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C-Suite:

Redesigning Work for a Hybrid Future

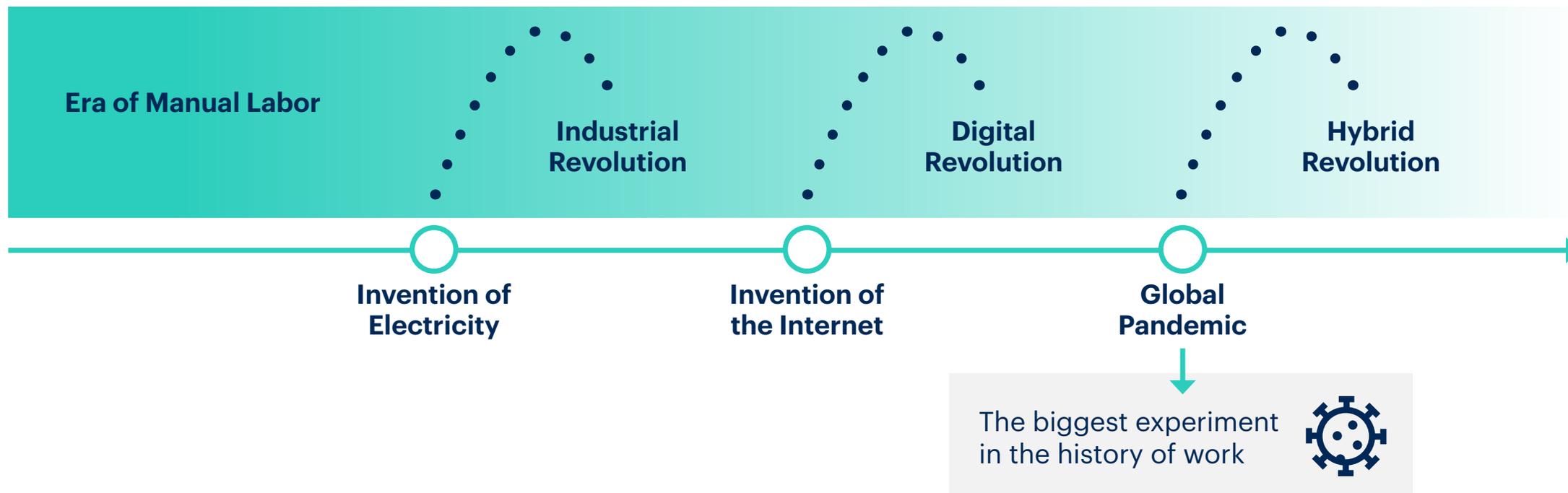
Dispel seven myths about where
and how work drives results

Updated August 2021



Every so often, something seismic happens to the way we work

The pandemic created a sudden shift — with lasting impact.



It's time to banish any remaining hybrid workplace myths

The way we have adapted to working during the pandemic has shattered antiquated assumptions about work design. Executive leaders now have a unique opportunity to break from a location-centric model of work designed around industrial-era constraints, and to redesign work around a human-centric model to secure digital-era talent and deliver business outcomes.

Human-centric work design, characterized by flexibility and empathy, makes employees feel more empowered, and increases their productivity and engagement. It also enables organizations to be more responsive to customer demand, more resilient to disruptions and more productive. It can also reduce a range of costs — from real estate and travel to employee attrition.

In short, the human-centric approach can be a win-win for employees and organizations, but it requires executives to commit to leveraging a hybrid workforce strategy. For many, that means shedding some old assumptions and dispelling myths about what hybrid work models mean and do.



Alexia Cambon,
Director, Research



Graham Waller
Distinguished VP Analyst

7 myths about hybrid workforce models

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Pretty soon, work will go back to normal

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We need in-person contact to sustain our culture

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Employees are less productive when remote

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Hybrid workforce models hurt DEI

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Serendipity is the best driver of innovation

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A hybrid workforce model duplicates our IT infrastructure

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Our jobs just can't be done remotely

01 Myth

Pretty soon, work will go back to normal

Prepandemic, organizations operated primarily in an in-person environment, designed around locations. During the pandemic, organizations rallied quickly to virtualize this design to remain productive remotely. Some leaders still believe things will revert, but the pandemic demonstrated that many of our work assumptions are archaic and unnecessarily limiting, and now beg for reinvention.

