The Future is Hybrid
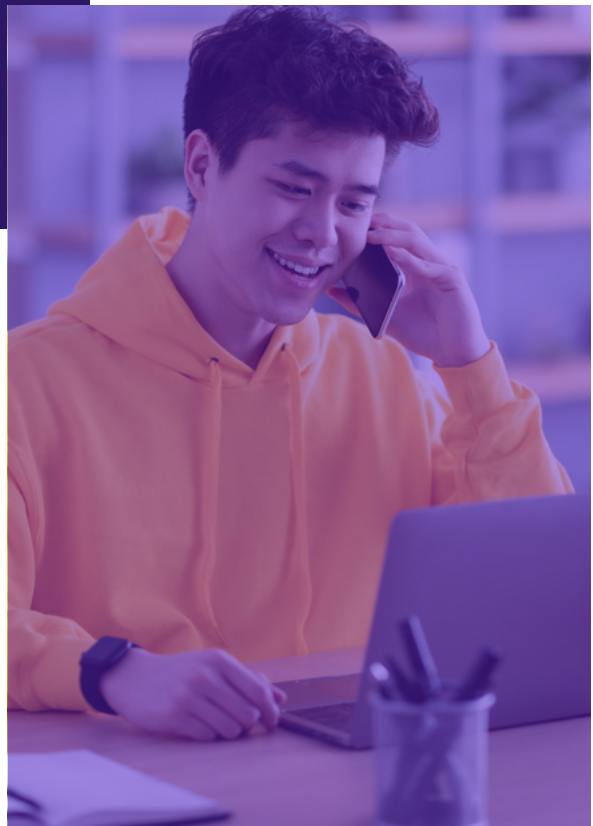
Embrace a more
agile workforce

A Robert Walters Group Company

Introduction

Out of necessity more than anything else, the pandemic has accelerated the push towards remote working situations across nearly every business sector. And as businesses settle into the constantly evolving "new normal", it's important to take into consideration the wishes of employees when adopting new work models going forward.

A recent McKinsey survey found that 52% would prefer a hybrid-remote working model, while 88% of C-suite executives surveyed expect their employees to spend at least 3 days/week working on-site. While there is room to adapt to a model that works for everyone, one takeaway from the pandemic is clear: when it comes to remote work, the future is hybrid.

In this report, you'll find an in-depth look at the different types of remote working models, their advantages, disadvantages, and best practices on how to successfully implement the model that works best for your organisation.

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The spectrum of hybrid work arrangements

Recent months have shown us that big brands are more readily embracing remote work as a permanent model, and with good reason. There are significant benefits for both the brand and its employees. For instance, while an organisation will realise significant cost savings operationally, employees can enjoy more flexibility and a better work-life balance.

To help you understand and decide how hybrid work can benefit your organisation, we've outlined the different types of work models which exist in practice today.

Fully remote

In a fully remote work scenario, employees spend 100% of their time either at home or a remote location of their choice. For this model to work smoothly and efficiently, it is important that certain work processes and expectations are clearly documented to avoid any misunderstandings or confusion around outcomes. In the absence of physical meetings, tech-enabled collaboration devices and online platforms are essential in order to facilitate real-time interactions, coworking groups, and even virtual parties and social events. Slack is an essential tool that is transitioning to optimise a fully remote work model. Citrix Workspace and Microsoft Teams both use cloud technology to integrate a whole suite of software that keeps remote workers connected as seamlessly as if they were on-site.

It's good to remember that a fully remote workforce still allows for face-to-face interactions. However, they should be reserved for pre-scheduled events like project kick-offs and team-building exercises and celebrations.

Hybrid-remote

There are several ways to employ a hybrid-remote work model, but it typically involves a certain number of employees or specific teams working remotely, while others stay in the office. However, a hybrid-remote model could also involve a split schedule between remote work and working on-site, usually three days per week in the office and two from home (or some other off-site location).

If an organisation chooses to use the hybrid-remote work model, access to communication channels and work processes should be available to all employees regardless of whether they are office-based or working remotely.

A number of large tech organisations have begun to embrace the hybrid-remote working model as a way of attracting and retaining employees. For instance, [Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey told his employees that they could work from home forever](#) and that the company will accommodate a permanent remote working setup. And in September 2021, ride-hailing company Uber also stated they would make the shift to hybrid work, explaining that the move gives employees the freedom and flexibility to do their best at work while remaining connected to their co-workers.

## Decentralised: Remote-first optional

A decentralised remote-first model is becoming more popular with prominent companies that have over 300 employees spread across multiple locations. These companies combine old and new working methods, creating flexible work areas for a more distributed workforce.

