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A Guide To Manage Hybrid Work By Headsup Corporation

The present and the future of work is flexibility. The endeavour of every organisation, large or small will be to enable people to do their best work and have a good experience, no matter where they are working from.
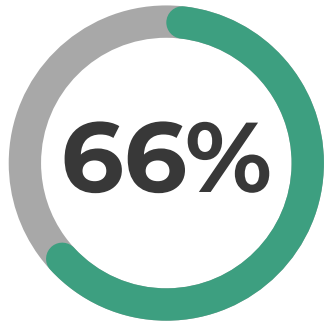
Hybrid Work is the next disruption:
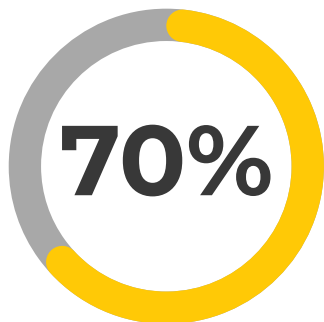## Are you ready for it?
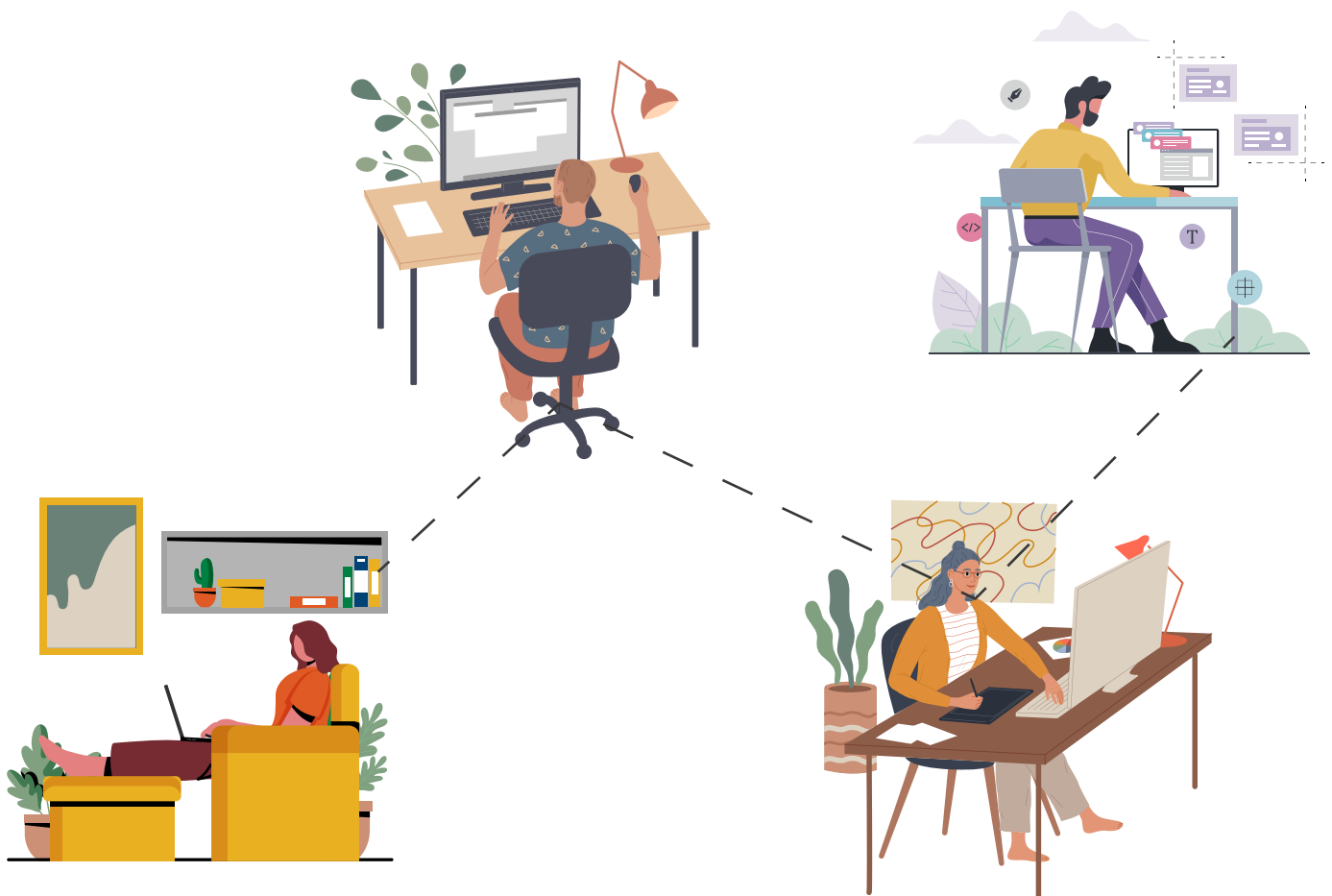
Extreme flexibility and hybrid work will define the post-pandemic workplace
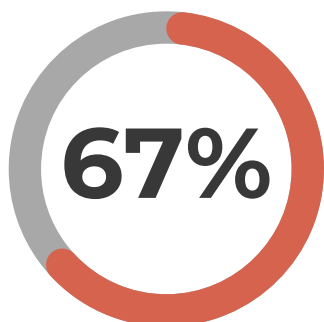
66% of the leaders are considering redesigning physical spaces to prepare for hybrid work