Reality

Hybrid workforce strategies are here to stay

Executives who reimagine where, when and by whom work gets done are in a better position to generate both business outcomes and talent outcomes: a win-win for organizations and employees. But first, you have to pick your journey forward — and acknowledge the risks of not adopting a hybrid working model.

Executives have three options for the way forward:



Option No. 1. Reject the hybrid environment and force a return to the traditional location-centric model and work schedule (Monday through Friday, 9 to 5, in many countries or first, second and third shifts). This incurs the risk of employees leaving for more flexibility elsewhere.

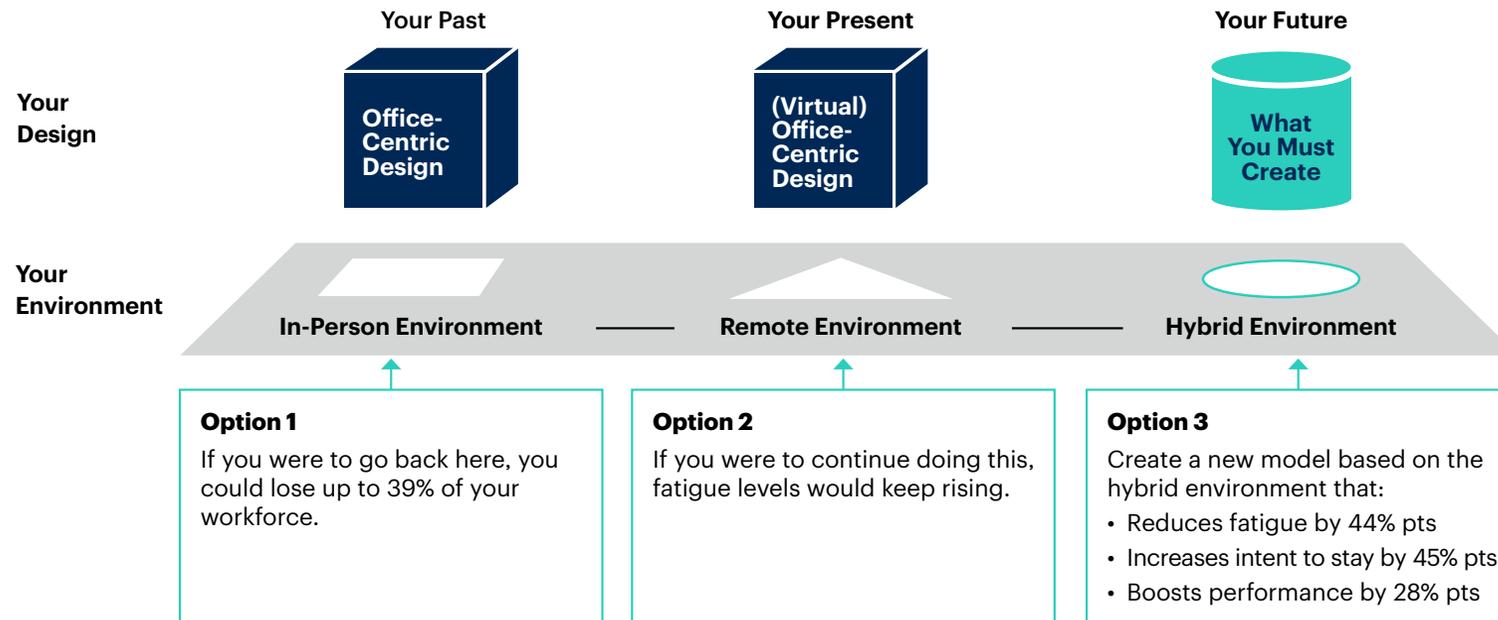


Option No. 2. Accept the hybrid environment, but decline to evolve the work model — continue virtualizing site-centric practices (such as meetings), as was common during the pandemic. This incurs the risk of exacerbating worker fatigue.



Option No. 3. Reinvent work around a human-centric design for the new hybrid environment that ensures performance, innovation and equity — getting it right requires experimentation, learning and iterating.

Hybrid working environment is the future; knowledge workers are especially at risk if you revert to the past



n = 75 HR leaders; 2,410 hybrid/remote knowledge workers
Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work HR Leader Survey; 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey

02

Myth

Employees are less productive when remote

Many executives and managers doubt the productivity of employees who are remote from a central work location. What they're really saying, though, is that they need to see employees to make sure they are being productive.

