

REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK

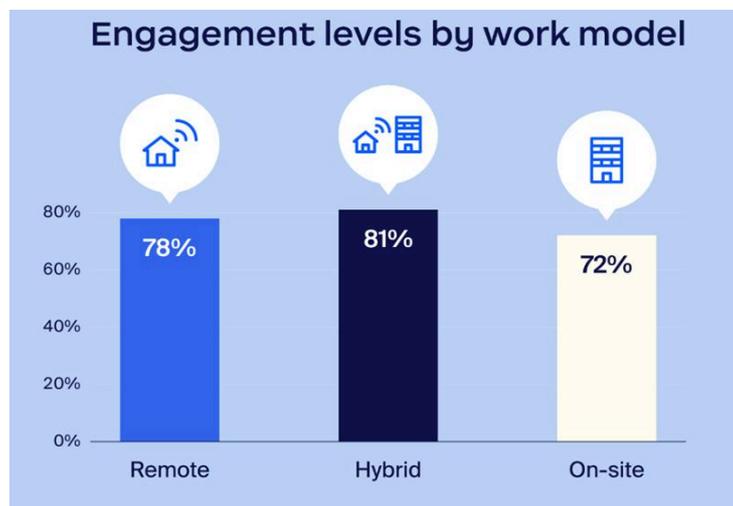
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING TEAM
COHESION IN A DISPERSED WORKFORCE

THE EVOLUTION OF REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK



How we work has evolved rapidly due to technological advancement and global events, particularly the global lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the lockdown, many organisations were forced to consider the remote work model. This ushered in a new era of alternative work modes: remote and hybrid work.

This shift has transformed the way organisations operate. The adoption of hybrid and remote work was discovered to enhance productivity and employee satisfaction. According to Owl Labs, Almost 80% of managers say their team is more productive when working hybrid or remotely, while 90% of CEOs say that adopting a hybrid model is a direct reason for reduced costs, this is according to IWG.



Source: Quantum Workplace (2021)

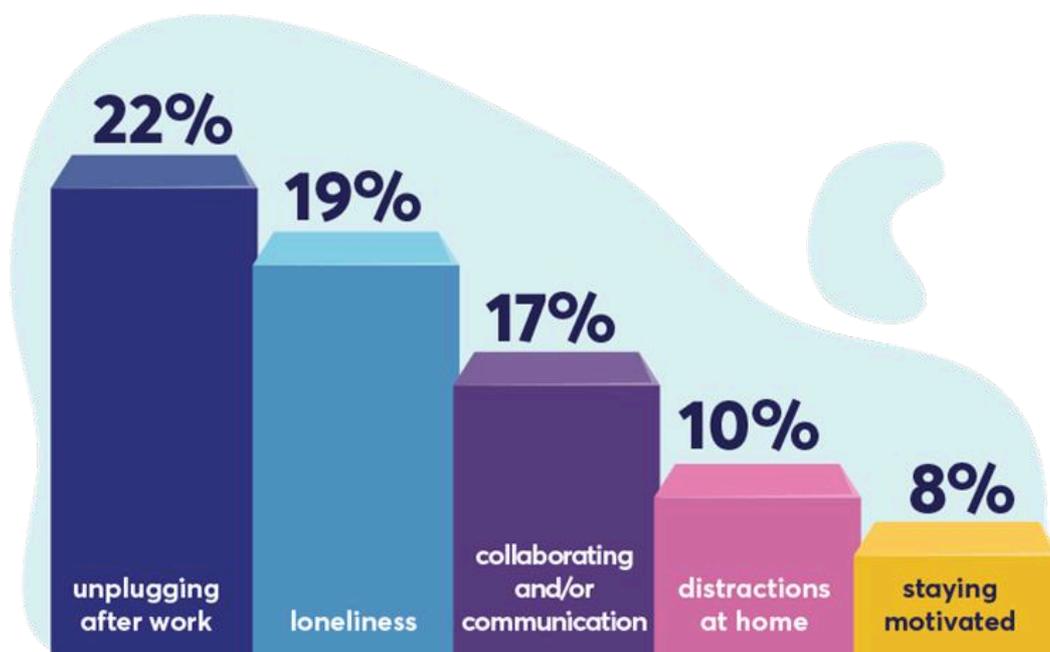
However, while offering flexibility and efficiency, it has also presented challenges in maintaining team cohesion. Maintaining a sense of belonging and collaboration in a dispersed team requires intentional strategies. This whitepaper explores key strategies for fostering collaboration, engagement, and a strong team culture in a dispersed workforce. It provides actionable insights for business leaders, HR professionals, and team managers to navigate the complexities of remote and hybrid work.

