



Harnessing Hybrid Work

It is difficult to imagine that the world already has endured well over one year of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as the midpoint of 2021 approaches, some reasons for optimism have emerged — from widespread availability of vaccines to companies preparing for their “next normal” workplaces.

For many employers, part of this vision for tomorrow involves their employees spending some workdays in the office and some working from home. In fact, [a West Monroe poll](#) finds that almost 1 in 5 executives are already implementing a hybrid model. [Employee Benefit Adviser](#) shares SHRM data that 68 percent of workplaces would want employees to be in the office at least three days per week when it is safe to return.

Workers themselves say they hope to continue this type of arrangement. [A study by Boston Consulting Group and The Network](#) reveals that, in the future, 89 percent of global respondents expect to have a job that allows them to work remotely at least occasionally. Overall, most workers “prefer a hybrid model” — considered to be two to three days per week from home and the remainder in the office. [McKinsey](#) also finds that a majority of employees would like a “more flexible working model post-pandemic.” [A recent Prudential survey](#) shows that, among Americans who have been working remotely during the pandemic, 87 percent would like to remain working from home at least one day per week. Across all employees, 68 percent indicate that a hybrid workplace arrangement is “ideal.”

However, to help hybrid succeed and take hold as an enduring reality, company leaders should rethink the employee experience and make practical shifts. According to [Microsoft Corp.’s Work Trend Index report](#), they “should resist the urge to see hybrid work as business as usual” and remain mindful of the demands on their workforces. There are a number of strategies to support the shift to hybrid — such as making investments in both workspaces and technology to connect people’s digital and physical environments. Specific to office space design, [a Gartner, Inc. survey](#) finds that more than half of finance and corporate real estate leaders anticipate using shared office seating for at least one quarter of employees who return post-pandemic.

From the interpersonal perspective, [a CNBC.com article](#) shares recommendations from Harvard Business School’s Raj Choudhury on creating a healthy environment where employees feel engaged

and productive. The transition to hybrid should be supported with intentional structural changes — empowering specific work teams to determine their schedules, for example. [Bloomberg](#) emphasizes viewpoints that, for hybrid and remote work models to succeed, companies should genuinely revisit roles and expectations with flexibility in mind.

Also, many employers may need to balance shifting dynamics within their workforce compositions — ensuring fairness and equal consideration across in-office employees and remote/hybrid workers.

[Gallup](#) also notes that leaders must address how they will conceptualize and measure productivity in this more complex environment. It is necessary to set clear expectations, as just 6 in 10 employees say they strongly agree that “they know what is expected of them at work.” To effectively lead hybrid workers, employers need to take a thoughtful approach to adapting employee tasks and incorporating frequent check-ins to ensure they feel supported and connected.

It is also critical that companies and team leaders address skills development equally within a hybrid context. According to [Gartner, Inc.](#), 58 percent of the workforce “needs new skills to get their jobs done” successfully. [HR Dive](#) covers the increased importance of learning and training, which help workers — both as individuals and as part of the broader organization — transition into situations that have likely changed.

As companies and their work teams begin to navigate this new hybrid era, it will be critical to regularly connect with individual employees and their managers. Meaningful efforts to assess their comfort levels, skill gaps, and needs in both the remote and office spaces will go a long way to build loyalty, improve performance, and strengthen retention.

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