

The hybrid workplace for the hybrid workforce.

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

verizon✓



New workstyles demand new workplaces.

You know the stats. Working patterns are unlikely to ever be the same again. But what does that mean for offices and other communal workplaces?

Opinions on the long-term future of how and where people will work vary, but there's one thing most commentators agree on: Fewer people are going to work in the office – and far fewer will do so five days a week. But news of the death of the communal workplace has been greatly exaggerated.

Firstly, some jobs require a physical presence – and not just in retail and manufacturing. Secondly, people are naturally social and research shows that we are better at being creative and solving problems when we are together. Technology has made virtual gatherings easy to organise, efficient and engaging, but there's going to be a place for communal workplaces for years to come. But the office needs to change.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for change for many. But it isn't just global pandemics that drive change. Some crises are localised, like adverse weather events, and some are commercial, like a disruptive new competitor entering your market. Even without major events, changing demographics and attitudes, as well as disruptive technologies, are likely to have a huge impact on how businesses make money and serve customers in the years ahead. The jobs people do and where they do them will almost certainly change.

Investing in workplace transformation now could help you be more adaptable and take these changes in your stride. In this report we'll look at how companies can adapt their offices, stores and other facilities to be SMART: Safe, Merged, Adaptable, Responsive and Thrifty.

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COVID-19 shifted attitudes.



The last year has taught many of us that ‘how’ we do our jobs is much more important than ‘where’ we do them from.”

Joe Garner, Chief executive, Nationwide³

You’ve probably read the research, and likely either changed your own work patterns or seen your colleagues and the people you deal with do so. COVID-19 has dramatically accelerated the move towards flexible working.

Many staff have found that working from home:

- Saved them time – nobody missed hours sat in traffic or on delayed and overcrowded trains
- Enabled them to improve their work-life balance – for instance being able to be more engaged in daily family activities
- Was more comfortable and productive – some even invested in garden offices, their very own ShedQuarters

Although many staff want to maintain some level of remote working, most don’t want to abandon the human connection and collaborative benefits of the office all together. About seven in ten (69%) people that have worked remotely want to work away from the office at least 1–2 days per week in a year’s time.¹

Just over a quarter of employees expect to be in the office full-time

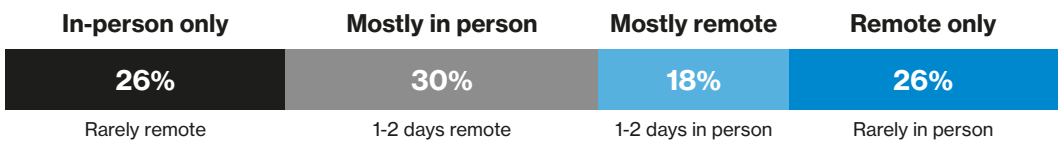


Figure 1: Thinking about what your work life will look like a year from now, how would you prefer to be working. Base: Employed adults. Those that expressed no opinion have been omitted.²

That means for many organisations, physical workplaces still have an important role to play. But these facilities will need to change; and fast. Organisations that fail to adapt could find themselves at a disadvantage to more forward-thinking competitors which embrace flexible workstyles and new workplace capabilities.

That's not alarmist, it's something that's on the mind of many employees. According to the 2021 EY Work Reimagined Employee Survey nine in ten employees want flexibility in where and when they work. When given the choice, more than half of employee respondents (54%) would choose flexibility in when they work – 40% in where they work. And people are willing to move jobs to get that increased flexibility – with millennials twice as likely to than baby boomers.⁴

Verizon's own research found that about half of those that have worked from home at some point will consider looking for a new employer if denied remote/hybrid work options in the future.

Half of employees may start looking for a new employer

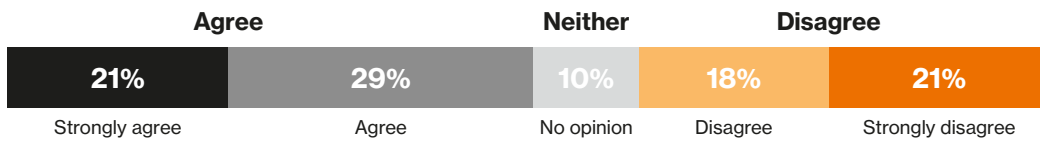


Figure 2: I will consider looking for a job at a new employer if my current employer does not allow for remote or hybrid work after the pandemic has subsided. Base: Employed adults that have worked remotely at some point.⁵

When your workplace could make the difference between losing and retaining staff, getting it right should be a high priority. But don't panic. Reassessing your workplace doesn't have to be massively disruptive or expensive.

