



Flokk & Neat

Designing office workspaces
for modern hybrid working





How to succeed when creating modern hybrid workspaces

Hybrid working – the act of working from more than one physical location for your job – is fast becoming the norm. Enabled through technology and accelerated by the pandemic, a global survey of over 300,000 found 86% worked outside of the office at least one day a week.

It is well documented that the ability to work at least part of your week outside of the office provides benefits such as reduced commute times, increased peace and quiet when working solitarily and a better work-life balance – without a drop in productivity.

Far from signalling the end of the office however, the normalisation of remote work and the proliferation of video meetings has given new meaning to the office and the opportunities and experiences it can provide.

Today's distributed and diverse way of working requires a rethink of the traditional workspace.

In this document, we explore the impact hybrid working has had on the office and the ways in which businesses can adapt their offices to better suit the working patterns and specific needs of their employees.

For those businesses struggling to attract staff back to the office, we also look at what employees are lacking when working remotely, and how best to create an office environment that caters for these needs.

Hybrid workplace technology - with Neat

A key factor of hybrid work is the ability to stay connected despite being apart. That's why we've asked Neat, pioneers of advanced video communication technology, to provide insight on the role technology can play when designing hybrid workspaces, and the advantages businesses can gain from adopting the latest in video communication technology.

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What do people want from the office?

Productivity - Creativity - Culture

Historically, the office has three major duties to perform - to improve productivity, to foster creativity, and to shape a company's culture. Whilst this hasn't changed, businesses adopting a hybrid work approach require a shift in thinking.

In 2020, Gensler conducted a wide-ranging study asking people what they want from the office. Unsurprisingly, the answers aligned with the three main functions of the office as just outlined. However, the most common answers generally favoured social and collaborative activities. This was to be expected as many office employees were working remotely at this time.

What this highlights is that the home was much more suited to individual focus work, and not an adequate substitute for the full workplace experience in the long run.

When adapting workspaces for hybrid work, social and collaborative spaces are crucial to provide a rounded workplace experience, and help to encourage people back to the office. However, it is important to not omit spaces for individual focused work, as we shall explore over the next few pages.

Gensler 2020 Work From Home Survey

Scheduled meetings with colleagues	54%
Socialising with colleagues	54%
Impromptu face-to-face interaction	54%
Being part of the community	45%
Access to technology	44%
Focusing on work	40%
Scheduled meetings with clients	40%
Professional development/coaching	33%
Access to amenities	20%

Linking places like never before

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Hybrid work requires new and innovative ways to patch the distances between the physical and the virtual worlds. More specifically, it demands that the future workplace be equipped with technology in ways unimaginable before.

Next generation video devices that fully leverage the power of cloud meetings across desktops, meeting rooms, and home offices are essential for effective collaboration, productivity, engagement and business continuity.

High quality video conferencing devices bring smart, AI-infused experiences and pave the path forward for more productive and engaging meetings. Today's advanced digital capabilities, such as AI and ML, are enhancing video meetings to deliver new efficiencies, improved user experiences and data-driven decision making.

Types of Hybrid Working

Different organisations have adopted different approaches, but these can roughly be placed into three categories. By understanding which type of hybrid work matches your organisation, you can better understand the specific needs of your employees when it comes to what the office can provide.

Office-preferred hybrid model

Leans towards a more traditional office approach, allowing a certain level of working from home. This is useful for multi-national organisations, and for businesses that provide flexible hours or locations to support a better work-life balance.

Remote-preferred hybrid model

A majority of staff work from home. The office is less a place for workers to come in for individual work based at workstations, but instead it is a hub for collaboration and community, with activities scheduled to strengthen workplace connections with colleagues.

Standard/Balanced hybrid model

The "Classic" hybrid model with staff varying their level of remote work based on individual needs and preferences. Companies who adopt this model maintain all types of workspaces in the office, yet lean more towards collaborative and community aspects.

A space to be productive

Organisations that adopt hybrid work policies should still provide a space in the office catering for focused work. Despite the benefits of working remotely, (quiet, comfort, and lack of interruptions to name a few) not every worker has access to an ideal home workspace environment with many lacking either physical space or peace and solitude. Sensitive work materials may also restrict off-site activities for others.

Conduct a survey

Just how much space you provide for focused work will depend on both your company structure and what type of hybrid work policy you have adopted. Most companies that adopt hybrid working will see a reduction in workstations, and in some cases switch to more shared spaces. By conducting a survey, you can determine how much time and when employees work remotely. Using this accurate data on occupancy levels, you can work out roughly how many workstations you will need.