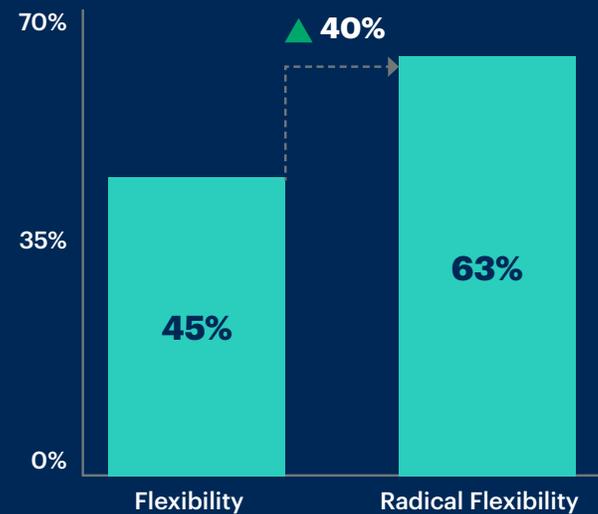
Reality

Employees thrive when given radical flexibility

Data shows radical flexibility (not monitoring of productivity inputs) is what drives performance — but it requires a culture of trust, empathy and empowerment. It also means managers must focus on work outcomes, rather than activity metrics.

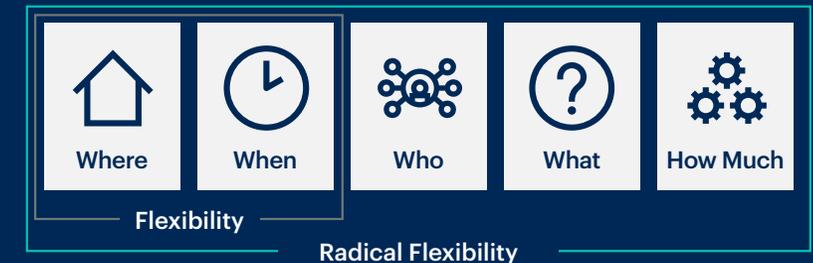
Number of High Performers Increases With Radical Flexibility

Percentage of High Performers



n = 5,000 employees worldwide
Source: 2021 Gartner EVP Employee Survey

Radical Flexibility Definition



Source: Gartner

Shifting to intentional human-centric design is what drives productivity and engagement

Office-Centric Design

An On-Site Model for an On-Site World
“Location is the stable pillar we design work around.”



- Provide Consistent Work Experiences**
Work design principle: Equality of experiences
- Enable Serendipitous Collaboration**
Work design principle: Innovation by chance
- Drive Visibility-Based Management**
Work design principle: Performance by inputs

Human-Centric Design

A Hybrid Model for a Hybrid World
“The individual is the stable pillar”



- Provide Flexible Work Experiences**
Work design principle: Equality of opportunity
- Enable Intentional Collaboration**
Work design principle: Innovation by design
- Drive Empathy-Based Management**
Work design principle: Performance by outcome