In this paper we will outline the three key steps to a successful transformation and future agility.



“We want to help enshrine new working patterns so they outlast the pandemic. Without conscious planning now, there's a risk we lose the best bits of these new ways of working when the economy opens up again”

Kevin Ellis, Chairman and senior partner, PwC⁶



1. Agree your key objectives

Every organisation has its own unique business processes, existing capabilities and needs. Outlining your key objectives and assessing the risks for both your organisation and your staff is a vital first step in successfully transforming your real-estate.

From boosting productivity to improving employee safety and building a positive culture, challenges facing organisations are new and varied. These are some of the key areas to focus on when it comes to reimagining your workplace.

Improving safety

All organisations have always had a responsibility to ensure the safety of employees and visitors when they're onsite, but recent events have changed how we interact with each other and raised expectations.

There was a time when crowded meeting rooms, workspaces and kitchens wouldn't have raised an eyebrow. They might even have been looked upon favourably as signs of a vibrant and dynamic environment. But people are now much more concerned about the potential risks to safety and wellbeing of dense gatherings.

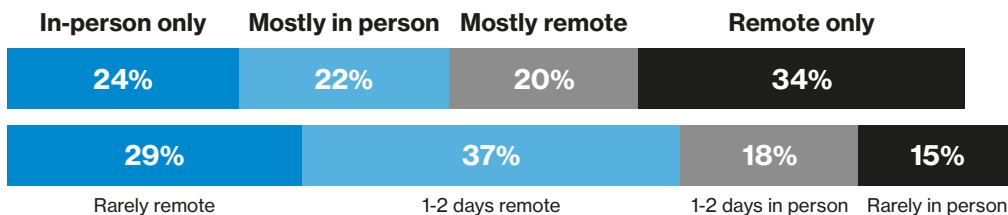
Employees expect their employers – and those operating in other places that they visit – to demonstrate that their sites are safe. This means more than just installing signs and hand sanitising points. Companies must change how their sites are used – and changing people's behaviour is always challenging – and leverage technology to increase safety in reliable, cost-effective and unobtrusive ways.

Enhancing employee satisfaction

Remote work has helped many staff achieve a better work-life balance. As a result, many will be reluctant to go back to how they operated before – for many, ‘hybrid work’ is becoming a much more desirable option.

Those with kids at home were more likely to want to get back to the office

Those without children



Those with children under 18

Figure 3: Thinking about what your work life will look like a year from now, how would you prefer to be working? Base: Employed adults that have worked remotely at some point. Those that expressed no opinion have been omitted.⁷

When it was just a few employees working different hours or working at home, managers and teams generally expected those employees to adapt to make it work. When lockdowns were introduced it wasn't just a few, for many companies it was most. This forced companies to change how they did things to maintain productivity.

Just as importantly, companies – at least those that take employee wellbeing seriously – were forced to consider the impact on employees' mental health, morale and motivation. Many companies, and many leaders, responded admirably. Because COVID-19 affected everybody from the new hire to the CEO, lots of thought and effort went into thinking about how to keep teams productive and happy.

According to research carried out by Longitude, an FT company, for Verizon, 75% of Pioneers, the top 20% of performers, said that they expected improving the wellbeing of their employees to grow in importance.⁸

Wellbeing has, justifiably, leapt up the list of priorities for forward-looking companies. Being seen as an employee-centric employer is essential in attracting and retaining the best talent, whatever industry you're in.

Improving productivity

The events of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that having the right technology is vital to long term sustainability. Companies that had agile infrastructure in place were able to adapt quickly and maintain operations and customer service.

One of the biggest challenges facing organisations as employees return to the office is merging onsite and remote working. Enabling staff to be productive and to move seamlessly between the two will be critical to collaboration and future success.

