Hybrid Work Trends impacting business

Strategies for organisations

People Empowered. Work Transformed.

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About **this report**

Work has changed. It's no longer about place, it's about people. And they expect more. Today's employees are hungry for a more engaging and more satisfying experience at work – one that's aligned to the organisation's purpose, reflects their own values and provides a great work-life balance.

For organisations, this presents exciting opportunities to create people-first working styles that are beneficial for everyone, however and wherever they choose to work. But it's a challenge too. Fail in the task of creating this modern inclusive workplace and organisations risk losing their best people to companies that can.

Here, we look at the key trends shaping today's workplace to help inform policies, best practices and future working strategies.

This report was first published by Microsoft as part of its New Future of Work Initiative and features the work of hundreds of researchers from across Microsoft, LinkedIn, and GitHub.

Top 10 **Hybrid Work Trends**

1. The Hybrid Work Era has begun but there is still a lot to learn
2. Leaders are out of touch with their employees needs
3. Employees want to get a sense of purpose from their work and care about sustainability and inclusion
4. Priorities have shifted towards tighter integration of work and personal needs
5. Wellbeing is seen as important factor of workplace experience
6. Burnout has been on the rise since the pandemic
7. Trust is central to a great employee experience
8. You can't fix security and compliance just with technology – you need to work together with your employees
9. Redefining what productivity means
10. Great reshuffle

Ready to take **hybrid work** to the next level?

The statistics are clear: survey after survey show that UK employees want to work flexibly. And they'll move roles to do it.

There's nothing new about the idea of mobile or flexible working. It's been gathering pace for over a decade as technology has evolved to make hybrid working both easily accessible and productive. But what was initially seen as a benefit or 'perk' has become an expectation for millions of knowledge workers across the UK. And expectations change.

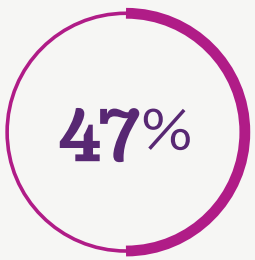
In the post-pandemic world of work, employees want to take hybrid working to the next level. They want more choice and greater control of where, when and how they work. And they demand the same experiences whether they're at home or in the office.

Often, employees want more than employers are willing or able to give – and it's creating tensions in the workplace. As we have seen with the 'great resignation', people will move to companies with a more empowered, flexible and people-first culture. Employers, therefore, need to adapt if they are to retain and attract the best people.

Today, there is an exciting opportunity to take hybrid working to the next level – to exceed expectations and create the agile, innovative and productive workplaces that make work better. Whether people want to stay remote, return to the office or find the best mix of the two that works for them.

Hybrid working is here to stay

of employees in UK prefer hybrid, vs 18% full time office and 23% fully remote *(Bloom et al 2021)*



of employees in NA prefer hybrid, vs 21% full time office and 32% fully remote *(Bloom et al 2021)*

In a global survey 21% of respondents who quit their jobs in 2021 did so because of lack of flexible working hours or locations *(Microsoft WTI 2022)*

In a global survey 80% of employees reported being as or more productive since going remote, but 54% of business leaders reported fearing that productivity was negatively affected since the shift *(Microsoft WTI 2022)*

Priorities have shifted

As Microsoft's New Future of Work has found, peoples' priorities are shifting fast. The pandemic has left many feeling burnt out, overwhelmed by workloads and feeling disconnected from colleagues.

As a result, and compared to pre-pandemic levels, around half of employees across all generations are now looking to prioritise their health and wellbeing over work. And they're choosing to put family and personal life first. That doesn't mean that employees are losing focus – rather that there's more integration of work and personal needs.

To support these shifts, organisations need to consider how best to manage work-life integration challenges. A good place to start is by focusing on goals and outcomes rather than time at the office or in front of the screen. In effect, they need to develop strategies and approaches to help everyone work smarter not harder.

It is important therefore to consider introducing meeting-free days to help employees find time to do their work and reduce the stress of meeting overload. This will help improve overall work and satisfaction.

Similarly, the idea of wellbeing must be put at the heart of the new workplace – to tackle the stress and burnout challenges. But this must be done holistically across the enterprise. The goal is the creation of a culture that is both supportive and inclusive of how everyone wants to work, and that recognises and addresses the challenges of hybrid working. That way, everyone will work better, and the organisation will be better.

