

Our May 2025 Pioneering Leader Summit took a deep dive into three big themes: Building connection, Mentoring, and Work distribution. Although these issues apply to any workplace, the ThirdPath community was exploring how they apply to high performing hybrid and remote workplaces.

Building Connection: No One-Size-Fits-All

If there's one thing we learned, it's that there's no universal playbook for remote or hybrid work. The pandemic pushed us all into remote work overnight, often without a roadmap, and many are still working through the growing pains. We also learned: organizations that experimented with remote and hybrid models before 2020 aren't struggling as much, and their success provides a guide for all of us.

What did we learn?

- **Have regular virtual meetings - cameras on!** They help build trust and a stronger sense of connection.
- **Encourage transparent conversations about what's working**—and what's not.
- **Use trial periods** for new work arrangements. Doing this lets teams experiment and adapt.
- **Create in-person rituals.** Encourage teams to design gatherings that help strengthen work culture at a tempo that aligns with the rhythm of their work.
- **Intentionally connect with friends and family outside of work.** It helps everyone return to work recharged and reduces or prevents feelings of isolation.

Mentoring: More Than Just a Nice-to-Have

Mentoring is not just about onboarding or ticking a box for professional development. It's an activity that serves many purposes. The greater clarity there is of its purpose, and the more clearly this is communicated, the more the desired outcome will be achieved.

A few key insights:

- **Mentoring is multifaceted.** You might have a mentor for a specific skill, or a long-term relationship. Both are valuable.
- **Everyone has something to teach.** In a multigenerational workplace, learning goes both ways.
- **Investment is reciprocal.** If you don't feel people are investing in you, it's hard to invest in others.
- **Remote-first mentoring is real.** You don't need to be in the same room—or even the same country—to be an effective mentor.
- **Mentors can become models of flexibility.** Not every job can flex the same way, but mentors can help mentees develop a winning solution.
- **Mentors can help mentees reflect on values and goals,** even when that means facing tough decisions like layoffs or whether an employee will stay given return-to-office mandates.

Work Distribution: Organize Around Remote-First Systems

When it comes to getting work done, creating systems with a “remote first” mindset helps everyone work more effectively – whether they are fully remote, hybrid or on-site. Remote and hybrid work has also put a sharper focus on the **softer skills** that help teams thrive, skills such as clear communication, empathy and building connection no matter where people work.

Some practical tips:

- **Know your team’s strengths.** Lean into them when assigning work.
- **Create a feedback-friendly culture.** Open dialogue helps teams prioritize, find efficiencies, and eliminate low-value work.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Team meetings, huddles, project management software, and one-on-ones all have their place.
- **Don’t let the organization tools become the work.** Make sure your systems are simple, efficient, and actually working for your team.
- **Remote work can blur boundaries.** Help team members learn how to disconnect. Learning how to set thoughtful boundaries around work and life helps everybody win.

Final Thoughts

Our May 1 2025 virtual Pioneering Leaders Summit reinforced that the future of work isn’t about where we sit—it’s about how we connect, support each other, and lead those around us.

And in today’s ever-shifting world of work, **leadership philosophy matters more than ever.** Being clear about what shapes your philosophy can make all the difference - whether you’re leading a team, mentoring a colleague, or just trying to keep your own work-life boundaries in check.