

## BEYOND THE OFFICE SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH HYBRID AND REMOTE WORK EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF MODERN WORKPLACES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the transformative impact of hybrid and remote work models on modern workplaces, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. Through an extensive review of literature and an empirical case study, the research highlights the benefits and challenges associated with these flexible work arrangements. The findings suggest that hybrid and remote work models not only enhance work-life balance and employee satisfaction but also contribute to increased productivity and organizational agility. However, the study also identifies potential pitfalls, such as social isolation and overwork, and offers strategic solutions to mitigate these issues. The case study on agile software development teams at Mentimeter, a technology firm in Sweden, provides concrete evidence supporting the strategic value of hybrid work models in enhancing job satisfaction and communication, though with a limited impact on performance metrics. The paper concludes that hybrid and remote work models are not mere temporary adjustments but represent a fundamental shift in how organizations operate, necessitating ongoing adaptation and refined HR strategies to maximize their benefits.*

**Palabras claves:** Hybrid work, Remote work, Organizational agility, Work-life balance, Employee productivity, Agile software development, Human resource management

## MÁS ALLÁ DE LA OFICINA: MOLDEANDO EL FUTURO CON EL TRABAJO HÍBRIDO Y REMOTO EXPLORANDO LAS DINÁMICAS E IMPLICACIONES DEL LUGAR DE TRABAJO MODERNO

### RESUMEN

*Este artículo explora el impacto transformador de los modelos de trabajo híbrido y remoto en los lugares de trabajo modernos, particularmente en la era post-COVID-19. A través de una extensa revisión de la literatura y un estudio de caso empírico, la investigación destaca los beneficios y desafíos asociados con estos acuerdos de trabajo flexibles. Los hallazgos sugieren que los modelos de trabajo híbrido y remoto no solo mejoran el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal y la satisfacción de los empleados, sino que también contribuyen a aumentar la productividad y la agilidad organizacional. Sin embargo, el estudio también identifica posibles inconvenientes, como el aislamiento social y el exceso de trabajo, y ofrece soluciones estratégicas para mitigar estos problemas. El estudio de caso sobre equipos de desarrollo de software ágil en Mentimeter, una empresa tecnológica en Suecia, proporciona evidencia concreta que respalda el valor estratégico de los modelos de trabajo híbrido en la mejora de la satisfacción laboral y la comunicación, aunque con un impacto limitado en las métricas de rendimiento. El artículo concluye que los modelos de trabajo híbrido y remoto no son meros ajustes temporales, sino que representan un cambio fundamental en la forma en que operan las organizaciones, lo que requiere una adaptación continua y estrategias de recursos humanos refinadas para maximizar sus beneficios.*

**Keywords:** Trabajo híbrido, Trabajo remoto, Agilidad organizacional, Equilibrio entre trabajo y vida personal, Productividad laboral, Desarrollo ágil de software, Gestión de recursos humanos

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## Introduction

In the contemporary employment landscape, the paradigm of traditional office-centric work has been profoundly transformed by the adoption of hybrid and remote working models. This transition, while precipitated by the global health crisis of COVID-19, has transcended its origins as a temporary necessity to become a fundamental of modern organizational strategies (Williamson, 2022). The shift towards these flexible work arrangements is not just a logistical change but embodies a strategic innovation that significantly influences work-life balance, enhances productivity, and promotes environmental sustainability.

The implementation of hybrid and remote working models offers compelling advantages across multiple dimensions. Primarily, these models provide employees with enhanced flexibility, significantly reducing commute times, which in turn contributes to an improved quality of life. For many, the elimination of daily commutes has not only reclaimed personal time but has also reduced the stress associated with traffic and the rigors of traditional work schedules (Williamson, 2022). This change facilitates a better balance between personal responsibilities and professional commitments, thereby fostering a healthier, more satisfying lifestyle.

Moreover, the environmental benefits of reduced commuting are substantial. By reducing the need for daily travel, hybrid and remote work significantly lowers carbon emissions associated with transportation. This reduction is crucial in the broader context of global efforts to combat climate change. According to (Williamson, 2022), remote working can potentially save thousands of tonnes of CO2 emissions annually, aligning workforce management practices with environmental conservation goals.