‘Neighbourhoods’ make people feel at home

Most organisations face pushback from employees if they no longer have personal desks. Assigning teams or departments to specific zones or “neighbourhoods”, can create a sense of group ownership and make employees feel more at ease. A team of 12 for example, where only 8 employees are in the office at any one time, can shift to an 8 workstation setup.

Customise the space to provide the right tools, adding personality with pinboards for team-related photos, memos, and artwork chosen by the team. The key to this is to promote a new way of thinking, from the “me space” to a “we space”.

Ancillary spaces enable concentration

Employees used to the peace and quiet of working remotely may find it harder to concentrate in open-plan workspaces. And whilst in principle some may decide to do their focused work at home and more collaborative activities in the office, in practice the working week is not so easily divided.

With the space saved from reducing open plan workstations you can create additional smaller focused workspaces, with enforced quiet policies. Private booths with glass doors are convenient and allow people to easily spot vacancies, whilst larger organisations may opt for libraries, hideouts, or project rooms, each of which may encourage reluctant employees back to the office, offering flexibility for those needing that extra bit of focus.

The Role of Technology

Agile computing

With employee’s switching from the home to the office on a regular basis, being able to use the same computer wherever they are will make staff more productive and happier. Laptop cradles and fixed monitors allow employees to sit down and plugin at any workstation.



Communication

Most workers require regular contact with their team members throughout the day, to go over their focused work. Most laptops are equipped to handle simple video or text communications, but the open plan office is not ideal for hosting disruptive conversations. Booths can double up as places to take quick calls for individuals who are currently doing focused work and need to check up on something.

Furniture

Intuitive comfort and support

The requirements for focused work are very simple – comfortable, ergonomic seating paired with a desk which provides all the tools (often only a computer!) necessary to be productive. However, hybrid work environments often support multiple users throughout the week. This means furniture should be easily adapted to suit different users. Chairs should have the least amount of fiddling required to adjust them, and any controls should be intuitive and easy to use. Height adjustable desks can also help to meet the needs of different sized users.

Flexibility and Modular

By using modular furniture and office fittings, you can allow your teams or neighbourhoods to shrink, grow and evolve when needed. It also allows switching from solo-focused desks to open-plan or collaborative spaces without any fuss.

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Being able to take a quick video call to go over some work, or share some new insights allows off-site workers to stay in the loop, but having everything on one screen can be an unsatisfactory experience, especially when sharing a presentation or trying to multitask on your computer.

When we designed Neat Frame, this was exactly what we had in mind. Easy to use, Neat frame handles all of your video communication on a single screen, allowing you to see other participants whilst still having full access to your own computer screens. Smart AI controlled audio helps block out background noise like people talking or your own typing, whilst a 4k camera provides sharp visuals.

Designed for ease of use, it is perfect for both personal desks and for multi-users in shared spaces such as private booths.



HÅG SoFi

Chairs for shared workstations have two major requirements – comfortable support for extended periods of concentration, and easily adapted to different user preferences. The HÅG SoFi was designed with this specifically in mind. Height, seat depth, armrest position and lumbar support are all easily adjustable with simple and obvious mechanisms, allowing the chair to transform within seconds. Strong ergonomic design makes it a chair with lasting comfort.

Recap

Take a survey

To ensure adequate focus work space

Team Neighbourhoods

Provide sense of community without personal desk space

Additional enclosed spaces

Provide extra layer of privacy and peace

Work-from-any-desk technology

Supports hybrid work patterns

Booths

Offer flexible space for focused work

Intuitive, adaptable seating

Supports multi-user environments

Modular furniture

Provides flexibility for neighbourhoods to adapt and grow



Somewhere to be creative

Creating a versatile range of collaborative spaces enables businesses to make the most of their space, whilst ensuring that time spent in the office complements that spent working remotely.

If the first role of the office is to allow people to focus, the second - and arguably most important - is to foster innovation and creativity, and creativity thrives on collaboration.

More than two-thirds (68%) expect to see dedicated spaces and infrastructure for communicating with those working remotely at their office within the next 2-3 years.

IPA Study

For hybrid work, collaborative environments are not just about bringing people onsite together, it's also about being able to communicate effectively with those working remotely, enabling anyone to take part in meetings, workshops and education.

Design Considerations

Role reversal

Traditional office designs feature an open environment for focused work with closed spaces for meeting rooms. With hybrid workspaces adopting more enclosed spaces for focused work, collaborative spaces will begin to take over the open environments. Having these spaces in the open will encourage better communication, exactly what the office can provide that the home cannot.