70% of the employees want flexible remote work options to continue

67% of the employees wish for more in-person work or collaboration
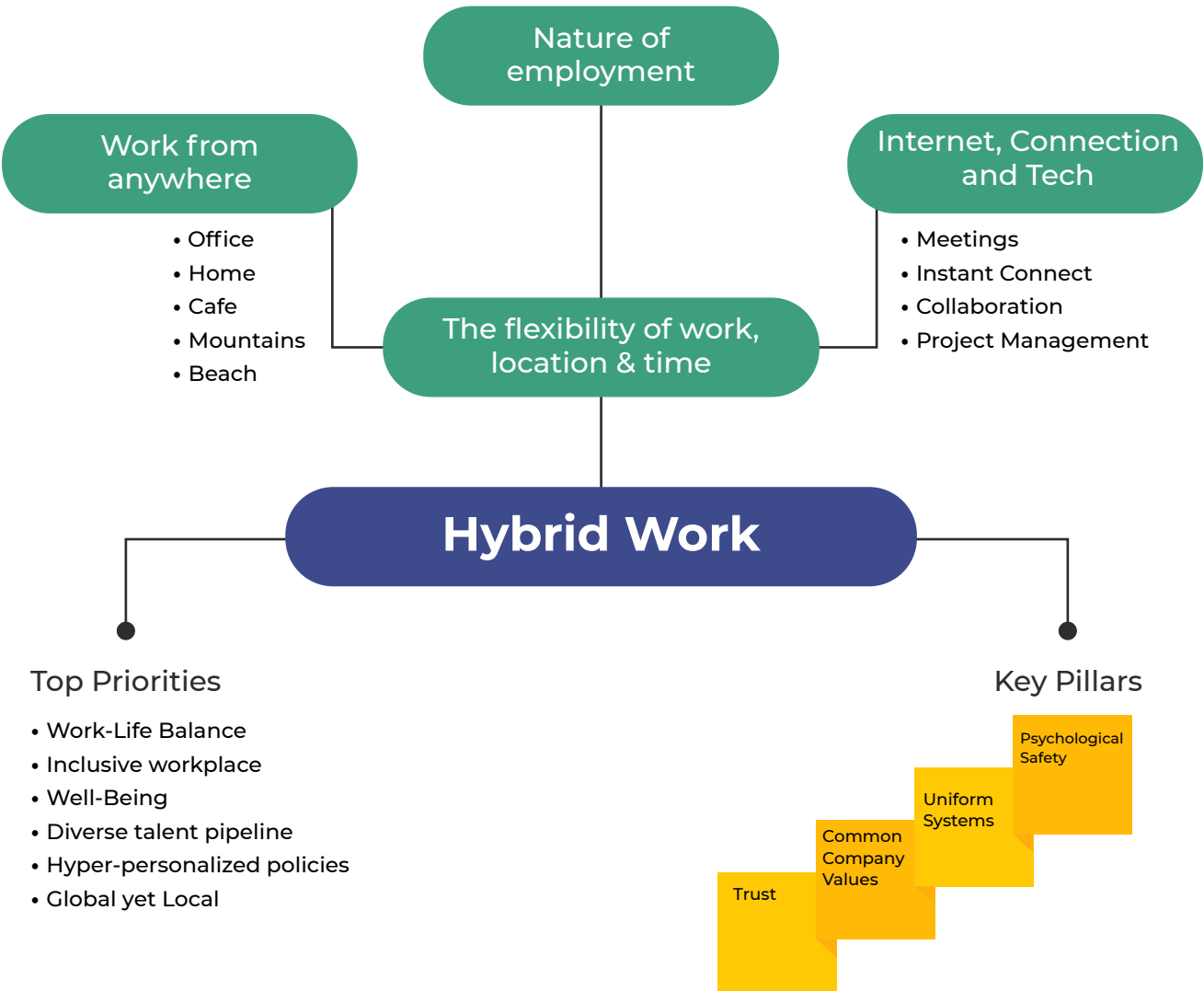
Source: Microsoft's 2021 Work Trend Index

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Index

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Breaking down hybrid work

The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in 2020 led to a shift from work from home. Even the companies who were most reluctant to ever try it were arm-twisted to adopt it. However, as the lockdown eased in India and a few other countries, many companies asked their employees to return to office. Some experimented with alternate days to work from home & the office, some asked only a percentage of employees to come back to work from the office. Especially small businesses and startups realize the huge cost they save with no physical offices. Once they realized the benefits of working from home, they were ready to navigate the other challenges it brought along. Even the ratio of permanent employees and freelancers changed. Hiring across geographies without the worry of relocation, also became normal. The world of work in which companies across the globe were ushered into is now the present and the future of work. It is called Hybrid Work.

Let us help you break it down:

Nature of employment

Work from anywhere
- Office
- Home
- Cafe
- Mountains
- Beach

The flexibility of work, location & time

Internet, Connection and Tech
- Meetings
- Instant Connect
- Collaboration
- Project Management

Hybrid Work

Top Priorities
- Work-Life Balance
- Inclusive workplace
- Well-Being
- Diverse talent pipeline
- Hyper-personalized policies
- Global yet Local

Key Pillars

Trust

Common Company Values

Uniform Systems

Psychological Safety

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Types of employees in a hybrid work system

*Depending upon the nature of employment
full-time part-time and freelancers*

A company's employees are its most valuable assets. Generally, a person who is hired by the employer to work for the organization is called an employee. These make the organization what it stands for. Employees can be differentiated into three main types depending upon their nature of employment:

• Full-time	• Part-time	• Freelancers

Full-Time Employees:

In India, a full-time employee should work for not more than 9 hours per day and a maximum of 48 hours per week. The benefits enjoyed by these employees are - compulsory health insurance, statutory bonuses, a provident fund, and pension, which are available to employees under Indian employment laws.

Part-Time Employees:

A part-time employee carries on work fewer hours per week than a full-time employee. They do not work continuously but carry out their work in shifts. There's no specific law for part-time employees but they generally have rights similar to regular employees. As a common practice, they don't get paid leaves or medical insurance, or retirement plans. Unlike regular employees, they don't get the opportunity of career advancements in the company. The only difference that occurs is that, unlike full-time employees, they receive proportionate benefits.

Freelancers:

A freelancer is a self-employed person who gives services to multiple clients at a time and is not committed to a particular company or employer. They earn as per job and charge hourly or periodically based on their work. This type of work is usually short-term. Most freelance jobs are in creative industries like - graphic designing, photography, copywriting, website development, catering, consultation, etc.

All these employees and the talent they bring are important for the business. In a hybrid workplace, all of these enablers play a critical role. Managers, leaders, and HR professionals have to distinguish among them and frame some common and other unique policies for the best experience of all. The HR policies for the hybrid work have to be created for all types of employees: Full-time, Part-time, and freelancers. Strategies have to be built to ensure productivity and growth for all. Starting from recruitment to separation, let's see how you have to reinvent your HR systems and policies.

Hiring across geographies: Things to keep in mind

With the emergence of COVID-19, WFH - an already existing trend accelerated at a great pace. Companies switched to working from home and many have continued to work in a remote or hybrid environment. Many companies have the advantage of seeing this as the upcoming future and some are even beginning to realize the potential benefit that this work environment has - hiring across geographies - a new competitive advantage.

Instead of choosing from top talents present nearby, they can now access top talents from anywhere across the world. The company can open its door to employees without any geographical boundaries.

Pre-COVID, the organizations believed that being present in an office is essential to run a company. 2020 proved it wrong, it became clear that while working remotely an employee can be as impactful as while working from an office cabin. Additionally, the international workforce would represent more virtuality and flexibility working for the organization.

As said, the future of the work is hybrid or remote, it doesn't matter if the employee is working from near the headquarters of the company or remotely, miles away from the physical office. Smart leaders already know that attracting, acquiring, and retaining a diverse workforce is going to be beneficial for the organizations in the long run. It will increase creativity, innovation and generate exceptional performance. Enabling the organization to have a much more modern workplace and work culture, also allows people to participate in more engaging and exhilarating work. But hiring across geographies is easier said than done. The real challenge is: How to be global yet local?

Here are some things to be kept in mind while hiring across geographies:

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1. Understanding an employee's intentions:

Remote working involves virtual /telephonic conversations. While it's human nature to misunderstand non-verbal cues such as smiling, body posture, or general voice change. These can be very infectious through virtual conversations because one can easily consider the worst of any situation. To avoid search circumstances it is advisable to the employer to have a habit of keeping a positive approach towards remote candidates. Switching to video calls more often helps too.

