Your workforce has changed, now it's time for your workplaces.

Working from home has helped many staff achieve a better work-life balance and improve their wellbeing while maintaining, or even increasing, productivity. As a result, we are hearing that many are reluctant to go back to five days a week in the office. Yet the news frequently includes news of another well-known company telling employees that they are expected back in the office.

56%

Over half of those that have worked from home at some point will consider looking for a new employer if denied remote or hybrid work options in the future.[3]

Despite the many benefits of working from home, as the Financial Times put it, "There is no substitute for face-to-face interaction – for understanding how to complete tasks but also for absorbing a company's way of doing things."[1] And there are many benefits to the employee too, including avoiding the "burnout" some have suffered due to a combination of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion and the absence of a dividing line between work and home.

But forcing employees to go back to the office is fraught with problems. According to a recent Verizon/Morning Consult survey, over half of those that have worked from home at some point will consider looking for a new employer if denied remote or hybrid work options in the future.[2] The reality is that, for most companies, the best option is a hybrid model that gives employees flexibility while still using shared spaces. This model can help realise the benefits of face-to-face interaction, improve productivity and problem solving, and retain existing employees.

The hybrid work model has great promise, but for it to be a success, businesses must transform their workplaces. Offices and other shared spaces must be turned into purposeful spaces that employees want to visit – whether daily or just occasionally, provide enjoyable and productive experiences and integrate remote workers seamlessly and thoroughly.

To help you do this, we've developed the SMART framework: Safe, Merged, Responsive, Automated and Thrifty. Read on for some examples of how this framework can help you make a success of hybrid working.

🔒 Safe: Make your workplaces welcoming

Demonstrating your commitment to the wellbeing of your staff, wherever they work, is vitally important and goes far beyond adding arrows on the floor and hand sanitisers. Technology can help make workplaces safer without getting in the way of collaboration and productivity.

- Manage the number of people onsite and resource allocation with smart meeting rooms, unobtrusive camera systems and helpful desk and room booking systems
- Maintain security with less physical contact by implementing touch-less check-in and facial recognition for access control
- Use artificial intelligence- (AI-)based video analytics to identify congested areas to redirect traffic flow and proactively schedule cleaning

🔁 Merge: Bring people together wherever they're working from

Three-fifths (60%) of respondents to the Mobile Security Index 2021 said that the productivity of remote workers was at least as high as those onsite – and one in five (20%) said that it was significantly higher.[4] Technology can help with much more than conferencing. It can help blend different working experiences, to the benefit of those in the office as well as those at home – or travelling, when that's an option again.

- Make those that only visit the office feel more welcome – and more productive – with tools to book desks, rooms and other resources and an app to navigate the building
- Level the playing field by involving remote workers in informal activities as well as structured meetings and create a community chatbot to answer queries
- Drive immersive in-room and remote collaboration with smart meeting rooms and whiteboards, including augmented reality (AR) features

📈 Automate: Make hybrid work easy, not a chore

The same sensors and systems that can keep staff safe and improve collaboration can also be used to automate time-consuming manual tasks. The hybrid workplace can reduce the "friction" associated with doing routine tasks like cleaning and site monitoring, while reducing the burden on the facilities team.

- Identify areas of high traffic in buildings and automatically schedule them for enhanced cleaning with smart video analytics
- Speed up moving through the building and improve security – including reducing "shoulder surfing" – by introducing touch-less access enabled by video analytics and machine learning (ML)
- Enable continuous improvement by bringing together data from all your cameras and sensors to create a 3D digital twin that can visualise traffic flows and make best use of resources

⏱ Responsive: Make your real-estate more adaptable

The pandemic highlighted the importance of being able to respond to unexpected events: Not just keeping business operations going, but also being able to pivot and take advantage of opportunities. Businesses are changing how they are using their real-estate too – for example, HSBC has converted the "executive floor" of its London headquarters into client meeting rooms and collaborative spaces.[5] Technology can help you make spaces more flexible.

- Identify underused areas that can be repurposed to meet other needs using video analytics
- Enable employees to work onsite when it suits them by making workplaces available 24/7 with sophisticated video analytics and automated security
- Improve resource availability and utilisation by making more spaces multi-purpose – for example, using noise cancellation and virtual whiteboarding to create more collaboration spaces

$ Thrifty: Control costs and get more from your investment

Staff making fewer journeys will naturally help organisations lower their carbon footprint. But there are benefits in, pardon the pun, going further, and setting ambitious targets to become net zero – as Verizon has done.[6] Technology can help.
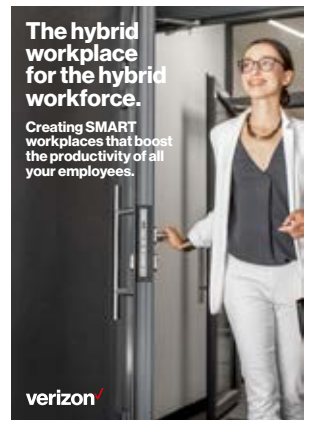
- Save money on heating and other utilities by introducing smart control systems that help reduce waste
- Reduce the risk of new capital projects failing by using 3D digital twins, built using data from smart sensors, to test ideas and evaluate alternatives before investing
- Improve the remote working experience, and save money, by replacing VPNs with a more flexible and versatile SD WAN

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Make SMART decisions today, benefit now and in the future

Successfully embracing the future of work will be critical to attracting the best new talent, retaining valued staff and building competitive advantage. It could also make your business more resilient and adaptable to deal with future crises and seize future opportunities.

The ideas on the previous page are just a small selection from our new report, The hybrid workplace for the hybrid workforce. The advice it contains could help you adapt your workplaces for the hybrid model and get ahead of the curve.
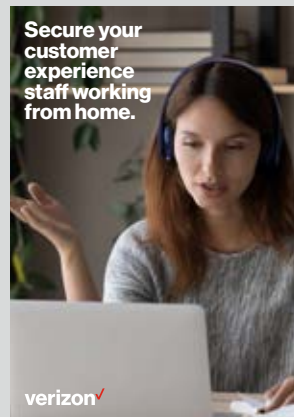
Read it now >

The hybrid workplace for the hybrid workforce.

Creating SMART workplaces that boost the productivity of all your employees.

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You might also like

Our Future of Work hub is packed with interesting articles, videos and reports:

How to lead differently in the workplace of the future

We look at the trends shaping the workplace of the future with research from Boston Consulting Group (BCG)

The Future of Work

Reimagining business as usual

The Future of Work

Secure your customer experience staff working from home.

Secure your customer experience from home

Choose to communicate with purpose.

Great collaboration starts with basic communication.

How better collaboration can lead to better business results

Forrester and Verizon experts discuss improving collaboration (video)

1   Financial Times, Bosses should persuade staff back to the office, June 2021
2   Verizon and Morning Consult, Look Forward, March 2021, those with no opinions have been omitted
3   Verizon and Morning Consult, Look Forward, March 2021, those with no opinions have been omitted
4   Verizon, Mobile Security Index 2021, April 2021
5   BBC, HSBC boss Noel Quinn scraps executive floor at London HQ, April 2021
6   Verizon, Moving forward sustainably, 2020

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