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MANAGING COMPLEXITY

Workplace Reopening Guide #2:

How to reopen your workplace with a hybrid-working model

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As lockdown restrictions continue to ease, workplace managers are actively planning for how their employees will return to the office, and the changes that need to be made to their workplace model.

However that return shapes up, one thing seems clear: For most organisations, it will take a different shape to how it was back in 2019.

Planning for how to make these forthcoming changes encompasses a wide range of considerations:

- The remote working/office working model to be adopted
- The key success factors for making the model work
- The technology required to deliver success
- The challenges to be faced
- The role of Covid-security
- Post-Covid future-proofing

In this guide we explore each of these 6 areas, and explain how to identify and deliver the right workplace reopening model.

How's the wind blowing?

Matt Pope, MD,
Space Connect

"There's a lot of buzz in the media right now around workplace reopening models" says Matt Pope, Founder and MD of Space Connect.

"Large organisations such as HSBC are talking about a 40% reduction in their global real estate footprint through homeworking.

BP too are pivoting to a 60:40 hybrid working model. While Goldman Sachs are predicting a return to the pre-lockdown 'office first' model. This really demonstrates the range of approaches being considered"

Flexible and hybrid working – the range of options for workspace leaders

"I think what we're starting to see now is not just global corporates, but everyday companies deciding that there is a way to make a hybrid approach really work." Says Matt.

"The lockdown has accelerated that momentum for change. Now is the time to implement it".

fn Financial News

HSBC plans 40% office space cut as Covid shifts bank to flexible working

Banks that are undertaking big transformations have seized on potential cost-savings presented by the Covid-19 pandemic

Cranes stand at Wood Wharf, a development by the Canary Wharf Group, beyond the HSBC building, in Canary Wharf, London. The bank is planning to reduce its real estate holdings by 40% — Getty Images

OFFSHORE ENERGY

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BP unveils hybrid model of working with option to work from home

HUMAN CAPITAL

March 9, 2021, by Nermina Kulovic

Oil major BP is introducing a new hybrid model of working for staff who had previously been based in the office full-time, balancing working in the office with working remotely from home – typically in a 60:40 split.

Let's take a look at the range of options workspace leaders have to consider for office reopening.

1. **Office-first.** Here the primary default is working in the office (WFO), while flexibility and exceptions can be made for working from home.
2. **Remote-first.** Here the primary default is home working (WFH). Exceptions are prescriptive around who is expected or permitted to work in the office, and when.
3. **Hybrid.** Here, different teams, individuals or job roles will work from different locations, in a more flexible way, based on different criteria and on business/individual needs.

Different hybrid/flexible working approaches

On-demand

With this approach, employees can, on any day, choose the work location that best suits them. The approach is entirely flexible and gives employees access to the office as required, within Covid social distancing management parameters.

Working week split

In this case, employees are prescribed the number of days per week they will be expected to work from home and from the office. E.G. 3 days from home, 2 days in the office.

This split may be different for different departments; for example, one team in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays, another on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Marketing team WFH 4 days a week, Sales team WFH just 1 day a week.

Shifts

This is a more traditional split of working arrangements whereby groups of employees are in the office at different times. For example, one team may all be in the office for one week, and another all in the office the following week. Alternatively, shifts may offer flexible working options, with employees choosing their hours and start/finish times.

The key benefits to an organisation of going hybrid

- Covid security: Workspace capacity and social distancing management are integral to the benefits of a flexible/hybrid working model
- Employee Health and wellbeing: Reduced infection and stress-related sickness and absenteeism
- Increased employee productivity and satisfaction: Employees fixing their work-life balance, and working to their strengths in the way that best fits them are happier and more productive
- Increased staff loyalty and retention
- Greater opportunities for talent hiring and acquisition: Location and commute distance become far less restrictive on the talent pool
- Greater opportunities for talent hiring and acquisition: Increased accessibility for those with disability
- Reduced workplace overheads

Putting people at the heart

Whichever hybrid model provides the best overall fit for an organisation, the #1 priority needs to be people.

Putting people at the heart and centre of the way workspaces are used, ensures the most positive outcomes for everyone concerned.

Matt Pope explains: “As human beings we are creatures of habit. We tend towards wanting to go to the same desk in the workplace each day, or to be in an area or ‘neighbourhood’ with our team or colleagues of similar roles”

“Hybrid working and Covid-safe hot-desk environments will impact that. Having the best desk management tech solution is what’s needed to ensure your staff are happy, safe and in control of managing where and when they are seated in the office.”

Space Connect’s Channel Sales Manager, Matt Makan, agrees, adding that “in the hybrid model, where different people may be in the office at different times, finding colleagues, finding key contacts, finding free desks in your preferred location – it all becomes even more important for people. The right workspace management tech can enable that.”

Which criteria affect the choice of hybrid working model?

Each of the different types of hybrid working models to consider will fit different industries and organisations, depending on a range of criteria. Let's take a look at the key influencing factors to consider:

1 Office capacity and Covid security

For the immediate future, understanding the relationship between desk, meeting space and floor capacity, and social distancing requirements for Covid security, is a crucial influencing factor.