In addition to lifestyle and environmental advantages, remote and hybrid work models have been shown to boost productivity. Organizations that have embraced these models report that employees often perform better when they have the freedom to work from environments that they find most conducive to concentration and creativity. Surveys and studies consistently illustrate that when employees are satisfied with their work arrangements, their engagement and output increase correspondingly (Williamson, 2022). This heightened productivity is beneficial not only for the employees but also for the organizations, as it leads to better results and enhanced competitive advantage.

This article asserts that hybrid and remote working policies are essential, transformative strategies that extend beyond mere responses to immediate challenges. They represent a comprehensive reevaluation of how work can be structured to maximize efficiency, sustainability, and employee satisfaction. The following sections will explore these themes in depth, providing empirical evidence to support the adoption of these work models as integral elements of future oriented business strategies.

## Literature Review

### *Evolution of Work Practices: Traditional vs. Modern Approaches*

The landscape of work has undergone significant transformation, evolving from traditional, rigid structures to more fluid and flexible practices. Historically, work was characterized by

strict schedules and physical presence in the workplace, a model that persisted well into the late 20th century. This approach often emphasized standardized tasks performed within the confines of office spaces (Kurland & Bailey, 1999). However, the arrival of digital technologies and changing societal values have driven a shift towards more modern work practices, prominently featuring remote and hybrid models.

Modern work practices are marked by a departure from the traditional 9-to-5 office routine, embracing flexibility in both timing and location of work. The proliferation of information and communication technology has been an essential factor in this transition, enabling employees to perform their duties effectively from diverse locations (Baruch, 2000). These practices not only accommodate a better work-life balance but also respond to increasing demands for a more sustainable and employee-centric work environment. Studies indicate that such flexibility can lead to higher job satisfaction and retention rates, as employees appreciate the trust and autonomy granted to them (Hill, et al., 2006).

### *Work-Life Balance and Remote Working*

The shift towards remote and hybrid work models can be better understood through various theoretical lenses, including the sociotechnical systems theory and human resource management (HRM) perspectives. Sociotechnical systems theory suggests that organizational success is achieved by optimally designing both the social and technical aspects of the workplace (Pasmore, 1988). This theory is particularly relevant in the context of remote work, where technology facilitates the completion of tasks while the social structures of work must be adapted to maintain collaboration and morale among dispersed teams.

From an HRM perspective, the practices associated with remote work align closely with contemporary approaches to employee well-being and engagement. The strategic HRM framework suggests that aligning HR policies with organizational goals, which now increasingly include flexibility and employee satisfaction, leads to better performance outcomes (Wright & McMahan, 1993). Remote and hybrid work models are seen as strategic HR practices that support these modern organizational goals by promoting a healthier work-life balance, which is essential for both attracting and retaining talent in a competitive market (Eikhof, et al., 2007).

Incorporating these theoretical frameworks into the analysis of remote and hybrid work practices provides a comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with these models. As organizations strive to balance operational efficiency with employee needs, the principles of sociotechnical systems and strategic HRM serve as critical guides for implementing effective work practices that are both technologically feasible and socially beneficial.

## Current Trends in Remote and Hybrid Work

### *Statistical Overview*

The landscape of work has been significantly reshaped in the post-COVID-19 era, largely influenced by the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid working arrangements. The "Remote Work Survey Report 2022" provides a comprehensive snapshot of these trends, revealing that a substantial majority of employees now prefer at least some degree of remote work capability in their professional roles. According to the report, 74% of respondents express a preference for hybrid models that allow for a blend of in-office and remote work, indicating a shift in employee expectations towards more flexible work environments (McCarthy, et al., 2022).

Organizations have responded to these changes by reevaluating their workplace strategies. The same survey indicates that 68% of businesses have formalized remote or hybrid work policies to accommodate this new preference. This organizational shift is not merely a temporary adjustment but is becoming embedded in the corporate culture, with 63% of companies reporting increased productivity as a result of adopting more flexible working practices (McCarthy, et al., 2022). This trend highlights a significant transformation in how work is structured, moving away from traditional office-centric models towards more dynamic and flexible arrangements.