Investing in people

Fostering a positive culture has taken on new importance following the events of 2020. It's crucial to create spaces that your staff can feel safe in, enjoy working in and be productive in. Doing so is not only vital to keep your organisation running efficiently, it also helps make employees feel more connected, improves loyalty and will attract new staff in the future.



We anticipate never going back to five days a week in the office, that seems very old-fashioned now.”

Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever⁹

27%

Over a quarter of employed adults said that their mental health had gotten worse.

Verizon and Morning Consult¹⁰

81%

More than four-fifths said their productivity had remained the same (58%) or improved (23%).

Verizon and Morning Consult¹¹

Increasing sustainability

Making changes to your workplace is a great opportunity to improve sustainability. Verizon has made a number of bold commitments to reduce its environmental impact, including achieving net zero emissions in our operations by 2035 and planting six million trees – see our [ESG Report](#) for more details.

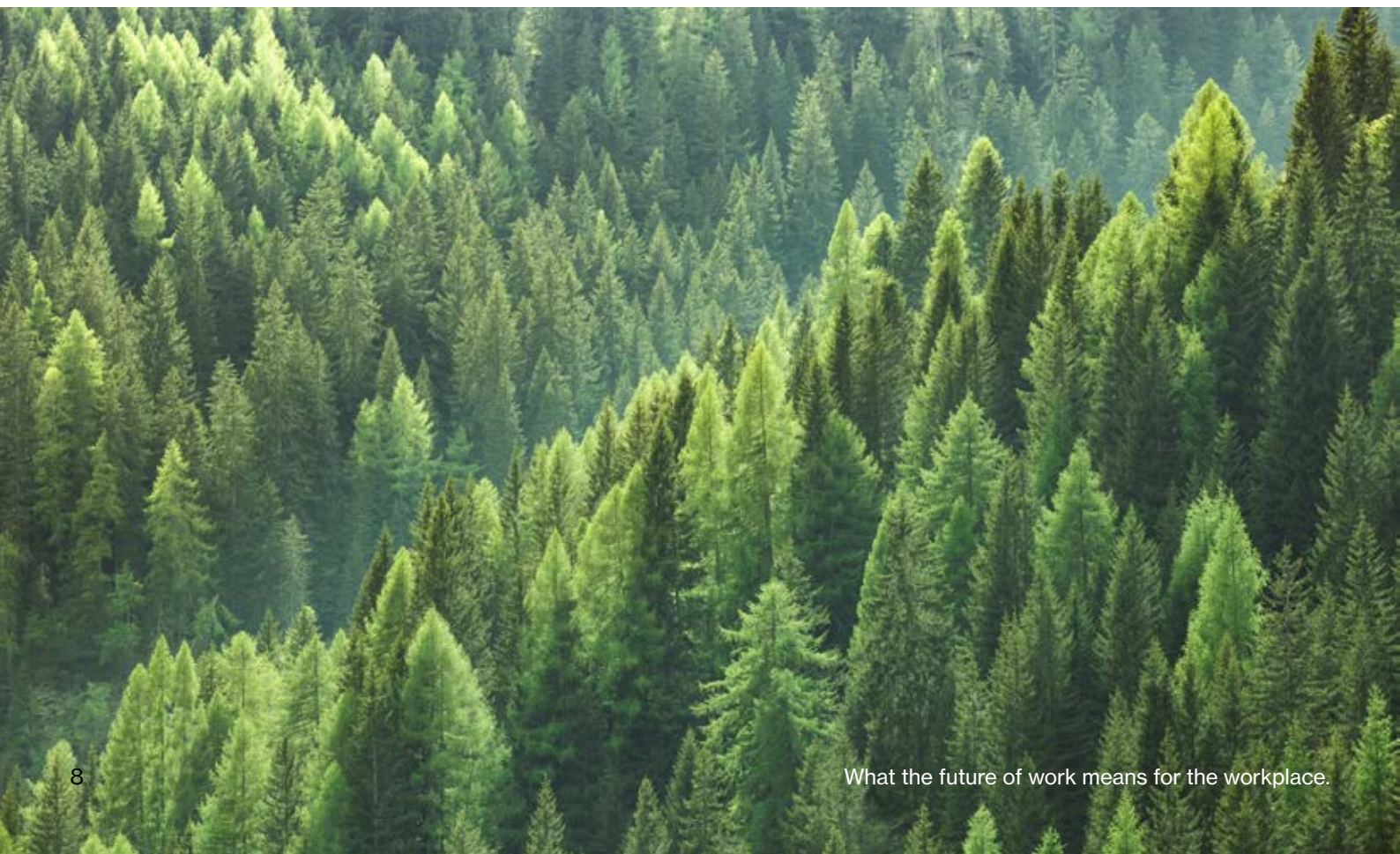
Improving sustainability isn't just the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense. Aside from the fact that today's consumers are beginning to look at companies' environmental credentials, reducing waste and emissions can help reduce costs and increase resilience.