Employees have the option to work remotely while still collaborating and communicating with the rest of the team.

Coinbase defined itself as decentralised – that is, a company without a specific headquarters. To remain connected, they've introduced virtual off-site events, social gatherings, and stipends for one-on-one coffee breaks with a colleague. They have also implemented virtual onboarding and learning opportunities and will soon be launching on-demand and in-person training. As a result, Coinbase has seen high engagement, learning, and creativity from their staff.

Centralised: Remote-first optional

In a centralised remote-first model, the office is the primary work environment. Organisations using this model have only a small percentage of employees who are permitted to work off-site, while the rest of the work is done by staff in the office. Since management works in the office, there is potential for some inequalities as in-office workers have more access to information, face time with top executives, promotion opportunities and other perks.
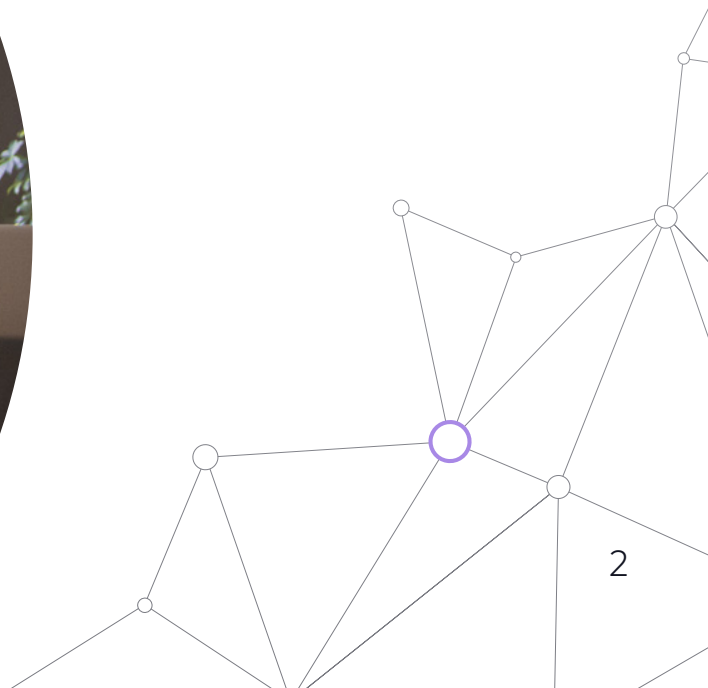
Companies committing to hybrid

The move towards hybrid work environments is becoming increasingly popular, as industries once considered to be more conventional, such as manufacturing and banking, begin to adopt hybrid models with more frequency. What is less surprising is that large tech organisations are also making the move to hybrid-remote work.

Manufacturing

The pandemic has shown manufacturing companies the possibilities and benefits of hybrid-remote work, as remote employees have the ability to virtually inspect work areas using collaboration devices.

Banking

At Citibank, branch-based and data centre employees worked on-site while remaining staff were permitted to work outside office premises. Companies in the banking sector with a hybrid work model enjoy significantly lower average staffing costs than banks with a more traditional model. However, hybrid banks tend to spend more on marketing and technology than branch-based banks, who benefit from convenience and local deposit gathering.

Relationship management has also been restructured by using the "tech-supported hub-and-spoke" model to streamline business segments.

Who is doing hybrid well?

Uber

Uber has adopted a flexible hybrid remote model that allows employees to split their time 50-50 between the office and working remotely. They're also allowing employees to choose their preferred office location and offering some employees the ability to work fully remotely.

Amazon

Amazon is employing a highly flexible hybrid-remote model that lets teams decide the number of in-office days per week that works best for them, rather than demanding a baseline number of days across the board. They're also allowing employees to choose where they work remotely, stating that "the ability to work remotely from a different location for a few weeks at a time is inspiring and reenergising", emphasising the importance of employee well-being.

Honeywell

Hybrid-remote work has been found to support more collaboration while decreasing the need to be physically present at work. Honeywell's Hank Wrenn, VP and GM of Americas Project & Automation Solutions, has said that by using RealWear and Microsoft Teams, their workforce has been able to stay connected and continue working with fewer interruptions.

The company has increased efficiency by streamlining acceptance testing, improved customer satisfaction with quicker implementation times, as well as cut overall travel costs by 50%, all significant positive impacts on the bottom line.

Advantages of a hybrid workplace model

As the shift towards remote work grows more popular with every passing quarter, implementing models that works as efficiently as possible can be a bit tricky. Let's look at some advantages and disadvantages associated with a hybrid workplace.