2. Managing time zones:

With unmanaged timings both parties may end up losing their entire workday. Thus, meetings need to be organized in an effective manner taking note of different time zones. To overcome this, employees need to be taught to work irrespective of any blocks. If there are blocks then they can be productive in some other work. There's always something else to do. Secondly, tools such as

3. Boomerang, Spacetime.am and Time-temperature can be used to set and plan meetings accordingly.

4. Cultural communication differences:

When a candidate is from a different cultural background, communication differences can occur. What may seem normal and acceptable to one can feel odd and disrespectful to others. The only way to overcome this barrier is to understand their communication style and make them understand yours. Thus, crossing the bridge of misunderstandings and divisions.

5. Becoming digitally available:

Once you have the candidates on-board, their onboarding experience and the first few days at work become critical. Remote employees often miss all the unscheduled discussions with their managers about a great instant idea or a last-minute project change. This is a major reason why the managers must be available digitally to their remote employees even if it's through a whiteboard tool. If employees have to run into the manager, they can do so easily digitally. Some of the whiteboarding tools that would help are - Gotomeeting, Mural, and Ziteboard.

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6. Making more one-to-one time for remote employees:

Employees working remotely miss a lot of moments like randomly discussing a new topic, attending happy hours at work, or getting one-to-one feedback from managers. They might also be miscommunicated as indicated earlier. The best way to set things right would be to invest more time individually with the employees. Once the mindset is clear and everything is in place, the rapport goes in the positive direction setting course for healthier communication and increased employee engagement.

Remote working or hybrid working is here to stay. The organizations that can accept the reality and redesign their strategies accordingly, will be able to survive the disruption.

A checklist for recruiting freelancers

Given the freedom and autonomy of the work, the world today is gravitating towards freelance work. While the traditional employees look for standard eight-hour work, today people are opting for flexible work timings. Working with freelancers gives businesses a lot of potentials to grow. One of the main reasons companies hire freelancers is because they're more cost-effective. They are also highly professional in their work because they practice it to the core. A freelancer's life is built around connections and they usually recommend their

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connections to the company if they want any. Moreover, freelancers can bring more value to the organization because of the different perspectives they have.

Hiring freelancers is a great way of getting work done in limited resources and many businesses find it easier to work with free-lancers for this very reason. It also becomes important to effectively manage these freelancers to ensure smooth working between them and the company. A leader needs a completely different methodology than for the regu-lar employees to manage them because they mostly work remotely and they aren't fully aware of the company's ins and outs. Thus, it becomes essential for the managers to develop a strategy to effectively manage the freelancers they've hired.

Some of the tips for managing freelancers are pointed down below:

1. Recruiting the right candidate

Freelancers' recruitment is way different from regular employees. While recruiting freelancers the important things that need to be considered are: reviewing their previous works, reviewing their websites, and using social media for verification. You can also use platforms and websites such as freelancer. in, truelancer.com, upwork.com, and 99designs.com to hire them.

Providing information on a company's background

Making freelancers aware of the organization's goals, objectives, stakeholders and immediate competitors helps a lot in building a good business context with them. This will help the gig workers to be more valuable to the company.

2.

3.

Outline the project and set clear expectations

A freelancer's work will ultimately define the success of the organization therefore it is advisable for the manager to list out all the objectives and expectations from the freelancer on the project beforehand. Setting clear goals, expectations, deadlines, and project requirements that have to be achieved by the freelancer will help eradicate any confusion and help in proper functioning.

Setting a budget

It is advisable to create an annual budget for freelancers rather than budgeting every time. Identifying whether it works best for the company to pay an hourly/ weekly/project-based rate or long-term contract can also help out in the favor of the business.

4.

5.

Don't micromanage

Freelancers have multiple clients to work for so refrain from practising control or micromanaging them. Trusting them and giving them adequate time and space to complete the project is the right thing to do. This would result in effective work and positive results. Furthermore, it is also useful in maintaining a good long-term relationship with the freelancer.

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Managing them becomes easy when the manager has the right strategies that the business needs which crucially to both the company and the freelancers hired.

A checklist for managing freelancers

Follow these 5 tips to manage your remote freelancers

With the rising demand for work from home culture, people are inclining towards remote or hybrid working models. The flexibility to work from anywhere has got the interest of many job seekers in recent years. Due to this, the companies are expanding their vacancies for people from different diverse regions and culture.

Though it may sound very up-to-date, many organizations may have a hard time managing their remote employees or freelancers due to a lack of physical monitoring.

Thus, no matter how interesting it sounds, if the management isn't up to the mark, it may cost heavy bills to the company that surely no one would like to pay as an employer.
So, what is the mid-way solution to this?

By practicing these 5 magic formulas, any organization can turn a tenfold increase in profits from their remote freelancers without the need for physical monitoring.

1. Be clear of your tasks and expectations

Unlike the physical mode of working, the online or remote works very differently. You cannot see the work happening by yourself all the time. Thus, it is necessary to hire those freelancers who are true to their work and respect your expectations.

Moreover, as an employer, you should be very clear from the beginning what tasks need to be done and what expectations you have from the people you are collaborating with.

It will lay clear grounds for expectations within which the freelancers have to work.
Remember, defining the periphery is very important when you are working on serious projects or looking forward to long-term collaboration to avoid any hassle.

2. Avoid setting rigid deadlines

Working from home may sound fun in the beginning. But, eventually, it turns out monotonous and boring. It is because unlike in-office work culture, one doesn't have a colleague to interact with or share ideas in the moment of doubts.

Also, people who usually opt for

remote work culture are often occupied with other chores/projects apart from your work which makes it difficult for them to meet rigid deadlines.

So to overcome that, set realistic deadlines after consulting the collaborator. Prefer to say get ABC work done by XYZ time rather than saying report (strictly) at XYZ time.

Even though both of these sentences may sound similar, they cast a very different impact on the receiver. The prior one gives a sense of extra time in the pocket while the latter one doesn't.

3. Use online meeting and monitoring tools to your advantage

There are many online meeting portals available today, especially Google meet, Zoom, and WebEx which are in huge demand these days. You can use these platforms to your advantage by conducting weekly meetings to monitor the progress and discuss further proceedings.

4. Track the records and simulate feedbacks

Tracking the work done becomes a necessity when you have to handle a team of remote freelancers. We all know that no two people are the same. Thus, every teammate has different levels of work efficiency. Therefore to

monitor that, you can use Google Classroom or Google sheets to check the efficiency of every freelancer.

By using Google classroom or sheets, you can mark the time when they have submitted their responses to the respective deadlines and thus track their records easily.

5. Be more than an employer

Today everyone is going through a tough time and multiple challenges. Thus as an employer, you need to connect with your interns or collaborators at a personal level or check on them frequently. It will not only add to your image but establish you as a reliable employer among your workforce.

Global Talent Pool: Making most of this new competitive advantage

The outdated way of hiring candidates was to seek the talented ones for job vacancies and keep them inside the four walls of the office by offering them benefits, compensations, and perks that they can't say no to so that they aren't persuaded to take up some other job. But over the last year, the complete outlook has taken a 360 degree turn. Employees are no longer sitting near the manager's cabin but are at their own homes working at their own pace. Remote work has taken the lead and with that, there has emerged a new competitive advantage for all the businesses- the global talent pool.