Source: Gartner

03

Myth

Serendipity is the best driver of innovation

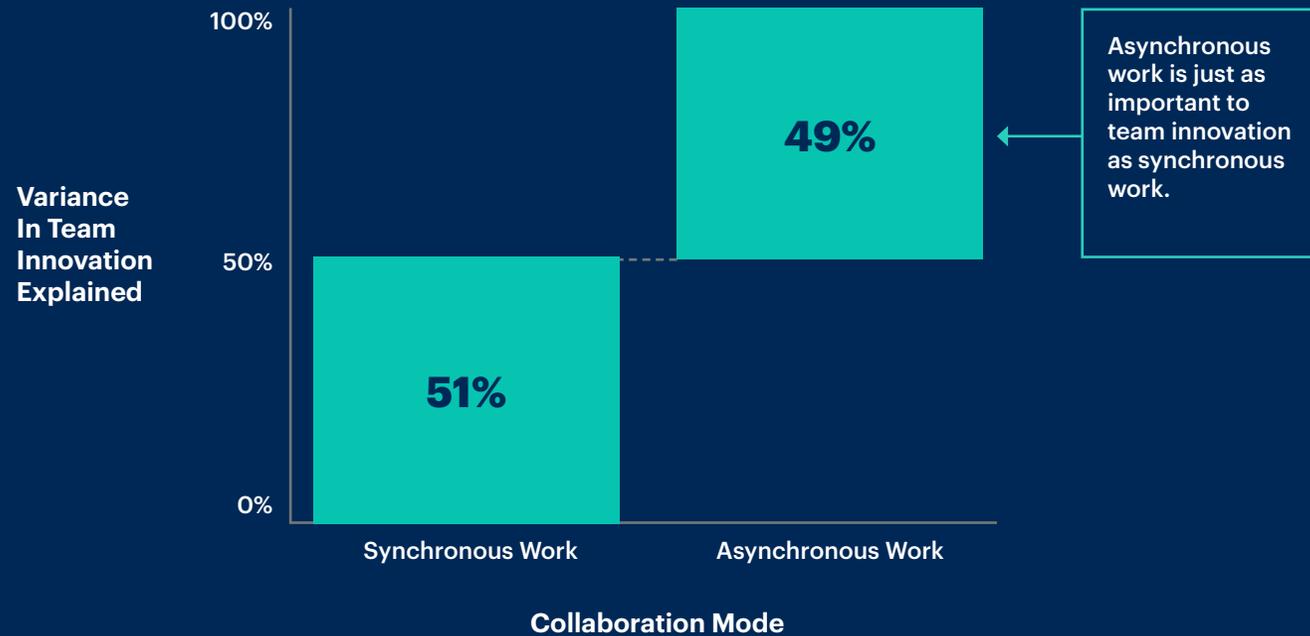
More distributed teams cannot count on chance encounters in the hallway to spark conversation. Some believe this lack of “water cooler moments” comprises innovation, but this overreliance on serendipity was already being questioned as a pre-pandemic source of innovation.

Reality

The key is to create intentional opportunities to collaborate

Leaders must hardwire intentionality into collaboration as a key team norm in order to drive innovation, especially in the hybrid environment. Providing access to four different modes of collaboration (see next page) is critical to innovation.

Working Together Isn't the Only Way to Drive Innovation



n = 2,410 hybrid/remote knowledge workers
 Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey
 Note: This chart shows the result of a dominance analysis demonstrating the relative impact of synchronous and asynchronous work on team innovation.

03 Progressive organizations will invest in providing access to all four modes of working

Hybrid work environments offer employees and teams more access to all four modes of collaboration — and gives them the flexibility to choose when and how they leverage each mode to maximize their contribution.

While we may work together when co-located, we often work alone even when seated together.

We don't need to be in the same place to work together.

And working alone — where our mindspace is protected from physical and mental distraction — is critical to our productivity and creativity.

Colocated

Working Together, Together



Working Alone, Together



Distributed

Working Together, Apart



Working Alone, Apart



Synchronous Work

Asynchronous Work

In hybrid working environments, teams can engineer opportunities to collaborate more intentionally.

Those that do **collaborate intentionally** have a stronger awareness of how, where and when to use each of the four hybrid collaboration modes.

Source: Gartner

04

Myth

Our jobs just can't be done remotely

Some executives insist their employees cannot work remotely, but that's often a default position rather than a thoughtful business decision. Location flexibility is a key component of hybrid work models so it needs more purposeful consideration.