2 Job roles and functions

While some roles and teams will inherently require a significant degree of face-to-face contact and interaction, others may work more readily with an individual focus, and with less need for collaboration or issue resolution.

3 Seniority and tenure

Training and development needs will impact the choice of hybrid model. Where new recruits, trainees, and junior staff members with high training and development needs are a significant proportion of the workforce, the model will change.

4 Individual personalities

The personality profile of a team or workforce is hugely influential. Some individuals will simply be more suited, personality-wise, to working remotely. While others will thrive in the office environment. Some will flourish with flexibility; others will crave routine.

5 Leadership

Where the leadership works will influence the workplace model.

6 Access to paper files and physical equipment

Some businesses, teams or individuals may require physical access to office equipment and assets that simply cannot be delivered digitally or remotely.

7 Home facilities

The choice of model must consider the access that a business's workforce has to facilities for working from home. A predominantly graduate workforce for example, may simply not have access to the home-office environment needed for a particular hybrid model.

8 Workspace optimisation technology

Managing any degree of flexible working requires technology – software and in some cases, hardware. Desk booking, meeting space booking, Covid-secure workspace automation, are all tech constraints and key influencing factors on the best hybrid approach for a business.

How to make it all work

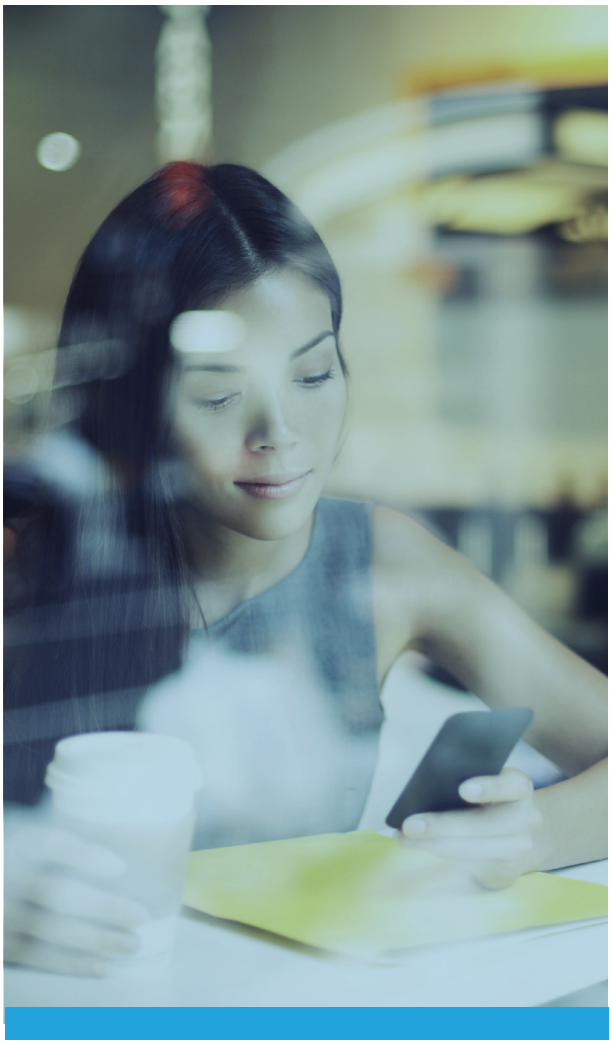
A hybrid workplace model has potential pitfalls as well as tangible advantages. Once the best-fit model has been identified, there are some quick win success tactics that need to be focused on to ensure the pitfalls are avoided or minimised.

Let's take an at-a-glance look at some of these:

Remote working enablement

For workplace reopening and a hybrid model, be very clear about what things worked and didn't work so well for employees in lockdown-enforced home-working. For example:

- Consider ways to reduce the 'always on' work culture, through asynchronous communication. In this case, employees are not expected to respond to an email or message immediately. An end-of-day or 24-hour update is fine.
- Allow 'off-camera' options in online meetings. Being on-cam can be a cause of stress to some.
- Define and enable home workstation assessments and ensure WFH staff have the necessary support in terms of workstation equipment.



Manage in-group and out-group dynamics

In a hybrid model there is a risk that a 2-tier workforce can develop, split between those mostly in the office (in-group) and those most working from home (out-group).

Focus on tactics to anticipate and mitigate this potential split, for example:

- Provide managers with training in identifying inclusion/group biases, before any biases creep in
- Formally reward results, not attendance
- Ensure remote employee visibility, e.g. if members of a team are to remotely join a meeting, then flip the meeting so that all members are remotely attending.
- Priotise online communications over face-to-face, where appropriate
- Create distinct but equal employee benefits for those working from home and those in the office
- Create and nurture a virtual workplace community for all staff – not just those WFH.

