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A CXO's Guide to a
Hybrid
Workforce

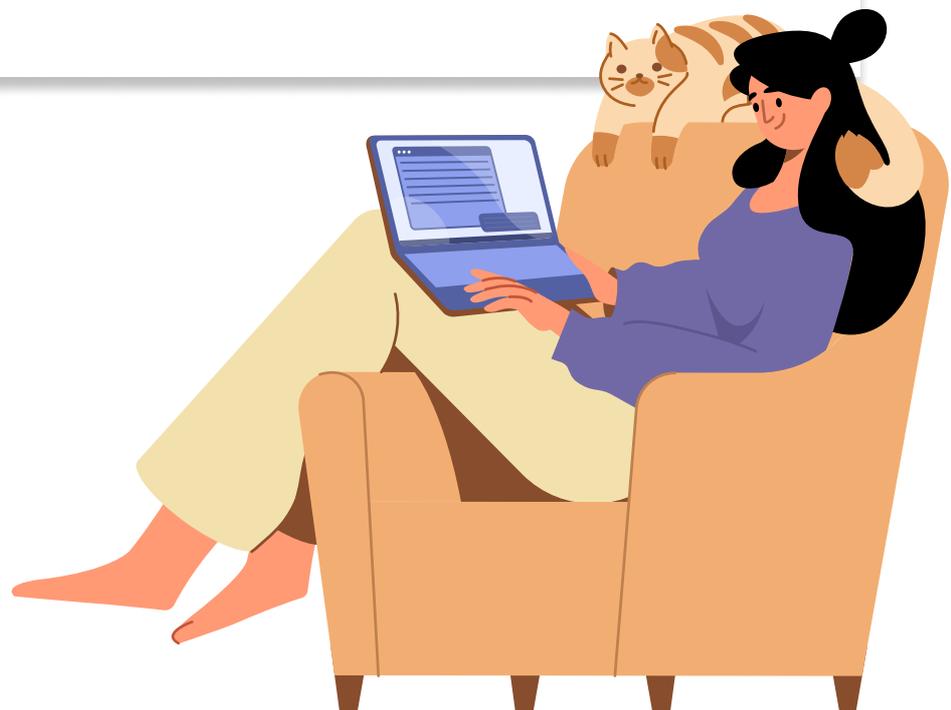


Preface



*As we enter into the post-pandemic era and the corporate houses prepare for the inevitable "**physical workplace**", one thing is clear: **employees all over the world are showing reluctance.***

*The last 18 months have been nothing short of phenomenal in setting up the foundations of the '**borderless workplace**'. Employees have stepped out of their cubicles for good and they are not willing to get back to being chained to their desks anymore.*



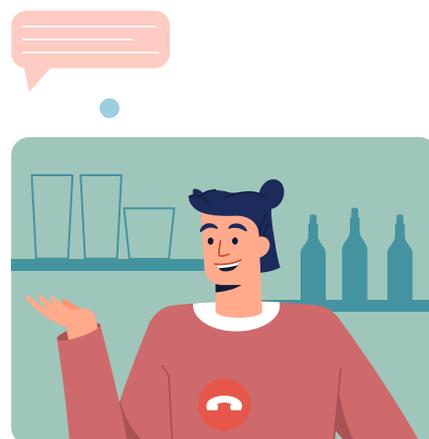
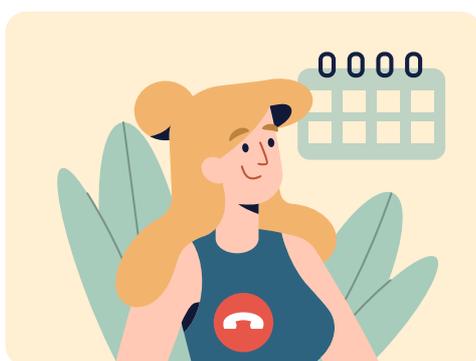
What do employees need right now?



*A study by Microsoft reveals **73%** of employees want flexibility and remote working options while **~40%** of employees are willing to quit out-right if the organizations are making them return to office full time.*

If the last two years taught us anything, it's to unlearn conventional people-strategies and bend the rules whenever we can. Will that be a smooth transition? - working from the office to working from home and now working partly from office and home – maybe not. Is it inevitable to prepare for a hybrid model of working? Yes, without a doubt.

While hybrid is often presented as a new model, the fundamentals of what transforms a group of people into an exceptional team haven't changed as much as we might think. About one in five Americans already worked remotely before the pandemic. Hybrid (in-office and remote) teams are not a new reality, but they are certainly a growing trend.



Google loves a Hybrid Workforce



Google has been **ranked the best place to work eight times** in the US. Google is also one of the few employers who allowed flexible working for their employees - of course it wasn't called hybrid then. A market leader like Google has already paved the way for new-age employers to adjust to the new norms of working - one that works for leaders and their teams.



