



# Creating Hybrid Work Models for Success

Best Practices from Companies around the Globe

**deskbird**



## Foreword

As the world of work continues to evolve with the times, we are seeing more tech companies becoming increasingly flexible in the way they organize work in their offices. This allows these organizations to attract the best talent by casting a global net for prospective employees and providing flexible benefits. In the past 3 years, we have seen companies around the world opt for a mix of remote and in-office work, allowing employees to choose when and where they want to work.

This flexible way of working has already been adopted by some of the world's biggest tech companies, who are pioneering the hybrid work model and exemplifying its success. In this paper, we will explore the current state of hybrid work, the different models being adopted, and how companies around the world are responding to the ever-changing working model.

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# 1 How leadership is responding to the “hybrid” revolution?

## A Models adopted by Tech/Big companies: Do’s and Don’ts

Many of the world’s largest and most successful companies have adopted hybrid models of their own. As a result of the new global climate, company leadership urges adaptation. However, other company leaders are pushing back against the need for remote options for employees.



Beginning with the seamless transitions, **Microsoft** is taking a three-pronged approach to their hybrid work model, which includes work site (physical place of work), work location (geographic location), work hours. Depending on the role, Microsoft specifies<sup>1</sup> in their job postings if the job is up to 50% work from home, up to 100% work from home, or Microsoft on-site only. If the job is 100% from home, the employee can work from anywhere geographically. Some jobs that are hybrid, requiring some in-office work, offer multiple locations from which the person can work. Additionally, Microsoft embraces flexible work hours, allowing employees to discuss with their managers when the best time is for them to work.

Microsoft is also innovating products specifically for the hybrid world in order to increase efficiency and support the transition to hybrid and remote work models. For example, Microsoft is launching Teams Connect which are shared channels created for collaboration and the Microsoft Whiteboard which provides teams with the ability to visualize and brainstorm while collaborating, as if in the office. These are just two examples of many innovations Microsoft has recently launched.



**Amazon**, a global giant, has also made strides<sup>2</sup> in the hybrid work world, giving employees the option to work from home if their role permits, such as those working on Amazon’s corporate or technology teams. They announced that rather than setting a number of days per week that employees are expected to work, they are allowing individual team leaders to make this decision based on the team’s needs and ultimately, customer’s needs. Corporate employees can work from anywhere but need to be close enough to the office so that they can travel there in a day if need be. Amazon is also allowing corporate employees to work away from the office, fully remotely from a location within the country of employment, for up to four weeks a year. However, considering the nature of Amazon’s business and the need for physical workers in the manufacturing and logistics sectors, these employees are still required to come to the office as their jobs require physical work.

1. <https://careers.microsoft.com/us/en/hybrid-workplace>

2. <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/workplace/amazon-offering-teams-more-flexibility-as-we-return-to-office>





This contrasts with **Tesla**’s Elon Musk, who believes that all employees, regardless of their roles, must come to the office and is requiring employees to come into the office 40 hours a week. While companies like Amazon are allowing corporate employees to work remotely, Musk urges that the presence of leadership is necessary to drive productivity. Additionally, Tesla has implemented a tracking system which requires employees to sign into the office. If they fail to do this, they are send an email to immediately report to a line manager. This raises concerns about micromanagement within the organization, as hybrid work experts know that trust is one of the most important aspects of the workplace.



**Google** is taking a similar approach, as CEO Sundar Pichai expects employees to come into the office at least three days per week. However, this is only required for some employees, with some asked to come in more than three days per week and others not required to come in at all. While Google is requiring employees to come in, they have made additional efforts to improve the wellbeing of employees. They are creating global communities that allow employees to apply to work in a different office and move around the world throughout their careers. Or, employees can apply to work fully remote if their position allows them to. Additionally, Google provides “work-from-anywhere-weeks”, which give employees the opportunity to work from any location for 4 weeks a year. Google has also made efforts to improve the in-office environment by improving office spaces to accommodate greater collaboration, limiting internal meetings to allow for greater focus, and providing “reset days”.



