

Are you ready for the new hybrid office reality?



According to a recent Forbes article¹, “Remote work is here to stay.” The article cites findings from a recent Ladders report², which found that “25% of all professional jobs in North America will be remote by the end of 2022, and remote opportunities will continue to increase through 2023.”

This means that the work-from-home shift during COVID is going to continue to be the norm, even as the pandemic winds down. For your business, this means you need to make some changes in your office to accommodate this now-ongoing model. You may have relied on some temporary fixes, but now you need to consider permanent solutions that will amply carry you and your staff into the future.

To level set, ask yourself a few questions:

1. What percentage of my workers are working from home?
2. What challenges does the remote-worker model pose to my business?
3. What can I do to mitigate lost productivity despite having work-at-home staff?
4. What solutions do I currently have in place to support remote workers?

Your answers will likely indicate a need to make some office updates.

CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED EMPLOYEE WORK LOCATIONS FOR REMOTE-CAPABLE JOBS

Work Location	Pre-Pandemic 2019	February 2022	Anticipated Location in 2022 and Beyond	Preferred Location
Exclusively Remote	8%	39%	24%	32%
Hybrid (>10% to <100% Remote)	32%	42%	53%	59%
Fully On-Site	60%	19%	23%	9%

¹ “Remote Work Is Here To Stay And Will Increase Into 2023, Experts Say”, 02/01/22, Forbes.

² “25% of all professional jobs in North America will be remote by end of next year”, 12/7/21, Ladders.

Experts anticipate that most offices in 2023 will need to accommodate a hybrid work model. “We’re not returning to the same workplace we left. And employees with the ability to work remotely are largely anticipating a hybrid office environment going forward — one that allows them to spend part of their week working remotely and part in the office.”³

This evolution may conjure ideas such as hoteling office cubicles where no one has a set workspace but rather signs in each day and takes what is available. Approaches like this will likely become commonplace as businesses will be able to scale back their office space as fewer staff will be in the office at any given time than were back in early 2020.

Other considerations may fall around videoconferencing and mitigating the impact of distance on remote meeting attendees.

CREATING IN-PERSON LIKE EXPERIENCES AND SEEING AND HEARING EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

At-home or remote meeting attendees often complain about not being able to hear or be heard and see or be seen. These issues can cause participants to miss important information discussed in the meeting. You can’t afford for this to happen time and again. It is problematic.

Industry leading videoconferencing tools make it easier for all participants to see and hear everything that matters during a meeting. Virtual management technology takes care of auto-zooming in on individuals when they are speaking. Dual video streams allow remote participants to see the speaker and a separate white board simultaneously. Intelligent lighting automatically optimizes the picture, and 180-degree panoramic views make all in-person attendees visible simultaneously.

Outfitting your conference room with a simple, small video system like this can literally change and improve how your team communicates.

JOINING ONLINE MEETINGS PAIN-FREE

When most of us work from home, we use a laptop and a Bluetooth device in our ear, connected to our mobile phone. While initially a quick and convenient solution, this setup can cause some interoperability issues. Consider the multiple steps required to connect your audio device to your monitor and the videoconferencing solution you’re using. It isn’t always a simple scenario. Many monitors and conferencing solutions automatically use the laptop’s built-in microphone and speakers. To use a separate earpiece, you must go into the settings and select your device for both audio and microphone use. Otherwise, no one will hear you, and you won’t hear them.

New Microsoft Teams certified headsets, for example, eliminate many of these issues. These products integrate automatically with the videoconferencing solution and make it easier to use them. Out-of-the-box capabilities ensure your headset is always connected to the system, so you don’t have to fiddle with the audio or mic settings each time you join a meeting. What’s more, new professional-quality, personal web cameras also work seamlessly with Microsoft Teams and other platforms. It is easy for users to create a quality video/audio experience with built in features like 4K Ultra-HD video, AI-enabled image enhancement, picture in picture, and more.

These tools alone help to arm your organization with hybrid-office capabilities that will surely and successfully carry you and your team into the future. With these solutions in your conference room and atop your remote worker’s laptops, you will be amazed at your team’s subsequent productivity and effectiveness gains, which can improve your bottom line.

³ “The Future of Hybrid Work: 5 Key Questions Answered With Data”, 3/15/22, Gallup.