exos

FINDING FLOW

The Why + How to
Support Flow for the
Modern Workforce

Ebook Expert Advisors

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Dr. Chris Bertram is an experienced applied neuroscientist and human performance coach with over 20 years of experience and expertise. He guides top entrepreneurs, executives, and athletes on maximizing learning, building resilience, and optimizing performance under pressure. As the Senior Director of Applied Neuroscience at Exos, Dr. Bertram leverages his work with high-consequence athletes into data-driven performance strategies for business professionals. He's also been known to write here and there, with over 70 scientific publications across the spectrum of human performance, featured in The Globe and The Mail, The Toronto Star, The Vancouver Sun, The New York Times, Inc. Magazine, and on the Golf Channel. Recently, Dr. Bertram even authored a book chapter on "Flow State as a Countermeasure to Mental Fatigue" and is featured in the documentary "FLOW." His role at Exos and broader impact make him a driving force in maximizing human performance.

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Dr. Sarah Sarkis is a licensed psychologist, certified executive coach, and the Senior Director of Performance Psychology at Exos. At times you'll also find her moonlighting as a writer and podcaster. With over 20 years of experience, she has had the opportunity to explore every corner of the human psyche, helping her to guide individuals to new personal heights. Currently, she's applying her passion, expertise, and focus to helping CEOs, athletes, professional coaches, and other executives achieve moonshot dreams and soar past goals. Part shrink, part coach, part Jedi of the unconscious, Dr. Sarkis leverages her knowledge, experience, and insight as a leader within the Exos Performance Innovation Team.

Stefan Underwood
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Stefan Underwood is a highly accomplished performance specialist and Senior Vice President of Methodology at Exos, bringing with him nearly two decades of experience in human performance. His passion is helping individuals excel, and he's known for his expertise in working with elite tactical and NFL combine prep populations. These days you'll find him applying his knowledge to the business world and sharing his insights globally as a presenter in Exos Education. Stefan leads his diverse team of experts in neuroscience, psychology, coaching, dietetics, and sports science, fostering collaboration through his empathetic leadership style. If that wasn't enough, Stefan is also currently pursuing a graduate degree in organizational psychology. From his broad competency and ability to inspire high-performance individuals and teams to his unwavering dedication to unlocking optimal human performance, Stefan is always pushing for more within the Exos Performance Innovation Team.

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Lead the Way with Flow

The ripple effects of flow in the workplace reach far beyond a single task or employee

You know the sound of productivity in the office? Keyboards are tapping away, brainstorming is happening in small groups, there's focused chatter, and the scraping of pens as to-do lists are crossed off.

It's the sound of flow.

Flow is the scientific term for the mental and physical state of mind when a person is fully immersed in a task.

Every leader is looking to help their team experience a state of flow. When teammates are working in sync and distractions disappear; where productivity and creativity are effortless and hours pass like minutes; where people are so absorbed in their work that nothing else matters, and the day flies by.

There's no denying it: flow state produces high-performance work. But don't be confused — we're not talking about grinding away, non-stop, workaholic-type work. Flow is fully immersive and is inherently rewarding. To reach a state of highly productive flow means leveraging rest and recovery; otherwise, you'll find yourself with a team of agitated, burned-out, and frustrated employees, producing work that no one is happy with.

Around here, we keep it simple: work + rest = success

In 2021, when we were still in the midst of the pandemic, famed organizational psychologist, Adam Grant, wrote a piece for the New York Times[1] titled: There's a Name for that Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing. He described the term "languishing" as the "neglected middle child" on the mental health spectrum that ranges from depression to flourishing.

And yes, the pandemic pushed clinical rates of burnout to reach alarming proportions, however, as Grant points out, we have to acknowledge that those numbers were already reaching critical levels before we ever locked down. And when you factor in the ever-growing number of people reporting symptoms of burnout (like high stress, low engagement, general job dissatisfaction, etc.), you can easily see the driving force behind the mass exodus from the workforce since 2020.

But fear not — Grant suggests that there may be a solution to this workplace crisis: flow.

Simply put, employee well-being matters. And not just for the employee but also for your bottom line. When a values-based culture is combined with employees that feel empowered by the appropriate strategies and tools, there is an increase in engagement and output along with an increase in well-being.

What we're saying is the answer to burnout and workplace fatigue is actually an answer with a lot of positive ripple effects — create a flow-supportive environment. It's good for your people, good for your community, good for business.