The fundamentals of hybrid work

Core principles of hybrid working -



The office is a more collaborative space for networking and meeting



Employees are often given the freedom to their own work patterns



A flexible approach to work increases resilience and productivity

Hybrid working is a form of flexible working where employees spend part of the week working remotely and the other fraction in the employer's workspace.

For those organizations that are able to accommodate staff working flexibly between locations, hybrid working can offer benefits to employers and workers alike. Post pandemic, we've seen a rising interest among employees to work remotely at least partly, which means hybrid working could be key in attracting new talent in 2022.

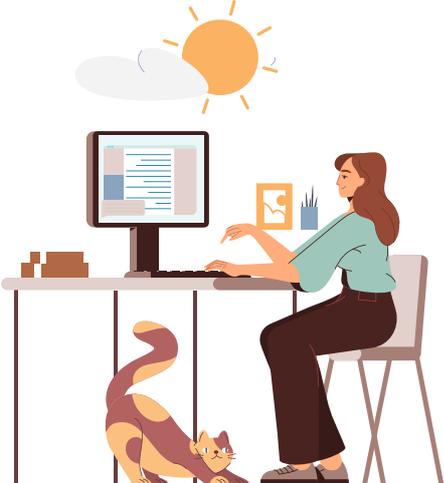
Hybrid work can also benefit workers through helping them to achieve greater work-life balance, reducing the costs of commuting and providing autonomy about how and where they work.

Hybrid work can potentially deliver the benefits of remote working whilst still also allowing for the social and collaborative advantages of working together with colleagues in the workplace.

Is Hybrid work for you?

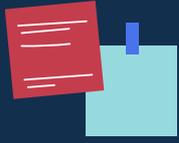
Pros

- Better space efficiency
- Happier employees
- Improved company culture
- Lowered costs
- Safety during pandemic



Cons

- The workspace may feel dull
- Potential burnouts from blurring lines between work and personal life
- Increased reliance on technology
- Team - building when there's distance



How can CXOs prepare?



While a hybrid workplace is touted to be the new normal, planning for it is a tough challenge for CXOs and the HR fraternity. Workforce trends show differences in the preferred workplaces.

For instance: working mothers prefer remote work settings while generation Z is in fact looking forward to returning to the workplace. Thus, compelling leaders to unlearn and relearn how to manage the workforce all over again.

One of the biggest concerns that have been looming over the hybrid work model is the lack of perceived fairness and sense of belongingness in the team. A research study suggests that disproportionately represented members in an organization are 1.6X more likely to have low belonging and more likely to leave as a result.

Different work setting choices for different members in the same team can create a feeling of in-group versus out-group, i.e., us versus them and therefore it becomes even more imperative for the leaders and especially line managers to lead in a more inclusive manner.

Employees report twice the engagement, approximately 3X commitment and job satisfaction when the immediate managers are seen as inclusive and foster a sense of belongingness within the team.

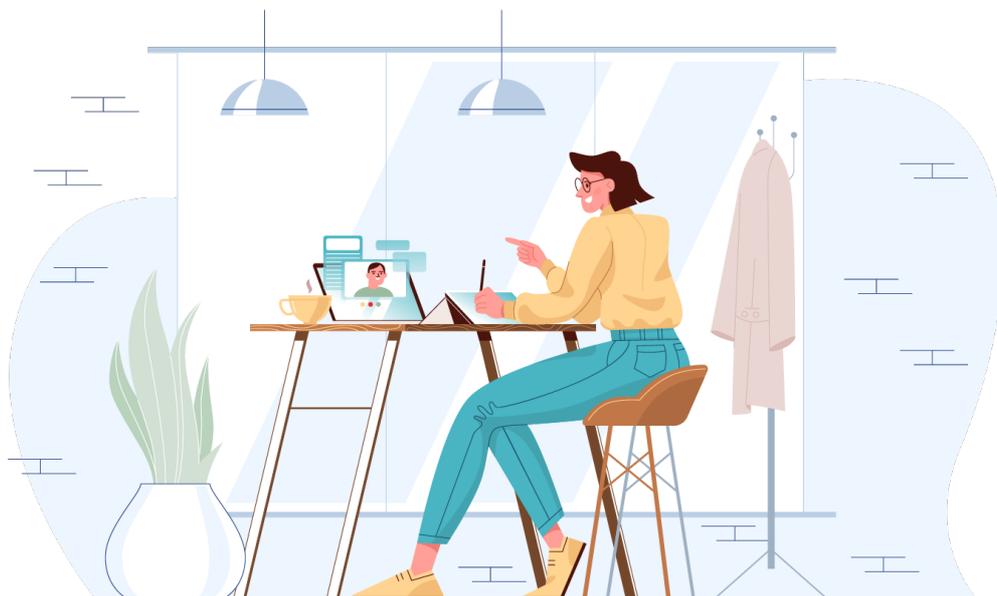


Here are few competencies that CXOs need right now to effectively navigate a hybrid workforce:

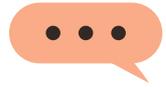
1 Emotional Intelligence

Hybrid work or not, it is important for the managers to have a high emotional quotient (EQ).