The international workforce represents a wealth of opportunities as far as talent acquisition is concerned. It brings a chance for the employees to be more virtually flexible. Along with this, companies can deploy the skills internationally which would have been otherwise difficult. The advent of remote working companies seeking talent outside the boundaries has made great innovations possible. The sooner businesses realize that remote work is here to stay and they can increase the boundaries of talent acquisition, the better it will be.

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Let's discuss some of the advantages of global recruitment one can consider:

1. Acquiring uncommon talent:

In the local market, every manager is driving talent from the same talent pool. They have people with the same qualifications and skill set. Hiring at a global scale can bring a change to that. There can be qualified prospective employees with unique skill sets that could add tremendous value to the organization, also bringing a new edge with out-of-the-box ideas because of cultural differences and diversity.
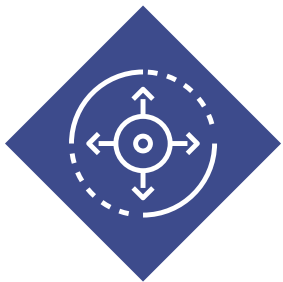
2. Expansion:

Companies opening their doors to global talent not only diversify their workforce but also innovate and expand. Expansion is a part of global recruitment. This allows not only tapping into the international market but also adapting them.

3. Cultural diversification:

Global talent pool brings diversity, cultural & communicational diversification. Workplace diversity allows the businesses to mix teams of differentiation allowing a greater flow of innovation and increasing productivity. It helps in individual development while maximizing skill sets while helping retain talent.

4. Peer to peer development:

When old employees work with new ones, a process of diffusion happens. While working on the same project or carrying out day-to-day operations, they can improve the skills, insights, and knowledge of their colleagues too. Even through remote working, this process can make the employees, sitting far away from each other become more confident in their roles. The performance of all the team members can be increased by sharing on-the-job experience and making it a valuable competitive advantage.

The pandemic today has broken down the technological and cultural barriers that hindered the path of remote working. It can add a lot of value if it is strategically managed by the leaders.

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Are you conducting Virtual Interviews the right way?

As companies try to make a solid impact in the market around the pandemic, virtual interviews have taken an important position in the working of businesses. Organizations are striving to make employees' health and safety their priority and thus most of the one-to-one interviews have been taken over by virtual ones. Many of the companies have already adjusted to the right way of conducting an online interview but some are still taking time to adapt to the new technology and adjusting to the new norms.

While conducting the virtual interviews, the tips given below are going to be very beneficial:
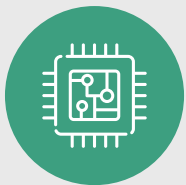
Testing the technology and giving it a dry run

If video conferencing tools haven't been used before then it's recommendable to do video testing first before taking an actual interview. This reduces the chances of a technical glitch that might occur during the interview. The most reliable options for video conferencing are - Google Meets, Zoom, Skype, and Cisco Webex Meetings. Video meeting features such as screen sharing can be tested before too so that it is done effortlessly during the actual interview. One must also make sure that they have a stable internet connection, a reliable well-functioning microphone, and a camera set at the right angle.

Sharing details with candidates

Once the candidates are informed regarding video interviews, reaching out to them individually via email or messages would help them to be comfortable in the process. Detailing out the expectations, timelines and even the interviewer's names would help them feel at ease. Along with this, companies can also share a common number with candidates whom they can reach out to, in case of any unexpected glitches with the network or technology.

Choosing proper interview space

Clean, well lit and quiet spaces for conducting a virtual interview are a must. Make sure that the background is free of anything distractive. This will allow the candidate to speak without any distractions. Make sure that the light is stable too, too much and too low light can get in the way of an interview eventually leading to distractions

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Have an attractive company pitch ready

Virtual interviews are an indication that the candidate will miss being inside the four walls of the office and the experience that comes with it. Thus having a compelling company pitch to introduce the candidate to the company must be appealing enough to give an imaginary tour of what working in the company would feel like. To get a little extra support in painting the picture, visual materials can be used like videos, presentations, images, or testimonies of current employees.

Be real

Virtual world paints a picture that doesn't seem real. In an interview, this can cause obstacles. So it is advisable to be authentic. Keep the human aspect alive. It must be remembered that the candidate is sitting in his home with other lives around. So for things like a dog barking or kids interrupting, the candidate must not be penalized. Empathize with the candidate and instead of following a script, be agile.

In this period where everything has shifted to the virtual world, virtual interviews are going to help the company recruit world-class talent across the globe. It also seems the only way to keep the candidates engaged and move them up the hiring process. Time to up your game and master the art of conducting virtual interviews for delivering exceptional candidate experience.
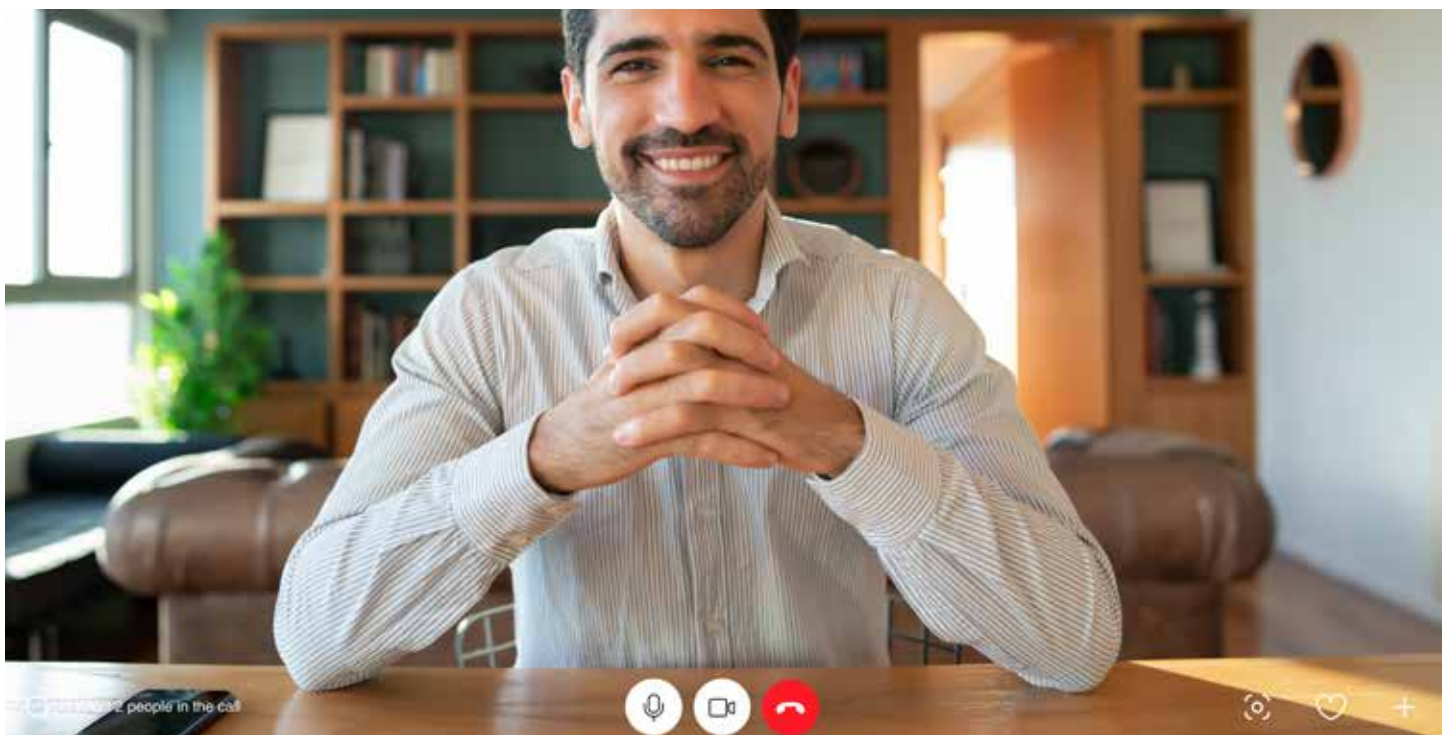
The start of hybrid work doesn't have to mean the end of productive work

