

How do you create  
engagement and belonging  
in a **remote** workspace?





# The Research

Creating engagement and belonging in a remote workspace is both complex and nuanced. **The solution is therefore not a one-size-fits-all.** Nonetheless, this report will analyze the key factors contributing to success working online and present them as tools that could be applied to many different organizations.

The following section will delve into the study, and explain:

- **Why** has it been researched?
- **What** has been researched?
- **How** has it been researched?

# Why has it been researched?

The Covid-19 pandemic forced companies to adapt to a more digital work environment. According to a study made by McKinsey & Company 52% of people prefer a more flexible working environment after the pandemic (Andrea Alexander et al., 2021, p. 8). However, the flexible workspace comes with a set of new challenges. The loss of face-to-face interactions and the lack of physical presence can lead to **decreased social interaction and a sense of community, which can negatively affect employee engagement, motivation, and productivity**. According to multiple studies compiled by Upwork, employees experience a reduced sense of community in their team and less organization within these teams when engaging in a more digital work environment (Ozimek, n.d., p. 7). It is therefore important for people with leadership positions to understand how to build a sense of community in a digital work environment to make sure employees feel connected and engaged. One way this has been done historically is by having a **strong purpose and company culture**. According to a study made by the Boston Consulting Group, focusing on just that might be a core building block for the future of work (Hilberath et al., 2020, p. 5).

At the same time as many companies are struggling with engagement and belonging in a digital work environment, **online communities** are thriving all over the internet creating both engagement and belonging.

**All this prompts two questions: How can we create a structured way of implementing flexible work, and what might we learn from thriving online communities?**

# What has been researched?

**The following 3 research questions**

**RQ1** What are the factors that contribute to the success of digital-based communities in creating long-term engagement, loyalty, and active participation among their members?

**RQ2** How do purpose-driven companies differ from non-purpose-driven companies in their approach to fostering engagement? Digital and non-digital.

**RQ3** What strategies can companies, who struggle to maintain engagement in a more digital workspace, learn from successful examples of purpose- and community-building in digital contexts?



# How has it been researched?

## Organization Research

### 1. Qualitative Interviews - Organisation

These were conducted with participants from both **purpose-driven organizations** and non-purpose-driven organizations, **11 interviews** has been conducted in a semistructured manner, opening up for new insight outside the scope. Out of the 11 participants, **5 individuals** worked or had previously worked in **purpose-driven organizations**.



**Purpose-driven organization** prioritizes a clear and meaningful mission beyond profit, focusing on for example societal or environmental goals, and are guided by core values.

#### Interviewees

Role	Relevant Organization Experience
Director Advocacy and Engagement	Swedish Branch of Global Sustainability Label (Formerly Human Rights Organisation)
VP, Talent & Culture	Multiple Purpose-Driven Tech Companies
Interim HR	Human Rights Organisation
Director of Culture & Performance	Hospitality Service Provider
Lecturer Design Research, and Head of Design Research	Top tier university and consultancy (Formerly fortune 500 companies)
Professor in Sociology	Multiple Top Tier Universities
VP Customer Journey & Product Development	Tech Company
HR Business Coach	Business Incubator
Global Head of Human Resources	Online Education Provider
Strategy, People and Culture	HR Consultancy
Senior Software Engineer	Fintech Company



## 2. Literature Studies

Scientific papers from institutions as well as articles and surveys has been read to understand earlier research within the subject. See bibliography for cited literature. Information from the following organisations have been used: *UC Berkeley, Stanford University, Harvard Business Review, McKinsey & Company, BCG, Washington Post, MIT Sloan Management Review, and BetterUp.*

# Online Communities Research

## 3. Qualitative Interviews - Communities

These were done with **5 active members** of digitally based communities. The purpose was to understand the reasoning behind their active participation in online communities.



**Online communities** are online spaces where individuals connect, collaborate, and engage in discussions based on shared interests, goals, or values. This can be through platforms such as Youtube, Facebook or Discord.

The majority of the participants were members of the Yes Theory Community, described in the following table, as well some interest and company specific online communities such as Videography and Arc Web Browser. Including a broad range of countries including Sweden, Brazil, US, and the Philippines.

## 4. Case Studies - Communities

**5 case studies** of digital communities were done, examining what tools are used to create engagement and belonging among their members. I have looked at how leaders communicate through social platforms, and I have also joined the different community platforms to understand the landscape of online interactions.