- **Authenticity:** As a leader, authenticity is one of the strongest traits that you can bring to the table. Being true to your values, encouraging transparency, and honest conversations can really give you a headstart in winning this war of talent and leading an effective hybrid team. Authenticity comes with the willingness to be vulnerable and engaging with others with integrity.



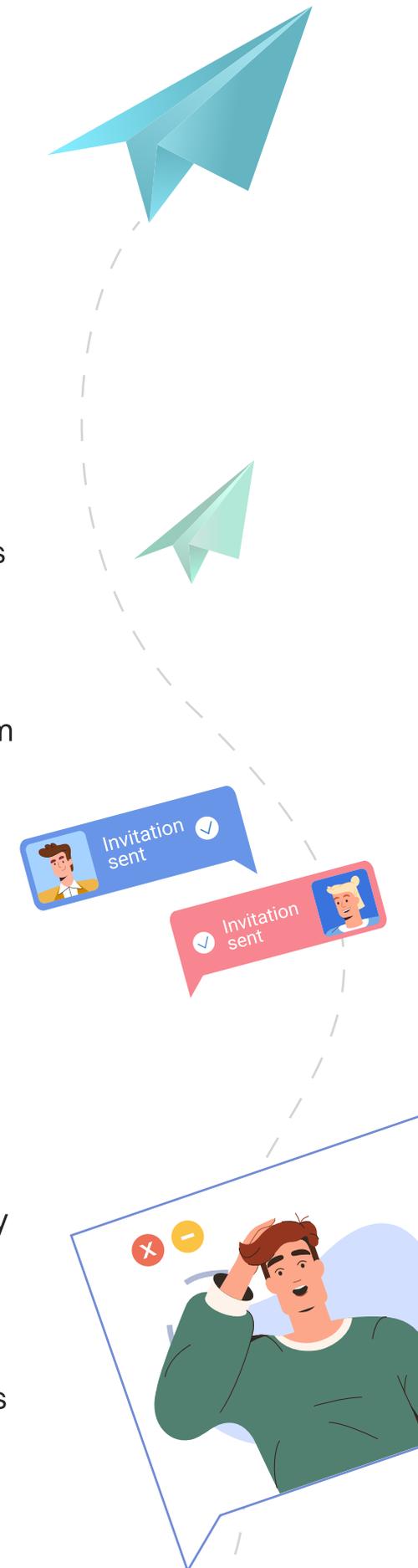
- **Empathize:** While some employees are struggling with burnout, others are still reeling from the devastation caused by the pandemic. Being empathetic to your team members helps in creating a psychologically safe workplace where employees can feel vulnerable and express themselves fully. Research suggests that empathetic leadership style gives way to higher innovation (61%), engagement, and employee retention.
- **Engage Meaningfully:** Feeling alienated and distant from the people who are working in different settings is one of the biggest challenges faced by CXOs in a hybrid set up. Thus, ensure that you connect with your team on a regular basis to discuss work and other things. A study by betterup suggests that manager's connect increases the sense of belongingness within the team by 17%.



2 Inclusivity

It is easy for certain team members to feel disassociated with the team in a hybrid setup, especially for employees who are working in silos. Thus, for the line managers to manage a hybrid team, it is important for them to lead inclusively.

- **Alignment:** Be crystal clear on the vision and goals. Ensure that each member of the team has complete clarity on their role expectations and have the resources to achieve the same. Inclusive leaders provide their team with a common goal to work towards and enables them to realize it.
- **Building team cohesion:** For the physical distance to translate into a psychological distance, it is important to ensure that the team stays connected. Plan regular team catch ups where team members can connect with each other for things beyond work.
- **Encouraging participation:** Ensure that each team member has a voice that is heard. It is easy for voices to get lost when team members are working at different hours or different locations. Thus, encouraging every team member to contribute in team meetings, share their opinions on important decisions can help everyone feel included.