A Struggling Workforce

Our workforce has endured a fluctuating market, from lay-offs to the Great Resignation, and it's impacting their mental health. Depression and anxiety are at an all-time high, with an estimated cost of $1 trillion[2] by lost productivity.

People are looking for greener pastures where their well-being will be prioritized. But for those that voluntarily left their jobs, 40% were dissatisfied[3] in the first three months. Why? It often comes down to two things.

1. **Company culture** — Things like respect at work, autonomy, and workplace expectations.

2. **Stress** — Specifically, an inability to effectively manage work and life-related stress.

ROI of Flow at Work

There are a lot of different workplace challenges that might be stopping your teams from finding their flow, but trust us, it's more than worth it to make the changes — both big and small — to create a flow-supportive space. And because flow can happen anywhere and everywhere, for anyone, on a broad spectrum, data shows it really is a solution to a wide array of problems with a positive ripple effect.[4]

- Increased sense of well-being

- Increased levels of engagement

- Increased creativity

- Increased productivity

- Stronger workplace community

- Improved communication

A Note About Expectations

Remember when you were a kid, packed in the back of a car, surrounded by suitcases and snack wrappers, and you'd ask your parents how much longer was left to the seemingly endless road trip, and they'd say: "It's not the destination, it's the journey."

Cheesy? Yes.

True? 100%

And it's especially true for flow state in the workplace.

When it comes to creating a flow-supportive work environment, it's important to keep in mind that the process should be the focus, not the results.

Sure, wanting a more productive workplace is fine and something every leader should be striving for, however, if you're really looking to make a long-lasting, positive change for your teams to continually find a highly productive flow state, then you need to focus on employee well-being.

It's not the destination, it's the journey; it's not the outcome, it's the process. Prioritizing employee well-being is the gift that keeps on giving — flow is just one positive outcome.

The Science of Flow

How the mind and body work together to support a state of flow

9 Traits of Flow State

Let's take a step back to 1975, when Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi re-conceptualized the notion of peak or "optimal" experience and coined the term "flow" for any state that drives peak experience, outside of the normal consciousness.[4]

By looking at studies conducted globally, and looking at the nature of happiness, Csíkszentmihályi eventually identified nine characteristics of the flow experience:

01 **High Concentration** — Irrelevant info is filtered out, and there is a heightened focus on a single purpose. Simply put, high concentration on a single task.

02 **Transformation of Time** — Flow really does move time differently. Time might slow down, but typically, in flow, it seems to pass at a faster rate. In other words: Time becomes distorted.

03 **Sense of Control** — A deep sense of autonomy and command over one's self and the environment. There is a strong feeling of control over self and personal abilities.

04 **Action + Awareness** — Actions or activities feel spontaneous and automatic when action and awareness merge together. Distractions decrease, allowing abilities and awareness to enter autopilot.

05 **Clear Goals** — Having clear expectations creates a distinct feeling of certainty about what needs to be done. Really, these are just goals that are clearly defined.

06 **Rewarding** — Flow is intrinsically rewarding and a person is able to enjoy the task at hand simply for the sake of doing it; the action or activity is reason enough to continue. In other words, the experience itself is worthwhile.

07 **Sense of Self or Ego Vanishes** — A loss of self, often met with the feeling of liberation from self-consciousness, which can increase creativity, confidence, connection, and freedom of expression. This is when the concern for self is decreased while engaged in an activity.

08 **Ideal Challenge to Skill Ratio** — The ideal balance between a person's skill level and a challenge. If someone doesn't have the skills to complete a task or is overqualified, the task might be frustrating or boring. Simply put, you need an appropriate ratio of skill and challenge.

09 **Unambiguous Feedback** — Timely and clear feedback provides clarity that things are on track and allows a person to make any necessary changes to continue moving forward. This really is just giving immediate and clear feedback.

Finding the Flow Zone

Take a closer look at Csíkszentmihályi's Flow Chart, from his book on the science of flow, called "Beyond Boredom and Anxiety." He describes flow as "a state of peak enjoyment, energetic focus, and creative concentration."

- **Anxiety** — Think about it this way, when a person is anxious, their mind tends to be fixated or ruminating on events of the past or worrying about events in the future. Additionally, anxiety bumps us out of the moment and places us in the future. Whereas flow state is when a person is completely focused on the present moment at hand.

- **Boredom** — Everyone knows how boredom feels, but what we're really referring to here is when there is a general lack of energetic focus for a person. When someone is in a state of flow, focus follows; they're less likely to be distracted as they find complete absorption and concentration.