Citizen Verizon

2020 was a year like no other. Verizon navigated obstacles that forced us to alter our ways of working, communicating and operating to keep people connected. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took swift and decisive action to:

- Protect the health and safety of our employees
- Keep our customers and communities connected
- Enhance our network during a time of unprecedented demand
- Communicate to our employees, suppliers and partners worldwide

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must make sure that the recovery lifts all communities to a state of economic, environmental and social advancement that exceeds pre-pandemic levels. Citizen Verizon – our responsible business plan for economic, environmental and social advancement – reinforces our commitment to addressing the most pressing societal issues of our time: The digital divide, climate change and human prosperity.



2. Assess what's possible

Your real-estate is more than just an office, or a shop, or a plant – it's a place for employees to come together: To create, to work, to interact. Every organisation should be asking what about its workplaces are, well, working and what needs to be replaced, adapted or augmented.

Are your workplaces SMART?

Safe

In the past, you probably never worried about how many people were in a meeting room, or how many people crossed paths in corridors and shared spaces. In fact, many workplaces were optimised to fit in as many staff as possible.

In future, managing the flow of employees will be crucial to ensuring that social distancing can be maintained and staff are not put in an uncomfortable or unsafe position. This can be made more manageable with a simple booking system which allows staff to select and book into a workspace prior to visiting. Not only can it help prevent too many staff turning up all at once, when they do turn up they know exactly where to go and what to do. That means less time offline and an increase in productivity.

Logging visitor details isn't new, but is now more important than ever. Make sure that all visits can be logged with as little admin as possible, either online or by facial recognition.

While many employees want to spend more time working from home, they also want the confidence that they can work from the office safely – even if only occasionally. While many companies are adopting “allocated days” policies, this is inflexible and could hamper productivity. Smart booking systems – for car parking spaces, meeting rooms and other resources – could help you keep numbers at a safe level while maintaining flexibility.



Suggestions

Create a safe, secure, and controlled way of communicating and welcoming employees back to the workplace:

- Enable employees to pre-book a workspace and parking space
- Reduce contact with touch-less check-in and passage
- Reduce unnecessary contact with easy-to-use navigation and resource-booking tools
- Detect congestion with video analytics
- Perform virtual fire drill and 3D navigation to prepare for the unexpected
- Provide employees with advice on creating a safe home-working set-up
- Enable employees to book resources in advance, helping them to make visits more productive
- Encourage all employees to focus on their wellbeing with reminders to clean their workstation and stand up for a few minutes



Merged

Despite the long-held concerns of many, the consensus was that for most companies, increased working from home did not have a negative impact on productivity.

The future is hybrid, with a spectrum of working preferences. Companies should strive to get the best from both onsite and home working models to maintain, and even increase, productivity. That means making it easy for staff to collaborate efficiently, wherever they are.

Situations where a meeting room isn't available or people at home can't communicate with those in the office are not just irritating, they could seriously damage productivity, frustrate staff and weaken employee trust in the organisation's ability to be agile and embrace new working models.

Fortunately, technology is helping merge home and communal workplaces by offering new and inclusive ways of conducting meetings, including the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). If you're not quite ready to make that leap, smart rooms and shared whiteboards are simple to implement and deliver many of the same benefits.