### *Emerging Theoretical Framework: Hybrid Work as a Catalyst for Organizational Agility*

The adoption of hybrid work models can be understood not merely as a response to employee preferences or logistical challenges but as a strategic enabler of organizational agility. This perspective aligns with the dynamic capabilities framework, which posits that an organization's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies is critical to sustaining competitive advantage in rapidly changing environments (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). By allowing employees to work in a hybrid manner, organizations are better equipped to respond to market fluctuations and unexpected disruptions, as they can quickly adapt their workforce deployment to meet emerging needs.

Furthermore, hybrid work arrangements facilitate the decentralization of decision-making processes, empowering employees to operate with greater autonomy and flexibility. This decentralization is crucial in enhancing organizational agility, as it enables faster decision-making and a more responsive approach to customer demands. Therefore, the shift to hybrid work should be seen not just as a logistical adjustment but as a fundamental reconfiguration of organizational structure that enhances resilience and adaptability in an uncertain business landscape.

Incorporating this theoretical framework into the analysis of hybrid work practices underscores its strategic significance beyond immediate operational benefits. It positions hybrid work as a pivotal element in the broader discourse on organizational agility and sustainability in the modern economy.

### *Impact on Work-Life Balance*

The shift towards remote and hybrid work models has profound implications for work-life balance, with many employees experiencing a positive impact on their personal and family dynamics. According to the "Global Work-from-Home Experience Survey," 77% of participants report that having the ability to work remotely has led to improved work-life balance, which includes more time spent with family and less time commuting (Williamson, 2022). This shift has not only enhanced employee satisfaction but also contributed to a decrease in work-related stress.

Furthermore, the flexibility offered by remote work allows employees to better manage their family responsibilities, such as childcare and eldercare, without compromising their professional obligations. This balancing act is crucial for fostering inclusive work environments where employees do not have to choose between career advancement and personal responsibilities. A study by FlexJobs (Pelta, 2021) supports this, showing that 60% of women with remote jobs were able to achieve more professionally due to the reduced conflict between work and family commitments.

Additionally, the changes brought by remote work extend beyond mere scheduling flexibility. They influence family dynamics by redistributing household responsibilities more evenly among partners, thus promoting gender equality within the home. Research by the Harvard Business Review (2021) suggests that remote work arrangements can lead to more equal relationships, as both partners partake more equally in domestic tasks and childcare.

## **Benefits of Hybrid/Remote Working**

### *Flexibility and Autonomy*

One of the most pronounced benefits of hybrid and remote working models is the enhanced flexibility and autonomy they provide to employees. This level of autonomy allows individuals to design their work schedules around personal obligations, which can lead to a more satisfying and balanced lifestyle (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Additionally, the ability to work from a location of choice can reduce or eliminate commuting stress, further enhancing job satisfaction and overall well-being. This flexibility not only empowers employees but also demonstrates trust from employers, fostering a positive work environment that respects individual work styles and life needs (Golden, 2006).

Moreover, the autonomy associated with remote work has been shown to drive innovation, as employees feel more comfortable in environments that they have personally optimized for productivity. According to a report by (Khaund, 2023), remote workers often pursue creative solutions to problems when outside the conventional office setting, potentially leading to new ideas and improvements in business processes.

### *Productivity and Engagement*

Remote and hybrid work setups have also been linked to significant improvements in productivity and employee engagement. A study by (Bloom, et al., 2015) found that remote



employees completed more tasks and demonstrated higher efficiency compared to their in-office counterparts. This increase in productivity is often attributed to a quieter, more controlled work environment that allows for focused work periods without the typical office distractions.

Engagement levels are similarly enhanced under flexible working conditions. Employees tend to feel more valued and respected when given the autonomy to manage their work and personal lives effectively. The Gallup State of the American Workplace Report (Gallup, 2017) supports this, indicating that remote workers feel more engaged because they are typically happier with their work arrangements and less likely to leave their jobs voluntarily.