Glass partitions

Not every meeting is ideal in an open space. Using glass walls to cordon off certain spaces can stop noise travelling whilst maintaining a visual sense of openness. They allow natural light when exterior windows are not possible, and staff can easily spot if meeting rooms are available.

Types of spaces

Successful hybrid workspaces offer a range of tailor-made spaces suited to different types of collaboration. Instead of one large meeting room, organisations should create a range of sizes, which not only saves space, but allows multiple meetings to take place at the same time. Smaller spaces allow for one on one

meetings, scrum rooms provide a space for teams to get together, whilst open environments allow several conversations to take place at once if the collaboration is informal.

Inclusivity

Hybrid work is all about providing the opportunity to work from where you feel you can perform best. Ensure that your collaborative spaces are situated conveniently for the workers they are designated for, making it as easy as possible to use them.

Technology

Digital first

Inadequate tech creates a divide between office workers and virtual workers, which can result in unsatisfactory and unnecessarily long meetings. Whether you opt for a remote-preferred or more balanced hybrid model, you should make sure at least some of your collaboration environments are optimised for digital communication.

Multiscreen environments for immersive experiences

A truly immersive collaboration space features several displays, so that presentations can sit side by side with video feeds from remote workers. On site participants should also use their own laptops or mobiles to provide close ups of themselves for virtual participants. Microphones on individual devices should be muted, with a dedicated system in room providing clear audio.

Cloud-based booking systems

By making collaborative spaces bookable via cloud-based systems, employees can ensure that when they do come in to work on projects together there will be a space available to them. With the remaining open spaces available for impromptu and less structured collaborations, there will always be a space for people to work together.

Furniture


Active, dynamic seating

Workspaces that incorporate active and dynamic seating encourage active and dynamic participation. Meetings should be about expression and participation, which is much harder when you sink into a chair, or are bodily restricted by a rigid design. For spaces designed for short encounters,

balance stools, or higher seats encourage a more healthy and enthusiastic exchange.

Acoustic Panels

Acoustic panels can help reduce noise across the workspace, whilst also creating a pleasing aesthetic. Moveable screens and curtains are also a great way to partition off certain areas as and when needed, allowing open spaces to offer more flexible and modular environments.



Meeting equity means everyone takes part is on equal terms, a balance all too often in favour of those in a room compared to those participating remotely. So, what do we do to restore the balance? The first and most obvious step is to audit your tech. High-quality video and audio quality are important, but that's just the start. You need to choose devices designed with both the physical meeting space and the remote participants in mind. The golden rule is to think face-to-face, no matter where people are located geographically.

This was the philosophy behind our latest device, **Neat Center**, available in fall 2023. It captures 360° visuals and sound to give remote participants a perfect perspective of everyone in the room transforming the traditional round table into a true hybrid-at-heart format.

Four types of collaboration in the workspace

- Present and share new ideas
- Brainstorm
- Plan and execute project work
- Review project progress and agree next steps



HÅG Tion

The HÅG Tion is a smart combination of personal comfort and active seating, easily configured to different users with minimal fuss. Despite offering qualities more usually found on standard task chairs, its lightweight and smaller footprint make it a versatile choice for meeting rooms, project rooms and more. With hybrid workspaces dependant on flexible design, the HÅG Tion can help businesses create smart and dynamic spaces that are suitable for all types of hybrid work activities.

Recap

Role reversal	Think open collaborative, closed focus
Glass Walls	Create privacy with a sense of openness and light
Tailor made spaces	To suit collaborative needs
Digital First	Equip spaces for remote participation
Multiscreen environments	For immersive experiences
Active seating	Encourages dynamic participation in meetings
Acoustic panels	Help reduce and muffle unwanted noise
Lounge Seating	Provides for informal collaboration



A place to connect

Successful hybrid working requires a physical office with spaces for colleagues to engage outside of scheduled meetings in chance encounters, to absorb the culture of their company and to connect with each other.

One of the key advantages of working from the office is the building of relationships between colleagues. In fact, the 2022 Microsoft Work Trend Index shows that one of the primary reasons people want to come into the office is for each other. Aside from general work collaboration, connecting with each other is about team bonding, learning from experienced co-workers, building relationships with senior leadership, or simply socialising with work friends.

Hybrid working can often result in a reduction in social cohesion, with interactions limited to scheduled video calls and formal meetings in person. New staff especially are disadvantaged if their only experience of their new company takes place remotely. By designing an office that actively encourages social cohesion it will be far more attractive to employees, who will also be happier, and more creative and productive.