60%

Three-fifths of organisations said that during the COVID-19 lockdown, productivity of remote workers was at least as high as those onsite.

Verizon Mobile Security Index 2021¹²

Digital signage and kiosks can help navigate staff around the workplace more quickly, reducing unnecessary congestion. They can also enable people to locate resources – like meeting rooms – more quickly, reducing the time wasted hunting around. These systems are much more effective than traditional room booking systems as they use sensors to detect which rooms are actually in use, not just which have been booked out. The same sensors can also be used to track room occupancy and issue alerts when there's overcrowding.

Visitors and meetings with customers and clients may no longer be held with the same regularity, but they still have a place. Remember that not everyone that arrives on-premises will become immediately familiar with how you do things – especially if they've been at home themselves or regularly work on the road. Ensure that any visitors required for meetings are briefed beforehand on checking into the premises, what to do onsite and the protocols they need to follow.



Suggestions

Help employees seamlessly move between the physical and digital workplace:

- Make occasional office workers feel welcome with a handy navigation app
- Show location of nearest free desk and other key resources
- Create a community chatbot to answer queries
- Provide easy booking of meeting rooms and phone booths
- Drive immersive in-room and remote collaboration with smart meeting rooms and whiteboards
- Implement collaboration solutions that support advanced features, like speaker identification
- Consider dedicated video conferencing terminals to improve the collaboration experience
- Incorporate home workers in informal activities as well as structured meetings



Automated

The good news about having the right technology in place is that not only can it enhance the safety and collaborative capabilities of your workplace, it can also help make your job easier.

Say goodbye to labour-intensive maintenance admin, sensors can help you to schedule and manage smart cleaning for communal areas. Desk just been used? Sensors can immediately log this, stop it from being booked and create an alert that it needs to be cleaned.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can also help improve monitoring without adding to your workload. Facial recognition systems can replace existing security systems, eliminating the need for contact and reducing risks like stolen passes and tailgating – where an unauthorised visitor glides in behind somebody that is supposed to be there.

Encourage communication between employees working at home and onsite, and integrate resource booking with calendar apps and collaboration tools to give all employees overview of availability. This will encourage them to return to site for important meetings that can boost collaboration – they can do so safely by booking space in advance. And consider the wellbeing of all your workers, whether they're at home or onsite, alerts can be sent to remind them to clean down their workstations, to stand up from their desks and to grab a glass of water.



Suggestions

Leverage automation to help increase employee productivity and asset utilisation:

- Track occupancy and flows
- Issue alerts if there's congestion
- Schedule and trigger smart cleaning depending on usage
- Capture data to improve experience and utilisation
- Visualise flows to help plan future improvements
- Send alerts to employees when space is available so desks can be booked in advance
- Integrate resource booking with calendar and collaboration apps to encourage people to communicate – book a meeting room via Slack

Responsive

In the short term, monitoring behaviour and space usage with sensors and video analytics can help to keep your staff safe. In the longer term, it can help improve space utilisation.

81%

Four-fifths of respondents said that increasing the flexibility of facilities and buildings to quickly respond to a variety of emergency conditions was a “very” or “extremely important” driver of investment.”

Johnson Controls¹³

Information from cameras and sensors can help build up a clear picture of how space is used, or not used. Hot spots, points of congestion and “not spots” – areas that are underused – can be identified and remedial action taken. This can help you manage your real-estate more efficiently and plan ahead for your future needs.

Technology can also help you create multi-purpose spaces that can support several different functions, improving flexibility and again helping to increase utilisation. And consider those working from home, you can track their working patterns, develop new policies and adjust your workplace to match. Make spaces available 24/7 so employees can work when it suits them, and with automated features you’ll rest assured that they’re doing so safely.



Suggestions

Make your workplaces more adaptable to changing demands and any future crises:

- Track and report usage to identify under-utilised resources and opportunities for repurposing
- Increase energy efficiency and facilitate greater use of renewable resources
- Enable change of use, including conversion to shared use
- Make workplaces available 24/7 so employees can work onsite when it suits them
- Encourage collaboration with multiple communication methods to reach employees wherever they are



Thrifty

It's likely that, compared to the pre-COVID-19 period, more people will work from home more of the time in the future. That means there'll be less staff on premises at any given time, meaning organisations are likely to see significant changes in the need for heating, lighting and other sources of energy consumption.