The pandemic changed the phase of how the business operates. Before the pandemic, people stayed up late in offices and did night shifts to prove that they were working hard and being productive. Now, there's no such way to measure productivity rather than trusting the outcome of the work and skills/behavior of the employees. Many reports suggest that COVID-19 has changed how employees view their position in the corporate world, especially when it comes to their workplace and their ability to do the work productively. It has emerged that hybrid working does not necessarily mean an end to productive work, if anything, it has increased the pace of work making employees more hardworking and productive.

> **Some key figures depicting employee productivity in remote work are-**
>
> 1. A study by BGC proved that 75% of the employees surveyed across three countries showed productivity the same as pre-pandemic.
> 2. CoSo Cloud found that 77% of the respondents reported an increase in productivity while working from home.

Looking at the survey figures it's clear that hybrid working hasn't affected employee productivity. However, it is considered that while more than half of the employees are working productively, for others productivity can be improved by identifying the challenges faced and using the right tool to overcome them.

The following recommendations are for managers to improve productivity in the hybrid work environment-

Ensure collaboration-

To be productive, the teams who are remote working need to be in collaboration with one another throughout when needed. The flow of information regularly is a basic need to have good productivity. The team should be able to share files, interact via video conferencing, and even connect to resolve queries or find out solutions. When the gap is bridged, productivity flows.

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Having better company work culture-

Truth be said: only collaboration does not result in good productivity. Company culture also plays an important role. When there's a sense of unity and belongingness among teams, a greater level of employee engagement and satisfaction can be achieved.

Provide feedback-

Regular feedback helps employees to be on the right track. Guidance regardless of whether it's work from home or in-office work proves to be useful. Anything from praising good work to a quick meeting regarding an unsatisfactory performance can create a difference.

Asking for feedback-

employees working on assignments know better about tools and solutions that can help enhance their efficiency and increase productivity. Asking for their feedback and implementing those changes might help in evolving the business. This can also help collect better insights and analysis from the employees.

Trust-

Believe in the potential of your employees and their ability to complete the work at their own pace. Sitting on their heads is never the solution. Working remotely doesn't mean your employees are getting lazy or laid back. If they have clear goals in place, clear about expected business outcomes, and are aligned with everyone in the team, they are driven and determined. So, build a culture of trust and allow your employees to take ownership of the projects. Then see how the magic happens.

Hybrid and remote working models can be extremely effective when it comes to productivity. Involving simple tactics and strategies in the day-to-day working of employees under hybrid work culture only enhances their work output and thus the overall business efficiency.

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Is successful remote team meetings a myth?

The 'video call meeting' revolution has taken over the entire world. The companies that never engaged in virtual discussions and businesses, find themselves acknowledging the merits of this worldwide revolution. Even though virtual meetings have proved to be a great solution to the pandemic for business, there are various myths and misconceptions about the same.

In this blog, we've outlined some myths about remote team meetings and their facts. They are:

1. Face-to-face about meetings surpass virtual remote meetings-

Pre-covid, in-person meetings were preferred over any other alternatives. It was believed that one could communicate better in face-to-face meetings. But as the pandemic rolled in and all the business meetings started being conducted online, this myth soon erupted. But as a fact, remote meetings are as productive as in-person meetings, given that the right technology is available to the employees. Screen sharing features, good audio and video quality are necessary for of fruitful virtual meetings and they can in totality make remote meetings as effective as face-to-face meetings.

2.Every remote meeting has to be a video meeting-

Video conferencing causes video call fatigue and is tiresome. For every message to be delivered from the manager to the employee or vice versa, video calls aren't necessary. Small messages can be delivered via phone or mail. For business meetings or clients' sales pitches, video calls should be a must as they help make more impact.

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3. A single solution will do justice across the business-

A very simple truth is - different teams have different requirements. Thus, a single remote meeting solution won't work across the whole business. Some teams will not require video conferencing while some may depend upon it for eg. - recruitment. Sales teams may need features designed for external guests and trainers may require question and answers or webinar functions. So a whole lot of options are required for the proper functioning of business instead of just one solution.

4. More the features, the better the experience-

In case a meeting requires just a basic list of features like- screen sharing, audiovisual aids, and chatbox, using a software that has rich features adds more complexity to the whole process. The employees will get confused and it will end up disturbing the whole meeting. Choosing a platform that has the basic requirements for the meet is the best fit.

> Remote meetings have become an important part of our lives lately. Having the required technology and correct knowledge is necessary to make it effective and productive.

Creating an emotionally connected hybrid workplace

The pandemic has taken an extremely emotional and personal toll on every human forcing them into hybrid working and virtual workplaces. Earlier, employees were still able to draw a line between their work life and personal life but since 2020 things have taken a turn. It's as if the pandemic has opened cameras into their lives, mixing the work and personal space. The reason that companies can jump into the personal lives of their employees and see life and people around them away from the four walls of the office creates a need for more connectedness and empathy- a need for emotional connection in a hybrid workplace.

If ignored, the remote working experience can be dry and bland. No water cooler conversations. No lunch breaks. No offsites. Lesser opportunities to network.

To ignite the spark of emotional connection, the leaders can tend to the following elements:

Respect

Feeling respected is the prime reason an employee loves the job. Respect must be incorporated as an important part of the organization and be used reciprocally. It creates a far deeper emotional connectedness in the work environment. Thus, creating motivation for peak performance.

Positive environment

When positivity thrives in a workplace, emotional connectedness is achieved and employees use it in a unified way to move forward together to achieve better results. A positive work environment promotes growth and goal attainment. These environments encourage employees to perform at their highest ability.

Values

Employees perform highest in organizations that thrive on qualities such as integrity, honesty and give importance to personal beliefs too. The leaders and peers work together in an emotionally connected workplace when both embrace common values of the organization and equally give space for others' personal beliefs too.

Collaboration

The employees feel a greater part of the organization they're working in collaboration as that becomes an important part of their work-life and they are included in the important inner working or decision-making process of the company. While working in teams, they share information and advice freely and frequently for efficiency and good results. This also opens strong communication channels with other employees and management.

