



How to Create a *Successful* Hybrid Work Environment.

Including Insights & Expectations
From Tech Professionals

#FINDYOURFORWARD

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Introduction.

No two professionals are exactly alike in regards to their preferred work styles and needs. Some want to live in a rural area and work remotely. Some want to live near their office with the flexibility to come and go on their terms. Others may want to be in the office all of the time. Most, however, desire to work for a company that offers some version of all of the above.

The key insights from our Built In Tech Worker Survey — a partnership with BrandData that surveyed 1,009 tech professionals nationwide from March 18 to April 5, 2022— indicate that employees want options and flexibility. In their work styles. And employers must adapt if they're going to hire and retain top-tier talent.

The work structure that meets this workforce's diverse needs is hybrid work. However, hybrid only works if it's done well.

As offices move forward with re-opening plans, companies must solve the puzzle of how all of these different work styles will come together. In one meeting, someone could be at their desk in the office while another is in a conference room across the hall. Other employees are also dialing in from the road and joining from their home offices. What are these experiences like for each person and how do companies ensure each is equally productive and rewarding?

This report is your ultimate guide to the state of hybrid work today and how to create a functional hybrid work environment to meet the demands of your employees and the current job market.



SECTION 1



Current Work Environment & Trends.



SECTION 1

Of today's workforce, **38 percent of employees feel mostly positive about their work environment**, and only 3 percent feel mostly negative. If we segment the data by remote versus in-office, positivity increases:

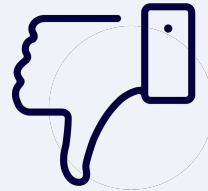
Sentiment: Work Environment.

People who currently work remotely full-time



44%

Mostly positive



5%

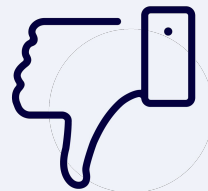
Mostly negative

People who currently in the office full-time



36%

Mostly positive



5%

Mostly negative

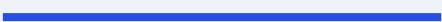
Therefore, there is something to be said for giving employees the option to work remotely. When positivity increases, work performance and productivity increase along with it.

SECTION 1

It is also clear that job seekers desire a hybrid work environment, one in which they are partially in-office and working remotely.

Job Considerations.

Employee Top Considerations When Looking for a Job

Remote work is top a consideration  **36%**

Office location is top a consideration  **33%**

Hybrid work is a top consideration  **28%**

The office isn't going away. People want the option to go in or to feel connected to the community they live in but still want the flexibility.

Job Search Location.



67%
of job seekers search for opportunities in the areas near where they live.