1 Results above hours worked

Productivity measures should be assessed based on project completion, rather than just the total number of hours worked. This makes good project management even more essential, as the person in charge of projects holds the keys to optimising productivity.

Employers can use workforce scheduling software to manage schedules, shift rotations, and breaks from any device or location. These systems enable every team member to stay up to date on everyone's responsibilities and the progress of each task.

2 Lower overheads and office costs

When a company adopts a fully remote or hybrid-remote working model, operational costs can decrease significantly due to lower demand for office space. Companies can experience reductions in overheads such as travel expenses, supplies and utilities.

3 Fosters trust in employees

Employees feel empowered when they are permitted and trusted to perform their jobs in an environment that works best for them. Realised benefits can include increased productivity, task and project ownership and a sense of responsibility to deliver. Employers can show support by ensuring employees have access to the equipment and systems they need to enable both a smooth transition and long-term productivity.

Disadvantages of a hybrid workplace model

(1) Technology and cybersecurity issues

When working from multiple locations, there is a greater risk of data loss and cyber-attacks. To mitigate these risks, IT departments must regularly update software, change passwords, and enable multi-factor authentication.

Additionally, employers must train their workforce to securely connect to company infrastructure and perform regular data backup and, in the event of an outage, data recovery.

Faulty devices and poor internet connection can have an adverse effect on communication between colleagues, sometimes leading to longer response times or poor decision making.

(2) Loss of company culture

Less personal interaction may have a negative impact on the working relationships and camaraderie that usually thrives in a physical office setting. Employers may need to focus on driving new types of employee engagement initiatives to maintain their company culture in a hybrid model.

(3) Client experience may suffer

The absence of personal interaction with current and prospective clients may impact some business deals or cause urgent issues to be overlooked.

Benefits, costs and risks of staying

"When done right, the hybrid-remote working model empowers employees to work in a more flexible way, resulting in a happier and more productive workforce. Likewise, it provides cost efficiencies for employers and encourages the use of office spaces as collaboration and ideation spaces. One potential drawback of the hybrid-remote model is the idea of expensive office space remaining half-full or completely empty at times. Companies should deploy technology to understand the usage of these spaces, and to ensure their workforce can connect digitally but also connect effectively face to face when necessary."

– Tom Lakin, Director of Innovation, Resource Solutions

Successfully implementing a hybrid workplace model

Designing and redefining the 'Workplace'

When looking to design, optimise and implement the new 'workplace', listening to the voices of your employees should be the number one priority before initiating any sweeping changes. Knowing how they like to work and how they want to continue working in a hybrid scenario will be the key to formalising the flexibility and policies of your hybrid model.

When it comes to a hybrid working environment, we suggest you clearly outline expectations to employees, incorporate hybrid scenarios into the workplace policy and ensure the technology you provide is accessible to employees, so they can go about their workday and collaborate, no matter how or where they choose to work.

To help get you started on building your hybrid model, the following parameters should be covered, according to Forbes.

Physical office strategy

To effectively plan an office space that accommodates and maximises the hybrid workforce scenario, start thinking about how you need to use the physical space, and incorporate employee needs and expectations to make this transition successful:

- How many employees will need a physical desk, and how will you monitor the usage and optimisation of workspaces?
- How will you enable the booking and use of meeting spaces?
- How will you deploy and manage the devices of your office-based and remote workers?
- Will there be "attendance"? Are there specific days where office attendance is required? Why and what does that look like?
- How will you define goals and expectations for people working in the office?
- Does compensation change? Will you ensure employees are being paid and rewarded based on their performance and not on office attendance?

Remote strategy

A working-from-home strategy requires access to technology applications that enable effective collaboration and face-to-face communication. To make the move to remote working as seamless as possible, the quality should be comparable to what employees experience currently in the physical office environment. You will also want to investigate other collaboration tools that enable employees to share ideas and monitor workflows easily.

To strengthen your remote strategy, consider the following factors:

- What kind of accessibility and/or collaboration devices will you need to support the kind of job your employees are doing?

- Have you considered or measured the effectivity of online collaboration vs working together in the office?

- How will you monitor the usage of devices and experiences of your employees?

- Can you provide additional resources to help improve your employees' home set up?

- How often will you measure employee satisfaction with the collaborative experience of remote working?

- What does an employee's schedule look like? Is their time flexible, or is there a strict schedule to adhere to?