3 Effective Communication

The efficacy of communication channels and style needs to be re-calibrated to ensure that there is no room for miscommunication in a hybrid workplace:

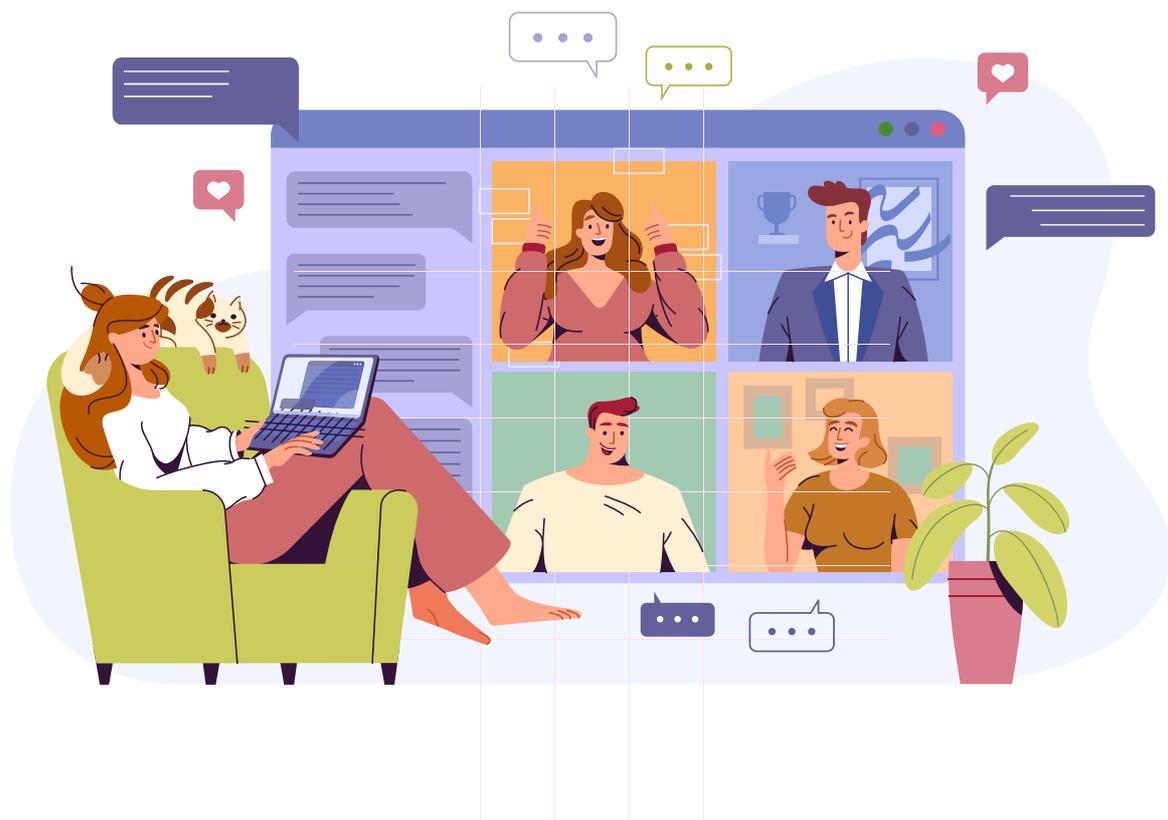
- **Adopt common communication channels:**
To ensure that the information is disseminated properly in the team, create common communication channels like a slack group to share information and other relevant information. Common communication channels, regular information updates avoids the information silos and ensure that the team is on the same page at all times.
- **Accountability:** The challenge of miscommunication can also be resolved by creating encouraging accountability within the team. Ensure that there are stakeholders assigned to each task to maximize productivity. Accountability creates a sense of responsibility and assigns ownership to the task. This ensures that each employee steps-up and works towards a common goal.

As much as this is a guide you can readily use to manage employee expectations in a remote setting, you truly have to find the balance that works for you and your team. Each team and each employee is different and thus needs to be managed differently in this new normal. The only way to navigate your way through this is to lead with honesty, transparency, and clear communication.



Hybrid teams are here to stay

As these times bring discomfort, it'll be a great reminder that the global workforce is on the brink of a major disruption. The world may not be the same after the whole hullabaloo as we make a major shift from the physical office model to the hybrid model. We're all learning as we go, but we know two things for sure: flexible work is here to stay, and the talent landscape has fundamentally shifted. Here's hoping 2022 brings in the much-needed energy all leaders need to lead in the most empathetic and efficient way.



Hybrid workforce engagement + productivity = Amber by inFeedo

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Amber starts by connecting with employees to ask the right questions based on inFeedo's research-backed EX framework at specific milestones in their tenure. She kills survey fatigue with empathetic conversations, analyzes sentiment and shares insights regularly with leaders to act on. Lastly, Amber equips HR with data to proactively drive focussed interventions to resolve employee concerns, prevent exits, and improve organizational culture.



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- Share learnings and metrics with people leaders so everyone can be fully informed at every moment.
- Observe how new initiatives and changes impact the employee experience in real-time so businesses can course-correct or double-down.
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