CHALLENGES OF REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK



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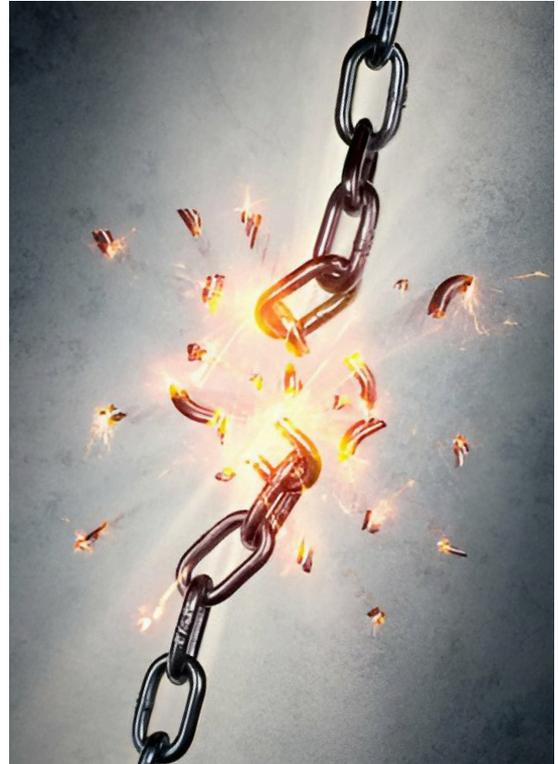
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While the flexibility and benefits of remote and hybrid work models are undeniable, they come with their fair share of challenges that demand our attention. Let's take a look at the top challenges.

1. Communication Barriers

Remote and hybrid work can present communication gaps due to the physical separation of team members. A staggering 80% of remote workers reported experiencing communication challenges, a statistic highlighted in a study by Buffer, which also revealed that 20% of employees felt remote work led to misunderstandings with their colleagues. These communication barriers can take various forms such as:

- Lack of informal interactions and spontaneous discussions
- Potential for misinterpretation in digital communication
- Variability in response times across different time zones
- The extremes of overcommunication and lack of immediate feedback
- Cybersecurity breaches of communication channels



2. Reduced Team Engagement

Engagement is one of the biggest challenges that HR leaders face. Hybrid and remote work tends to isolate staff which has detrimental effects on employee engagement if deliberate efforts are not taken to ensure continuous lines of communication and feedback are maintained.

A study by Harvard Business Review found that 41% of remote workers reported experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation, suggesting that while remote work offers flexibility, it also poses emotional hurdles that organisations must take into consideration. Some symptoms of reduced team engagement include:

- Feelings of isolation and disconnection
- Lower participation in team activities
- Difficulty in sustaining motivation and morale

3. Collaboration Difficulties

Collaboration difficulties and challenges in aligning workflows are some of the challenges of remote and hybrid work. According to a survey by Hubstaff, 36% of respondents state that it's difficult for them to know what each team member is working on, as well as when they're working. This makes collaboration difficult and can lead to undesirable outcomes such as:

- Limited access to in-person brainstorming sessions
- Difficulty in sharing knowledge and best practices
- Over-reliance on digital tools, leading to tool fatigue



4. Company Culture and Trust

When it comes to remote employees, trust issues can exacerbate as you can't interact or socialize with your peers in-person. In some cases, colleagues may have never met in person. This hinders the establishment of a bond between coworkers.

Many managers and remote employees also fear that building and maintaining a strong company culture is harder in a hybrid or remote work model. Some of the bottlenecks that businesses have identified are:

- Challenges in fostering a shared company culture remotely
- Lack of visibility into team members' work and contributions
- Inability to build trust in a digital environment

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING TEAM COHESION



1. Strengthening Communication

Consistent and transparent communication is the lifeblood of a thriving team. Without it, collaboration weakens, employee engagement declines, and company culture erodes. Foster a strong foundation by providing multiple communication channels, such as video conferencing, instant messaging, and project management tools.

To make communication more effective in a remote or hybrid environment, implementing a video conferencing tool goes a long way. According to a survey by Forbes in collaboration with Zoom, 66% of respondents say video conferencing is particularly effective in enhancing the engagement and effectiveness of remote workers.

Pro Tips:

1. Implementing structured communication channels (e.g., daily stand-ups, asynchronous updates)
2. Encouraging open dialogue and feedback loops
3. Leveraging video calls to enhance personal connections

2. Enhancing Engagement and Team Bonding

To maintain engagement and social interaction, leaders can organise virtual happy hours with their remote teams. Although this might not have the same impact as a true face-to-face interaction, it will still allow team members to mingle in a more relaxed environment. Team-building activities can provide team members with the opportunity to bond with each other, create and maintain relationships, and build trust.