Priorities have shifted

Glints February 2021 Employee Well-Being report states the top three reasons why respondents felt burn out:

38% reported overwhelming workloads

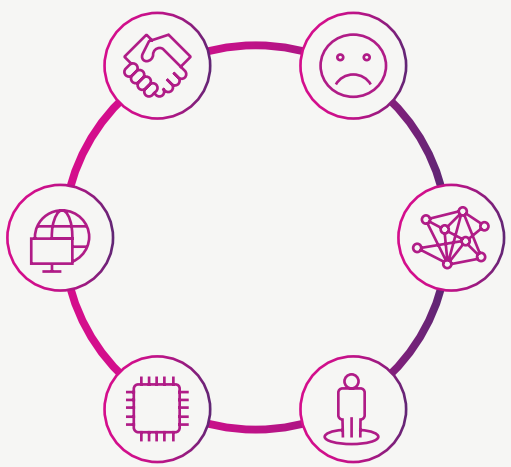
41% selected feeling disconnected from colleagues

35% conflict between demands from home and work

47%

of respondents reported that they are more likely to put family and personal life over work than they were before the pandemic *(Microsoft WTI 2022)*

Assessing the challenges of **hybrid work**



Trust

- Trust is central to a great employee experience
- Employers need to trust their workforce to get their work done to the best of their ability
- Employees need to trust their colleagues they're collaborating with, and that employers are giving them the right information and right tools for success

Frustrated employees

- Manual workforce management due to lack of digital access to schedules
- Inadequate communication with headquarters, worsened by the pandemic
- Stalled productivity from manual, outdated processes

Data culture

- Need for insights to win cost reductions & efficiencies in unpredictable markets
- Strong demand to infuse data into routine workflows & services
- High cost of managing & scaling enterprise insight capabilities

People Centric Leadership

- Hybrid working requires a new leadership approach – one that is "People Centric" and a new type of leader - authentic, emotionally intelligent, open to change. So that employees feel inspired, empowered and connected

Device experiences

- Complexities of remote deployment, management, and updates
- Confusion & slowdowns from inconsistent user experiences
- Unpredictable costs from constant refresh & upgrade cycles

Processes & Practices

- Current processes, systems and KPIs are not focused on supporting people –centric leadership
- Leaders & employees need training & support to help them better navigate and work in remote/hybrid model

The way forward requires **a holistic approach**

Hybrid working is not, in itself, a panacea to tackling the pressures facing today's post-pandemic workforce. Simply allowing more people to work from home – without putting in the appropriate tools and safeguards (and culture) – creates a whole new set of challenges. Success requires a holistic approach.

From HR, to IT, to marketing and sales, to operations, to manufacturing – in a hybrid model, every function needs to come together to empower employees, engage customers, create efficiencies and innovate.

Reinventing when, where, **and how people work**

In practice, this means creating an environment where people can connect and collaborate from anywhere, on any device.

Where the ‘workplace’ is anywhere work is done rather than somewhere people go to do it; an inclusive space where people are fully supported and empowered to be productive. Underpinning it all are the solutions and the processes that enable people to work wherever they choose in complete confidence. If we can do all that, then the benefits will be considerable...

Reinventing when, where, **and how people work**

People

- Resilient connections to company, mission, and coworkers
- Accelerated onboarding, training, & career growth
- Strengthened wellbeing from improved productivity, collaboration, & job satisfaction.

Places

- Standardised, more secure device experiences—from any location
- Barrier-free collaboration between frontline and headquarters
- Simplified, modern systems for inclusive & accessible meetings.

Processes

- Automated processes to improve workflows & free up IT resources
- Workforce management that enables agility and saves time
- Single-platform solution integrates collaborative apps & data tools—while reducing upfront costs.

The way **forward**

As we move through 2022 and beyond, addressing this workstyle shift will be critical to success.

This requires organisations create strategies that promote agility and flexibility for a workforce that is now more diverse, distributed and remote than ever before. While it can certainly be challenging, the commercial and cultural rewards will be worth it.

The way **forward**

5-step plan for hybrid success

1. Create a plan to empower people for extreme flexibility
2. Identify how to bridge the experience gap between physical and digital working worlds
3. Invest in developing a culture of innovation, don't be afraid to experiment different working models
4. Provide a clear sighted, purpose driven leadership
5. Rethink employee experience to compete for best and most diverse talent

Next steps

Each business has unique priorities for hybrid work. Let's work together to identify the right next steps for your business.

Get in touch with Insight to see how we can help you smooth your path to a hybrid future at uk.insight.com/workplace

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