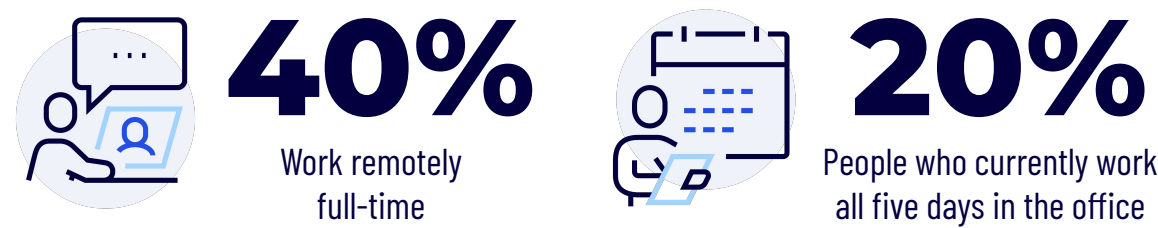


40%
of job seekers look for remote-only jobs

SECTION 1

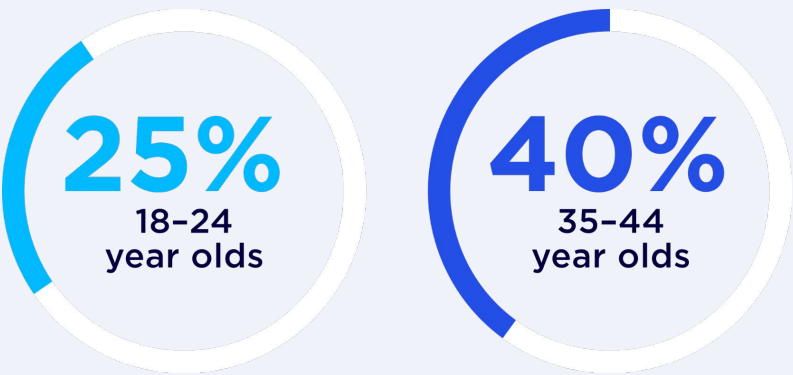
Around 35 percent of technology professionals would not accept a job offer if hybrid work were not offered. When looking at this data by current work environment, those working in the office five days a week may actually be seeking a hybrid option.

Hybrid Preferences: By Current Work Environment.



Hybrid Preferences: By Age Group.

Age range of technology professionals



SECTION 1

Furthermore, excluding insurance-related benefits, a [2020 Unum report](#) showed that flexible and remote working arrangements were one of the top three benefits that mattered most to the employee respondents.

This trend was apparent prior to the pandemic accelerating remote work. In as early as 2019, the [FlexJobs annual survey](#) found that 30 percent of respondents reported leaving a job because they didn't have the option for flexible work options. Another 16 percent indicated they were in the process of looking for a new job because of a lack of flexibility. 80 percent said their loyalty to their employer would increase if they had flexible work options and 52 percent stated they tried to negotiate flexible work arrangements in the past.

All these insights boil down to one central conclusion: Companies with a solid hybrid work environment will best suited to attract talent — no matter if they're looking to work in the office, remotely or a combination of both.



80%

Percent of professionals whose employer loyalty would increase if they had flexible work options



SECTION 2



The Hybrid Model Explained.

SECTION 2

In part thanks to the pandemic, hybrid work structures have evolved beyond merely in-office positions with minimal opportunity for telecommuting. Instead, hybrid work models now bring an integrated, multi-faceted approach to how work gets done.

A hybrid work model is a plan that incorporates a mixture of in-office and remote work into an employee's schedule. Employees can choose when they work from home and when they come into the office. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this work style. Instead, each company should develop a hybrid model based on the needs of the business, teams and employees.

Variations of the Hybrid Model.

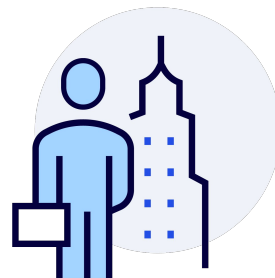
**There are several variations of the hybrid model.
Three popular options include:**



Remote-first



Office-occasional



**Office-first,
remote allowed**

SECTION 2

Remote First.

A remote-first model implies that the company's operations will closely mirror those of a fully remote workforce. Most will retain offices as a space for employees to work from. In a remote-first organization, the default is online communication as the primary, with in-person meetings being minimal. Some companies adopting this approach are only using office space for collaborative projects. Examples of companies that have or are implementing a remote-first model include Quora and Dropbox.

Office-Occasional.

An office-occasional hybrid model implies that employees come into the office a few times per week. Unlike many remote-first models, an office-occasional model uses office space to blend solo work and in-person collaboration. Some companies might have strict guidelines that indicate when and why employees need to be in the office. In contrast, others might have a loose policy where, for example, employees are instructed to come into the office one to two days per week of their choosing.

Some employees might choose to spend more time in the office than required if that's their preference. However, for office-occasional work models, much of the workforce is likely to be local since there is a requirement to come into the office occasionally.

SECTION 2

Office-First, Remote Allowed.

Office-first, remote-allowed environments keep both the office and remote work options and designate the office as the primary place of work. This is a common approach when the entire leadership team is primarily in the office. Since the leadership team is likely to request in-person collaboration and meetings, an office-centered approach is expected to result. A remote work policy is offered, and some employees might be located in different areas of the region or country, but many will likely be working close to the office, especially those who work closely with the leadership team.