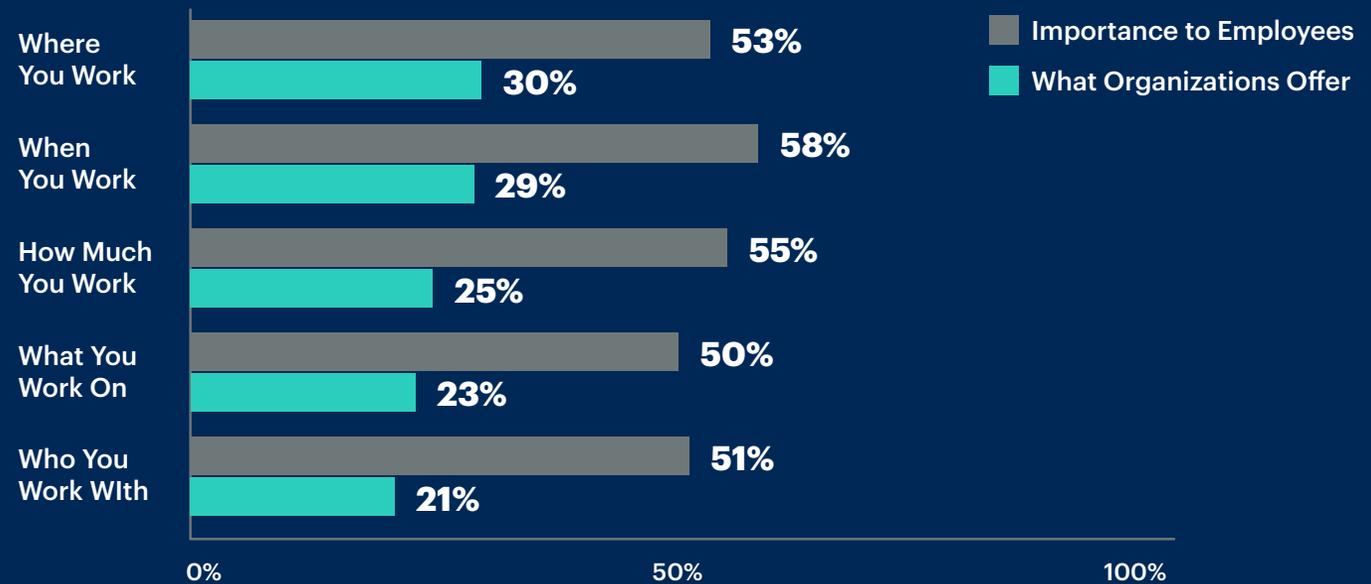
Reality

Hybrid workforce models look beyond roles

By mapping employees' activities, you can spot opportunities for flexibility even when location isn't flexible. Most jobs fall somewhere on a spectrum between fully portable and fully nonportable. Assembly-line work, for example, includes almost all nonportable tasks. Surgeons, in contrast, perform a mix of nonportable tasks (e.g., the surgery itself) and highly portable tasks (e.g., notes and paperwork).

Knowledge Workers Aren't the Only Ones Who Value Flexibility

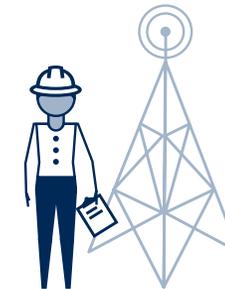
Percentage



n = 5,000 employees worldwide; 77 HR Leaders
 Source: 2021 Gartner EVP Employee Survey; 2021 Gartner EVP Benchmarking Survey

Sample flexibility options for employees who aren't knowledge workers

Illustrative



Role	Retail Employee	On-Site Essential Personnel	IT Field Technician
Flexibility Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employees the choice to schedule and trade their own hours • Provide tenured employees options for what areas they work in and who they work with • Allow employees to work at different locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employees transparency into the types of projects available to them • Allow employees to share their workstyle preference • Provide employees choice of when they can start and end each workday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust scheduling as needed (i.e., four 10-hour days, not five 8-hour days) • Provide employees options of which peers they work with on-site • Authorize remote work when not on-site

Source: Gartner



Myth

We need in-person contact to sustain our culture

Many executive leaders fear that limited in-person contact in a hybrid workforce model will dilute corporate culture. Yet culture should always adapt. Even before the pandemic, many cultures lacked future fitness and were missing key attributes for digital success, such as agility, speed and autonomy in decision making.