Listen

It's also important to frequently monitor the challenges and changes happening in the workplace and follow them up, creating a secure path for the employees and making sure all the employees are on board. Creating an emotional connection in the workplace is as important as looking after employee engagement. Thus, when everyone is aligned, building an emotional bond with each other and working together makes the business thrives.

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For employees to feel right and satisfied where they are, they need more than just increasing salaries and huge bonuses. When they feel that their work and input in the organization matters to their managers and is productive to the organization, they feel connected. Emotional connection is a motivating sense of satisfaction that comes from being appreciated for the work or worthy purposes. While most organizations monitor employee engagement for motivation, a strong and positive workforce is ready when they are emotionally connected. When employees feel a deeper emotional connection with the organization, their managers, and co-workers, it alters their perception of the workplace.

Stitching an efficient employee engagement strategy for all

Employee engagement is the level of mental and emotional commitment an employee has towards their job and the organization. An engaged employee will help drive the organization to success directing their best efforts towards their work. Employee engagement is of massive importance to the organization as they are dedicated towards certain goals and that helps employees derive maximum efficiency to outperform their competitors every time.

It is beneficial because it helps in customer satisfaction, improved productivity and efficiency, reduction of turnover, low absenteeism, improved company culture, and better business outputs.

Some of the employee engagement strategies used by top companies are as below :

1. Encouraging and giving paid leaves

Various companies give paid leaves. Companies like Netflix and LinkedIn give unlimited paid leaves to the employees. This helps in maintaining employee engagement at a healthy level . A few reasons why employees don't take paid leaves even when they can is because they feel that their superiors will judge them and they'll stop getting important assignments when they return. This may sound like a win-win situation for the business but it's not. There are high chances of employees being unproductive, overworked, and burned out if they don't take leaves. Thus, paid leaves must be encouraged by managers.

2. Consulting employees on decision making

An important part of employee engagement is that the employees do not feel left out. They are likely to feel more valuable members of the organization if the managers consider them more than just numbers on the pages and make them feel that their opinion matters. Many organizations include Their employees' opinions and say in the decision-making process of the company which eventually boosts the morale of the employees and makes them feel important to the organization that also increases the motivation and thus the productivity level for the company.

3. Offering flexible working hours

As new technology and innovative managerial strategies have taken the place of the old ones due to pandemic, the companies are ditching nine to five office jobs in remote working. Employees working from home are parents and partners too so the companies have given the liberty to choose their working timings. Some of the companies that have adapted to flexible work timings are- Automattic, Dell, DuckDuckGo, Invision, and Upwork.

4. Ensuring 360-degree feedback

360-degree feedback is the feedback that employees get from all the people around them. Using this style employees get reviewed by their colleagues, seniors, and subordinates. HCL Technology uses 360-degree feedback for its employees. Their managers share the survey with the teams. This builds trust and loyalty in the allocation of tasks.

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5. Employee recognition

In remote working, the need for employee recognition is more than ever before. A simple gesture can have a very positive effect on employees' morale. Remote workers are missing out on an important part of day to day working of the organization like peer to peer interaction or interaction with the managers and so it becomes important to make them feel that they are a vital part of the company and their input matters. Some of the ways a manager can recognize employees and appreciate them in remote working are social media shoutouts, virtual celebrations, surprise meal delivery, surprise day off, or wellness perks.

Employee engagement is an excellent way of boosting your employee's morale, increasing productivity, and finally making the business successful. Employees are a crucial part of the organization and keeping them happy and satisfied is the need of the hour especially during remote working. Therefore, it is advisable to take a look at the company's culture and identify opportunities to improve employee engagement.

Reinventing performance management systems for hybrid work models

Traditionally, managers used to set weekly, daily or annual goals for the employees. Thereafter they would review them at the beginning of the year or annually and rate or score them. This methodology was as distasteful for the managers as it was for the employees. Managers hated sitting with the employees telling them where they went wrong and where they needed to improve. Meanwhile, this made employees feel targeted and alienated.

Though the concept of these 'outdated' and old annual review systems was fine, the application and execution failed to meet the ultimate purpose.

As many organizations reinvent their performance management system for hybrid work, some of the strategies that can be followed are:

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1. Measuring outcomes and skills & behaviors

Skills & behaviors and outcomes are measured differently for different employees. For in-office employees, managers usually access the behavior or skill of the employees used for the desired outcome. For remote employees, it is difficult to measure the same. Thus in hybrid work, the performance management system needs to be such that it tends to all the employees, whether they are working remotely or in-person. A performance management system that incorporates both measures of outcome and skill/behavior can be worth considering.

2. Continuous assessment

The companies today are choosing to move from traditional annual reviews to continuous performance assessments. There are various advantages to this - the employees have a better track of their progress, motivating them to be dedicated to their goal and achieve more. Also, due to continuous review, employees will know where they stand and won't be unsighted by a surprise annual review.

For remote working teams, communication is a hassle. Continuous PMS will enable you to combat communication blocks and keep the employees as well as managers updated at a regular pace.

3. Development and evaluation appraisal

Both development and evaluation appraisals are important for the organization. Evaluation appraisals are formal and they determine how well an employee is carrying on the job. Development appraisals are informal and they are usually to identify employees in the area of praise or improvement. The informal appraisal will help employees to speak openly and it will ensure that the employees are assessed regularly and equally. Formal appraisals, on the other hand, will help out the company in maintaining a clear record for legal and accountable reasons. Thus, there is no better or best appraisal system, it depends upon the company culture and should be chosen depending upon it.

4. Involvement in the process

Traditionally, the employee got feedback and performance reviews just from the line managers but as the scenario is changing, so are the strategies. They are now also focusing on including peer-to-peer review and self-review in performance management. Some companies like Netflix and Google are already doing it in their remote working environment. These practice of performance evaluation can be completed using software and assessments that are designed professionally. The employees can either keep their reviews anonymous or can give direct feedback. Either way, it helps in making everyone feel comfortable and open with each other, creating a better bond of trust.

A hybrid working environment is different from an in-office environment, but it doesn't mean that the performance evaluation is less effective. The managers can upgrade the performance management system for hybrid work into methods that meet the challenges. With continuous reviews, frequent meetings, and development in appraisal systems managers can effectively evaluate the employees.
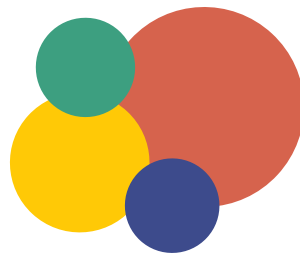
Here's why tech is a key pillar of hybrid work

Remember 2019? Employees used to run to reach their offices on time. But COVID-19 changed it. It pivoted almost the whole scenario of work. Companies shifted from in-office work to a virtual/hybrid work environment. This shift in working conditions also called for the implementation of digital solutions to help organizations maintain the standard of business. Solutions like - video conferencing software, cloud storage, virtual performance management system or employee engagement systems became necessary for business continuity.