ANXIETY

TASK DIFFICULTY

FLOW ZONE

BOREDOM

USER CAPABILITY
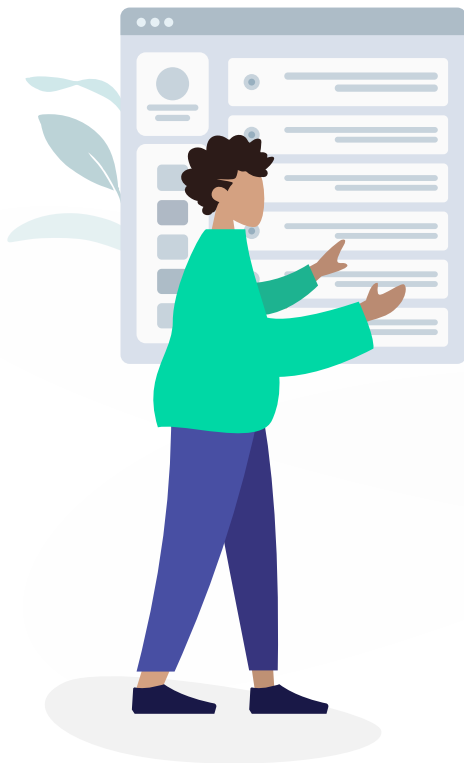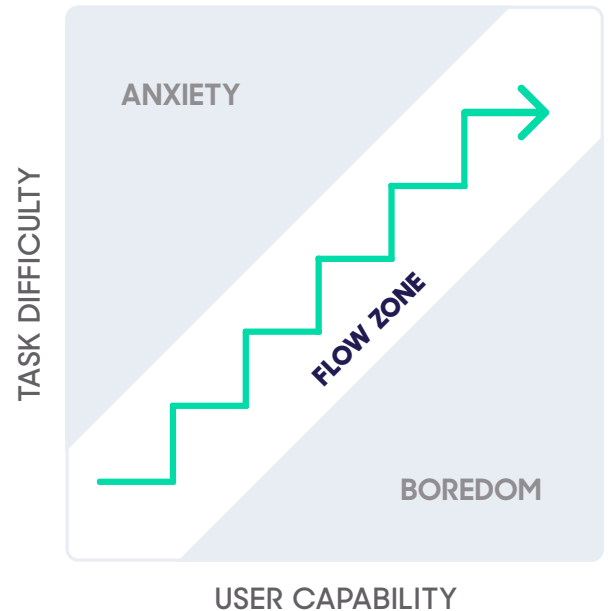
Knowledge is Power

As you begin making the necessary steps to support your team in finding their flow, it's important to remember a few things we've already touched on.

- **Process vs Outcome** — When it comes to flow, and supporting your teams in flow state, it's not about getting to the end results, it's the process that reaps the benefits.

- **Nine Traits of Flow** — Supporting flow means supporting these nine areas for your employees, and that might look different for each individual.

- **Anxiety vs Boredom** — The key to flow is finding that sweet spot where your people are in a relaxed yet engaged state with heightened focus.

- **Progress is Progress** — No matter how small or subtle the progress is, when it comes to creating a flow-centered workplace, any progress is a step in the right direction and should be celebrated.

The Four Phases of Flow

Before you start gathering your teams and sharing your flow-focused itinerary, it's important to take a step back and understand that flow isn't actually an all-or-nothing experience, but really a four-phase cycle.

Phase 1: Struggle

This phase preps the body and mind for focus. In this phase, a person is met with feelings of agitation and stress, and the body begins to release adrenaline. Adrenaline, and its ripple effects, improve cognitive function, heart rate, blood pressure, and more — all of which signal the body to get ready. So yes, the struggle is real ... really important.

Phase 2: Release

This phase is where the body rewards a person for embracing the struggle. When this happens, the body releases dopamine, that feel-good hormone that increases drive, pursuit, and motivation. This phase also comes with a bonus relaxation response, where endocannabinoids (nervous system supporters) counteract the stress response from phase one to help support creative insight.

Phase 3: Flow

This is where the magic happens, the flow phase. The mind and body are in a relaxed state of heightened focus. Endorphins and serotonin enter the show, the frontal lobes begin to chill out, and the brain's electrical rhythm is at its peak, as a person enters a state of flow.

Phase 4: Recovery

No matter the occasion or the activity at hand, flow is an intense, high-energy experience, mentally and physically, which means recovery is crucial. What do we mean by recovery? Well, it differs from person to person, but recovery is the opposite of exertion. So, sorry, checking emails doesn't count as recovery. Every hour or two, everyone needs to take a break — grab a snack, get some sunlight, meditate, stretch. The specifics will be unique to each individual, but the important part is that, as leaders, you promote recovery breaks.