Community	Description
Yes Theory	Youtube channel encouraging people to step out of their comfort zones and embrace new experiences and challenges. (Offering a community platform)
Colin and Samir	Youtube channel teaching people in building communities online (Offering a community platform)
Indie Hackers	Community platform that supports independent developers in building online businesses
Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell	Youtube channel around scientific, philosophical, and technological concepts in a simplified and engaging manner. (Offering a community platform)
Marques Brownlee (MKBHD)	YouTube channel discussing news within technology (Offering a community platform)



# The Result

Having conducted interviews with both companies and online community members, delved into relevant literature, and analyzed digital communities through case studies, the result of this research reveals the following: Fostering engagement and creating a sense of belonging within an organization entails establishing trust between employees and employers, through a structured approach to flexible work, while also enhancing team cohesion through community-building.

**The following chapters will examine these two parts:**



## 1. Flexible Work for the Individual Employee

In this section, the benefits of implementing a flexible work schedule will be explored as opposed to mandatory in-office, hybrid, or fully digital work models. It will also present the steps needed to establish this flexible work environment.



## 2. Building a Sense of Belonging Through Community

The second part focuses on how an organization can foster a strong sense of belonging among its employees, regardless of the medium in which they work. The section will present how this can be achieved through the tools used to build and engage online communities.

# 1 Flexible Work for the Individual Employee

In the scope of just a couple of years, many companies have gone from allowing their employees to work entirely remotely, or at least hybrid, to implementing more and more mandatory return-to-office policies. However, in a Policy Brief published by Stanford University professor Nicholas Bloom, only 48% of employees actually followed their employer's full week return to office policy. In this survey, 5000 employees in America were asked. (Bloom, 2022)

Several interviewees, during the study, mentioned that these types of policy changes toward the stricter spectrum are not the right way to do it. The *HR Business Coach*, the *Vice President of Talent and Culture*, and the *Professor in Sociology*, all mentioned during the interviews that the personal needs of the employees are so different, and should therefore be taken into account. The second, above mentioned, interviewee built upon this and mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on the importance of many other aspects of life than work. Whether it is family, health, or maybe education employers should not ignore the needs of their employees.

In a recent article in the Washington Post, Harvard Business School professor Choudhury, who studies the future of work also stated that *By mandating these rigid policies, you're risking your top performers and diversity. It just doesn't make economic sense* (Abril, 2023).

By in a structured way allowing for more flexibility to work, employees could feel heard and a greater trust between the two parties could emerge.

But how would this be done in practice? *The following sections are some key takeaways from the research that could be a great starting point for creating trust in relationships between employees and employers.* These are the five key takeaways:

- Understand Employee Needs
- New Flexible Guidelines
- Remote Meetings and Effective Leadership
- On-boarding with Specific Rules
- Employee Surveys and Reflection

## 1.1 Understand Employee Needs

Understanding employee needs may sound obvious to some, however after multiple discussions during the interviews, it became clear that really getting this part right is crucial. For example, three of the interviewee participants: *Global Head of HR*, a *HR Business Coach*, and *Vice President of Talent and Culture* all mentioned that it is important to have an open dialog and really understand why people do what they do. The third interviewee, stated above, mentioned that having 1:1 meetings with every person on the team worked for them to understand everything from an individual's needs and interests. Based on these findings, one could use this knowledge when building a new team or taking an old team to the next level of flexible work.



Building on the things mentioned during the interview, one could ask questions such as the following to understand where and how an employee would like to work:

### Needs

- Where do you feel most productive? Is it dependent on the type of task?
- What hours do you feel most productive?
- What are your personal and professional goals?
- In what way could we support you in achieving these goals?

To understand other motivations of an employee, the following types of questions could be asked:

### Interests

- What are some things you value, and spend time doing, outside of work?
- If you had more flexibility in your work schedule, how would you choose to spend your time during the workday?

## 1.2 New Flexible Guidelines

What became clear after all the interviews and research was that there is no secret formula for every team and company. If there was, we would probably already know it by now. The following paragraphs will discuss some general tools that might work for your team, or can at least work as a spark of inspiration.