Some challenges to this setup include those in-office having access to leadership, whereas others might not. Also, if large groups are working together in the office with a few employees working remotely, the group within the office might leave those working remotely out of conversations, making them feel more isolated. Therefore, it's vital that organizations put clear hybrid policies to include remote workers, so they don't feel like second-class citizens.





SECTION 3



Challenges Employers Face With Hybrid Models.



SECTION 3

As Hailley Griffis, Head of Public Relations at Buffer and co-host of the MakeWorkWork podcast, shared in a [recent post](#):

“People refer to the hybrid model a lot, but there isn’t exactly one clearly defined example. Ultimately, it involves some combination of working remotely and from an office. So far, **the hybrid model looks different for every organization, but there are a few clear themes.** Whatever the specifics, however, companies that choose to incorporate a hybrid model will all face some challenges.”

Employers are starting to understand they must adapt to the demands of a workforce that’s asking for flexible working arrangements. In a 2021 benefits survey, more than **80 percent of employers** ranked flexible work arrangements as essential and something they could offer to employees. Additional research from a [2020 Robert Half Salary Guide](#) showed that 50 percent of employers offered telecommuting or some form of work flexibility to employees.

However, the challenge is implementing a hybrid model that works well and gains the satisfaction and approval of employees across the board.

SECTION 3

The reality is that a hybrid work environment is meant to meet the needs of all employees no matter how they want to work, but it's a complicated strategy to set up and maintain over time.

With a hybrid work model, employers must find ways to ensure all employees feel productive and a part of the team, no matter where they are working. They must build policies and practices that enable strong communication, alignment, and engagement with all employees for a flexible work environment to be successful.

Biggest Employee Challenges of Remote Work



Organizations must build clear policies and expectations around their hybrid work environment to mitigate these challenges. **However, 31 percent of employees indicated they do not know their company's plans or policies surrounding hybrid work.** This is another issue that employers must address by being hyper-transparent on existing strategies as well as any updates to their policies in the future.



SECTION 4



Creating a Successful Hybrid Work Model.



SECTION 4

To maximize the success and productivity possible with a hybrid work model, it's vital to lay a foundation that creates success by doing the following:

- Commit to a remote-first mentality
- Create a work-from-home policy
- Make communication and transparency a priority
- Develop management and work processes that reduce friction

Creating a Work-From-Home Policy.

Just as there is a need for policies around social media use, company equipment and time-off, your company should have a work-from-home policy. The more clarity you provide to your employees, the better the hybrid experience will be for everyone.

Before you put a hybrid plan into action, clearly outline your expectations for every employee in the work-from-home hybrid work policy. Include the policy prominently within your employee handbook and make sure every employee receives it as soon as it goes into effect. Ensure each team member understands individual and team responsibilities within it.

SECTION 4

To Implement a Work-From-Home Policy:



Step 1: Establish a clear purpose.

Your policy should enhance your employee value proposition and what you hope to accomplish by providing work-from-home opportunities.



Step 2: Define the scope.

Outline the roles within your organization that are eligible for remote work, taking into account client-facing responsibilities, cybersecurity concerns and software limitations. The scope should include the qualities of individuals permitted to work from home — role capable of asynchronous work, manager approval received, etc. — and if there is any tenure or limitation to the timeframe work-from-home is permitted.



Step 3: Outline a process.

Clarify the approval process for work-from-home requests.

SECTION 4



Step 4: Set admissible work-from-home days.

Outline what days of the week or month are permissible work-from-home days.



Step 5: Outline clear expectations.

Clearly outline communication, responsiveness, working hours, performance, productivity and availability expectations in the policy.



Step 6: Set technology support requirements.

Outline requirements, such as equipment and internet speeds, for work-from-home capability. Office supplies, security and maintenance requirements should also be addressed.

SECTION 4

Committing to a Remote-First Mentality.