**Apple**’s Tim Cook is also pushing back against the hybrid work model requiring employees to come into the office at least once a week. Employees must be in the office Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays and Fridays they can have a “flexible” schedule. They will also be given the option to work fully remotely for up to four weeks per year. While this is less than other companies, there has been great pushback from Apple employees who are threatening to quit, leading Apple to a two-day-per-week plan until the Covid surge lessens<sup>3</sup>. Worries about employee retention, led Apple to add a hybrid work policy that allows employees to work from anywhere for 2 weeks<sup>4</sup>.



Companies outside the technology space are also implementing hybrid models, such as **Deutsche Bank** which is giving employees the option to work from home some days if they are eligible to do so. Taking a more individualized approach, Deutsche Bank has implemented divisional guidelines for work-from-home eligibility. It is up to individual managers and employees to have conversations about what model would work best for individual employees and their teams. CFO James Von Moltke says, “*Innovation is a vital element of the way we work. We’re fostering a spirit of innovation as we build the Finance function of the future, working in more agile ways to drive efficiency and deliver change*”.


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3. <https://www.computerworld.com/article/3660777/apple-backs-off-its-return-to-work-policy-cites-virus-resurgence.html>


4. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/04/apple-adds-2-week-work-from-anywhere-benefit-to-hybrid-schedule.html>





To ensure this fairly new model runs smoothly Deutsche Bank, has an HR system in place that enables employees to make requests and arrangements for hybrid work and keeps employees up to date on hybrid work requirements in the company. They also have a FoW microsite that provides all remote work information for all employees globally, such as country guidelines and remote work trainings. Overall Deutsche Bank keeps all managers highly involved in the process to ensure processes run smoothly.


 A number of firms are implementing a remote-first approach which means that the company has a hybrid model but most employees work from home. The e-commerce website developer **Shopify** had most of its employees work from home post-pandemic with the opportunity to come into the office when they needed to. As Shopify’s CEO Tobi Lutke puts it, the company will be “*digital by default*”.

 **Twitter** was one of the first companies to implement a remote-first hybrid model, providing employees with offices across the United States.

 A revolutionary work model was adopted by **Atlassian** in April '21, which is known as “*Team Anywhere*”. The \$80 billion tech giant now allows its global employees to work from any location in a country where Atlassian has a corporate presence. The employee must be legally allowed to work in that country and be in the same time zone as the other team members. In place of the 'cost of living scaling method,' employees' salaries will be determined by local costs.

 Additionally, CEO Hayden Brown of **Upwork**, a popular freelancing platform, announced the company would be permanently adopting a remote-first approach from May 2020.

 **Slack**, the workplace communication software, is implementing a hybrid model with flexitime, allowing employees to work more flexible hours that suit their schedules best, which they define as “*sync hours*” and “*maker hours*”. “*Sync hours*” are for employees to sync with each other and collaborate in person while “*maker hours*” are hours for focused work. Slack has also adapted their recruiting process to allow for more remote candidates and has removed the title of HQ from their San Francisco office to equalize all remote employees, no matter where they are.

 Finally, **Spotify** has embraced the hybrid model with the option of a company-expensed co-working space if the employee does not live near the office. Additionally, they are continuing to pay employees San Francisco and New York salary rates even if the employee is working remotely from another location.