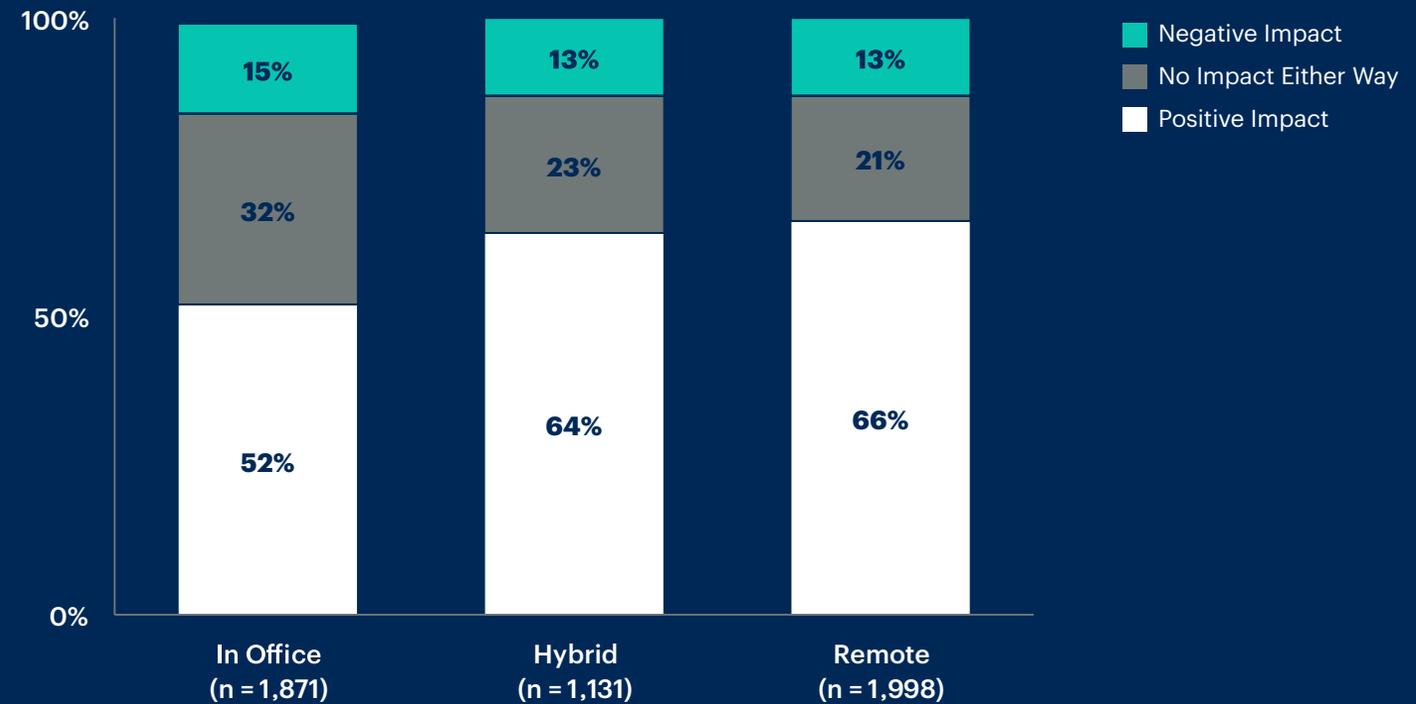
Reality

Hybrid workforce models offer a critical opportunity to reinforce culture

Employees don't magically imbibe culture simply by entering a physical workplace. And so far, more remote and hybrid employees report higher culture satisfaction than on-site employees. Success requires intentional culture change and role modeling, whether employees are remote or not.

Culture Is Viewed Positively by More Remote and Hybrid Than In-Office Employees

Q: "Does Your Organization's Culture Have a Positive Impact, Negative Impact or No Impact Either Way on Your Job?"



Source: 2020 Gartner Improving Employee Engagement Survey (September 2020)
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

05 Think differently

Think first about the cultural norms and values you want to promote and the behaviors that reinforce them.

Then work on how to promote those behaviors in a hybrid model to create a shared purpose and deeper connections with and among full-time employees.

As mentioned (in Myth No. 3), many leaders fear, for example, that innovation can only thrive in a physical workplace where ad hoc and in-person brainstorming takes place or when employee teams collaborate with nontraditional (e.g., gig) workers.

In a hybrid working model, ensure that innovation thrives by orchestrating it:



Create intentional collision opportunities. Foster virtual gatherings that pull in employees from diverse business units or from outside the organization. Intentional matchmaking connects people who realistically would never interact in the real world.



Teach employees to use formal and informal networks. The existence of groups within or across business units isn't always obvious. Teach employees about the networks that exist and how to access them.

This same type of intentionality should apply to all aspects of the desired behaviors and culture.