Figure 4: Example of a building digital twin from Verizon.

A KPMG survey “Real Estate in the New Reality” found that the vast majority (83%) of real-estate professionals believed COVID-19 would result in a significant increase in tenants’ demand for sustainable and environmentally friendly buildings.¹⁴

Smart sensors can help to reduce waste and identify opportunities for savings. The data they gather can be used to create sophisticated 3D models, or digital twins. These can be used to perform complex what-if analyses, either to test understanding of building performance or to model the impact of proposed changes.



Suggestions

Improve resource utilisation and get more for your investment, now and in the future:

- Save money with easy, granular management of heating, lighting and other utilities
- Automate energy saving rules
- Track footfall and resource usage to identify under-utilised assets
- Create 3D digital twins to test new use cases before making investments to evaluate alternatives and reduce risks
- Integrate conferencing and calling systems – this can improve employee satisfaction and save money
- Replace costly VPNs with a more flexible SD WAN



3. Action, review and refine

The job isn't done when you've decided what you want to achieve and how you go about it. Workplace transformation, like any transformation, requires significant planning and implementation effort. And even when everything is deployed and working smoothly, things don't stand still. Effective transformation is about increasing agility and making it possible to seize new opportunities. This requires a continuous improvement mindset.

Action

Integrating systems is key to the success of intelligent systems. Introducing smart rooms and facial-recognition access control systems isn't just about cameras and sensors. These systems must be integrated with existing business systems – whether it's physical security, HR records or any of dozens of others. You don't want to add lots of incompatible new systems with different interfaces and authentication requirements. Plus, to build the “data lake” – the vast trove of information – required to build a digital twin, you'll need to gather all the resulting data together in an organised and rapid manner.

Implementing unified communication and collaboration solutions requires a wide range of skills to do properly. And doing it well is critical to success. Systems that are unreliable or difficult to use are unlikely to become user favourites – especially when they are displacing an existing solution. And while solutions are increasingly moving to the cloud, you may well have on-premises hardware – including PBXs and room systems – to consider, making the challenge even greater.

People don't like change. They might say that they do, but when it comes to systems that they use every day, they want to see that the new application is significantly better before they commit to it. And new collaboration solutions aren't just competing with the legacy apps that they are replacing. The new system that you are deploying also must compete with the consumer apps that people are using in their personal lives – and often, unsanctioned, for business purposes too. Effective change management is critical to success.

Review and refine

Responding to COVID-19 has required many rapid changes in how businesses operate. Sales of hand sanitiser dispensers, clear dividers and floor stickers rocketed. While many of these changes were essential, they were short-term solutions to immediate problems.

Workplace transformation isn't just about solving the problems that you are facing today, it's about creating more adaptable workplaces that can respond to future changes. The need to check the temperature of people entering the building may soon disappear, but the ability to use the same cameras and infrastructure for access control and modelling may be valuable for years to come.

It's important to choose partners, implement technologies and create plans that enable you to adapt to whatever changes demographics, consumer preferences and the competitive landscape throw at you. Regularly reviewing how your workplaces are performing and refining them as necessary will help you get the most out of your investment. That goes for any employees working from home too, don't forget to assess how these employees are performing and if there are any changes the organisation can make to help them create a safer, more productive workplace.

The review process can be greatly improved by the near-real-time data you can get from smart sensors and video analytics. This can help you build a granular understanding of your real-estate and how it is being used. Where something isn't working quite as you intended, you'll be able to spot it and rectify it more quickly. And you'll have the confidence of knowing that your decisions were based on data, not anecdotal observations or hunches.

64%

Almost two-thirds of employees say they want better technology in the office.

EY survey, May 2021¹⁵

Conclusion

You might be asking, isn't this just a passing fad? It's true that people have been predicting changes to working patterns for many years. But there are several things that make this time different.



As companies rethink what agile teams and ways of working look like, future employee experiences will likely be more empowering through more flexible working arrangements and more immersive with reimaged workspaces.”