To find the ultimate compromise between the needs of the employees and the company, one could use a combination of the results from your 1:1 interviews with employees and a structured analysis of the company's needs.

One way to understand the company's needs could be done using the advice Bloom described in his Policy Brief. Bloom mentioned that managers could summarize what company activities are crucial for team members to be at the office, and calculate how much time this adds up to in a week. Based on these calculations try to group activities on the same days, that people should be at the office. Bloom states that "These become social, vibrant, and lively days at work." (Bloom, 2022, p. 4). Using this tool, managers could formulate trustworthy guidelines that are backed by the real needs of the company. During the interview with the *VP of Customer Journey and Product Development*, it was mentioned that there could be brief guidelines from the company's top leaders, however, the smaller teams in an organization should have the freedom to create their own specific guidelines.

When you have both your team member's needs and the company's needs, it is time to write down where there are time and interest conflicts. These points of conflict need to be communicated either to the team or a specific employee.

For example, it could result in allowing an employee to join a specific activity remotely or communicating to the employee why it is not possible. While the delivery of unwelcome truths may be discomforting, communicating it is far superior to ignoring it.

Apart from guidelines around employees being in the office, other policies could be added based on employees' needs. The interviewed *Director of Advocacy and Engagement* for example mentioned that they have tried the policy of having one meeting-free day during the week. This was to help manage stress levels, especially when working remotely. It was also mentioned that when working remotely, it is important to not have meetings back-to-back. Policies or guidelines similar to these ones could be the result of your own team's work schedule.

### 1.3 Remote Meetings and Effective Leadership

Several interviewees noted that remote work presents new leadership challenges during meetings. This report section will explore key considerations, particularly in remote communication. While many of these aspects were important even before remote work, they require renewed emphasis in the digital work landscape. When focusing on digital meetings, there are some considerations that will be discussed: what to have in mind during a meeting, proper work environments, and the effective use of catch-up meetings.

**What to have in mind during a meeting** My own analysis of the situation, based on the different findings, is that participants during

online meetings have a preconceived notion that these meetings should be more effective and productive than physical meetings. In an article in the MIT Sloan School of Management, G. Rogelberg also emphasizes the importance of keeping digital meetings even more effective (G. Rogelberg, 2020). The *Director of Culture and Performance* mentioned in our interview, that during meetings it is even more important to have clear discussion points going into a meeting. G. Rogelberg also emphasizes this in his article and mentions that it is important to not over-schedule your meetings (G. Rogelberg, 2020). That the length of the meeting should not be longer than actually needed. Furthermore, an *HR Consultant* also mentioned during our interview that it is even more important to document what has been decided and discussed during a meeting online. In addition, G. Rogelberg stated that the facilitation of meetings needs to be more active. Active facilitation also involves listening and sensing the needs of the participants. One interpretation of this is that it can for example include remembering to take short breaks if the team is low on energy. During my interview with the *Director of Advocacy and Engagement*, it was also mentioned that it is extra important to keep an eye on the energy of the participants during online meetings. Using these tips should help meet the expectations of the meeting attendees, and create a more engaged atmosphere.

**Proper Work Environment** A key insight that the *HR Business Coach* brought up was that leaders should not forget their responsibility to keep track of employees' work environment,

even when working remotely. Keeping track of employees' potential physical or psychological discomforts is important, and making sure that things such as their desks are optimized for this. A reflection on the potential solution for this problem is that it might be even more crucial to educate about what makes a work environment at home more ergonomic, it can be everything from lighting conditions to choosing the right chair. If possible, even provide ergonomic interior/furniture for employees in need of an upgraded remote work environment.

### **Effective Use of Catch-Up Meetings**

The third important key takeaway is the importance of having more catchup meetings. During the interview with the *HR Consultant* it was mentioned that when we meet physically at an office there are more opportunities for short, perhaps accidental, both informal and formal meetings. This could for example be by the coffee machine or maybe in the corridor. These short meetings have acted as a way to catch up on both a professional and personal level. However, due to the unspontaneous nature of working remotely, we need to have more short remote meetings. The interviewed *Director of Advocacy and Engagement* also underscored the importance of having more check-in meetings with people working remotely. In a UC Berkeley staff document outlining guidelines for effective flexible work arrangements, they highlighted the significance of also actually having these regular check-ins scheduled (UC Berkeley, [n.d.](#), p. 11). Another interesting perspective to have in mind, when

considering scheduling more regular check-ins, was highlighted by Twaronite in an article by the Harvard Business Review. Based on findings from a survey it was determined that 39% of individuals experience the strongest sense of belonging when their coworkers engage in personal and professional check-ins with them (Twaronite, [2019](#)). The check-ins described here may prompt the question of how often they should occur. Deliberately, the term "regular" is intentionally left somewhat subjective in this report, as it depends on the project's scope. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that these check-ins should happen more frequently than your typical in-office formal check-ins.