COMPANIES’ HYBRID MODELS — SPECIFICS

<div>Microsoft</div> <div>employees: 221,000 (2022)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specifies in their job postings if hybrid, remote, or in-office</li><li>• Flexible work hours</li><li>• Innovating products specifically for the hybrid world (ex: Teams Connect)</li></ul>
<div>Amazon</div> <div>employees: 1,608,000 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Option to work from home if role permits</li><li>• Individual teams set number of days in office</li><li>• Corporate need to be close enough to the office so that they can travel there in a day if need be</li><li>• Corporate employees can work fully up to 4 weeks a year</li></ul>
<div>Tesla</div> <div>employees: 99,290 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All employees must come to the office 40 hours a week</li><li>• Implemented a tracking system which requires employees to sign into the office</li></ul>
<div>Google</div> <div>employees: 140,000 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most employees required to come into the office 3 days per week</li><li>• Global communities that allow employees to apply to work in a different office and move around the world</li><li>• “Work-from-anywhere-weeks”</li><li>• Improving office spaces to accommodate greater collaboration</li><li>• Providing “reset days”</li></ul>
<div>Atlassian</div> <div>employees: 8,200 (2022)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All employees can work from anywhere (as long as they have the legal right to work there and they are in a time zone aligned with their team)</li></ul>
<div>Apple</div> <div>employees: 154,000 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requiring employees to come into the office at least once a week</li><li>• “Flexible” schedule on Wednesdays and Fridays; must be in the office Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays</li><li>• Option to work fully remotely for up to four weeks per year</li></ul>
<div>Deutsche Bank</div> <div>employees: 83,000 (2022)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requiring employees to come into the office at least once a week</li><li>• “Flexible” schedule on Wednesdays and Fridays; must be in the office Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays</li><li>• Option to work fully remotely for up to four weeks per year</li></ul>
<div>Slack</div> <div>employees: 2,600 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexitime — “Sync hours” &amp; “Maker hours”</li><li>• Adapted their recruiting process to allow for more remote candidates</li><li>• Removed the title of HQ from their San Francisco office to equalize all remote employees, no matter where they are</li></ul>
<div>Spotify</div> <div>employees: 6,600 (2021)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Company-expensed co-working space if the employee does not live near the office</li><li>• Paying employees San Francisco and New York salary rates even if the employee is working remotely from another location</li></ul>



## 2 What is hybrid work?

### A Definition



Now that the hybrid models of some of the largest technology companies have been explored, it is time to dissect the actual meaning of hybrid work.

**Hybrid work** is a model in which employees work either remotely or in-office on any given day. This can take many forms, with some offices being remote-first, where most employees are working from home but the company still has offices for those who wish to work in person. Other workplaces require employees to come into the office for a specific number of days or hours but are flexible if they need to work from home some days.

For large corporations, offices are scattered across the country or globe but those employees who do not live in major cities where these offices are located can work from home. Similarly, smaller companies that want to expand their team globally, have one central office that local employees come to while the global team works from their desired locations.

Although hybrid work existed at a number of organizations prior to 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic made remote work a necessity for most companies across the globe. Now that healthcare measures, such as testing and vaccines, are more widespread, employees are going back to the office. However, companies and employees alike have witnessed a number of benefits from working remotely, making a model in which people can work both remotely and from home increasingly popular.



## B The four pillars of hybrid work effectiveness

There are four pillars of hybrid work effectiveness — technology, connection, flexibility, and trust. Let's explore what they mean.

**Technology** drives the hybrid work model by providing organizations with the ability to build a team that works from anywhere. With the use of communication, organization, and HR management technology, companies can build and sustain a happy and productive hybrid team. Using deskbird as an example, our deskbooking and hybrid scheduling features allow employees to book when and where they will work from every week, giving their team and management a clear understanding of their schedule and availability without unnecessary coordination. Team members can book collaborative spaces in the same office to work on a project together and individual employees can book desks in the office when they plan on coming in rather than requesting to work from home or from the office each time they wish to do so. Technology like this makes the transition and maintenance of a hybrid workspace virtually seamless.

**Connection**, another crucial pillar of hybrid work effectiveness, can be difficult with teams not physically meeting every day. One of the greatest challenges of remote teams is connection, however the building personal and professional relationships between colleagues is essential for driving productivity. Without connection, not only do collaboration and creativity suffer, but employees tend to be less happy and feel isolated. Hybrid work provides the opportunity for those working remotely to meet their team in person from time to time in order to build the necessary connections for success and build a positive company culture.