Devices and tools strategy

To meet, message, call and share content, staff must be provided with full-featured collaborative devices and tools to keep them connected, engaged and productive, whether in the office or at home. Deciding on which platforms to use in order to facilitate a hybrid workforce model is complex enough, but having to consider multiple global locations and the technology limitations and local country nuances that exist is even more demanding.

When choosing the platforms to invest in, you will want to look at the following factors:

- What features does the software provide to enable and facilitate productive and distraction-free hybrid work?

- How does it monitor the usage and security of devices?

- Ease of use: What level of training will employees need?

- Does the platform cater for all site locations, and languages?

- Does it enable all employees at your organisation to work seamlessly?

- Are devices and tools available in the locations your business operates in?

- Does the platform cater for a variety of synchronous (phone calls, video conferencing, face-to-face conversations, and live instant messaging) and asynchronous (email, collaboration tools, shared documents, voice and video messaging) communications needs?

- Are there case studies and/or reviews that ensure it delivers a consistent work experience at home and in the office?

Developing a communication policy

Without clear direction and set-out expectations, miscommunication and confusion can easily occur in a hybrid setting, especially when groups of workers are not speaking to each other face-to-face.

Developing a communication policy, or a list of expectations that incorporates employees based in the office and those that work remotely can help create better synergies, performance and productivity within teams and the wider organisation and is especially important for settling new joiners into the business.

Video conferencing company Owl Labs recommend the following communication strategies to help fulfil your organisational needs in a hybrid setup.

Evaluate your current communication strategies by considering:

- Daily communication with teammates

- One-on-one conversations

- Communication and documentation of general company information

- Changes to communication strategy based on the location of work

- Tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication during remote work

Plan your communication policy and workflow for remote and office work without affecting the existing productivity and performance levels.

Create a template that illustrates your policy and workflows and provides a much-needed work/life divide for remote workers. This can include:

- The location and time the employees will be working

- Scheduled time to go online

- Protocol and tools used during hybrid team meetings

- Forms of communication used during in-person and 1:1 conversation

Implementation and communication of your hybrid work policy

Invest in rigorous training and ensure your employees know how to effectively utilise all the communication and collaboration tools, systems, and software. This will guarantee a smooth transition to hybrid work and is key to the ongoing success of the workforce model

Enabling a safe remote environment

Often overlooked in creating a safe remote work environment is ergonomics. Remote employees might not necessarily have the best workstations for promoting and maintaining physical health. Working at kitchen tables and couches and children's desks for extended periods can create long-term health problems that are costly for both employee and the employer.

It's best to encourage employees to establish a consistent and ergonomically sound at-home workspace. This includes using a properly fitted chair that ensures your feet touch the floor and your hips and knees are level. Using an external monitor will help prevent "tech-neck," the neck pain associated with looking down for too long.

It is also important to consider more than just ergonomics and address other factors that can affect an employee's mental and physical well-being. Stress can have an effect on a person's physical pain, so it's important to encourage methods to reduce stress in employees wherever possible. This includes taking breaks, practising relaxation and yoga, as well as instilling a distinction between work hours and home hours. It should be emphasised to remote employees that they work from home and don't live at work.

What does a hybrid workforce mean for your ED&I agenda?

Accelerating diversity and inclusion through hybrid working

A recent survey by Gensler found that employees in countries including the US, UK, France and Australia want their employers to adopt a hybrid work model – that is a mix of where, when and how they work. Gensler's research placed wellbeing, work-life balance and employee empowerment as the key drivers for this shift in attitude. Further research by the UK-based HRDirector found that 75 per cent of employees want to work in a flexible way. Interestingly, this research found different perceptions between male and female workers – more women (65%) than men (55%) would prefer the fluidity of an office they could drop into anytime. Other studies have stressed that diverse candidates and colleagues – younger people, disabled workers – view workplace flexibility as a non-negotiable when making job application and retention decisions. Therefore, adopting a hybrid work culture offers opportunities to employers – specifically reducing their skills gaps by widening their talent pools.

Creating a culture of inclusion

Of course, implementing a hybrid work model requires a culture shift to ensure diverse employees feel valued and connected to other colleagues. A recent Forbes article points out that this new world of work could create in-groups and out-groups based on who is in the office and who is not. Out of Sight / Out of Mind bias is more likely to impact women and disabled workers, for instance, who may spend more time working at home, due to out-of-work responsibilities and impairments.

