

Keep the office.

Go hybrid.



Thinking of quitting the physical office for remote work? Maybe you should think again.

Intro

“The pandemic might seem to come to an end. Whether this is true or not only time will tell. Companies are ready to call in employees and restore office work exactly as it was before. But is this really the correct approach?”

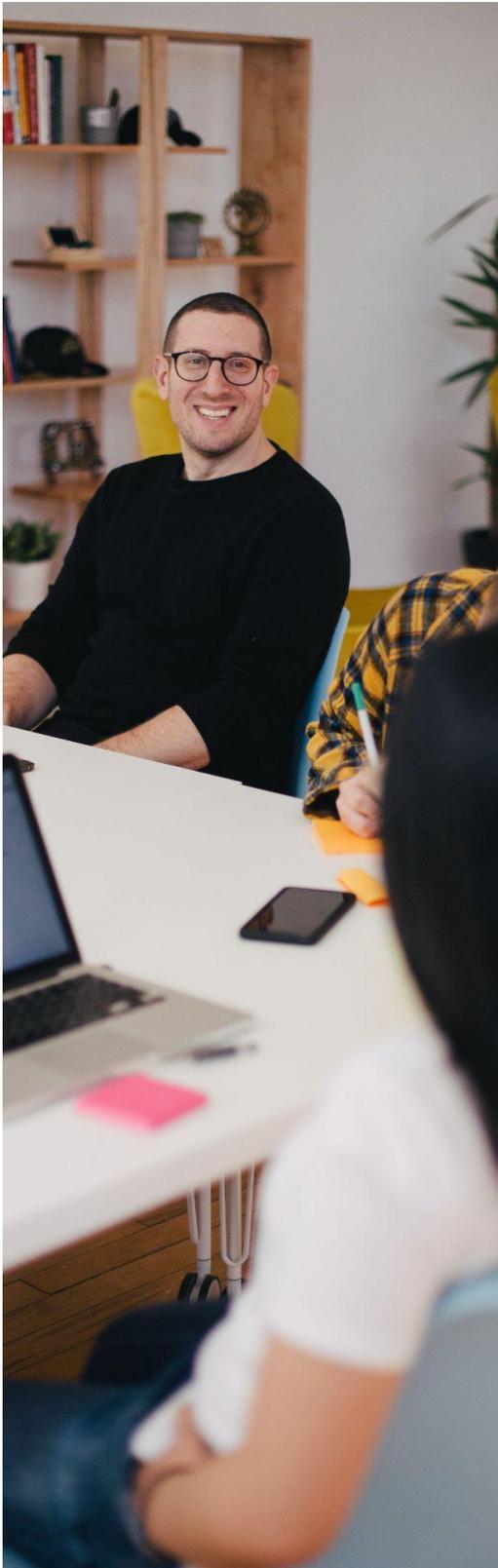
It’s evident that employees not only do not want to go back to 100% office days but are apprehensive about this possibility. None of us have ever come back to work from a pandemic. Employees will likely feel excited, apprehensive and nervous about this. Management should set a goal to empower employees to return to the office with confidence, and offer a flexible working experience (of any type).

It’s clear now that the office isn’t ‘dead’, and most of us will return. We can choose to embrace change by continuing to practice empathy and encouraging companies to prioritize well-being. Easing into change might make it feel less dramatic. The benefits of an office space can include (but not only) collaboration and community. Therefore we suggest continuing to encourage pre-pandemic behaviors like coffee breaks, team events and lunches between colleagues. The office should potentially change from a ‘place of work’ to a ‘destination’ where employees meet to create and build.

Through this guide we want to address the reasons it is important to keep a physical space for employees to meet and work in.”



Office Space: To be or not to be?



According to recent studies, companies are expecting to reduce office space in the near future¹. And even though many of these organizations are keen on seeing their physical space footprint decline, we believe that many of those companies will find it necessary and essential to maintain some sort of office space. Therefore the emphasized keyword being *reduce* and not *eliminate*. A space where employees can connect with their colleagues, learn from seeing, share their thoughts and ideas spontaneously and overall feel surrounded by the people who work with them.

Having teams working together in the same place day by day will help build tighter bonds and maybe even friendships. This will cultivate a more efficient and product environment and overall more satisfied employees. (More on company culture in this guide.)