A successful hybrid work environment is also characterized by **flexibility**. This means hybrid offices should allow employees to work where they want, with reason. By giving each person the choice to make last minute changes to their schedule and location reduces stress and improves culture, individual wellbeing, and in turn, employee retention. However, flexibility can also take the form of flexible timetables, or **"flexitime"**. This allows individuals to work when they want in the day, shifting their schedules based on needs, priorities and productivity levels. While some hybrid businesses require attendance at meetings or workers to be online at certain points of the day, others, especially global teams in different timezones give the choice of working anytime during the day.

Finally, **trust** lays the foundation for the development of a positive work culture in a hybrid work environment. Since it can be challenging to develop authority online without the physical presence of a boss or manager hovering over, trust must be established in order for a hybrid team to function effectively. Trusting that the team will achieve their goals without supervision is the only way to drive productivity. Using the previous pillars as support, technology can help foster open communication and connection which will help with the development or trusting relationships.

### 3 What employees really want?

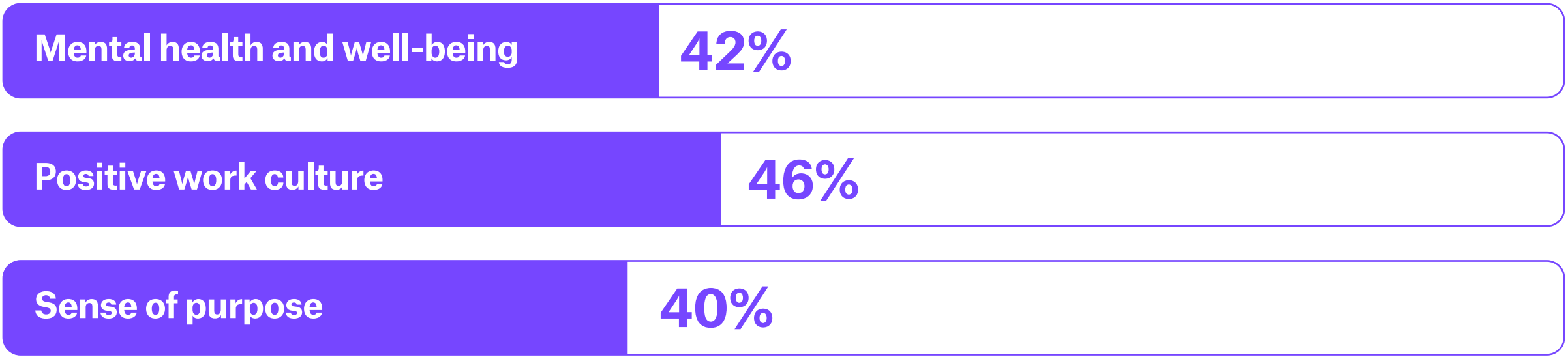
#### A Expectation vs. Reality

Employees are the center of any business and their needs must be met in order to run a successful organization. However, post-pandemic needs have shifted, leaving employers to adapt to new expectations.

Microsoft’s 2022 Work Trend Index<sup>5</sup> outlines some of the shifts that have taken place, beginning with the *“role of the office”*, which has shifted from the place where work must be done to a space that is used for collaboration when necessary. The new role of the office is for building social capital and serving the varied needs of employees, whatever they might be.

Because the meaning of the office is changing, employees need a clear understanding of their company’s hybrid model. Each company needs to define what hybrid work means for it and its team. For example, is the company adopting a hybrid-first model where most employees work from home and come to the office sparingly? Or, is the company using flexible time tables (*“flexitime”*), allowing different team members to work at different times of the day? These elements of the model need to be defined.