Initially, it was not an easy task for all the companies to make the shift from offline to online and adopt the necessary technology and solutions but many companies did it without much trouble too. Now in 2021, we can witness that remote/hybrid work has paced up and covered almost the entire working environment in all the business houses. With it, technology has become an important pillar in the way of conducting business.

Some of the key reasons for tech to be an indispensable part of hybrid work are -

1. Workforces are dispersed

An important reason for technology to be a part of hybrid working is that the complete workforce is scattered around the globe. When the employees are working from the office within those four walls, they are already connected. They can easily communicate by moving from desk to desk or cabin to cabin. In remote working, employees are sitting miles away from each other at their homes. Thus, technology plays an important role in connecting them for business functionality.

2. Better employee productivity

Other than basic software of communication, technology provides access to tools that help in an employee's day-to-day work improving their efficiency and increasing engagement. The high-quality work produced by an employee drives productivity to the business and benefits both the employee and the organization. This technology also helps in employee productivity and satisfaction.

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3. Better serve customers

Through technology in the workplace, clients are better served and are provided with both faster and personalized customer service. It provides endless opportunities to enhance customer experience like - using social media to understand customer needs, reaching prospective customers through email marketing, targeting ad placements to reach the correct audience.

4. Reaching beyond geographical boundaries

Remote working has the perk of breaking down the barriers of countries by opening the opportunity of recruiting employees with exceptional talent not just from nearby but also from other countries. The concept of remote working has removed the obstacle of travelling and relocation of employees. It has created a global pool of talent from which every business can benefit through the best use of technology.

Overall, the impact of technology is tremendous in the workplace. The application, software, and platform provided help increase the business and results in better productivity. All in all, using the proper technology in business creates a competitive advantage.

The periodic table of apps for the new world of hybrid work

A sneak peek into how some companies are approaching hybrid work

Microsoft

As of March 22nd, after over a year in which most Microsoft employees have worked remotely, several of their worksites around the globe have reached a stage that meets or exceeds government requirements to accommodate more workers, while many other employees will continue to work remotely. Further, worksites in 21 countries have been able to accommodate additional workers in their facilities – representing around 20% of their global employee population. Marking the onset of a hybrid workplace.

Here's how Microsoft is managing it:

1. Hybrid Workplace Dial

It anchors to six defined stages – rather than specific timelines – and allows them to quickly adjust their worksites depending on health conditions. The dial helps us assign a stage to each of our work sites depending on the current local health data and government guidance. The dial can go in both directions – moving a work site forward when local disease burden improves and also dialling back if declines in progress are observed.

2. Tech Transformation

Microsoft has also invested in resources to support the hybrid work evolution through innovations within their technological tools to help people navigate both remote and hybrid work environments (e.g. Together Mode, Microsoft Whiteboard in Teams, and Microsoft Teams rooms with features like intelligent capture).

3. Pillars of Trust and Transparency

As Kurt DelBene - Executive Vice President writes, "Frequent and transparent communication with our employees has become more critical than ever, establishing a meaningful feedback loop that allows us all to learn and iterate."

4. Reassessing Worksite

Just like any other company, even for Microsoft, not all functions can be delivered remotely. Hence, it is important to assess all Microsoft work sites to understand what adjustments are needed to enable social distancing and meet local health standards. With health and safety in focus, the necessary changes shall be made

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Ford Motor's Hybrid In-Office and Remote Model

Redesigning corporate office interiors:

It includes changing walls, furniture, fixtures, conference rooms, and collaborative spaces. The focus will be on enabling video calls and deploying technology to enhance virtual connectivity among co-workers and managers.

## Occasional work from the office:

Offices will be open from July for work that requires face-to-face interaction, such as meetings or team building activities.

Regular employee check-ins:

The automaker surveys its employees almost every week to gauge their experience and know their work preferences.

Altered work schedules:

Ford has also offered alternative work schedules, such as 10-hour days four times a week instead of the traditional five-day work week.
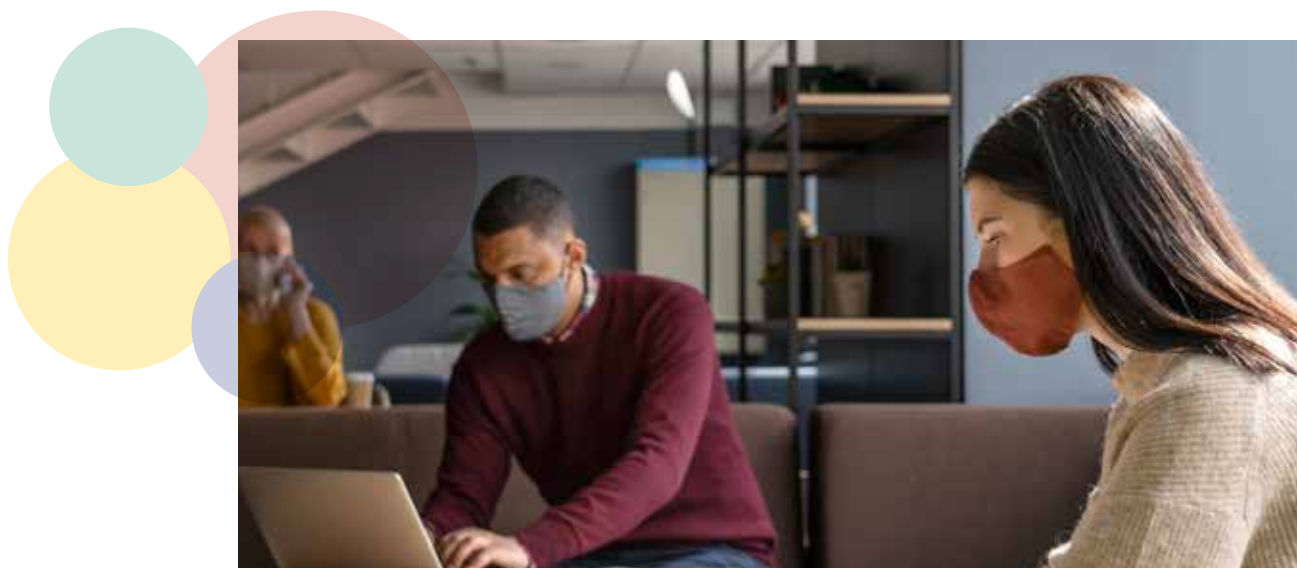
Citigroup's Work Model: Hybrid, Resident and Remote

As Jane Fraser, Chief Executive Officer, Citi described in his blog:

Hybrid	The majority of roles will be designated as Hybrid globally. These colleagues will work in the office at least three days per week and from home up to two days per week.
Resident	It applies to roles that cannot be performed offsite. These could include branch-based colleagues or those who work at data centers.
Remote	These roles will allow colleagues to perform their functions from outside a Citi location. Apart from roles that were remote before the pandemic, such as those supporting our contact centers, new remote roles will be somewhat rare.

Further, Jane added that Citigroup would be thoughtful about when it asks colleagues to be in the office together, using the four principles below.