06

Myth

Hybrid workforce models hurt DEI

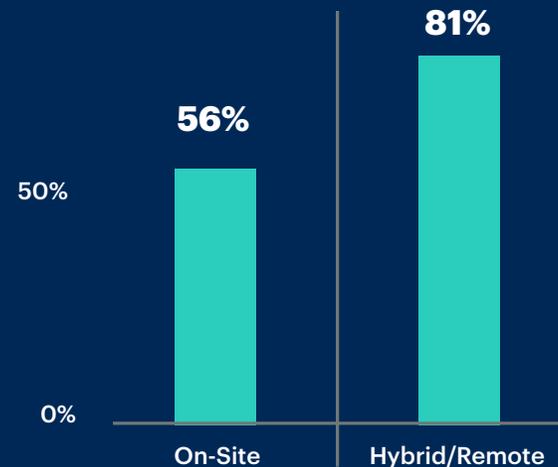
Concerns that employees feel disconnected from their colleagues in remote work environments can feed fears that a hybrid model, in which colleagues are physically separated by design, will undermine diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and create disparities between work conditions.

Reality

Aim for equality of opportunity — fairness not sameness

The imperative is to facilitate flexibility while ensuring that all employees have an equal opportunity to participate. A fully on-site return is actually a risk to DEI. This type of sustainable DEI approach will make you an employer of choice for diverse candidates — whether you deploy a hybrid workforce strategy or not.

Knowledge workers with a disability are more likely to feel respected in a hybrid environment than when on-site



n = 2,410 hybrid/remote knowledge workers
Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey

Women Feel Increased Safety In Hybrid Work



51% of women who weren't working remotely before, but have been since the pandemic, say their level of safety has increased

n = 254 employees who identify as female
Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey

06 Think differently

Devote discrete attention to diversity, equity and inclusion.

With a hybrid workforce, organizations certainly need to be committed and intentional about DEI initiatives — but so will they in more traditional workforce models.

The good news is that employees provided with flexible work options say they are more likely to bring their authentic selves to the organization, which improves their engagement and performance.

Commit to ensuring that inclusion strategies large and small work to remove any barriers to equitable advancement. For example:



Develop good everyday work habits, e.g., ensure everyone is heard in a virtual meeting.



Review how work is assigned, e.g., don't preserve certain clients only for in-person sales calls.



Listen to employees. Pulse employee groups about their work experience, and ask what they need from the organization to feel connected and heard. Leverage employee resource groups (ERGs) to ensure everyone has a voice, and identify new practices, from flexible work schedules to additional hardware or software for differing needs.

Myth

A hybrid workforce model duplicates our IT infrastructure

Nearly 70% of infrastructure and operations (I&O) employees view the enterprise’s priorities of speed and agility as being at odds with infrastructure’s mandates for reliability and efficiency. But this reflects a legacy mindset that will significantly constrain infrastructure speed and agility.

Reality

Resilient organizations continuously reengineer their IT strategies and infrastructures anyway

Resilient, future-fit organizations need “Everywhere Enterprise” strategies — which go beyond enabling a workforce with mobile devices and remote access alone.

Everywhere Enterprises use technology, team structures, processes, skills and tools to empower dispersed workforces, harness distributed infrastructures and serve ubiquitous customer bases.

Requirements gathering by IT

<p>Who are the users and what is their job function?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executives or mission-critical employees • Users with intense data analysis needs • Users with “normal” requirements
<p>What kind of device is being used and who owns it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC vs. mobile devices • Organization vs. user-owned • Phone/tablet • PC-class
<p>What kind of applications and data do users need to access to and are they located on-premises or in the cloud?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Browser-based on-premises • Windows-based on-premises • Browser-based cloud • Windows-based cloud
<p>Where in the world is a user located?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify user’s policy complies with all local labor and privacy laws

Source: Gartner

07 Think differently

Embrace best practices for serving "everywhere" needs.

To serve the “everywhere” needs of a hybrid workforce, you’ll need to deliver consistent and secure network access for all employees (traditional and nontraditional), regardless of where they work. CIOs will need to work with other business leaders to help define the requirements.

Best practices for designing and deploying the right systems include:



Define requirements. Establish the specifics of who needs what, including minimum download and upload speeds, and negotiate coverage to include as many employees as possible.



Optimize performance. Deploy solutions that distribute traffic across the network and prevent backlogs that come from routing everything through the on-site data center. Enhance network uptime for employees whose local broadband provider doesn’t provide enough coverage.