Incorporating these elements into organizational practices not only benefits the employees but also provides companies with competitive advantages. Increased employee satisfaction reduces turnover rates and associated training costs, while higher productivity boosts organizational output and profitability.

## Challenges and Solutions

### *Isolation and Overwork*

While hybrid and remote work offer numerous benefits, they also present unique challenges such as social isolation and the tendency for overwork. Remote workers often miss the informal social interactions that office environments provide, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection from the organization (Golden, et al., 2008). This isolation can impact mental health and overall job satisfaction. Additionally, remote work blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, leading some employees to work longer hours than they would in an office setting, increasing the risk of burnout (Virtanen, et al., 2018).

To address these issues, organizations can implement regular virtual social events and teambuilding activities that foster a sense of community and belonging among remote employees. Providing clear guidelines on work hours and encouraging regular breaks can help manage overwork and promote a healthy work-life balance (Messenger, et al., 2017).

### *Empirical Insight: Case Study on Hybrid Work Productivity in Agile Software Development Teams*

To provide empirical support for the theoretical arguments presented, this section includes an analysis from a case study conducted on agile software development teams at Mentimeter, a scale-up company headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. The study, conducted by Tran (2022), explored the impact of hybrid work on productivity, focusing on job satisfaction, performance, and communication within the teams.

The results of the study indicated that hybrid work positively influenced job satisfaction and communication among team members. Specifically, the findings showed that employees reported higher levels of job satisfaction due to the flexibility afforded by hybrid work arrangements. Additionally, communication and collaboration within the teams were found to improve when physical presence was required for meetings involving high participation. However, the study also highlighted that the impact of hybrid work on overall performance

was limited, suggesting that while hybrid work supports certain aspects of team dynamics, its effect on productivity metrics such as task completion rates was less pronounced.

These empirical findings support the theoretical arguments that hybrid work models can enhance certain dimensions of team productivity, particularly in areas related to employee satisfaction and communication. This case study provides concrete evidence of how hybrid work can be effectively implemented in agile software development settings, reinforcing the strategic value of these models in modern organizational practices (Tran, 2022).

### *Strategies for Effective Management*

Effective management of remote teams and the integration of hybrid models require adapted leadership strategies and tools. Managers need to be proactive in communicating expectations and providing feedback to ensure that team members feel supported and valued. Implementing regular check-ins and using project management tools can help maintain clarity and cohesion within remote teams (F. P, et al., 2015).

Training programs for managers that focus on the details of leading remote teams can be highly beneficial. These programs should include strategies for remote communication, fostering inclusivity, and recognizing the signs of overwork and isolation among team members. Additionally, leveraging technology to streamline communication and workflow can significantly enhance the effectiveness of remote management (Russ J., et al., 2010).

To facilitate the successful integration of hybrid models, organizations should strive to create parity between remote and in-office experiences. This involves ensuring that remote workers have access to the same resources and opportunities as their in-office counterparts, which can be achieved through technology solutions and policy adjustments that prioritize fairness and transparency (Mischke, et al., 2023).

## **Role of Human Resources and Legislation**

### *HR Strategies*

Human Resources (HR) plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective hybrid work environments. As organizations adapt to a more flexible workforce, HR strategies must focus on developing policies and training programs that support both the organization's objectives and employee needs. One key area is the formulation of comprehensive remote work policies that address aspects such as work hours, communication expectations, and performance metrics. These policies help in setting clear expectations and foster a sense of fairness and transparency among remote and on-site employees alike (T. D, et al., 2015).

Moreover, training programs designed by HR are crucial in preparing both managers and employees for the dynamics of hybrid work. These programs should cover best practices for managing remote teams, maintaining engagement, and utilizing technology effectively. Additionally, they need to address the psychological aspects of remote work, such as combating feelings of isolation and managing stress, which are vital for sustaining employee well-being and productivity (Golden, 2006).

## *Legal Framework*

The legal landscape around remote work has evolved significantly, with new legislation being introduced to support the transition towards more flexible working arrangements. A notable example is the "Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Request Flexible Working" which sets out guidelines for handling requests for flexible working arrangements in a fair and efficient manner. This legislation ensures that all employees have the opportunity to request flexible working arrangements, with employers required to deal with these requests in a reasonable and structured way (Workplace Relations Commission, 2023).