01 — Struggle Phase

02 — Release Phase

03 — Flow State

04 — Recovery Phase
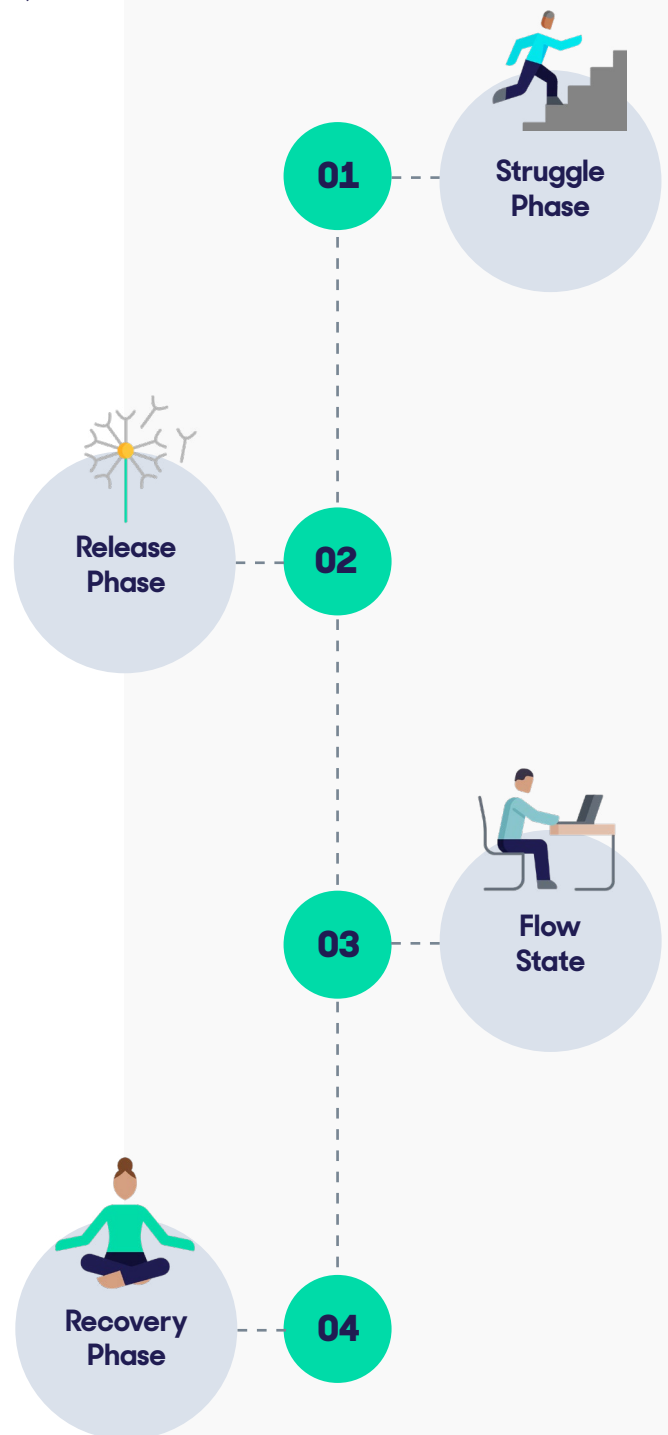
Fostering Flow in Your Facility

How you can create the ideal environment for flow

Foundations of Flow

Now that we've really gotten into the nitty gritty of what flow is and why it's so important for your employees, it's time to take a closer look at how to create a space that truly encourages your teams to flow.

So when it comes to creating a flow-supportive work environment, there are three foundational areas that are pretty necessary.

A Welcoming, Safe Workplace

Creating a work environment that is welcoming, supportive, and safe is actually pretty simple. Amy C Edmunson,[5] pretty much the authority on psychological safety, a Harvard Business School Professor, New York Times best-selling author, and organizational consultant, defines psychology safety as, "the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for sharing your ideas, questions or concerns."

It's the idea that there is no expense for a person to be truly themselves within a team. Consider how your employees react and respond to risk, failure, fear, and friction, these areas can be extremely telling as to whether or not your people feel safe and supported in their environment.

When it comes to developing or supporting a psychologically safe, welcoming workplace, there are four stages6 to the process:

- **Stage 01: Inclusion**
  Everyone feels accepted as part of the team.

- **Stage 02: Safety**
  Everyone feels safe to ask questions, engage, and give and receive feedback.