## **1.4 On-boarding with Specific Rules**

There is one specific guideline that most companies should implement when having a team that has flexible work arrangements. Three interviewees mentioned the importance of having the whole team in the office when a new employee joins the team. The interviewed *Vice President of Talent and Culture* stated that onboarding should be in-person because it kick-starts a relationship. The interviewed *Director of Culture and Performance* built upon this and said that working remotely works great when we feel safe in each other's presence. To summarize, having a policy for the team to meet in person when a new person joins the team or when a new project is initiated could be of great help when working in a flexible work environment.



## 1.5 Employee Surveys and Reflection

Conducting regular employee surveys benefits both employers and employees alike. The majority of interviews brought up the importance of using employee surveys regularly. Knowing how the employees are doing, and feeling towards their work is really important to be able to adjust the structure of work. For instance, the interviewed *Director of Culture and Performance* mentioned that they now conduct the survey every other week, a significant shift from the previous frequency of two times a year. A positive impact resulting from this increased frequency was also presented. In addition, the interviewed *Global Head of HR* mentioned that many organizations often focus on the wrong result, however. They often time focus where they did good, and should instead focus attention towards where they need to be better. During the interview with the *Vice President of Talent and Culture* examples of three project-specific questions was brought up, that could be asked during such a survey:

- What is your current focus?
- What is currently blocking you, and/or what is not working?
- What deliverables have gone unnoticed?

Other questions about well-being or views around their work schedule should also be included. Apart from the substantial advantages gained by employers through understanding their organization's performance and well-being, it is crucial to highlight its significance from the standpoint of employees too. According to Judd, O'Rourke, and Grant, in the article presenting findings from internal research at Meta (Former Facebook), surveys also show employees that the company actually values employee feedback. They also stated that it is worth noting that employees place value on having the chance to express their opinions, even if their desires aren't always fulfilled. (Judd, O'Rourke, and Grant, 2018)

## 2 Building a Sense of Belonging Through Community

*1 in 2 people value connections more than money* (Wood et al., 2022, p. 27), is a statement from a report conducted by Upwork. Building a sense of belonging has always been important, but it has become even more crucial in today's flexible work setups. With a more digital work environment, the spontaneous chats by the coffee machines are unfortunately fading away, and just suggesting a digital coffee break isn't enough. In this part of the report, we'll dive into my findings from analyzing digital communities, engaging with their members, and exploring the importance of a shared purpose.

*As an employer, what steps can you take to lay the foundation for a sense of community to naturally emerge within your organization in a flexible work environment?* These are my four conclusions:

- A Higher Purpose or a Team Purpose
- Interactivity
- Consistency in Activities and Communication
- Celebrating Achievements

### 2.1 A Higher Purpose or a Team Purpose

Upon examining purpose-driven and non-purpose-driven companies, along with studying successful online communities, the conclusion drawn is that fostering a higher or team purpose within a team or organization can significantly contribute to creating a sense of belonging in a flexible work environment. An organization guided by a higher purpose has the potential to cultivate the most profound sense of belonging. Nevertheless, since not every company may or should adopt a higher purpose, a team purpose can still be sufficient. In this section, the two definitions are presented as well as an elaboration on why this particular conclusion is valid.

**Higher Purpose** As an individual, feeling that you are part of something bigger than the individuals in the team is really important, and something that the interviewed representative of an online *education provider* stated. An interviewed representative from a *purpose-driven sustainability label* also mentioned that due to having a higher purpose, strong self-leadership is present among their employees. Not only the sense of belonging and engagement is higher, but it also eases the initiation phase for a new employee. During the interview with another representative of a *purpose-driven tech company*, it was noted that by having a well-defined purpose and establishing platforms for the broader public to engage in discussions about their company's mission, they've attracted new employees who already experience a sense of belonging before their official

start date. It was mentioned that occasionally, individuals who are not even part of their organization engage in discussions about their product and mission so thoroughly through their community platforms that they almost feel like employees.

