: Organisational Culture, Leadership and Work Ethic
- 5: Role Clarity
- 6: Hybrid Working
- 7: Being Organised
- 8: Meetings
- 9: Visibility

Once the group agree on one to two areas of focus, the intention would be to hold further facilitated one-hour conversations on the selected topics to explore and better understand the issues, and in turn, to develop an Action Plan and potential solutions to address the issues raised.

You can join either via [[Microsoft Teams](#), [Zoom](#) or attend in person]. I have booked the [xxxxx] room if in the studio.

Regards,

2. 'In Conversaton' session: Invitation Template

This invitation can be used once the topics of conversation have been agreed.

Subject: Presenteeism and Work: [Selected Specific Conversation Topic eg. Staying Connected]

Hi Team,

Thank you for attending our recent workshop to talk about what presenteeism means to you and what one to two topics of conversation you would like to focus on.

Now that we have agreed on our area of focus, this subsequent one-hour 'Conversation' will further explore these areas of interest. The aim is to better understand the issues, and in turn, to develop an Action Plan and potential solutions to address the issues raised.

These discussions should result in:

- *Simple, transparent and relevant practices which are openly discussed and communicated.*
- *Actions that are practical and can be implemented at an individual or team level.*
- *Ideas and solutions that may also be considered at an organisational level.*
- *Relevant approaches and best in class work practices and/or people management processes.*

You can join either via [Microsoft Teams, Zoom or attend in person]. I have booked the [xxxxx] room if in the studio.

Regards,

03 Setting the Scene

#	Resource	Main Discussion Points	Time (approx.)
3.1	Room set-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this session is to create a dialogue, so the room should have minimal obstacles between participants. Have plenty of pens, markers, and paper on hand. Have some music ready to create a relaxed atmosphere. 	
3.2	Welcome and Introduction		2
3.3	Housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Before we begin, a few things to keep in mind to help facilitate this session.</i> <i>The key aim is to create a dialogue on the topic of Presenteeism and Work, which means I will need:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>– Active participation and engagement, this means devices off and I may direct a question to you if I have not heard from you for a while.</i> <i>– Respect other participants' opinions.</i> <i>You have been given a handout to allow you to write down your thoughts. I will let you know when you will need to refer to the handout throughout the session."</i> <p>Confidentiality. <i>"Honest feedback is valuable. To this end, it is important to communicate to participants that you will guard their confidentiality and will not disclose the names of those individuals in the group (or one-on-one discussions) who have given specific feedback unless they give permission for you to do so."</i></p> <p>Information on where to go for help. Information on where to go for help should be provided at the beginning of the discussions and at the conclusion of the session, as per the following: <i>"If this session raises any concerns or issues for you and you need more help, can I encourage you to talk to someone, whether it is your people leader or line manager, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), GP or your People & Culture representative/ occupational health team."</i></p>	<1
3.4	Agenda	Agenda (refer to section on session outline for suggested agendas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take participants through the agenda and purpose of session 	<1
3.5	Purpose (customise as required)	<i>"By the end of this session, we want you to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Better understand what presenteeism means and its impact in the workplace (Presentation).</i> <i>Talk about some of the key issues which can sometimes cause or result from presenteeism at work.</i> <i>Discuss and agree on areas of priority for further conversations (e.g., selection of one to two topics from this guide, specific approaches, and commitments).</i> <i>Agree on Next Steps and an Action Plan."</i> 	5
3.6	Questions	ASK: Do you have any questions? Are you ready to get started?	<1