Design Considerations

Environments that cater to these interactions are often overlooked when it comes to workplace design. Sure, people sitting at their open plan workspace have ample opportunity to chat with their close work colleagues, and meeting rooms, whilst designed for work collaboration, also provide a space to get together and talk. It is important to think beyond these “work” spaces, to more social elements.

Blurred lines

Hybrid working blurs the lines between work and play – The best hybrid offices often don’t look like workspaces at all, with areas such as bars, breakout spaces and cafes provided as flexible spaces not only for light work but for conversation between colleagues. These environments not only strengthen a sense of community and inclusion, but increase the possibility for chance encounters across departments.

Offering employees a choice of workspaces from comfy lobby and cafes, right the way to private focused rooms, organisations are providing the flexibility and autonomy workers are craving, helping to increase happiness and productivity, whilst making their workspace an attractive place to be.

Attractive Design

Mapping out your workspace zones is only half the picture though. People want an inspiring place to work. Visually pleasing design, intuitively placed furniture, fittings, and equipment, and an overall aesthetic appearance that imbues the company culture of an organisation. If your workplace inspires, people will want to come in to work there. This isn’t a new philosophy – the tech offices of brands like Apple and Microsoft have been doing this for decades now, with increasingly attractive amenities on offer, but it’s not just extravagant amenities, more and more it’s about feeling at home.

Technology

Despite the prevalence of technology, it doesn’t solve every problem in the workplace, and this is most apparent when it comes to the need to build company culture and social cohesion. Chance encounters, random conversation and spontaneity don’t really mix with technology that generally requires intent and purpose - you cant call somebody by accident.

Future technologies could perhaps be based on integratiing remote workers more seamlessly with those working in the office, to enable more frequent, and spontaneous interactions. What this may look like is currently unclear, but they would have to be dedicated devices in convenient locations, designed specifically for informal communication.

The challenge is to design technology that can delicately balance accessibility with privacy. Face to face interactions rely a lot on body language, with humans able to read signals that individuals are open or not to engagement. More technological sophistication is required than the current „do not disturb“ status messages.



Furniture

Resimercial Design

Resimercial design, a combination of “residential” and “commercial,” adopts certain aspects of the home into contemporary workspaces. Comfortable seating, soft ambient lighting, home-inspired accessories like rugs and lamps, and textures that feel warm and familiar all help to bring a sense of fun and comfort to the office.

Think Modular

Modular soft seating systems give you the freedom to create a piece to fit the needs of your workspace, whilst also being easily moved and rearranged to give greater flexibility in how you use your space from day to day. When combined with acoustic panels or screens they can be used in open spaces without major disruption to other workspaces, removing line of sight and reducing noise.





Profim Revo

Profim Revo is a stylish collection of sofas benches, screens and stools in softly contoured organic shapes that can be combined into 96 different configurations. With a soft, 'resimercial' appeal, Profim Revo offers the modularity and flexibility for creating laid back spaces for people to connect, designed for socialising, light work and informal collaboration and chatter.

Recap

People	Come to the office for each other
Create spaces	That allow people to meet informally
Flexible breakout spaces	Strengthen a sense of community and inclusion
Express your culture	Through attractive, workplace design
Resimercial	Combines residential and commercial design concepts
Modular seating	Makes these spaces more adaptable





Designing Better Workspaces - with Flokk

Create inspiring places where people want to work

Now more than ever, businesses and organisations are evaluating the way their employees want to work, with a more distributed model being adopted on a wider scale, with people working in more and more places outside of the traditional office.

Flokk is the leading manufacturer of sustainable furniture and acoustic solutions in Europe. Combining internal expertise with renowned international designers, we want to help you design better workplaces, embracing new ways of working to create lasting business advantages.

Find out more

About Neat

Neat is a Norwegian video communications company partnered with Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Neat designs pioneering video meeting devices that bring rich and meaningful experiences to people's work, interactions and lives, accommodating all types of hybrid workforces, workplaces and workstyles.



Flokk is the leading manufacturer of high-quality workplace furniture and acoustic solutions in Europe, offering a wide range of seating solutions, tables, and accessories for working and public spaces.

Combining internal expertise with renowned designers from around the world, we create furniture designed to improve the well-being and performance of its users, to 'inspire to great work'.

Flokk has over 40 years of experience in developing environmentally friendly furniture. With a systematic approach, using an ever-increasing amount of recycled materials in our designs and following a unique set of guiding principles, our goal is to reduce both our own and our customer's environmental impact, inspiring others to do the same.