Pro Tips:

1. Virtual team-building activities and social events
2. Recognition programs to celebrate achievements
3. Encouraging informal chats and watercooler conversations

3. Optimising Collaboration

In all organisational settings, whether on-site or remote, productivity is unleashed when collaboration is optimised. A 2022 survey by McKinsey revealed that organisations leveraging collaboration software experienced a 20-30% increase in productivity.

Encourage cross-functional collaboration and create opportunities for knowledge-sharing and brainstorming sessions. Utilize project management tools, shared workspaces, and collaborative platforms to break down silos and enhance overall productivity.



Pro Tips:

1. Use collaborative tools effectively (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, Asana, Notion)
2. Establish clear guidelines for documentation and knowledge sharing
3. Encourage cross-functional collaboration and virtual brainstorming sessions

4. Reinforcing Organisational Culture

Organisations are defined by their culture. However, when employees work remotely and don't have enough face-to-face interactions, creating an effective company culture can become a big challenge.

The right work culture is a win for your organisation. Organisations with strong cultures can easily navigate hybrid and remote work arrangements while maintaining consistent efficiency and productivity.



Pro Tips:

1. Clearly define and communicate company values
2. Create opportunities for employees to engage in cultural initiatives
3. Leadership must model company values in remote interactions

5. Supporting Employee Well-being

Studies indicate that people are happier working in a hybrid model. An early 2022 Owl Labs study found that remote and hybrid employees were 22% happier and stayed in their jobs longer than workers in an all-office model.

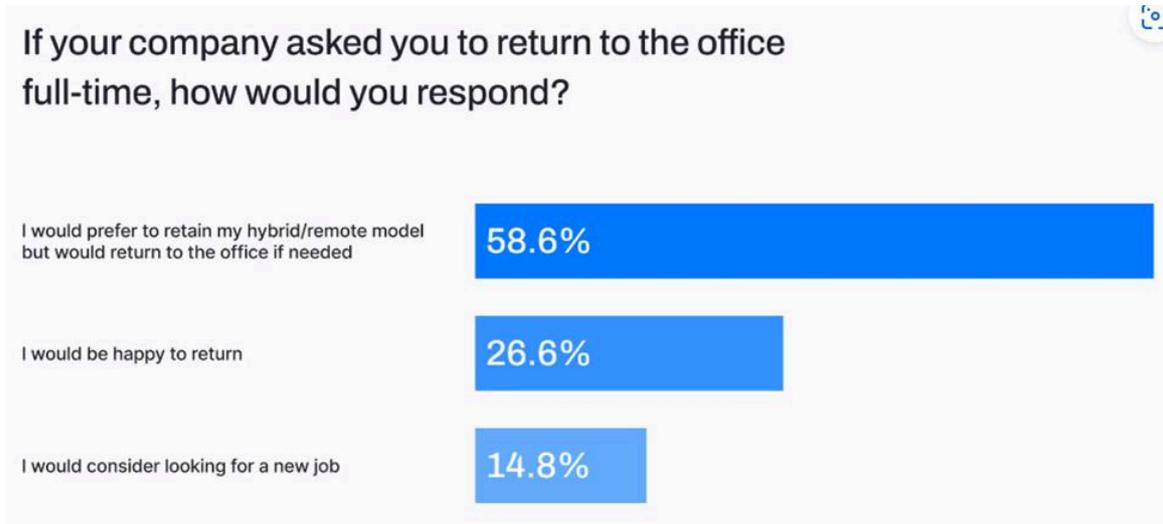
However, remote and hybrid work arrangements tend to blur the lines between life and work. Helping employees maintain proper work-life balance will lead ultimately to less stress and better team cohesion.



Pro Tips:

1. Encourage work-life balance and flexible schedules
2. Provide mental health resources and support
3. Promote a culture of trust and autonomy

Conclusion



Source: Quantum Workplace (2021)

In conclusion, it is safe to say that remote and hybrid working arrangements are here to stay. In this new reality, managers and business leaders need to seek out ways to maximise the productivity of their human capital by enhancing team cohesion within their workforce.

Humans are made to interact with each other. It gives us a sense of belonging which is essential for most of us. When employees work remotely, they often lose touch with others and, depending on their circumstances, may experience social isolation.

Organisations must engender support and promote a transparent work culture where employees can interact on a deeper level. By implementing effective communication, fostering engagement, optimizing collaboration, and reinforcing culture, businesses can create a thriving dispersed workforce. The strategies outlined in this report serve as a guide for leaders looking to strengthen team dynamics and sustain productivity in a new world of work without walls.