04 In Conversation

#	Resource	Main Discussion Points	Time (approx.)
4.1	About this session	<p>You may wish to introduce the session using the following talking points and reference the Champions of Change 'Presenteeism and Work' PowerPoint presentation (if you haven't already covered this material or distributed as pre-reading).</p> <p><i>"I am keen to hear from you the topic of presenteeism but just to give you a few minutes to settle in and perhaps reflect on your perspectives on the topic, I'm just going to cover off a few points that may also help set the scene.</i></p> <p><i>Just to reiterate, recently the Champions of Change (Architecture) published a toolkit of information on the topic of Presenteeism and Work aimed at:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging people in our workplaces to talk about presenteeism, and - To suggest practical solutions and actions that could be taken to address issues relating to presenteeism at work. <p><i>When we last met, we decided on where we wanted to focus and which of the 'Conversation' themes we wanted to talk about. These conversation themes, you may recall, have been developed to encourage discussion between people leaders and employees to better understand perspectives on presenteeism and work, how presenteeism impacts people, and how these issues could be addressed."</i></p> <p><i>"The conversation we are focusing on today is [select from the following]:</i></p> <p>Presenteeism 'In Conversation' Topics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Work Demands and Work Life Balance 2: Trust, Autonomy and Support 3: Staying Connected 4: Organisational Culture, Leadership and Work Ethic 5: Role Clarity 6: Hybrid Working 7: Being Organised 8: Meetings 9: Visibility <p><i>So today, the intent is talk about this, and perhaps pull together an action plan to address the issues raised."</i></p>	5 mins (max)
4.2	Questions	ASK: Do you have any questions? Are you ready to get started?	

#	Resource	Main Discussion Points	Time (approx.)
4.3		<p>Prior to running a workshop, facilitators are encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the introductory section of the 'Presenteeism: In Conversation' toolkit prior and be across the nine key Presenteeism themes. • Refresh your knowledge by reviewing the 'Presenteeism and Work' presentation included as part of this toolkit. • Familiarise yourself with the content specific to the 'In Conversation' topic being addressed in the session. These guides give the people leader/facilitator a series of thought starters and questions to start discussions with an employee or small group of employees about presenteeism and particular areas of focus, for example, Conversation One – 'Work Demands'. These guides are intended to help facilitate a discussion with employees to develop ideas and actions. • The guides also have some thought starters to help with ideas, actions, support, and improvements relevant to each topic. • An agreed action plan should include two to three actions, activities, time frames, accountabilities and success measures. Also, a date to discuss progress. 	
4.4		<p>The people leader / facilitator starts the discussion with participants about presenteeism and work by utilising the relevant Conversation Guide. If, for example, you are focussing on Conversation One: 'Work Demands', a good question to start the conversation may be <i>'What has been your experience of presenteeism at work when it comes to [work demands]?'</i> How you approach the discussion will depend on the group and individuals. Some options to encourage discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the whole group what they think and note down the responses [making sure everyone can speak]. • Break into smaller groups and ask participants to nominate a spokesperson to summarise their discussion of their experience, and their suggested actions to address the issues. <p>ASK: Refer to the relevant section in the Conversation Guide for questions and thought starters</p>	25-35 mins
4.5		<p>Depending on approach taken...</p> <p>DO: List key experiences and feedback from participants/groups. This will reinforce the 'listening and learning' approach.</p> <p>DO: Re-confirm two to three key actions the group has agreed upon.</p>	5 mins
4.6		<p>Summary of discussion outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight any key themes. • Confirm Action Plan (including activities, accountabilities, and success measures). • Discuss next steps. <p>ASK: Do you have any questions or final comments?</p>	5 mins

05 Action Planning and Wrap-Up

#	Resource	Main Discussion Points	Time (approx.)
5.1	Session summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on and reinforce key actions, activities, accountabilities, and success measures. Outline next steps eg. logistics and accountabilities. <p>DO: Follow up on any issues, actions or questions that need to be addressed with individuals.</p>	5-10 mins
5.2	Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline next steps including communication of Action Plan, involvement of others in the process, commitments. <p>ASK: What are your key takeaways? [only if needed]</p>	
5.3	Information on where to go for help.	<p>Information on where to go for help should again be provided at the conclusion of the session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"If this session raises any concerns or issues for you and you need more help, can I encourage you to talk to someone, whether it is your people leader or line manager, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), GP or your People & Culture representative/ occupational health team."</i> 	<1
5.4	Thank you and goodbye!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share your genuine feedback in relation to the session and anything that you have learnt from them. Thank participants for their contribution. Share your contact details. 	<1

Additional Resources

References and Additional Material



Additional Resources

Champions of Change Coalition

[Reports and Resources](#) including the following.

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