Advancing diversity and inclusion in a hybrid work environment

Employers need to take proactive steps to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the context of hybrid working. Here are 3 things to consider:

Attracting talent: Place hybrid working at the centre of your talent attraction strategy. Communicating your organisation's commitment to flexible working sends a positive signal to diverse candidates and increases the likelihood of applications from women, disabled candidates and others.
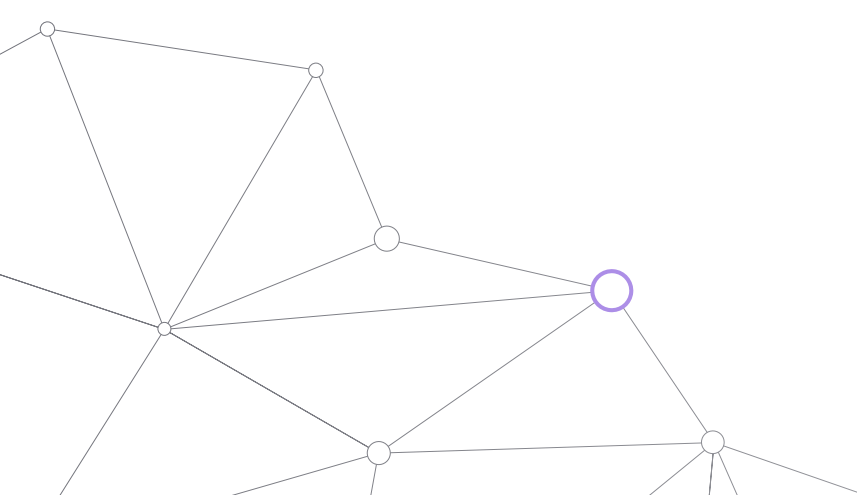
Culture integration: Seek out opportunities for in-person get togethers for those who prefer hybrid and flexible working. Consider how you can provide opportunities for diverse colleagues to connect with other team members to build social bonds and a sense of connectivity via regular in-person off-sites, monthly team get- togethers, and weekly Zoom calls.

Monitoring advancement: Keep track of promotions and reward decisions by capturing and analysing data. Ensure that data is crosscut by diverse groups and those working in a flexible way. Act quickly to address any bias. To assist with the advancement of hybrid workers, practice the principle of amplification, by rotating opportunities for all colleagues to contribute to idea sharing and client projects.

"Organisations that strive for equity of opportunities should consider awareness programmes and processes to ensure managers and others connect with their out of office colleagues. This will help eliminate further biases (affinity bias, confirmation bias) in areas such as work opportunities and performance reviews and encourage teams to avoid making assumptions such as hybrid workers are less committed than in-office colleagues."

– Dan Robertson is Director of VERCIDA Consulting, the global inclusion company

Managing hybrid workforces and teams

There is no doubt that the shift to a hybrid working model has added an element of intimacy as the distinction between an employee's home life and work life becomes less clear. As organisations try to reimagine physical work and remote work – striking a balance between the two for a hybrid environment – there are more 'at home' priorities (childcare, schedule flexibility, workstations at home, etc.) that must be considered to support your employees.

To help you more effectively manage your workforce, whether in the office, working remotely or a combination of the two, consider the following tips.

Build a culture of trust and ownership

Trust is a critical ingredient in a hybrid work arrangement, and with the growing demand for flexible work it is even more crucial to find ways to build trust over time, for the long term. One way to build mutual trust with your team members is by allowing them to choose a work schedule and a work location that enables them to maximise their performance and output, whilst still enabling participation in team activities. Providing employees with this responsibility empowers them to make this decision by considering their own needs as well as the needs of the team and the wider business.

Share expectations and be transparent

You will want to build a culture of transparency. Visualise milestones and let everyone know the necessary project details: deadlines, workflows, responsibilities, defined roles for every employee on each task and other helpful details that allow employees to easily identify who they can or need to collaborate with to accomplish what needs to be done. Encourage honest conversations where your employees can talk about their issues and frustrations and receive the necessary help to guide them forward.

Invest in a project management system that enables regular project monitoring, including timelines and resourcing. Share schedules where employees can indicate their location each day and set regular progress/status calls and meetings. These calls or meetings will help clarify the direction of the task or the team and address issues to avoid division between office and remote staff.

Focus on open communication

Communication is critical for managing remote teams, especially when understanding how each person's work contributes to the bigger goal. In a hybrid setting especially, you'll want to communicate – in detail – about project deliverables and deadlines. The team should decide on the agenda, schedule, duration, and meetings to avoid wasting time. Always have a follow-up with the minutes to track deliverables and people assigned to each task.