- **Stage 03: Contribution**
  Everyone feels free to contribute their skills, talents, and abilities.

- **Stage 04: Challenge**
  Everyone feels able to challenge the status quo, without fear or embarrassment, marginalization, or punishment.

Here are a few tips to help you establish a workspace that is judgment-free and psychologically safe:

- **Actively listen** — In order for people to feel a sense of belonging, they need to feel seen and heard. Active listening allows us to convey and (unconsciously) cue our effort to understand their needs, wants & POV.

- **Be transparent and vulnerable** — When we are transparent and (appropriately) vulnerable as leaders, we model to others that it is okay to be fully human in this space.

- **Seek out dissent** —The presence of healthy dissent inside your teams is (possibly) a good indication that teammates have a strong sense of belonging, enough to challenge the status quo and not jeopardize their social standing in the community.

A Supportive and Authentic Approach to Recovery

While recovery is the last phase in the flow cycle, at Exos, we believe it is actually a critical step when it comes to creating a workspace that supports flow. Just like an athlete can't perform if they're under-recovered, neither can employees.

Think about it this way, the fastest way to block a person from entering a state of flow is poor recovery habits. But that doesn't mean at the expense of business growth or viability. Research[7,8,9] shows that when team members are encouraged in active recovery (like stretching, moving, hydrated, etc.) it directly benefits productivity as well as the individual.

So how do you create a pro-recovery culture?

There are a few different ways to offer your team next-level support and create a culture of recovery:

01 Daily recovery — Every day opportunities for your individual employees to find recovery within their workday.

- **Microbreaks:**[10] short, five- to ten-minute breaks[11] like walking or stretching, gazing out the window, having a snack, or mindful meditation. Structure meetings to be 25 or 50 minutes long to ensure your team has time for microbreaks.

- **Boundaries:** Support your team being truly off after hours by allowing employees to log off so they can recover.

02 Weekly recovery — Ways to incorporate recovery for your entire team.

- **Dedicated recovery:** creating time and space for everyone to focus on their recovery in the way that works best for them. At Exos, we're researching the power of the four-day workweek, but there are other options that can serve your team.

- **Time blocking:** dedicated time to specific tasks alongside dedicated time to recover.

- **Ditch the conference room:** when possible, take meetings outside, or even block out days for no meetings to encourage "head down" work days for true focus.

03 Quarterly recovery — Here is where to think about big-picture recovery.

- **Paid time off:** Did you know that 55% of Americans don't use their PTO?[12] Quarterly recovery is an opportunity to lead by example, as a leader, use your PTO as an opportunity to truly "turn off." Remember, be proactive — encourage your employees to use their PTO before burnout happens.

A Truly Empowered Team of People

Oftentimes when we think of corporations empowering and supporting employees, we think of more time off or better benefits, and while, yes, those things are critical to employee well-being, it's also important to look closely at the culture we as leaders are creating.

Empowering your people really is making a simple shift in mindset and creating space for employees to make decisions about their personal recovery. Creating a culture where it's okay for teammates to say no to meetings, silence notifications, and utilize microbreaks in a way that best serves them.

Simply put, work should be a place where people feel safe enough to articulate their own needs.

Friendly Reminder: It might take a while for your team to embrace the changes necessary for finding their flow, but a little goes a long way. Stay focused and supportive.

Finding Flow for Your Team

How you can help your people find their flow triggers

As you set out to create a workspace for your team that is flow-supportive, it's important to remember that flow is a unique internal process. Meaning, how a person, or group of people, reach their state of flow will greatly vary.

Additionally, flow is also a spectrum. At the one end, you'll find macroflow, which is peak flow or the deepest version of flow, where a person is completely absorbed and focused on the task at hand. At the other end, is microflow, which has been described as shorter, less intense flow experiences.

Keep in mind, flow can be subtle, so it's critical to help your people develop an inner awareness of the various characteristics of flow state in all its forms. And equally important to remember, is that microflow is a powerful tool that can really impact a person's ability to learn, create, and perform.

Really, we don't need a state of deep flow to see the benefits of it. Microflow is a powerful tool.

A Note on Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a broad term, covering numerous categories of people, but simply describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them differently.[13] More often than not, we hear this term in the context of autism spectrum disorders or other neurological conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities.

In regards to neurodiversity, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. And when it comes to supporting those who are neurodiverse, as leaders, we simply need to focus on what's true for everyone.