Continuing looking at this topic, but instead of examining purpose-driven companies, this paragraph will look at successful online communities. My conclusion is that the same argument could be applied. *Yes Theory*, is a community that was just started by a group of people posting YouTube Videos, where they went out of their comfort zone by saying yes to new experiences and posting this to the public. Their simple yet powerful idea, their higher purpose, has spread far and wide. Today, millions of individuals not only passively follow their message but actively engage and collaborate with others worldwide through their community platforms. Among these platforms, one channel that left a lasting impression was one named "From Stranger to Friends." It is filled with images featuring people from diverse backgrounds coming together and connecting, all driven by a shared commitment to *Yes Theory's* higher purpose. In almost every image, individuals proudly display a flag bearing the *Yes Theory* motto. During an interview with an *Online Community Member* he explained that he defined himself as an introverted person who originally did not reach out to meet new people. Because of *Yes Theory's* motto, he now engages in community channels meeting and engaging with people he had never talked to before. The approach and success of *Yes Theory* is not a single case but has been present

in the majority of the communities that were analyzed. Pointing out again that all of the engagement and belonging that is now present was initiated through a digital medium. My analysis of all this is that a higher purpose can survive every medium, whether it is physical or digital, and can therefore strongly help an organization foster engagement and belonging in a flexible workspace. A common purpose can help with belonging through an entire organization, and not only in a specific team. However, not all organisations want to, or even should have a higher purpose. During several of the interviews, it became clear that having a higher purpose should not be forced. Having the company's mission statement printed on the wall is not enough, you need to live as you learn. In this case, having a team purpose might be the solution, something that can help with belonging within a team rather than the entire organization.

**Team Purpose** Having common purposes within a team is more about listening to employees and trying to connect a team through potential similarities. During my interview with both a *Strategy, People, and Culture consultant* and the *Vice President of Talent and Culture*, they gave examples of how this could be done. The first stated interviewee mentioned that their team had been encouraged to all send in a video to their team leader. The purpose of this video was for you to share, as if you were having a conversation with a friend, what the company does and why they work there. Afterward, the entire team watched these videos together, identifying commonalities and differences in their



perspectives on work. This process aimed to strengthen team cohesion and understanding. Another great example of finding commonalities was explained by second above mentioned interviewee. It was mentioned that they had a conversation with every employee, to understand what their interests were. Based on knowing what employees like in a team, the company could give opportunities for people to connect through for example events or special interest groups. Activities like these could generate team cohesion due to their shared team purpose.

## 2.2 Interactivity

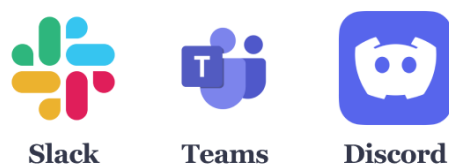


Figure 1: Three different interactivity platforms

Allowing for digital interactivity among members of a community seems crucial when examining online communities as well as companies successfully fostering engagement and belonging online. Digital interactivity often comes from using platforms such as Slack, Teams, or Discord, as seen in Figure 1. Even though one might think that technology is standing in the way of engagement, the interviewed *Design Research Lecturer* mentioned during our interview that we already have the technology we need to create engaged communities online. Moreover, the interviewed *Global Head of HR* stated that earlier

we have been communicating over email which can in some cases feel like a monolog, however when using platforms such as the ones earlier stated we are moving more to dialog communication. The possibility of more quick dialogues has allowed employees to create a community around things that are not strictly connected to a work task. These platforms allow employers or employees to create specific channels for interacting with each other about for example different interests. Furthermore, the interviewed *Director of Advocacy and Engagement* mentioned that a company can for example also have channels to celebrate birthdays. A representative from a *Fintech Company* also stated, during our interview, that even having the ability to send GIFS lifts up the mood in a conversation. Further looking at online communities, many of the successful ones that were examined allow their members to chat through interactive platforms about everything from their mission to other similar interests. Specific channels that were particularly interesting were: a channel where members could give and receive feedback on each other's work, a channel where people could meet people that they had not met before, and specific interest channels such as photography, sports, or music. In my interview with another *Online Community Member*, also an active member of the *Yes Theory* community, she shared her involvement in a particular Brazilian subgroup. Within this subgroup, there are an astonishing 29 distinct subgroups, each dedicated to various topics ranging from cooking to aviation. This revelation suggests that while all members initially join the *Yes Theory* community due to a

common interest, they stay and engage in discussions on a wide array of other subjects as well. If your organization is not using these platforms, it can be worth trying it out. If your organization already does, it should be sure to have channels for different purposes that might be interesting for your specific organization.