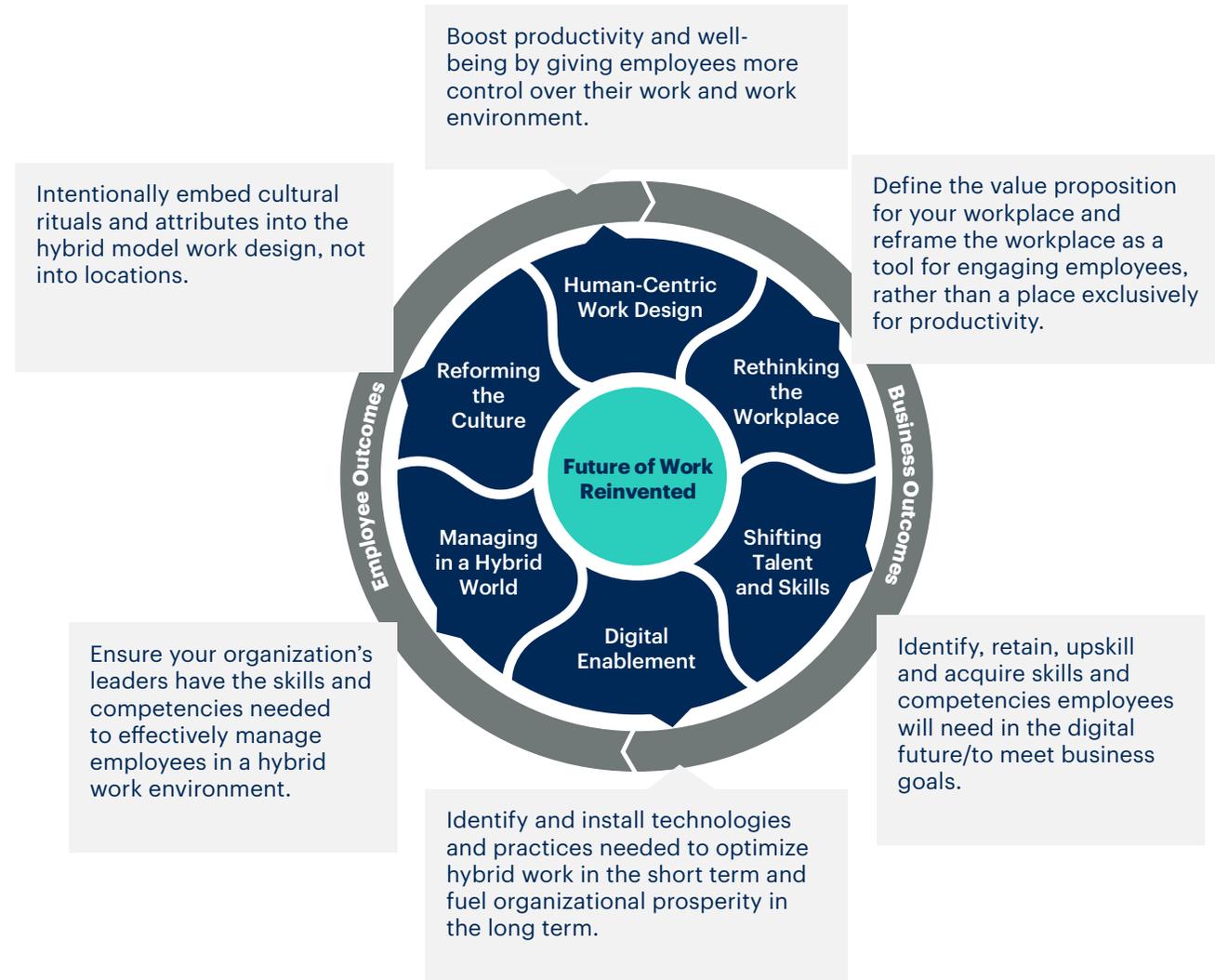
Invest in cloud-based services. Cloud providers deliver reliable service regardless of worker location, while allowing enterprises to quickly shift capacity in response to disruption.

Conclusion

Going back to the work model that prevailed before the pandemic is a step backward. And your organization can't be resilient without rethinking strategies like hybrid workforce models.

Start by dispelling the myths that stand between you and your ability to capture this competitive opportunity. Then pursue a coordinated strategy in which you experiment, learn and iterate implementation across six fronts to make hybrid working a win-win for your employees and your organization.

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