+ Sleep is critical
+ Recovery matters
+ Proper fueling and hydration are key

A good rule of thumb for all employees, but especially those who are neurodiverse, is to be patient while supporting employee autonomy. Allow them the freedom and space to experiment with different flow triggers to discover what works best for them.

People are unique; autonomy and empowerment really are the building blocks for flow for all employees to feel supported in expressing their needs.

Flow Triggers

Flow triggers are preconditions — as an individual, in their own surroundings, among their team — that help set the stage for flow. As we mentioned earlier, flow follows focus, so flow triggers are things that help us draw our focus to the present. That is what flow is all about: being present and driving focus.

Everyone's different, what triggers one person's flow might bore or distract another. So help your people identify their individual triggers, and remember, practice makes perfect — the more your team learns their triggers and how to utilize them, the easier it will be to enter into a flow state.
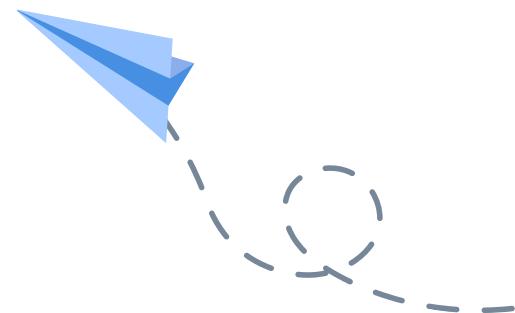
Psychological Triggers

These are factors that an individual has some internal control over. Pretty much internal strategies that focus attention.

- **Clearly defined goals**
  A person has clear parameters regarding the task at hand (e.g. a well-written brief or outline including the purpose or goal).

- **Immediate feedback**
  In-the-moment feedback so one can quickly adjust or alter strategy (e.g. watching the body language of participants during a presentation or workshop).

- **Challenge/skill ratio**
  When someone is challenged ever-so-slightly more than their skill level, versus just working within their skills (e.g. providing a task that requires just a bit of challenge beyond their skills, but that is still reasonable for them to complete).

- **Intentional/expressed creativity**
  The act of intentionally expressing creativity through action (e.g. writing, doodling, dancing, singing, etc., any other variety of creative expression).

- **Gratitude**
  A stating appreciation for people, places, or things in one's life (e.g. writing down gratitude in a journal or stating appreciation at the beginning of the meeting).

Environmental Triggers

Factors in the immediate surroundings that directly impact a person's internal state.

- **Risk/high consequences**
  Pushing outside one's comfort zone (e.g. a new challenge or the social risk of publicly expressing gratitude).

- **Novelty**
  Visual, tactile, auditory, or any other new stimuli (e.g. working in a new location or a chance to play as an adult).

- **Sensory richness**
  A break from the "norm" into nature (e.g. getting outdoors and spending time in nature or even incorporating plants into the office decor).

- **Deep embodiment**
  Engaging all your senses at once, especially movement that engages the balance system while also engaging sound, visuals, and/or other spacial senses (e.g. hopping on a balance board or balancing on one foot while listening to music.).

Group Triggers

Flow can be experienced in a collective state when a group is performing at the peak of its abilities.

- **Psychological safety**
  Sharing ideas, asking questions, voicing concerns, making mistakes without fear (e.g. asking for opinions, creating space for questions, opening up discussions, etc.).

- **Challenge/skill ratio**
  The ideal balance between the demand and the group's abilities (e.g. providing a task that the group has the skills to complete and also challenging enough to not bore them).

- **Shared, clearly defined goals**
  Clear parameters regarding the task (e.g. a clearly stated goal or agenda at the beginning of a meeting or workshop).

- **Familiarity**
  A level of familiarity among group members (e.g. a level of knowledge about others in the group — temperaments, communication styles, roles, etc.).

- **Close listening**
  An authentic desire to understand and support each other (e.g. taking the time to hear other's responses or opinions or asking for other's input).

- **Shared concentration**
  Intentional, focused attention (e.g. the entire group is focused and determined to move towards the goal at hand).

- **Shared control/autonomy**
  The belief that each person can make unique contributions that matter (e.g. a leader creating space for each member to voice their ideas, active listening, asking questions, etc.)

- **Frequent communication**
  Allowing participants to actively engage (e.g. Check-ins or thought-provoking questions during a meeting or workshop to help keep a team's energy moving forward).

- **Shared, group risk**
  A sense of internal agitation to promote excitement and fuel motivation (e.g. a new challenge, team building challenge, or physical activity).

- **Blending of egos**
  The setting aside of titles and hierarchies to support connectedness (e.g. removing formal titles, using first names, creating space for everyone to have a voice, etc.)