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Belonging	It is important that people feel an attachment to the firm, a sense of pride about serving the clients, and a duty to protect the financial system. That only happens when people are together—and as we have all experienced, loneliness is not a great feeling.
Collaboration	There is no debate about the fact that working together creates a shared purpose and energy. Although we have embraced remote working and the tech tools, collaboration is much more dynamic when we can pop over to the next desk or brainstorm in a room together, bouncing ideas and feeding off each other.
Apprenticeship & Learning	Banking is an apprenticeship business and this can happen over Zoom, but only up to a point. "Feedback from an impromptu conversation after a meeting or coaching from your manager walking by your desk after watching you in action—we all miss out on this learning as part of the daily rhythms of being together," wrote Jane.

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Competitiveness & Performance

As per Citigroup's observation, driving collaboration and coordination can help break down silos, which further improves competitiveness and performance.

Hence, these are some reasons why they would still want their employees to come to the office, occasionally.
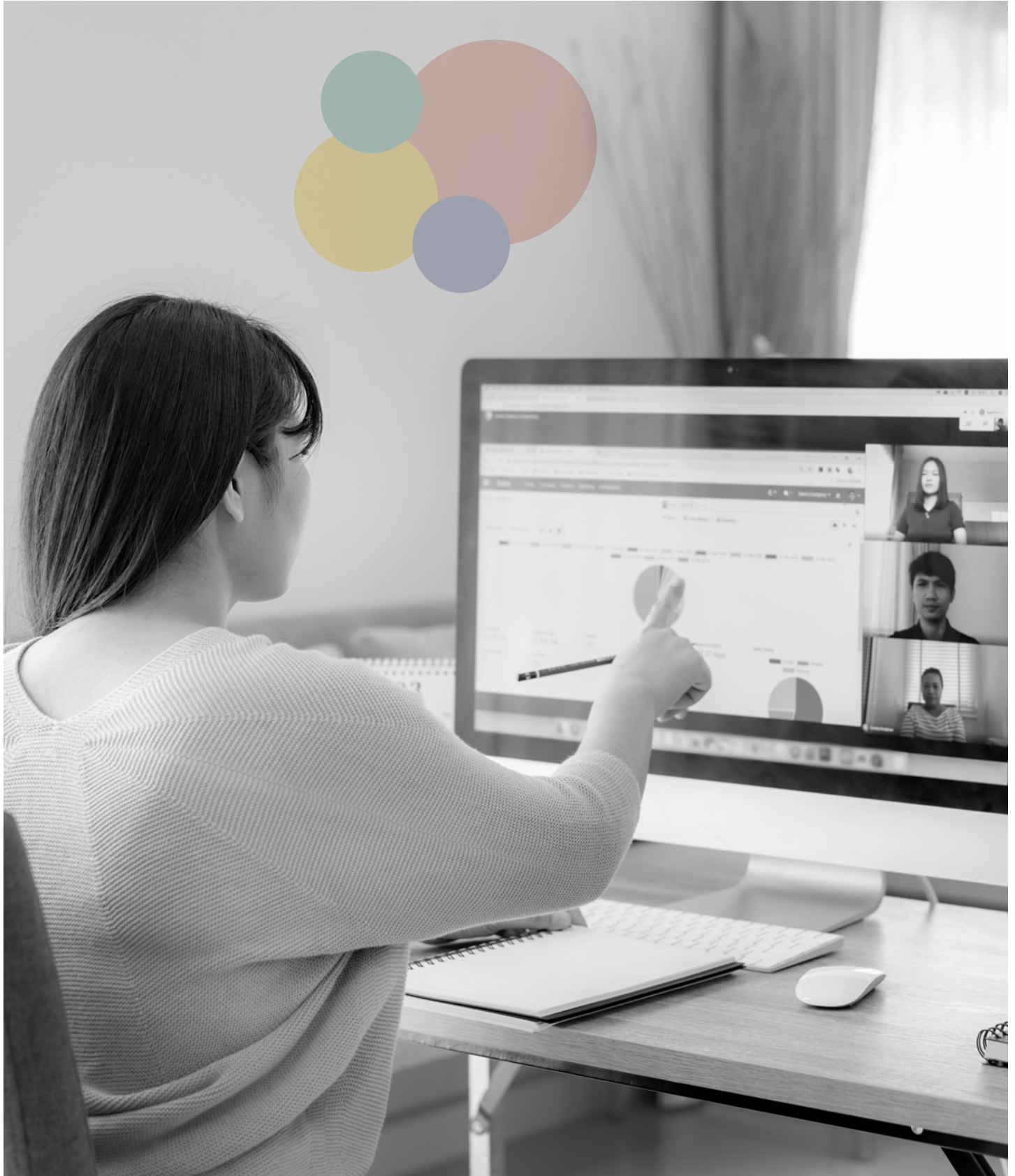
Virtual@Home & Physical@Offices: The Infosys way

The four pillars on which Infosys planned the Return to Work include IPPPT – Isolate, Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Thrive.

Isolate: Employees have the option to abstain from the physical workplace.

Prepare: Defines the enterprise's strategy and guidelines for legal and health compliance, when deciding on how to allow employees to re-enter the workplace.

Prevent & Protect: Refers to the measures taken to safeguard employees while in the workplace.

Thrive: The focus is on health and wellness beyond the immediate, COVID-19 related health needs.

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Physical Safety in the office

Employees feel comfortable

Health Guidelines

Sanitization

Social Distancing

Virtual Connect in home office

Augmenting connectivity

Consistent communication

Ensuring security

Note: One hybrid model doesn't fit all. There is no fixed guideline of what hybrid work should seem like, and there shouldn't be. A lot depends on the industry in which the company operates and its corporate structure, among other things. Reach out to us at info@headsupcorporation.com if you need any assistance in figuring out a hybrid work structure that's best for your business.

" We're not calling this the 'future of work,' we're intentionally calling it an 'evolution' because we're going to continue to learn as we go and use those learnings to adapt our practices and policies around flexible work, as well as other areas. **"**

- **Kiersten Robinson, Ford Chief People & Employee Experiences Officer on Hybrid Work**

" As we've moved to virtual work, we haven't just coped, we've thrived. We are more focused on the things that have the greatest impact on our customers, associates, and the business. We are making quicker decisions and actions. Meetings are now more inclusive of people regardless of location, level, or other differences. We have great momentum and need to figure out how to carry it forward. **"**

- **Suresh Dutt Tripathi, Vice-President, Human Resource Management, Tata Steel**

" Now that we've broken the stigma of remote work (it used to be frowned upon), companies are building Hybrid Work models. And I'm all for it. We've spent a decade studying employee engagement, employee experience (EX), and 'the over-whelmed employee.' And in every study, we found that flexible, empathetic, well-de-signed workplaces are great. "

- Suresh Kumar, CTO at Walmart

" Fexible working not only portrays an organi-sation's intent to create a workplace for the upcoming generations but also solidifies its intent to cater to the needs of its diversified workforce across geographies.The pandem-ic has helped move away from the tradition-al thinking of productivity being contingent upon fixed hours of work within an office environment and bust many of the myths around remote working "

- Suresh Dutt Tripathi, Vice-President, Human Resource Management, Tata Steel

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