Create policies for how and when to communicate for both on-site and remote employees. Ensure those policies also include guidelines, response times and the tools that enable more efficient working. For example, many organisations use video conferencing, instant messaging and notifications for real-time communication. They may have guidelines stating a reply (e-mail or call) within two hours is expected for urgent matters and up to one business day for non-urgent concerns. Lastly, consider amending your policy with guidance on how to engage in e-mails

after working hours. This is particularly important if you have remote global teams working in different time zones, with varying office hours.

Enable remote collaboration tools and ensure everyone has access to appropriate software, robust internet connectivity, and adequate sound and lighting, to make work productive.

Create an inclusive culture

Remember that an organisation's culture is not exclusively tied to a physical office – it's what you do collectively and how your employees work together. To facilitate an inclusive culture, build relationships through the weekly video calls and team meetings, and make sure all suggestions and opinions are heard to encourage a supportive and respectful team culture. Ensure all the appropriate people who need to be on the call are there – ensure no one is forgotten about.

Other cautionary measures include ensuring there's no favouritism taking place – such as managers having closer associations with team members due to location. Avoid unplanned in-office meetings that remote employees won't be able to join at a moment notice, and don't encourage important discussions and meetings among employees working at the office that might exclude staff working remotely.

As a team manager, you'll want to establish regular communication with your remote staff to make them feel included and prevent feelings of social isolation. Be supportive when someone is struggling with remote work fatigue and if possible, suggest they visit the office from time to time to benefit from more conventional social interactions with office colleagues and find more opportunities to enable team collaboration.

Foster equality

Due to the common perception that remote working staff have more work-life balance, you'll want to extend the same flexibility to your office workers. For example, allow them to choose their work schedule (like a condensed work week) or allow them to schedule in personal engagements (like working out at the gym in the afternoon or picking-up their kids from school). Consider creating open work areas so on-site workers can choose their own workstation if they feel like they need a change of scenery.

Some organisations have even designed an inclusive and fair rewards system. For example, on-site staff can gain benefits like in-office workout classes, discounts on gym memberships or company lunches once a week. For those working remotely, their lunch can be delivered to them and they can attend workout classes via a livestream.

Drive performance

In remote work, employee autonomy is vital. Clarify deliverables and ensure employee performance measurements are aligned to results and outcomes such as Return on Investment (ROI), sales or customer satisfaction. This will give employees clear direction on the expected delivery and overall goals they are working towards. Traditional performance metrics might need to be reviewed across the board to ensure they are fit for purpose, and applicable in a hybrid setting.

Team leaders should provide feedback and coaching, empowering employees to control the execution of their tasks and instil a culture of continual improvement where employees are empowered to find better ways of working.

Talent attraction and onboarding for hybrid workforces

HR professionals are increasingly needing to rethink their approach to both talent attraction and employee onboarding when it comes to securing and settling a more diverse and distributed workforce. In a hybrid workforce model, there are more challenges to ensuring new employees feel like they're part of an organisation's culture, goals, values, and mission.

Below, we have included several ways employers can re-invigorate and align their employer branding messaging, onboarding process and hiring strategy to help them attract the hybrid workforce needed for the future.

Employer branding: Attracting the 'right' talent

Employee values and expectations have shifted significantly in recent years and employers who do not identify, adapt and align their EVP and employer brand messaging to accommodate this can fall behind in the war for talent. Your employer brand's outward messaging needs to align with your culture and at the same time meet the needs to fulfil and satisfy an employee's sense of purpose whilst meeting their changing demands and expectations.

How do you go about building a strong and relevant employer brand to maximise your hybrid work offering to potential employees?

1 Highlight your EVP and company culture

During the interview process, create opportunities for candidates to engage with a mix of both your office-based and remote team members so your candidates can get a good sense of your organisation's culture from both camps.

Consider scheduling video conferences and having different employees tell the candidates why they chose to work for your company, what unique experiences with the company led to their professional growth, and the unique and fun remote team- building activities that the organisation implemented. Any personalised touches – especially from current employees – are an effective way of making a good impression on candidates.

2 Make leadership accessible

Employees want to know who they're working for and what the organisation stands for. Ensure your company's leadership, ethos and vision are featured in your employer branding content, in various mediums. Make sure your content reflects your leader's genuine and inspirational sides.

Ask the management team to record introductory videos explaining the culture and values of the organisation in their own words and send them to candidates before the initial interview. Additionally, articles, blogs or shorts clips of leaders speaking at webinars or hosting events also enable candidates to get a better picture of leaderships vision, purpose and personality.

### (3) Create positive first impressions with the right recruitment technology

A positive candidate experience starts with having a clear understanding of the candidate journey and designing a touchpoint experience to enhance and reinforce candidate interactions with your organisation.