- **"Yes, and …"**
  A concept taken from improv acting; it is a way to build off ideas and support constructive criticism or feedback. (e.g. When someone shares an opinion or idea, make sure to validate that idea and then add to it. For example, "Yes. That's a great idea [summarize the crux of the idea] and have you considered [idea] as well?")

- **Dissent**
  Opposing views enhance critical thinking and creativity to help drive innovation and is inherently linked to the struggle phase of flow (e.g. a leader asking the team, "is there anything we're missing?" or other ways to encourage differing thoughts and opinions.).

Flow is Everywhere: On-Site, Remote, and Hybrid

How to support flow no matter where your people are

When it comes to creating a work environment that is flow-supportive, you might be scratching your head, thinking of the different types of employees you have. How are you supposed to create an environment for a diverse workforce? You're probably not just addressing one office space with the same challenges, distractions, and work schedule. Every work environment has its challenges, but the good news is that all can support flow, too.

A Note About Travel

For employees needing to travel, keep in mind this comes with its own challenges and disruptions. From time changes to sleeping habits,[14] traveling can seriously hinder the ability to flow.

The best way to support flow for employees who travel is to help them set up a travel routine. A few tips to remind your travelers of are:

- Quickly adjusting to local time through movement in natural light and eating meals at regular local times
- Regulating sleep
- Choosing nutritional meals that support the brain, body, and mind
- Moving or exercising for at least 30 minutes a day

And remember, travel means a change of scenery, which is also a flow trigger.

Work Location Challenges

As there are flow triggers, there are also flow blockers. One of the biggest flow blockers is a distraction that takes you out of focus; every work environment has its own distractions that can and should be addressed.

On-Site

On-site, in-office, in-person — whatever you call it, this is when people are physically at a location provided by the employer. These employees may experience:

- Distracting coworkers
- Poorly designed workspaces
- Frequent interruptions
- Lack of control of their environment

Remote

Remote work has had an obvious boom in more recent years. The details vary, but generally, remote employees work where they choose, often from home. These employees may experience:

- Digital distractions (social media, television, personal email, etc.)
- Technology difficulties out of your control
- Household distractions (children, pets, unfinished chores, etc.)

Hybrid

In this context, when we say hybrid work, we mean employees who work remotely some days and on-site other days. These employees may experience:

- All the same challenges as remote and hybrid, combined
- Forgotten work or work tools needed when transporting from one place to another
- Mismanaged schedules (digital meetings while on-site, group work while remote, etc.)

All Locations

No matter where your employees work, there are some common challenges that can pop up in any environment.

- More time in meetings than self-directed work
- Working without breaks
- Inefficient or poorly planned meetings
- Lack of autonomy
- Lack of novelty

Supporting Flow Anywhere

Just like every location has challenges, there are common threads to supporting flow for all types of workspaces. No matter where your employees are, you can help create a flow-supportive work environment.

Meetings

Meetings can be a major hurdle for any location because often, we have too many that are poorly planned and minimal breaks in between. Improve your meetings by:

- Ensuring every meeting has a clear purpose and agenda

- Ensuring the right people are involved — and only those people

- Encouraging meeting lengths that allow for breaks (25 minutes versus 30, 50 versus 60, etc.)

- Empowering your team to decline meetings that don't serve them.

Environment

For on-site or hybrid workers, the physical space and layout of the office can greatly affect your team's ability to find their flow. Ideally, your office should have the space to:

- Support group and individual flow

- Provide space with closed-door offices for those working alone

- Provide collaborative spaces for teams working together

- Flexibility for individuals to find the right place for them to complete the task in front of them

Schedules

At an organizational level, consider limiting meeting days or times to help create space for individuals to structure their days in a way that works for them. At an individual level, allow your employees to have a say over their schedules. This helps to promote flow because:

- Autonomy is key for intrinsic motivation

- It acknowledges that every individual is unique in their needs

- It allows your employees to find what works best for their flow and efficiency

- It promotes employee well-being

Habits

Flow is a practice, so it's important to build a routine so that flow can come easier and easier each time. Make sure you're giving each member of your team the support needed to create consistent habits by:

