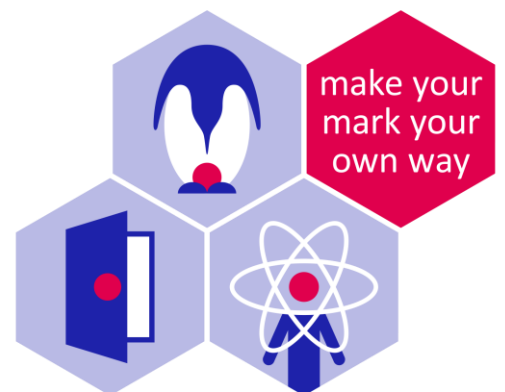


# **Making a hybrid workplace a great workplace**



**October 2021**

Over the last 18 months ***“No area has undergone more rapid transformation than the way we work,”*** according to Microsoft’s CEO, Satya Nadella.

This time has been very different for everyone and there’s no doubt challenges still lie ahead. But right now, employers have the opportunity to unlock new ways of working. To deliver better work-life balance and wellbeing for employees, and a healthier, more productive company culture.

- Flexible working • WFH - Working from home • Hybrid working
- Smart working • Working 3:2 • Remote working
- Distributed working • WFA - Working from anywhere
- Free range working

Whatever we call it and whatever model we or our employers adopt there’s no doubt that the world of work has changed, and changed forever.

Some of the sacred cows have been slain. The sky didn’t fall in.

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) reports 2/3 workers have<sup>1</sup> some anxiety about returning to the office. Research by People Lab says that 91% of respondents do not want a return to how they worked before the pandemic.

So, what might the future look like?

Microsoft’s 2021 Work Trends Index captures the conundrum:



***Employees want the best of both worlds: 73% of workers surveyed want flexible remote work options to continue, while at the same time, 67% are craving more in-person time with their teams.***

***“66% business decision makers are considering redesigning physical spaces to better accommodate hybrid work environments.”***<sup>2</sup>



Recent research from the CMI supports this view with about half of managers expecting staff to be in the office two to three days a week.<sup>3</sup>

Here at Rix & Kay, we’ve been considering the future of work for professional services firms and how employees and their managers can make it work – for themselves and for their clients. **To create great places to work.**

1

1 <https://www.managers.org.uk/about-cmi/media-centre/press-office/press-releases/the-great-workplace-return/>

2 Microsoft 2021 Work Trends Index

3 <https://www.managers.org.uk/about-cmi/media-centre/press-office/press-releases/the-great-workplace-return/>



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There's no one size fits all but there are some sound principles to bear in mind for the hybrid workplace of the future.



***This is a once-in-multiple generations opportunity to reshape workplaces for good – for employers, their people and clients. If we can get this right, businesses will experience better outcomes, attract and retain great clients, recruit the best people - creating a better future of work for us all.***



*Richard Cripps, Managing Partner, Rix & Kay Solicitors LLP*



## It's a good thing!

While we may be anxious, giving our people greater flexibility will improve mental health and productivity. According to the Health and Safety Executive, stress, depression and anxiety accounted for 51% of all work-related sickness and 55% of all sick days in 2019-20.<sup>4</sup>



***The evidence, globally, is clear: if employers and employees agree to flexible working you have higher job satisfaction, less sickness absence days and higher productivity where you can measure it.***



*Prof Cary Cooper, President of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.<sup>5</sup>*

## Earning, building and maintaining trust

And the one thing underpinning the workplace of the future will be trust – trust in each other, trust in our leaders, our leaders' trust in their people. Just look at the data. Compared with people at low trust companies, people at high trust companies report 74% less stress, 50% higher productivity and 29% increased wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

As we rebuild our organisations, those who actively seek to earn trust, build trust, maintain trust will be the winners.

As David MacLeod, author of the MacLeod report and co-founder of Engage for Success<sup>7</sup>, the UK's leading authority on employee engagement, says:



***Trust is the vital underpinning to successful, productive outcomes and to individual wellbeing. The evidence is compelling. But trust arrives on foot and leaves on horseback. It must be built.***

***Trust in an organisation's future comes from a compelling strategic narrative. Trust every day comes from being well managed.***

***Trustworthiness is encouraged by having clear and respected employee voice. Integrity is where behaviours and trust align.***

Business writer, Simon Sinek, concurs: ***Give your people a resource scarce in our workplaces - Trust. Trust them to get the balance between work, rest and play. To stop working and start doing something else (for a little while).***



A team is not a group of people who work together, a team is a group of people who trust each other.

