

Are Hybrid Workplaces the Future of Work?

When safer-at-home policies were enacted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, workers across the country scattered to their homes, making remote work, at least temporarily, the “new normal.” Today, a new debate has erupted. While some business owners and employees are eager to return to working in an office, others want remote working to remain their new normal.

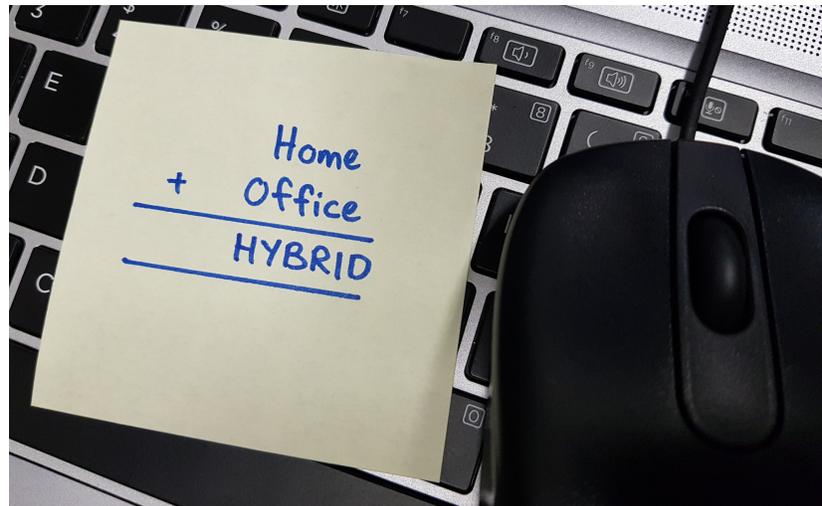
How to reconcile the debate? The “Goldilocks solution” (the one that’s “just right”) seems to be hybrid work, splitting the time between working remotely and in an office. However, if you’re not comfortable with the hybrid concept, know that most workers in the U.S. consider it their future of work.

Actually, the home remodeling industry has an advantage in adjusting to hybrid work. When the pandemic began, estimators, schedulers, project managers, the sales team, office administrators, marketing and accounting personnel could head home to work, but the field crews obviously had to work on job sites. So most of you have experienced a hybrid work environment for the last few years.

Are you ready to permanently transition to a hybrid workplace? Here are some ideas about how to embrace the future of work.

Attracting Employees

It’s no secret the construction industry is in desperate need of attracting new employees. In general, workers prefer working in a hybrid workplace. According to a recent study from [Kettle](#), a flexible workspace technology company, 65% of newly employed Gen Z workers say a hybrid workplace is “important” to them when



considering a potential employer, and 69% “would select an employer who offered a hybrid model over one who didn’t.”

A [report from McKinsey](#) shows that 90% of business executives “envision a hybrid model going forward.” And a survey from [Zoom and Survey Monkey](#) reveals 65% of employees who’ve been working from home say a hybrid work environment is their “ideal work model.”

Flexibility is Key

Flexibility is key to making a hybrid operation work in remodeling businesses because much of the work is in the field. First, you need to define what hybrid means to you. Do you want your employees who are not in the field to be permanently remote or have flex schedules working from home some days and coming into the office others?



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Consider:

- How many, or which specific days will employees come into the office?
- Can employees set their own schedules? Do they need your approval?
- Will schedules vary based on seasonal work ebbs and flows?
- Do some of your remote workers need to go to job sites? If they're on a flex schedule, does that count as an in-office or remote day?

Flexibility extends beyond scheduling, especially for remodeling and home services companies, which often face seasonal slowdowns. Consider offering your staff different payment options. Do they want to work full-time and hustle for the full commission? Or would they rather take time off and earn less during the slow months?

For jobs that don't require any office time, you can extend your reach and hire people anywhere in the country, possibly decreasing your payroll.