There are multiple recruitment technologies available in the market that can help provide a fantastic, consistent and consumer-grade experience for candidates looking to join a new organisation – from attraction and consideration targeting, to API or one-touch applications, to self-interview scheduling and virtual onboarding tools. Recruitment technology is evolving at a rapid pace, and it is becoming faster and easier to integrate with ATS systems and customise content to ensure a streamlined candidate experience.

Hybrid talent attraction

When reviewing your talent attraction strategy for a hybrid model, one of the primary objectives is to define work expectations and limitations surrounding each role. It's vital that this information is available to the talent acquisition team from the offset and is embedded into the advertisement of each vacancy. Being open and transparent about the role requirements, work hours, hybrid work policy and terms of engagement will help candidates review the opportunity and its suitability in meeting their expectations and will lead to better employee retention with these expectations aligned to the employee experience.

Without the limitations of location, a hybrid workforce enables organisations to expand their existing talent pool, which is especially attractive in specific locations or areas where demand for skilled talent is high.
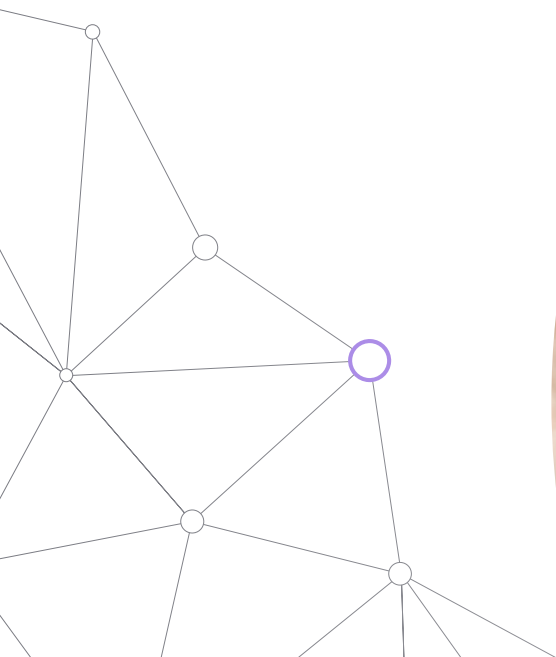
Case Study
Going remote: Filling critical vacancies
when there is no locally available talent

Challenge

One of our manufacturing clients was looking to increase their R&D footprint in Japan and Korea with immediate vacancies for niche, senior engineering talent, and a strong pipeline of ongoing vacancies to meet their aggressive expansion plans. To compound the issue, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the ability to import talent.

Solution

Our RSIntelligence platform confirmed major gaps in local talent, and identified an immediately available, qualified talent pool in India. With relocations on hold, we enabled an innovative interim solution and took the department to India. Our team facilitated setting up the new Indian hires with materials and technology locally to work remotely from India. This solution will continue until travel restrictions have lifted, by which time the team will relocate to Japan.

Results

Over 20 qualified, experienced niche and senior engineers onboarded and working remotely within three months. Maintained business continuity with no project downtime.

Onboarding

Your onboarding experience can set the tone and expectation for the future for new hires. In a hybrid setting, ensuring your virtual onboarding experience is as seamless as it is in person is a challenge. Start by reviewing your current onboarding touchpoints, and ensure each touchpoint has a virtual and physical option to account for your hybrid workforce and build in an opportunity for feedback and regularly review to improve the onboarding process for future employees.

Meet and greet the newest member by scheduling a welcome video call with the whole team. Alternatively, you can ask each team member to send a short welcome email or video recording to the latest member.

Ensure the new employee has access to the resources and technology they need, so they can navigate to the work set-up immediately. Prepare a checklist so IT, HR and their immediate manager can get them set up correctly. Should the new

employee decide to visit the office on their first day, gather the whole team and personally welcome them. If possible, align the start date with an in-person, all-hands meeting.

The first few months can be difficult for a new hybrid worker. Provide plenty of opportunities for them to feel connected to the team and experience the company culture. If feasible, consider meeting up for a walk, having a team lunch or booking Zoom hangouts for them to unwind with the rest of the team.

Are you onboarding completely remotely? Make sure you send them a physical welcome pack with items to set up their home workstation. This is a perfect opportunity to give them branded company merchandise, motivational words and reminders of the company culture and values. A digital welcome pack that includes the company policies, organisation guidelines and charts and contact information for all team members will be useful to navigate the probation period.