Gavin Patterson,
President and Chief
Revenue Officer,
Salesforce¹⁷

Many companies have taken bold moves to encourage flexible working, only to backtrack later. For example, in 2009, IBM boasted that 40% of its 386,000 employees “have no office at all” and that it had reduced office space by more than 58 million square feet, saving nearly \$2 billion. But then in March 2017, it announced that it wanted many of those workers back in physical offices again.

Attitudes have changed

It's possible that tastes may change again, but consider the context. In 2008, right as IBM was making significant changes to how staff worked, 70% of U.S. workers had never once worked from home.¹⁶ Now many, many employees – from the newest to the longest serving, from the most junior to the most senior – have experienced flexible working for an extended period of time, and a large number of those don't want to go back to how things were.

Technology has changed

Another big factor is that the technology has changed. In 2008, Ofcom, the UK regulator covering telecommunications, found that the average broadband speed in the UK was just 3.6 Mbps. Today, we'd complain if that's all our phone's cellular connection delivered when we were traveling 100 mph on a cross-country train. It is now relatively easy – and cheap – for most people to get a sufficiently reliable and fast connection to work from home effectively.

And the applications that businesses use have changed. Core business systems, like ERP, are now often cloud-based, making accessing them from practically anywhere simple. And we now have apps like Slack, Microsoft Teams and other collaboration apps to help us not just communicate, but to interact with our colleagues and customers in a multitude of ways. Finally, the network management and security tools that are available to companies to manage all this dispersed working are unrecognisable compared to their 2008 counterparts.

The momentum for change is huge

Post COVID-19, the momentum behind more flexible working is enormous. Attitudes are very different than they were in 2008. People are much more aware about climate change and many are changing their own behaviour to reduce their environmental impact. More sustainable buildings and fewer people commuting every day could go a long way toward meeting emission-reduction targets. And work-life balance is now a commonly used term.

Companies that choose to swim against the tide may be proven to be right, but most companies will want to avoid taking that risk. Technology can help you to get more value out of your existing spaces, create workplaces that foster productivity and enable all employees, wherever they are, to collaborate more effectively. That can help attract and retain the best talent, increase productivity and inspire innovation and competitive differentiation.

Next steps

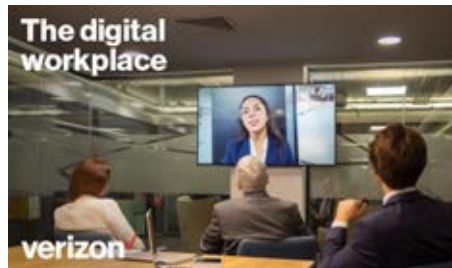
The possibilities for organisations that seize the opportunity to reimagine the workspace are exciting, but there are risks. The number of options available are enormous and selecting what's right for your business can be hard. Then there's the challenge of implementing the technology. And that's not just about connecting things up and configuring services and accounts. Many unified communication and collaboration projects fail because they didn't take the cultural aspect into account – you've probably seen good solutions fail as they failed to achieve buy-in from the users.

Our in-house team of experts can assess your needs and help you identify the solutions that can help you to achieve your desired business outcomes. We can then help you implement the technologies you need to prosper in the future.

To find out more:



Visit our 'Future of Work' hub to find everything you need on adapting your workplaces for hybrid work, from quick explainers to in-depth research reports, you can find the answers [here](#).



[Join our on-demand session](#) as we explore the changing concept of work and hear expert advice on how you can reimagine your workplaces for the digital future.



[Read our paper](#) to explore the ways working patterns have changed, what others are doing to adapt and what that could mean for your business too.



[Talk to us](#). We'll help get your workplaces ready for hybrid work. Wherever you are on your transformation journey, we can support you.

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- 2 Verizon and Morning Consult, [Look Forward](#), March 2021
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- 4 EY, [More than half of employees globally would quit their jobs if not provided post-pandemic flexibility, EY survey finds](#), May 2021
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- 16 Gallup, [Work and the Workforce, 1999-2021](#)
- 17 World Economic Forum, [Back to the office? Here's how tech company Salesforce thinks that might look](#), May 2021