The priorities of the workforce have also changed, with personal life and well being taking precedence over work itself. 42% of those surveyed by the Microsoft study rate mental health and well-being benefits as one of the top things they require from employers. Similarly, 46% of respondents want a positive work culture and 40% want a sense of purpose. These results illustrate the core values of the workforce and suggest that companies need to provide benefits that are not only concrete and monetary but also those that enhance employee experience on a personal level.



5. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/great-expectations-making-hybrid-work-work>



The Microsoft study also found that people were spending more time working and in online meetings. This is likely due to the blurred line between personal and professional life when working hybridly. Companies now adopting a hybrid model should scale back online meetings to prevent employees from working longer days. Instead of relying on video conferencing for building social capital, the hybrid model allows teams to mingle when necessary—again illustrating the overall shift in the role of an office space. This is increasingly important as many remote workers feel lonely (55%).

However, with any change comes a level of resistance. While employees have clearly defined their new priorities, business leaders have pushed back against these needs. Whether it is a push back against hybrid work as a whole or against the shift in culture, there is a mismatch between expectations and the reality of the tangible changes being made in the workplace. While half of business leaders want to return to the office full time, almost the same amount (52%) of employees are looking to work remotely.

While there seems to be a feeling of gridlock, with managers trying to appease both employees and business leaders, there are some steps that can be taken in order to start aligning expectations with reality.

According to the Human Workplace Index<sup>6</sup>, the first step is treating each person like an individual with separate needs, understanding that each individual has a different level of comfortability with returning to work and that individual priorities may have shifted. In order to gauge how the team is feeling, surveys can be conducted to measure job satisfaction and feelings of connectedness.

Connectedness is highly important, as previously mentioned as one of the four pillars of a successful hybrid office. The Human Workplace Index found that 69% of employees returning to the office are excited to meet their co-workers and are longing for more events and in-person activities. In a hybrid office, this connectedness must extend past those working in the office to those working remotely, ensuring that the remote team also feels included.

Additionally, with mental health becoming a high priority, an important step for aligning with employee expectations is devoting more resources to well being and the development of company culture. The Human Workplace Index reveals that only 34% of workers feel strongly that they can discuss mental health at the office, revealing a clear misaligning of expectations and reality.

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6. <https://www.workhuman.com/resources/globoforce-blog/human-workplace-index-new-year-new-workplace-expectations>