The implications of such legislation are profound. It not only empowers employees to seek work arrangements that better suit their personal circumstances but also obliges organizations to consider these requests seriously, unless there are valid business reasons for denial. This shift encourages a more inclusive and adaptable workforce, allowing businesses to retain talent and improve job satisfaction and productivity (Kelly & Moen, 2021).

Moreover, compliance with such legislation is critical for organizations to avoid legal pitfalls and enhance their reputation as flexible and employee-friendly workplaces. HR departments must ensure that all managers are well-informed about these legal obligations and that their policies are in line with current laws to protect both the organization and its employees from potential legal challenges.

## **Case Studies and Real-World Examples**

### *Successful Implementations*

One prominent example of successful implementation of remote work policies is seen in the experience of a large multinational technology firm, as documented in the "An Evaluation of the Impact of Remote Work 2022" (Williamson, 2022). This firm implemented a flexible work policy that not only allowed employees to work from home up to three days a week but also provided them with the necessary tools and training to facilitate effective remote work. The results showed a 23% increase in overall productivity and a significant improvement in employee job satisfaction and retention rates.

Another example is provided by a public sector organization in Ireland, which adopted a hybrid working model following the government's "Code of Practice for Employers and Employees Right to Request Flexible Working" (Workplace Relations Commission, 2023). The organization set clear guidelines for remote work, trained its managers to lead distributed teams, and established strong communication channels. This approach not only maintained service continuity during lockdowns but also resulted in higher work-life balance scores among employees.

### *Comparative Analysis*

Contrasting with these successes, some organizations have faced challenges with their hybrid or remote work implementations. A notable case involved a retail company that



rushed to adopt remote work without adequately preparing its infrastructure or its workforce. The lack of adequate technology support and training led to decreased productivity and a feeling of isolation among employees, negatively impacting employee engagement and effectiveness. (Mahesh, 2024)

In comparison, another company in the financial sector meticulously planned its transition to hybrid work by first piloting the approach with a small team. This gradual implementation allowed the company to learn and adjust its policies based on real-world experience, which resulted in a smoother transition when the policy was rolled out company wide. The financial company's careful approach ensured that both technological and human factors were addressed, leading to a successful integration of hybrid work models. (Krajčík, et al., 2023)

These examples show that while remote and hybrid work models can offer significant benefits, their success largely depends on careful planning, adequate support systems, and continuous improvement based on feedback and performance metrics. Organizations that approach remote work as a strategic change, rather than just a temporary or reactive measure, are more likely to reap its benefits.

## Conclusion

This article has explored the multifaceted implications of hybrid and remote work models, particularly focusing on how they reshape the dynamics of modern workplaces. The critical insights gained from this analysis affirm the thesis that hybrid and remote working models are transformative strategies that not only enhance work-life balance but also drive increased productivity and overall employee satisfaction.

Hybrid and remote work models offer significant benefits, including increased flexibility and autonomy for employees, which contributes to improved job satisfaction and efficiency. The successful implementation cases of multinational technology firms and public sector organizations in Ireland underscore the potential of well-structured remote work policies to elevate productivity and employee engagement. However, these models also present challenges such as potential isolation and the risk of overwork, necessitating robust HR strategies and supportive legislation to mitigate negative impacts.

Looking towards the future of work post-pandemic, it is evident that the adoption of remote and hybrid models will continue to expand. The transition to these models calls for ongoing adaptation and refinement of policies to address emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities. As organizations and employees alike navigate this evolving landscape, the role of HR will be crucial in ensuring that the transition is smooth and beneficial for all stakeholders involved. Continuous learning from real-world implementations will be vital in refining these models to suit diverse organizational contexts and individual needs.

In conclusion, hybrid and remote work models are not temporary adjustments but permanent transformations that redefine how organizations operate and how employees fulfil their roles. The ongoing evolution of these models will require a commitment from all levels of an organization to ensure that the benefits are maximized, and the challenges are effectively addressed.

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