Creating employee engagement and improving retention in a hybrid setting

Employee engagement and retention in hybrid workforces

There is no playbook or road map for most organisations navigating the new hybrid working model. Technology and infrastructure alone can't make your hybrid working a success. Organisations must focus on employee behaviour and build deeper professional relationships that incorporate trust and transparency. As you recalibrate your existing company culture to suit both the office-based and remote workforce, here are some employee engagement best practices you can consider:

① Take a remote-first approach

When thinking about opportunities for employees to collaborate, always lead with a digital-first approach. Create a digital space where all staff can collaborate, regardless of location. All meetings should be conducted via video, so both in-office and remote workers can participate. Record both online and in-person meetings for the benefit of the people who were unable to attend.

② Treat office and remote workers equally

Ensure you don't operate in a two-tiered system. As best as you can, do not provide preferential treatment for those who work at the office over those who work remotely. Managers should focus on the results rather than placing weight on where work gets done. This will eliminate any bias and foster a more equitable hybrid workforce. To develop remote work as a vital element in your hybrid culture, you need to ensure in-person work isn't perceived as more valuable than offsite counterparts; position remote work as something you encourage, not just allow.

③ Create a virtual community

Reinforce your company culture, especially for those working outside the office, but bringing it to life digitally. Create digital content such as blogs, videos, and interactive quizzes that illustrate the fun and exciting events and work you've been doing, or the impactful CSR initiatives that helped local communities. Get everyone involved in providing regular content to fuel this initiative.

Retaining the whole workforce in the move to hybrid

With hybrid working settings, organisations must ensure that employees feel connected while working remotely and inspire collaboration and innovation. It's best to customise your employee engagement and retention strategies so that they work for hybrid workers.

In this section, we focus on some of the challenges of implementing hybrid-remote policies. It's important to consider how these policies will be perceived by the whole employee population. Below are some strategies aimed at minimising perceptions of bias and keeping communication open and transparent to help win the talent war.

80% The Harvard Business Review reports that 80% of employee turnover is due to poor hiring choices.

Rewards and recognition

Generally, organisations often focus exclusively on results and desired ROIs, but hard work and effort shouldn't be disregarded. If your employees are engaged and working collaboratively to reach certain milestones, those efforts should be recognised, regardless of whether the goals were met or not. Things don't always go according to plan, but managers must be able to understand these limitations and still recognise the efforts behind every endeavour.

Part of a thriving company culture is to give credit when credit is due. To ensure remote and in-office workers feel equally valued, managers should strive to make sure the efforts of all workers are duly recognised in a way that is visible to all workers.

Cultivating recognition activities like a rewards programme that allows staff to choose the type of rewards they want, or a regular forum in your digital HQ acknowledging exemplary performance publicly, can be an effective way of making sure everyone feels valued.

Benefits

With the ongoing pandemic, prioritising employee well-being is crucial in retaining your most loyal employees. In addition to sick leave, health insurance and free check-ups, many companies are giving their employees a mental health week off like LinkedIn, Bumble and Hootsuite. If you have the resources, incorporate health and wellness programmes like meal planning, fitness tracking, etc.

Regardless of location, every employee deserves fair and just appraisals. Google is among a growing number of companies opting to pay remote workers lower salaries based on the location from where

they choose to work. Down the road, this may present some difficulties in retaining key talent, ultimately costing the company more to find a suitable replacement.

Managers should be designing compensation packages that motivate and encourage their people to stay, whether they work remotely or on-site. Retaining valuable talent is critical to success, so salary increases, and performance bonuses are key to a workforce that is happy to continue working.

④ 80/20 rule

Google came out with an 80/20 programme that allows its staff to work on side projects that spark their interests and passions. Consider permitting employees to work on various projects that may be adjacent to what they were specifically hired to do. Allowing them to pursue something that interests them opens them up to collaboration with other teams, in addition to helping generate new ideas, upskilling, improving working relationships, and fostering business growth.

⑤ Learning and development opportunities

Candidate and employee behaviour has shifted dramatically over the last couple of years. Where salary was once a strong motivating factor in someone accepting a job offer, we have seen how quickly that has shifted. For example, in our recent whitepaper, our internal survey identified that most Millennials and Gen-Z employees choose a job with lower pay if there is a potential for growth and learning.

To attract and retain this hungrier and more eager type of worker, managers need to ensure that they're providing an environment where upskilling is available to everyone, regardless of whether they're working remotely or on-site. Helping employees meet their career goals and aspirations is vital in keeping them.

Ensuring that career development and promotions are based on merit rather than visibility will ensure remote workers still feel valued and that they continue to have a future within your organisation.

To talk with one of our workforce and talent advisory specialists to help you build a strong hybrid workforce, please contact:

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