- Permitting the use of "do not disturb" on company chat during flow time

- Allowing employees to decline meetings

- Encourage blocking time in the calendar for heads-down work and recovery
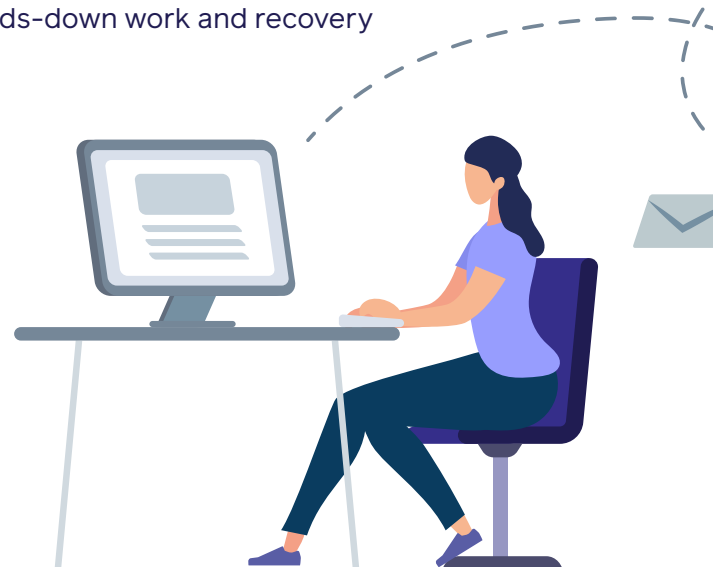
A Forever Kind of Flow

Steps you can take now, later, and in the future to support flow

Slow and Steady

When it comes to building new habits or setting new goals, you have to play the long game. Just like flow itself, the progression of flow can be subtle, happening below the surface before we see the results. But remember, consistency is key, over time those small changes compound and soon you and your team will start to see the far-reaching benefits.

Climate vs. Culture

Organizational climate describes what and how things are done whereas organizational culture explains why.[15] Another way to think about it is that culture is the way work is done and climate is how it feels to work at an organization.[16]

Keep in mind: culture doesn't always reflect climate and vice versa. Your company's mission, initiatives, incentives, and benefits could look amazing on paper, but you need to step back and see how the climate actually feels. Does it reflect the culture you're working to create?
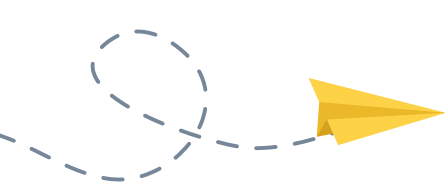
Action Steps

So you know the what, you understand the why; you even know the how when it comes to flow.

But *where* do you even begin?

Fear not, creating flow in the workplace doesn't mean sweeping organizational changes, it's more about focusing on the small, simple steps, practices, and adjustments that promote the pre-conditions necessary to create flow.

Here are three handy checklists to help you create a workplace that supports flow for everyone on your team:

Now

- Do a meetings audit. And we mean really look at the number of meetings your team is averaging; keep the necessary ones, cut the rest.

- Reassess your company values. Do they need to be updated? Do they acknowledge a balance of employee well-being and organizational goals?

- Ask yourself how your company values are aligning with the everyday climate within the organization. Are there gaps? How would you bridge those gaps?

Soon

- Create a philosophy that shapes the culture of meetings inside your team and make sure leadership models it. For example, don't schedule meetings that are irrelevant; make sure meetings that are necessary have clear goals and end times.

- Lean into recovery. Embrace, promote, and model it at every level, especially leadership.

- Prioritize and protect flow-focused work time.

- Support, promote, and encourage your people to experience flow and recovery outside of work in their personal lives.

Later

- Ask yourself how your performance appraisal process ties to your values. Are you rewarding behaviors that tie in with your values or the opposite? For example, if you value teamwork, do you reward and promote leaders based on their ability to lead and publicly recognize their team?

- Incentivize recovery. Run a PTO-usage audit, ensure leaders are accountable for their people utilizing PTO; encourage them to model this as well.

- Invest in coaching, facilities, training, and expertise to support your organization and its employees in the quest for a culture and climate of flow.

- Create and invest in a space that is designed to support and encourage flow, including the recovery phase.

Focus on Flow

Helping your people flow means helping your organization thrive

Flow is an invaluable tool for your business and your employees, with a pretty massive positive ripple effect, from bottom lines to employee well-being.

Helping your people find their flow really can mean bringing passion back into your team's work, and who doesn't want employees who are excited and focused on the work they're doing?

See, at Exos, we firmly believe that when individuals thrive, their teams thrive. And when teams thrive the organization thrives. That's why we've made it our mission to support your team's readiness — helping anyone and everyone to have the physical, mental, and emotional capacity to live up to their potential in the moments that matter most. Meaning if your team is Exos Ready, finding their state of flow is simple and easy.

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