¹ <https://fortune.com/2021/06/23/companies-reducing-office-space-fortune-500-ceos/>

Putting people first

Working remotely has kept your employees safer (from getting infected) and isolated. Though the first was very much needed during those early pandemic outbreak days, the later was an unwanted side effect. Most likely employees will have two major concerns regarding returning to office work after a long time of remote work. The first being surrounded again by people, which might lead many to fear getting infected; and the second being related to their anxiety to return to an inflexible working, more commuting and less free time for family or friends. During the pandemic employees experience taking the dog for a walk, eating lunch with family, shortening or extending work days as they see fit. They don't want all of that to disappear.

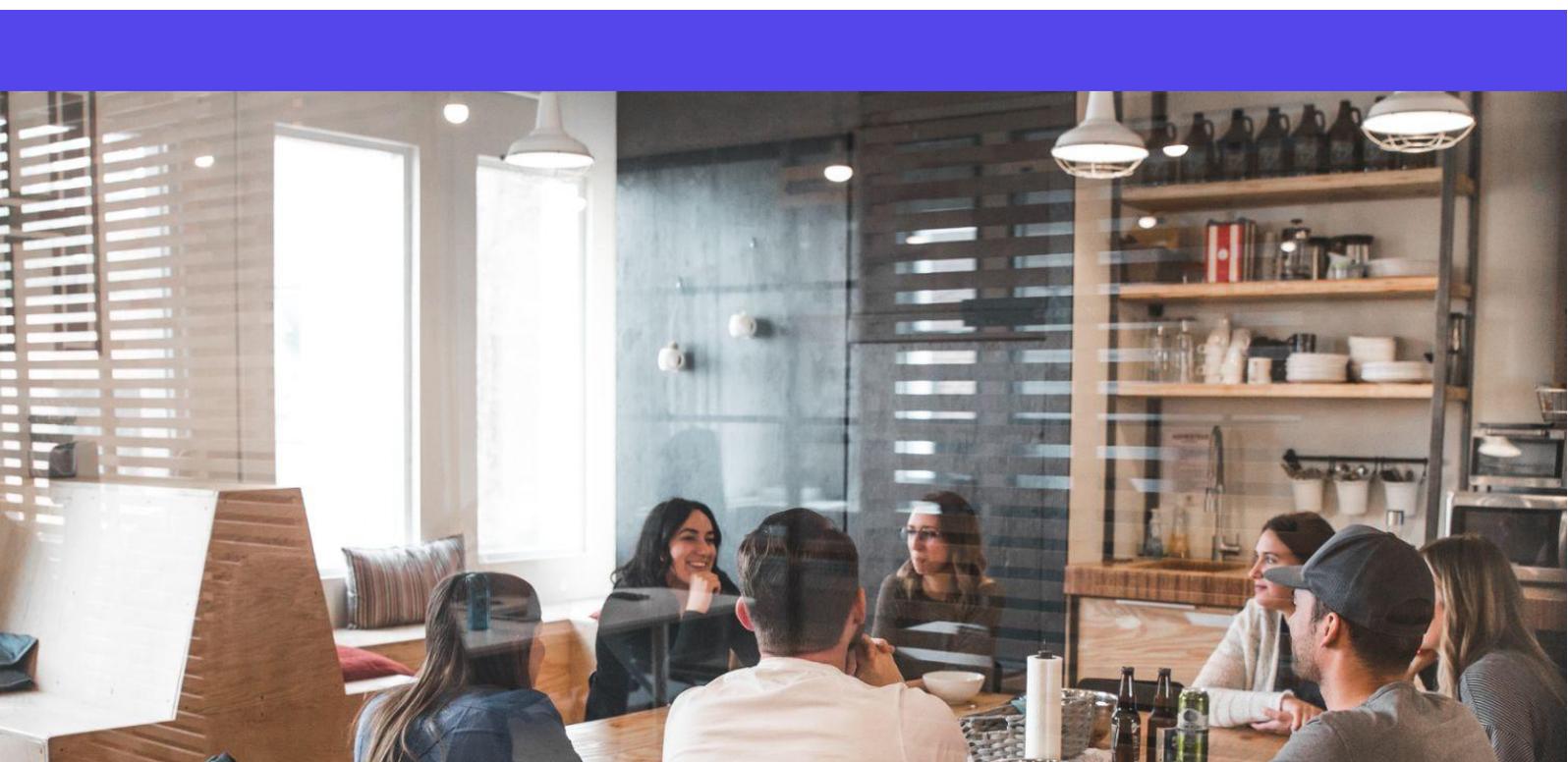
A **hybrid work model** might be the right solution. It's a simple trade-off between the benefits of both remote work and office work. It offers both flexibility and office days and ensures somewhat of compromise that could be agreed by all. Hybrid work refers to a work arrangement that allows employees to work a certain predetermined number of days in and out of the office. Work from home (WFH) is enhanced by the company ensuring that employees have all they need to be effective wherever they work.