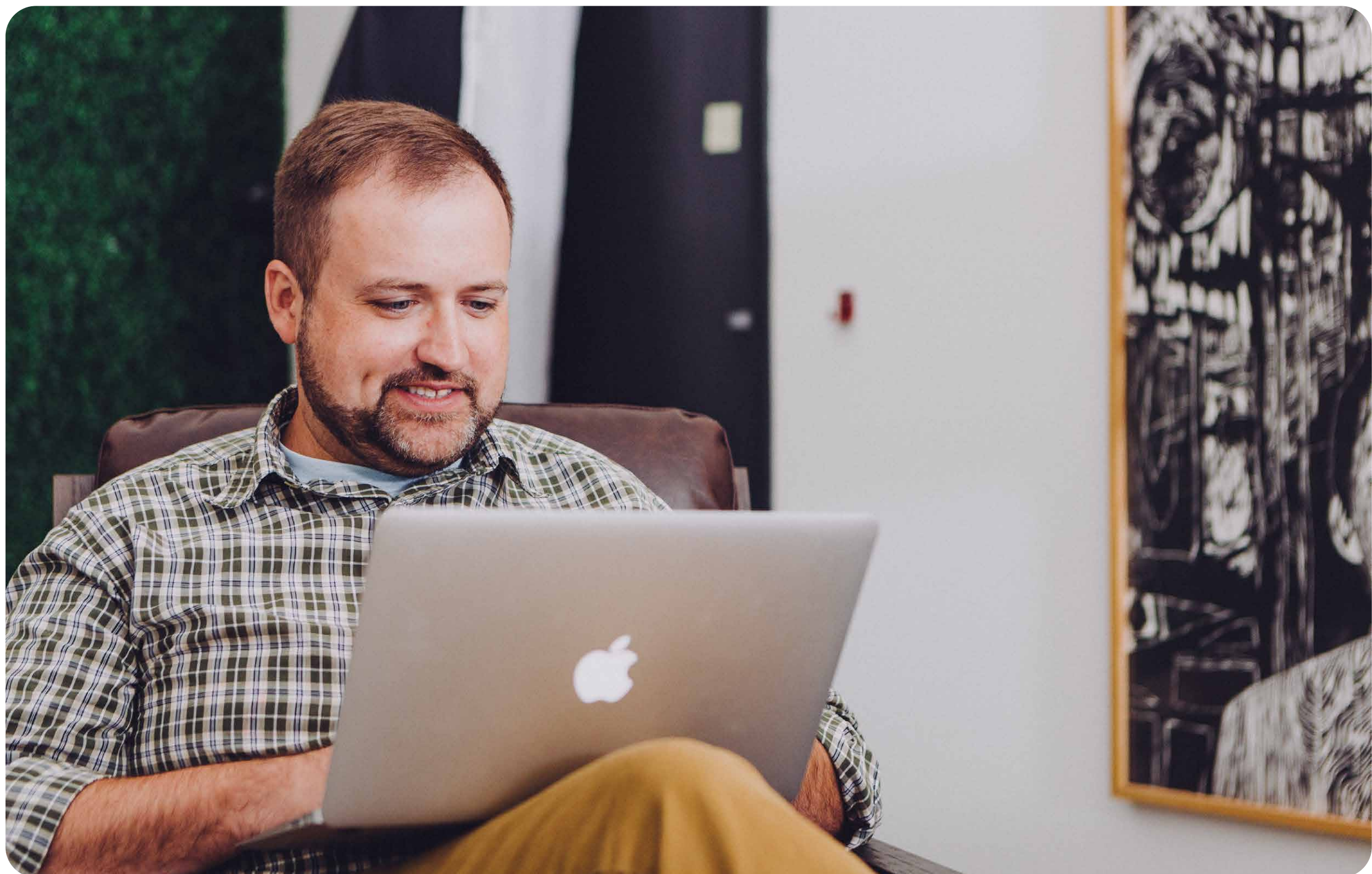


## 4 State of work 2022

### A Current situation: Hybrid is the “new” normal

The state of work in 2022 is characterized by major transformation as we begin to enter the post-pandemic era. With the advent of vaccines and widespread testing, companies are bringing their teams back into the office. However, two years of working from home has shifted the perspective of many employees and businesses alike. The Accenture Future of Work Study 2022<sup>7</sup> found that 63% of high-growth companies have already adopted a “*productivity anywhere*” workforce model.

Essentially, hybrid is becoming the new normal. It is inevitable that the way we see the office has changed but we are not ready to scrap it entirely. People still long for human connection but are not also attune to the many benefits of working remotely. However, the true future of work has nothing to do with location and much more to do with understanding and fulfilling employee’s needs. Employee centricity is at the heart of our transforming work environment as people search for autonomy, better work-life balance and supportive leadership. Hybrid work simply helps drive the creation of this future.



7. <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/consulting/future-work>



## B Benefits and drawbacks

The rapid adoption of hybrid work speaks to its many benefits.

**Cost Effectiveness:** Hybrid work reduces the need for office space and resources and with the cost of rent rising in most major cities, being able to downsize office space will significantly reduce costs.

**Stress Reduction:** Allowing employees to work on their own schedules or from their homes when needed reduces stress, therefore improving overall satisfaction and company culture. For example, being able to work from home reduces stress from a long commute and allows employees to prioritize their personal lives when necessary, such as dropping off their children at school or attending a doctor's appointment.