Communication of procedures

- Clearly explain all in-office social distancing rules and expectations
- Explain all flexible / hybrid working procedures and expectations
- Provide a clear channel for employee feedback

The checklist

Here's our 23-point checklist of factors to consider for planning and delivering a winning hybrid workplace model

Ts and Cs

- Salary and rewards – consider location weighting, commute costs, WFH expenses
- Working from overseas – consider potential employment, immigration and tax implications
- WFH equipment – consider what employees need in their home-office environment to do their job

Policy and procedures:

- Health and safety – at home as well as workplace
- Data protection and IT security - at home as well as workplace

Inclusion and equitability

- Consider the equal allocation of work and opportunity to those WFH and those WFO

Workspace tech checklist – Covid security

Flexible desk Management

- Flag desks as unavailable, for social distancing
- Multi-option no-touch desk check-in / checkout
- Pre-screening questionnaires, by email and on check-in

Manage Desk Cleaning + Hygiene

- Activate cleaning alerts following a desk checkout.
- Mark a desk as 'clean' for use by other employees.
- Alert desk users to sanitise desk as they checkout

Limit room capacity and manage cleanliness

- No-touch meeting room check-in and check-out
- Dynamically change and limit room capacity
- Cleaning Alerts
- Clean Room Status – indicated on display panels and mobile app
- Automated, no-touch video conferencing

Find a colleague, key contact or preferred free desk location

- Location mapping and interactive floorplans
- Locate a colleague
- Tailor desk searches to match preferences

Reporting of real-time data by floor, room, space and desk, for:

- Desk/workspace occupancy history and contact tracing
- Space utilisation and capacity usage
- Room cleaning activities

Future proofing

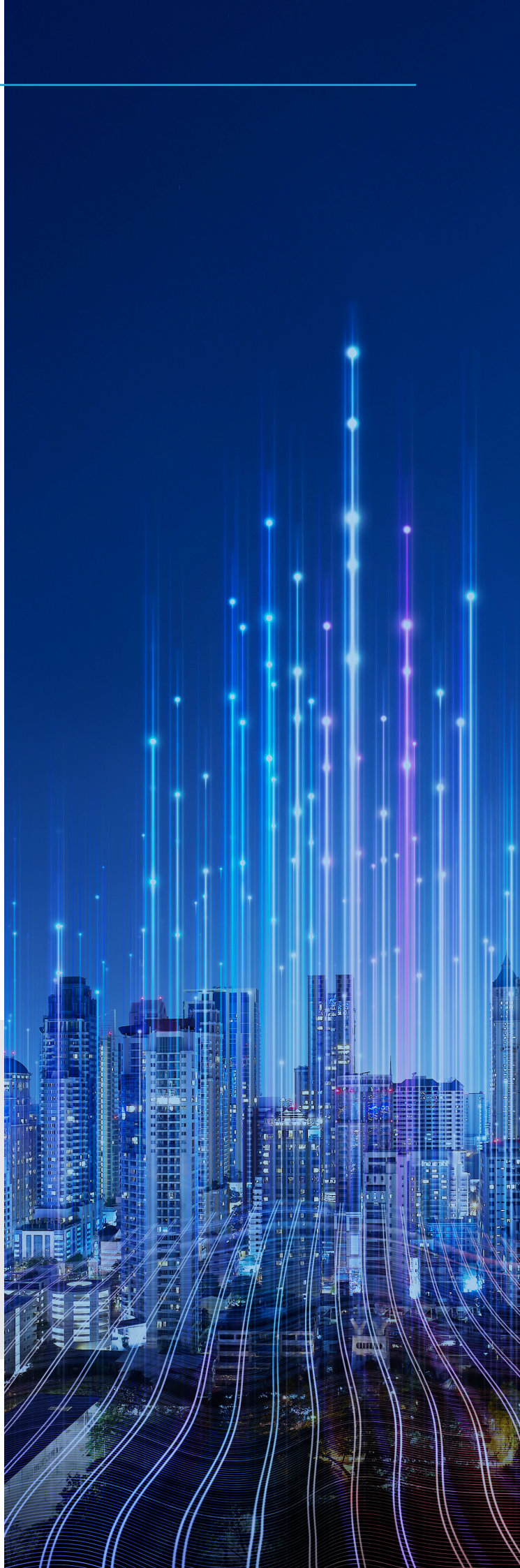
Whichever hybrid model is chosen and enabled, the dynamic times we live in mean flexibility for future-proofing is key.

“When we consider what the future looks like, organisations need to think about both the post-lockdown short term solutions they require, and their longer-term needs” says Matt Pope.

“That means making sure your workplace model, your procedures, and your workspace technology all have flexibility built-in. The tech workspace managers choose needs to be easily configurable, so it can change and scale with future demands, without boxing them in with minimum term contracts and fixed pricing. “

Matt Makan, agrees, adding “Post-Covid, the adoption of hybrid working models will move businesses forward to true agile working. It’ll be all about data-driven workspace strategies, based on detailed space usage analysis and reporting.”

The right space management technology and reporting will take the guesswork out of office utilisation, and enable businesses to focus on true space optimisation.



Get in touch

To explore the best desk booking solution options for your workspace:

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