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<sup>4</sup> Work-related stress, anxiety, or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2020, HSE November 2020

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/aug/16/three-two-win-how-to-adapt-to-hybrid-home-and-office-working?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/aug/16/three-two-win-how-to-adapt-to-hybrid-home-and-office-working?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

<sup>6</sup> The Trust Triangle, Matthew Davies

<sup>7</sup> [www.Engageforsuccess.org](http://www.Engageforsuccess.org)



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## The first steps toward the hybrid workplace

The pandemic has accelerated a trend that began over twenty years ago. Then it was called “new ways of working”. For example, in the early 2000s PwC opened an office in Ghent, Belgium that had an occupancy rate of well over 100%. How? Because it only had hot-desks, with an hotel-style concierge system for booking them. They recognised work could take place in the office, in clients’ offices, the café or at home. A system built on trust. And it worked.

Now we are referring to the hybrid office. New name – tried and tested methods.



***There are some practical and immediate steps to be taken before moving on to the longer term strategic thinking a successful hybrid workplace requires.*** Says Richard Cripps. For example:



- Reviewing working management practices, job descriptions, policies - working hours, billing and time tracking
- Assessing physical and mental health of employees
- Assessing workspaces owned or leased. Carrying out a space audit
- Getting hardware and software basics right – open calendars, desk booking software, make sure it’s all working as it should. Avoid piling on micro-stresses caused by system glitches
- Involving employees in how they return to the office and work in new ways

**By considering these aspects we can begin to reimagine the office ...**



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## Evolution, not revolution

The move towards hybrid workplaces is an evolution, not revolution. This is unlike the change we in professional services experienced at the start of the pandemic. Then, simultaneously we were all hit with the same thing. This time it will be gradual.

Firms who are successful will try. They will test. They will learn. And they will adapt.

There is a lot of talk about Agile Methodologies and being agile. It doesn't matter whether your firm adopts and applies Agile Methodologies or are simply attempting to apply an agile approach. At heart those who are the winners will share a flexible, iterative approach to implementing change in their workplaces. And they will engage their people in that shared purpose and embark on the change together. We unleashed creativity and innovation – let's not put it back in the box.

And why is it so important to get this right? 41% of employees are considering leaving their current employer and 45% say they're likely to move because they can now work remotely. Your approach to hybrid will impact who stays and who goes.<sup>14</sup>



***This makes creating an exceptional employee experience in our hybrid workplace vital. This moment also offers leaders a powerful opportunity to unlock new ways to achieve everything from wellbeing and work-life balance to an inclusive and authentic company culture — and experience better business outcomes along the way***

Jenny Reardon, Human Resources  
Manager, Rix & Kay Solicitors LLP



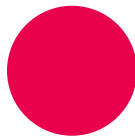
**In our next thought paper we will be looking in more detail at what makes a great hybrid workplace.**

## At Rix & Kay we make it easy for you to make your mark your own way

The new world of work has arrived. We're excited about the potential it offers to balance the objectives of a company and the needs of its people equally. We want you to be part of it with us. We're a firm who live our values, Expert, Committed, Transparent. A firm with a clear strategy for growth, for our business and our people. We offer quality professional training and development, exposure to working on the bigger, more stimulating instructions earlier, and high-quality work with some exciting clients.

The law is difficult and complex. It takes commitment, training, resilience and tenacity. But at Rix & Kay we want to try and make things easy. Easy too, for you to have the opportunity to make your mark, your own way. Easy to offer great client service, easy for you to work flexibly - where, when, and however you're most productive. When everything's in balance we know that's when you'll do your best work and give our clients the best service, making law easy for them.

We value and celebrate diversity (in all its forms) and the wealth of experience our people provide. We are a company of personalities where everyone has a part to play. We're a friendly, welcoming and open place where your opinions are valued and where we want your voice to be heard. Please, join us.



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