## 2.3 Consistency

When examining online communities, another key component is consistency. Consistency in hosting activities for the members and consistency in communication. This section will discuss the importance of both these and how a company like yours could adopt some of these strategies.

**Activities** In a McKinsey excerpt from the book *Market Rebels*, a view on how communities are created is explained. One key part as Hayagreeva explains is *engaging audiences through collective experiences that generate communities of feeling* (Rao, 2009). The communities that were looked at were built online, however, many of them host both digital and physical activities for their member, or allow their members to host their own activities in the name of the community. During two of the interviews with *Online Community Members*, they also stated that having activities with other members of a team is crucial for team cohesion. One of them believed that this is because you as a group create memories together, and therefore form the shared purpose of the team. Giving the example of the community *Yes Theory* once again, they consistently create experiences for their members

to engage in. It can be everything from member meetups to engaging in more premium events where they invite people to see their projects in a premiere manner. Looking at online activities, they often invite members to participate in challenges. One example is a challenge they called *100 Days of Sweat*, where members from all over the world were encouraged to form a new workout habit together with the community. From my understanding, these types of challenges are often done in solitude, however, it creates a bond and accountability with other members of the community through a digital medium. Another active member also mentioned, during our interview, their high frequency in online Zoom events, where moderators of the community facilitate huge Zoom meetings with 100-200 people. These meetings can end up being anything from performances such as poem reading from community members, to inspirational talks.

During the interview with the *Vice President of Talent and Culture*, a representative of a company succeeding in creating activities for their employees, many new interesting insights were presented. It was mentioned the importance of experimenting with different activities to find what suits the company and its employees. A couple of examples of activities they have tried was presented: Events where they invite local entrepreneurs in their community during the pandemic to speak about their business, coffee connections where they connect employees that do not know each other to have a coffee together, and as well allowing for identity/interest groups within the company to form. During my interview with the *Global Head of HR*, the

importance of creating activities that are also connected to the organization or the company's values was brought up. This helps to company actually live as they learn. Another interviewee raised an interesting observation to have in mind. It was pointed out that as more companies shift towards remote work, they reduce their costs related to physical office spaces. It was stated that it would be reasonable to allocate the funds saved from this transition towards initiatives aimed at fostering a stronger sense of community within the organization, such as common activities. As the title of this section suggests, remember to do it consistently. Not just once.

**Communication** The concept of consistency in communication comes solely from looking at successful digital communities, or organisations acting in that way. It became clear that authenticity was also a major key factor when communicating, for the majority of the communities that were looked at. Communicating as described in this paragraph, can also be viewed as the term broadcasting. All of the communities did this in one way or another through social media, however, they all looked different from each other. To give you some examples: *Yes Theory* mostly shows the leaders of the group, *Indie Hackers* mostly show the members of the community, and *Kurzgesagt* delivers education through animations. What they all have in common, however, is that they do it consistently to remind members of why they exist: through for example the shared purpose or through educational content. During my interview with another *Online Community Member*, he

pointed out feeling part of a community connected to the web browser *Arc*. If you are not interested in new technology, many of you might ask, *how you can feel belonging to a community of a web browser?* Hopefully, after hearing these two examples of consistent authentic communication, you might realize the power of it and implement it in some way for your company. First of all, they are consistently posting updates about their organization on social channels. Looking at their YouTube channel, you will see videos of the company authentically documenting the journey of their company. Among these videos, you can find videos such as their CEO transparently talking about the discussions they had at their latest board meeting, see Figure 2. This YouTube channel has by the time of writing 47,000 followers, and the comment section of these types of videos are all filled with people rooting for their success and appreciating their authenticity.



**Our board says we need an "Arc Engine"**  
(CEO diary)

Figure 2: A screenshot of one of the Browser company Arc's Youtube video, showing authentic communication.