For a hybrid model to work, you have to be proactive in making sure remote employees have access to the same opportunities and information as those in the office. Otherwise, your processes and systems will fall apart.

A remote-first mentality means considering the needs of the entire workforce, including remote employees, and embracing the tools required for successful remote work. These include:

- Communications tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams
- Virtual meeting tools like Zoom and Google Meet
- Collaboration tools like Google Docs and Miro
- Work management tools like Monday.com and Asana

Every meeting should be planned with remote employees in mind. To do so:

- Add a video call link to every meeting invite.
- Ensure meeting rooms are well-equipped for great video and audio.
- Plan for virtual whiteboarding instead of using an actual whiteboard.
- Create a shared online document versus. Printing out documents.
- For lunch meetings, give the people at home options for food delivery credits when ordering for those in the office.

SECTION 4

It's necessary to establish virtual touchpoints with management and mentors. Options include:

- Schedule recurring one-on-ones with all members of the team so they have dedicated manager facetime to discuss careers, work and personal lives.
- Create weekly open office hours for management teams that anyone can join. Opportunities and blockers can be identified through casual discussions that can happen in the office but need to be planned for remote employees.
- Host virtual lunch-and-learns. Encourage employees to record processes, best practices and training sessions for on-demand viewing.

Finally, it's vital to ensure all are treated consistently. This includes:

- Be aware of who is promoted and recognized and ensuring remote employees are not being left out.
- Ensure that all remote employees have the same opportunities as in-office employees, including access to leadership, meeting attendance and participation in celebrations around company and interpersonal milestones.





“

Embracing a remote-first ethos means everyone can work comfortably, feel heard, and contribute equally — whether they're in their office or yours.

”



Marc Boscher

CEO, Unito

SECTION 4

Making Communication a Priority.

Communication can be challenging for employees in general. This is compounded by a hybrid work environment where there isn't always face-to-face interaction. For a hybrid model to succeed, companies need to commit to building effective communication strategies, including cutting down on lengthy Zoom meetings and implementing asynchronous communication tools.

According to Atlassian, 45 percent of individuals feel overwhelmed by the number of video meetings they have to attend, with 73 percent of meeting attendees indicating they multi-task and do other work during the video sessions.

Meetings should be focused and provide employees with the information they need as efficiently as possible so they can continue their work. Ultimately, long video calls can reduce a worker's autonomy and ability to organize and prioritize their time — all while cutting into the time they could be spending on their actual job.

Working from home is successful only if the friction for obtaining information is similar (or less) than what employees experience in the office. Adopting asynchronous communication tools such as Jira, Trello and Notion can help improve communication and establish remote processes. These types of tools can increase knowledge sharing and externalize the necessary steps required to complete a project. Externalizing information is valuable since it makes an employee's personal knowledge about the task transparent and accessible to others. Also, asynchronous communication tools allow remote work to occur on the employee's schedule.

Instant messaging apps like Slack, G-Chat, and Teams can also help cut down on email inbox overflow and messages getting lost in the shuffle.

SECTION 4

Developing a Workflow Management System.

To succeed as a hybrid business, you need to assess your current systems and processes, then update them for a hybrid model. Identifying project flow, stakeholders, when and where the work gets done and the tools required for a project are necessary considerations. From here, you can identify and remove potential blockers and choke points.

Ideally, you will implement a workflow management system that takes into account a hybrid work model, such as a bidirectional workflow where information can travel seamlessly between tools. Once the workflows are established, they should be shared widely to increase transparency and build alignment within the hybrid model.

Hybrid = Smart.

Experts agree that the hybrid model is here to stay. Companies that implement an effective and successful hybrid work model will be more appealing in the job market than those without it.

However, if the past few years are any indication, change is likely. What a successful hybrid work model looks like now may not be the same in six or 12 months. **Companies must frequently and regularly seek out feedback from employees and potential candidates to modify their hybrid work model to meet the changing needs of the market.** New tools, approaches and strategies are likely to emerge and if you want your hybrid work success to last, listening will be key.



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