

Is Hybrid Working Hurting Women's Careers?

By Zara Chechi

Hybrid working may have become the norm in the post-pandemic era, improving [employee satisfaction](#) in many cases, but there is mounting evidence that suggests hybrid working poses a number of hidden risks for women.

Having time to box off some household chores in-between meetings and cut the daily commute time to a couple of minutes seems, on the surface, ideal for many. But a study carried out by The Female Lead and King's College London shows that hybrid working could slow down the progression of women's careers.

The report, *What's Hiding In Hybrid Work: The Rewards And Risks For Women In Hybrid Work*, explores the hidden risks associated with hybrid work for women and how to mitigate these risks.

According to a survey of 1,300 managers from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), male managers are 48% more likely to work mostly or completely from the office compared to women (38%). With women more likely to choose a hybrid schedule due to childcare and household responsibilities.

A report by Deloitte on working women has shown that 94% of the women surveyed believed that opting for hybrid work would affect their chances of being promoted.



How hybrid working puts a woman's career at risk

The Female Lead identified four areas of risk as women are more likely to become invisible as hybrid work has meant doubling down on household, childcare, and work tasks. Keep reading to find out what these four areas of risk are.

Hidden behind a virtual wall, women and their work accomplishments can often go unnoticed, as women are more likely to work through illness and have this extra work go unnoticed.

Hybrid working shields women from office politics, and while many might embrace this, it can mean that women are kept out of the loop and lack the network to support career growth.

Senior roles tend to have less flexibility, which can slow down career growth; and the lack of learning opportunities when hybrid working means **career progression is slower**.

The increased workload and less social interaction contributes to many women experiencing a **loss of joy and purpose in their work life**.

Despite the risk to a woman's career growth, the report doesn't recommend moving to the office full-time. Instead it recommended a number of solutions for businesses to help mitigate these risks.

We spoke to Jessica Kats, an ecommerce and retail expert at Soxy, who says, *"Adopting ill-conceived hybrid work models has resulted in speed departures, decreased inclusion, and harmed performance. It is crucial for talent leaders to track the way that hybrid work plays out for various groups in their organisations, in real time, to ensure that the relationship between hybrid work, diversity, equity, and inclusion is not negatively impacted."*

How businesses can make hybrid working women stay visible:

The report has not reached a point of recommending best practices for businesses, but it has provided a toolkit for businesses to deal with each area of risk.

One recommendation is to **clearly outline what 'productivity' means** in the context of work tasks. One of the reasons women are doubling down on work is because they're unsure of how their work is being assessed. By providing more clarity, women can aspire to achieve these goals and not overwork themselves.

Businesses are encouraged to **support employees in separating work from home**. This looks like setting 'core hours' of operation, avoiding work requests on platforms that could be sent to a personal device, and senior leaders role modelling 'switching off'.

To overcome the lack of office politics, the report recommends **encouraging informal, unstructured online meetings**. Additionally, buffer times could be added to meetings to provide space for informal sharing and questions.

Another way to encourage interaction is to try and **coordinate office days and provide incentives for employees**, such as free food, paid expenses, and celebrations of cultural events. Providing an inclusive and welcoming environment will help provide hybrid workers with the social interaction they may be missing out on.

The report found that employees involved in *online social groups* with their colleagues had **greater enjoyment from their work**. Some examples of groups that can be set up by businesses include, digital book clubs, fitness groups, and film and TV review groups.

Online onboarding has become the new normal for businesses following COVID. However, this report recommends **switching to in-person onboarding** as it provides better opportunities for new employees to interact with colleagues and understand the culture better.

The lack of flexibility in senior roles can be a barrier to career progression, which is why the report suggests **adding flexibility into all roles** so those who structure a life around hybrid working don't feel like they need to stay in their current role to enjoy the benefits.

With these recommendations, we're confident that your female employees won't need to face career stagnation and will instead continue to reap the benefits of hybrid working while progressing in their careers.