The second example, that he mentioned during our interview, is something they call Release Thursday. This is a weekly update, where Arc presents what they



have changed during the week and which people in the company have contributed to the different features. He also stated that this made him feel a sense of belonging to their organization. Understandably, not every company should, or needs to start a Youtube channel or a weekly recap of the company. However, what a company like yours might take away from this successful implementation was brought up by another *Online Community Member*. It does not matter what medium the communication is brought through, the importance is consistency. Therefore find a medium that you and your employees feel confident in using and consistently and authentically remind your employees what the organization is doing and why.

In conclusion, there might be value in experimenting with different activities that resonate with your employees and the organization's values. Test both physical and digital, and why not try having common challenges for your employees? As this section is titled, remember to not just do it once, do it consistently. Also try to find a medium where your employees can feel confident in using, and consistently communicating in an authentic way what the company is doing right now and why.

## 2.4 Celebrate achievements

Ending this result section with a short concluding tip, that was brought up by the majority of the interviewees. Celebrating together as a team is even more important when a team is more fragmented. The interviewed *Director of Advocacy and Engagement* stated that celebrating milestones together as a team creates a sense of belonging to the journey the team is going through.

Celebrating achievements could be small things such as having an activity or a dinner together, or just making the coffee break a little more special. If you practiced the earlier advice by getting to know your team better, you could probably create an activity that resonates more with your team.



# The Tools

In conclusion, creating a workplace that allows for high engagement and a sense of belonging is crucial in today's more digital work environment. **The two-part strategy** that is outlined, starting with the implementation of a flexible work schedule, provides a foundation for increased engagement. Additionally, building a sense of belonging through community is essential, enabling employees to connect, share, and thrive within your organization, regardless of their physical or digital presence.

Hopefully, the tools and approaches discussed in this report have given you some insight and inspiration as to what you as an organization might change, to better *foster engagement and belonging in a flexible work environment*.

*To help you next time recall the insights from this report, the following two pages are summaries of all key points presented.*



# Flexible Work for the Individual Employee

These five tools serve as **condensed summaries** of the methods discussed in previous sections on structuring a flexible work schedule and cultivating engaged employees.

## Understanding Employee Needs

Conduct open dialogues, like 1:1 meetings, to learn about productivity preferences and personal interests. Use this insight to build or improve flexible work teams.

## Onboarding with Specific Rules

For better teamwork in a flexible work setup, prioritize in-person meetings when welcoming new team members or initiating projects. These interactions strengthen relationships and trust, enhancing remote collaboration.

## New Flexible Guidelines

No universal solution exists. Combine employee insights and company needs analysis, to create new guidelines. Consider adding policies like meeting-free days or spaced-out meetings, tailored to your team's schedule.

## Employee Surveys and Reflection

Regular employee surveys benefit both employers and employees. They help adjust work structures and show employees that their feedback is valued.

## Remote Meetings & Effective Leadership

Prioritize clear leadership and avoid over-scheduling. Also, consider remote ergonomic needs and increase catch-up meeting frequency for better connection among remote workers.



# Building a Sense of Belonging Through Community

These four tools serve as **condensed summaries** of the methods discussed in previous sections on creating belonging through community building.

## A Higher Purpose or a Team Purpose

Embracing a higher- or creating team purpose can foster a sense of belonging and survive any medium, be it physical or digital.

**Higher Purpose:** Aligning individuals with a larger, meaningful mission that goes beyond individual interests.

**Team Purpose:** Shared interests, encouraging team cohesion and connection based on common ground.

## Consistency

Maintaining consistency in activities and communication.

**Activities,** both digital and physical, build shared memories and purpose. Experiment with different activities

**Communication,** be authentic and consistent in broadcasting news or the company purpose. Find a medium that suits your organization, and remind employees why you exist.

## Interactivity

Leverage platforms like Slack, Teams, or Discord for digital interactivity. These tools promote dialogue, create community around shared interests, and encourage engagement beyond work tasks. Having a diverse set of channels is a key to create belonging.

## Celebrate Achievements

Celebrate milestones as a team, particularly in fragmented workspaces, to strengthen the sense of belonging. Celebration though for example activities prompted by your teams preferences.

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*David Sundström, 2023*



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