

Readjusting to a new “normal”

Eliane Markoff- June 2021

Having been away from the office and with little or no physical contact with colleagues, some managers have expressed concern about face to face reunification of their groups.

Many of us miss personal interactions and collaboration with our colleagues. We miss the personal conversations during coffee breaks and over lunch. We miss seeing each other on campus. But it's complicated.

Many of us have also enjoyed our independence. We have enjoyed the ability to control our work schedules. We have enjoyed the “easy commute” to our home office. We have enjoyed our ability to focus on our work with less interruptions associated with being in our Bentley office. We have enjoyed the quiet time alone to reflect and think of creative solutions and new initiatives.

The time away, therefore, could be viewed as a mixed blessing.

To ensure a positive and cohesive experience as we come back to campus and revive traditional as well as adapt to new methods of communication with colleagues, some managers have scheduled retreats for their teams. The Ombuds office had the opportunity to help facilitate the planning of such meetings. The questions raised to prepare for the retreats are listed below and may be of interest to your group.

The first set of questions listed below 1-5 are ice breakers and then the focus turns to mission and goals:

1. What have we missed during this past year? What have we enjoyed during the past year?
2. Please share a favorite email you received from a student or an experience you feel especially good about that made your day.
3. Have you become aware of anything new while working from home, or were you surprised about something that you didn't expect while working from home?
4. Do you have any concerns about coming back on campus and working in the same manner prior to the pandemic?
5. Is there anything you would like to share with your team members?
6. What have we done well as a team?
7. What can we do better as a team?
8. Do we understand the role each of us plays and how we perform our respective responsibilities?
9. What other new initiatives and programs should we consider for the group?
10. Are there any programs or projects that need to be reevaluated?
11. What is our ideal new normal as we move forward?
12. What initiatives will help us become more motivated and more productive?

Many of us may be overwhelmed by the return to campus. Please know that there are many resources available to help us as we come back to campus. They include our [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#), Department Chairs, your manager, Human Resources and the Ombuds Office.

I look forward to seeing you on campus and helping in any way I can.

Eliane Markoff is the Ombuds for Bentley University