Managing Employees

Some resistance to remote work is because managers fear a loss of productivity from at-home workers. However, studies show this is not the case. According to a Mercer survey, [94% of businesses](#) say productivity has stayed the same or improved since their employees started [working remotely](#).

Another concern is that innovation is reduced due to a lack of spontaneous meetings and conversations in the office. The New York Times report this not only isn't true but cites a study showing there were [70% fewer face-to-face interactions](#) in open offices



Focus on Inclusion and Equality

Part of managing your team is making sure your policies are applied equitably. This is key to avoiding possible discrimination claims. The [Bluebeam blog](#) from Built talked to Leanne Fuith, an associate professor at the law school at Hamline University in Minnesota, who recommends companies consider equality when crafting hybrid policies. "Make sure," she says, "that policies don't have adverse impacts on one category of employees, such as women or people of color."

"Thoughtful communication" is also essential. Fuith says, "Leadership must regularly provide an overview of policies and expectations," and these need to be communicated to all employees.

To avoid any potential problems and stay compliant with employment laws, consider consulting with an attorney or HR expert.



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The Right Tools

Creating a successful hybrid workplace is really about creating a functional digital work environment, in the field, at the office, and in everyone's homes. According to McKinsey, there's been "[increased digitization](#)" across the construction industry as more companies shift to remote working. They say, "Leading contractors are using 4D and 5D simulation to replan projects and reoptimize schedules. Contractors are looking to online channels for monitoring their employees' well-being through apps, ordering construction materials, managing scarce resources more accurately, and maintaining cash flow."

The Bluebeam blog recommends investing in virtual reality tools so your team can follow the progress of projects from their computers at home. And it notes, companies are increasingly using drones for remote inspections.

Use video conferencing tools for meetings, and make sure your staff has updated hardware and software.

Staying Secure

Of course, employees who work from home need to maintain secure workplaces. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. [Security Magazine](#) reports on a survey from Tessian, which reveals that 36% of employees have picked up bad cybersecurity behaviors since working remotely, and 27% say they failed to report any cybersecurity mistakes because they feared facing disciplinary action.



Security says, "a fundamental shift in security priorities is required." It's critical you establish security policies and train your staff to know what to look for. For instance, family members should never have access to business computers.

Financial Benefits

The benefits of a hybrid workplace are not just about having happy employees. You'll most likely save money, especially if you reconsider your office space. Do you even need a central office? If you do, can you rent/buy a smaller space, which will substantially reduce overhead costs, such as rent and utilities? You and your employees will also save on commuting costs.



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The Future of Hybrid Work

Open Space, a construction tech company, says, “[hybrid work is here to stay](#)” for the construction industry.” They conducted a survey which reveals:

- Before the pandemic, 52% of respondents said their field teams never worked remotely. During the pandemic, this shifted to 58% reporting frequent remote work.
- 80% of construction companies surveyed say they were just as productive or more productive when working remotely. Only 20% saw productivity decline.
- 92% will now offer occasional or frequent remote work

The survey showed the benefits of remote working:

- 72% say it led to saving time and money by decreasing travel to and from worksites
- 72% also report an improved work-life balance
- 35% say it allowed them to find the best job candidates
- 20% say they were able to put their best people on more jobs
- 95% say technology was very or critically important in their company’s decision to allow remote work in the future

Are you ready to shift to a hybrid workplace? It’s likely your employees are. Before you make the move:

- Make sure you have a place to receive delivery of any products you need.
- Invest in best-of-breed technology for you and your employees · Make sure your team’s homes have [reliable WiFi and other tools](#) so they can stay productive



Transitioning to a hybrid workplace is not an easy process. Javed Khan, SVP/GM of Cisco’s Collaboration group, told [Forbes](#), “We all knew how to work when everybody was in the office, [and then] we all learned how to work when everybody was home. But this mixed mode is going to be very different. It requires new kinds of innovation, and that is our focus going forward.”

That should be your focus as well.



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