Now, let's address employees' first concern - **safety**. Keeping employees safe shouldn't be a burden on anyone. In cases of exposure there should be a step by step approach set up by the company. In a hybrid setup **not** everyone is at the office every day and with proper attendance reporting

and real time data you can control the maximum number of people present within a space and later it will be easier to decrease and even pinpoint who needs to be checked, sent home or quarantined. This will ensure smoother operations and decrease stress at employee and employer level.

Regarding the second concern - **flexibility**. Hybrid work offers the best of both worlds; flexibility but also days of collaboration. (more on creating a collaborative space later in this guide).

Lastly, because of extended time away from our normal daily office work routines, we strongly advise you to remind your workforce of those basic actions they did before, like taking breaks, meeting up with other colleagues, time to move around and stretch and overall enjoy the experience of being around others and not just sitting in front of a computer (as they did at home).



Reasons to bring employees back

Collaboration. There are many substitutions for face to face encounters. Video conferencing has been on the rise and they have been helping all of us conduct our work and meetings thus far. From our point of view online meetings don't always deliver the best user experience: With connectivity issues, multiple speakers, limited time frames and lack of body language nuances etc... Having a space to come to and have real conversations face-to-face will provide the perfect setting for brainstorming, idea feeling and collaboration between different individuals.

The **wellbeing** of the workforce is a topic that concerns many companies these days. It's not a trend to care about the mental state of employees, it's the necessary evolution, and while working from home comes with advantages it also has some downsides (isolation, poor health, burnout, lack of motivation and disconnect with company culture).

Giving employees **an opportunity to wake up**, get ready and leave the house will already play a small role in improving their wellbeing. Giving them a place to feel safe, to focus and to collaborate, will even enhance that improvement. Having a dynamic work experience will further reduce risks of burnout.

Using new technology: Embracing hybrid work

In order to make a smooth and safe return to the office, we recommend taking on an IT solution to help. This will help orchestrate attendance, enable team leads to schedule team meetings and make sure office utilization is spread evenly through the week. There are many solutions that could assist you with transitioning your workplace into a hybrid workplace and help you maintain and optimize it as such. Having an integrated and automated solution will create a streamlined process that is easy to follow, easy to maintain and will create data insights that can be reviewed if needed before making decisions regarding physical office space and costs that are related.

Additional benefits of having a 3rd party platform are:

- ★ Integrations with HR and communication tools - a seamless way to connect the systems you are familiar with and avoid duplicate work.
- ★ User experience that is thought through and offers employees an ease of use when adding more processes to their day to day.

And other endless improvements that arise from being dedicated to this subject. Feedback could be sent to these providers to further customize their solutions in a way that suits you and your team. Bringing your team together, safely, with proper tracking and with ease should be a priority companies set. .

The collaborative office space

Redesigning a cooperative and collaborative environment in your physical office space will meet employees needs, boost productivity, enhance employer branding and retain your company culture.

Checklist for creating a collaborative workspace:

- Offer flexible desks that can be switched around.
- Have an open plan rooms if it's possible.
- Allow employees to have dedicated break-out areas.
- Create space for dining-in.
- Offer plenty of meeting rooms and also call booths.
- Set up seating with employees facing each other and not walls.
- Find the optimal room temperature.
- Insert color in your design, for engagement and focus.

