



Legacies of the Pandemic: Hybrid Working



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The 1990s saw the spread of liberalization and capitalism. The 2000s were the tech decade; the bursting of the “tech bubble”, the proliferation of the internet and emergence of big tech. The 2010s saw the growth of a populist, nationalist narrative: polarizing political figures with populist policies that eschewed international collaboration and cooperation. Will the pandemic define the 2020s? It will certainly be a contender, but as we emerge from the worst of the crisis, we might reflect on how we move forward.

One trend has been to explore hybrid working. Whether this will endure remains to be seen, I contend that it will be a short term trend that will fall out of favor as other factors and forces define the working environment.

The claimed benefits of hybrid working are well documented, for employees: flexible working patterns, reduced cost, reduced time spent commuting, improved productivity, balancing family needs and a leveling up within organizations making senior colleagues more accessible. Many of these benefits also serve employers, who will likely also offset increased technology spend with savings on real estate to accommodate fewer staff.

That said, there are a number of challenges with a hybrid workforce: blurring of the boundaries of work and home, it’s difficult to collaborate effectively or build social capital, trust can be an issue including anxiety of missing out, client empathy and engagement are hard to maintain at distance.

What can you do to get it right? Many colleagues are developing comprehensive communication plans to help address these challenges. Any such plan should consider:

- The nature of any engagement: from individual status check to “all hands” team meetings
- The frequency and rhythm of communicating to your audience, including stakeholders, leaders, clients and colleagues
- The platform or venue for specific engagements, think “Does this meeting need to be in person?”

- When to use synchronous vs asynchronous communication, some colleagues are now recording videos rather than writing emails and using other collaboration tools
- How and when to plan or engineer those social engagements that build trust, enabling your team to create the social capital needed to work successfully together

The nature and needs of employees and their employers will shape the future workplace. We could label this the “Great Hybrid Working Experiment”. Those organizations that get it right are unlikely to revert. They will recognize and realize the benefits of hybrid working by recruiting and retaining capable, committed, talented resources. Those that don’t may react differently; compelling staff to return to their premises on a permanent, ongoing basis.

Interested in what Couranto can offer your business?
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Stephen Phillips is a global leader, influencer and advisor with over 30 years of experience in knowledge and information management, document services, analytics, and vendor management.