**Employee Retention:** Because the hybrid model gives employees greater freedom to make choices about how they work and align their priorities, both at home and at the office, they feel valued. A study from Ergotron revealed that 88% of employees had increased job satisfaction when given the flexibility to work from home.

**Increased Productivity:** Data from Prodoscore showed that there was a 5% increase in productivity during the pandemic when most people were working from home. This is because people know when they will be most productive. By giving them the opportunity to choose when and where to work they contribute to the company's overall productivity.

**Attract the Best Talent:** With a hybrid model, employees can work from anywhere, meaning they can be recruited globally. Not only does a global team provide diverse perspectives that will increase creativity and innovation, but it also means finding employees that fit your company best.

However, there are a number of downsides that should be considered before implementing a hybrid model.

**Difficulty With Collaboration:** When some employees are in the office while others are at home it can become difficult to build a schedule that suits everyone. If some people are on Zoom and others are in person, the quality of collaboration might be compromised as it might be difficult to communicate.

**Hard to Keep Track of Employees:** With different people working from different places, this can pose a challenge for HR and management. If there are quotas for how many days each employee must spend in the office, for example, without a clear office management system, keeping track of schedules becomes difficult.

All this being said, no challenges are without solutions. In the next section, we will discuss how to make hybrid work and overcome these hurdles.

## 5 Conclusion: How to make hybrid work

Deciding to adopt a hybrid model is only the first step. Then begins the actual implementation which constitutes most of the battle.

We can begin by addressing the challenges mentioned in the previous section above and how to overcome them. First, hybrid models can present difficulties with collaboration, which can be managed with the right technology. Team communication software like Slack allows employees to communicate seamlessly with each other and with specific teams. It provides synchronous communication that mimics in-office communication in real time. Office management software like deskbird can also be used to plan when certain people are in the office so that work schedules align to allow for in-person meetings. With the deskbooking feature, employees can book meeting rooms or desks near each other.

Additionally, hybrid work can make it difficult to keep track of employees and their whereabouts but the right HR tools will make all the difference. deskbird's hybrid scheduling features allows teams to see when each person is in the office and plan collaboration accordingly. Managers will know where their team is working from with just a few clicks. Employees are given agency over where they work and managers have a clear image of everyone's schedules without additional coordination.

Now, what are some ways to ensure the success of a hybrid workplace?

**Provide flexibility:** Flexibility is the first thing that comes to mind for many people when thinking about hybrid work. Therefore, it is important to maintain this flexibility in more ways than one. While working from anywhere provides a level of flexibility, we see increased productivity when employees are given flexible working hours, or 'flexitime.'

**Employee centricity:** One of the benefits of the hybrid approach is that it has a tendency to boost employee satisfaction and improve work-life balance. Therefore, for this model to work, it should be approached with employee-centricity at the center. This begins with trusting your team and avoiding micromanagement. Trusting that employees will do their job when remote ensures that management does not get bogged down with monitoring and improves overall morale.

**Embrace the digital transformation:** Possibly the most important step in implementing a hybrid model is using the available technology. As we previously exemplified, the deskbird app can help mitigate many challenges, such as organizing the team, and help increase efficiency. Additionally, technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation are becoming crucial for an efficient, safe and well-maintained office space. With the right technology, your business will not only optimize its processes but it will also provide a better employee experience.



As we see many large companies, especially in the technology space, confidently move towards a hybrid model, this should serve as inspiration for other businesses to embrace the shifts in workplace management and culture. Not only are employees longing for greater flexibility but businesses are seeing the true benefits of implementing hybrid work, from saving costs to improving job satisfaction and employee retention. The shift is not going to be easy, requiring behavior change and the implementation of new technologies and processes. deskbird is here to help with its leading hybrid workplace solution that will ensure your hybrid office runs smoothly and serves the needs of both employees and the business at large.



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# deskbird

Make hybrid work

Start for free