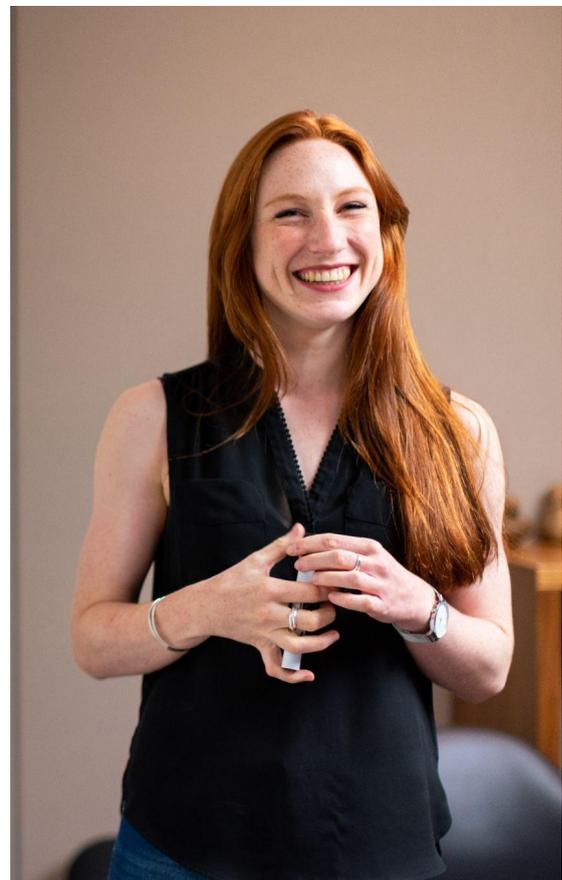
Having different spaces for connecting and collaborating can foster innovation, new ideas and also friendship. A good company culture is formed by having strong attachment between employees and company. Strengthening working relationships allows employees to feel more comfortable to ask questions, share knowledge and assist each other. There at yoffix we teamed up with a few office design partners so that we can offer our clients a holistic solution and the best hybrid work experience.

Summary

Prior to the pandemic it was hard to imagine companies allowing all employees to work remotely, today we are dealing with the aftermath. It's important to make any new transition as simple and easy as possible to give stability and comfort to employees.

Involving employees in the process of transitioning to hybrid work will gain you buy-in as opposed to unilateral decision making that forces them into another new reality. Seeking feedback and communicating properly always leaves employees feeling included and respected. Once the decision is made or the pilot has started your employees will stand beside you and ensure a successful transition.

Adding technology to manage your hybrid office will make the transition smoother, easier and more efficient. It's not just attendance scheduling and desk bookings... it's fostering collaboration and face to face interactions; securing a better hybrid office experience. Having a partner to help on the way is a vital part of making this change happen for both company and employee.



Why choose yoffix



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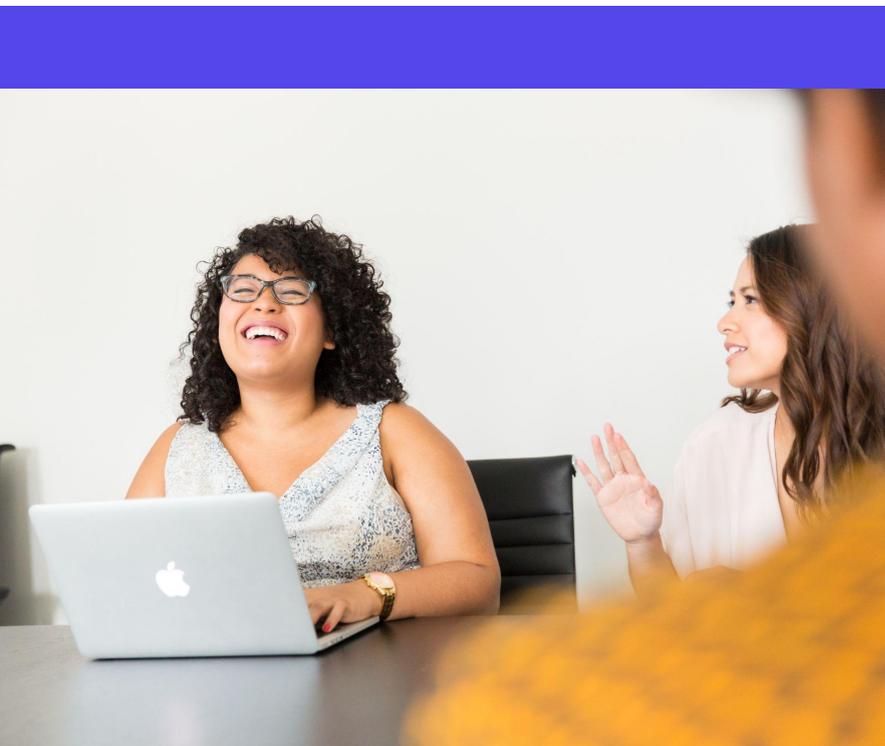
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