

# HYBRID WORKING

**CREATING THE “NEXT NORMAL” IN WORK PRACTICES,  
SPACES AND CULTURE**

# A FOREWORD BY POLY

ALMOST OVERNIGHT, COVID-19 FORCED MILLIONS OF EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE TO WORK FROM HOME.

**In many cases, the adoption of remote working on a massive scale has demonstrated how employees can operate with the same (if not greater) efficiency and productivity, while achieving a better work-life balance.**

Yet this dramatic change suddenly overruled many business policies on when and where employees work. It also brought challenges around maintaining company culture and supporting home workers.

One thing is clear, however. The enforced changes brought about by the pandemic have opened the eyes of employees and business leaders to new ways of working. There is an opportunity to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, redesign the business and reinvent the way people work.

Drawing on insights from experts on the future of work, workplace design, and cultural change, this report explores how work will evolve as we emerge in the “next normal.”

It sets out why 2020 will be the catalyst to radically accelerate hybrid working, where employees enjoy flexibility and choice, and businesses thrive through motivated, collaborative and productive teams.

## INDEPENDENT CONTRIBUTORS

### **TOM CHEESEWRIGHT**

Applied futurist

### **SARAH SUSANKA**

Architect and best-selling author of the Not So Big® series of books

### **MEGAN REITZ**

Professor of leadership and dialogue, Hult Ashridge Business School

## THE JOURNEY TO THE

# “NEXT NORMAL”

- **REACT** to the crisis
- **MITIGATION** and business continuity
- **SHIFT TO WORK** from home

### RESPOND



### REDESIGN



- **WORKING PRACTICES** and policies
- **PRODUCTIVE** work environments
- **A PEOPLE-FIRST** culture

### REINVENT



- **EMPOWER** employees to work from anywhere
- **CONSISTENT** experiences across workspaces
- **DIGITAL** transformation as a state of mind

# HYBRID WORKING: PRACTICES

CHALLENGE THE STATUS  
QUO AND RETHINK THE  
WAY WE WORK



For much of 2020, “working” hasn’t meant sitting at a desk in a company office for a set period every day.

Triggered by COVID-19, businesses have been presented with a unique opportunity to challenge convention, adopt new technologies, think creatively and innovate.

We can shape a new future by redefining what “work” really means. Work isn’t a place, it’s what you do and this focus on outcome-based working means the hours we work, where we are located and who we meet are only relevant in pursuit of results.

**Hybrid working empowers employees to work anywhere, to be mobile and connected, to collaborate and be productive.**

# 85%

of **BUSINESSES** believe greater location flexibility has led to an increase in productivity.<sup>1</sup>

International Workplace Group

# 30%

of **COMPANIES** say the right cloud collaboration tools can improve company productivity.<sup>2</sup>

McKinsey Research

# 74%

of **CFOs** intend to shift some employees to remote work permanently.<sup>3</sup>

Gartner

<sup>1</sup> Global Research Shows that Flexible Working is now a Deal Breaker in the War for Talent

<https://www.iwgplc.com/mediacentre/pressrelease/flexible-working-is-now-a-deal-breaker-in-the-war-for-talent>

<sup>2</sup> Technology, Media and Communications

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/how-we-help-clients>

<sup>3</sup> Gartner CFO Survey Reveals 74% Intend to Shift Some Employees to Remote Work Permanently

<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-04-03-gartner-cfo-survey-reveals-74-percent-of-organizations-to-shift-some-employees-to-remote-work-permanently2>

# POST-LOCKDOWN WORKING PRACTICES



**BY TOM CHEESEWRIGHT**  
APPLIED FUTURIST

**Even before the pandemic, the nature of work was changing because the nature of business is changing. Low-friction communications technology has compressed our world and lowered the barriers to cooperation.**

Today, a successful business is most likely to look like a network of people and technologies that together create value for the customer, and not like the monolithic organizations of old. These networks span the world, leveraging the power of multiple companies and many freelancers.

Inside these networks, location matters less and less, whether you are working from home, from a coffee shop, or from the other side of the world. What matters is your ability to add value, and your ability to communicate that value to partners.

## **WHAT ROLE WILL TECHNOLOGY PLAY?**

We have known for some time that more flexible working arrangements allow people to deliver more value. But the usual inertia in corporate practice and personal behavior had slowed its adoption. The pandemic and the lockdown response forced many companies to overcome this inertia and allow, or even enforce, the remote component of flexible working. Today, few can claim that technology is a barrier to changing practices. But the lockdown has highlighted the need for investment into the cultural and behavioral components of flexible work.

## **EVERYONE IS A CYBORG**

Today, every worker is bionic. We are augmented by technology that enhances our knowledge, memory, productivity, clarity and reach. Lockdown proved both the power and robustness of these technologies, at least for those companies who had invested in the right hardware and tools. But it also showed that their application requires thought. Half the challenge with any new technology is always building the practices and etiquette around its use. And even though many of the critical technologies employed in lockdown have been around for a decade or more, there is still some way to go in the evolution of the etiquette around them.

## **EMBRACE CHANGE TO EMPOWER THE WORKFORCE**

The future is a flexible working environment that caters to the needs of all employees, giving them the most fulfilling work experience and in return allowing them to maximize the value they return to the organization. Achieving this goal means building a culture of trust, where work is packaged and briefed in a transparent fashion and workers are given the autonomy and responsibility to complete it in the way that best fits their working patterns. It means ensuring that junior members of staff get the critical career development they need, when so much of their learning comes from simply being around their more experienced peers.



**As the dividing line between work and home life becomes ever fainter, organizations must ensure the well-being of their staff and give them the confidence and skills to operate remotely and independently.**

# 3 STEPS TO CREATING HYBRID WORKING PRACTICES

## 01

### RETHINK WORKING PATTERNS

**Hybrid working** brings flexibility on location, times and days that work is carried out.

**Review and revise** work-from-home policies and focus on what employees need to be productive in their role.

## 02

### FOSTER BETTER COLLABORATION

**Encourage inclusive and productive work** as teams become more virtual in nature.

**Create engaging and productive** virtual workspaces, using noise-cancelling and intelligent acoustic solutions in dynamic headsets and video soundbars.

## 03

### OPTIMIZE INVESTMENT

**Banish under-utilized office spaces** that bring little return on real estate costs.

**Prioritize investment** beyond the office walls to create flexible, collaborative, technology-enabled personal workspaces everywhere.

# HYBRID WORKING: SPACES

IT'S TIME FOR A RADICAL  
RETHINK ON HOW WE CAN CREATE  
THE BEST ENVIRONMENTS FOR  
EMPLOYEES TO BE PRODUCTIVE

In the “next normal,” we need to create workspaces that give people choice—places to collaborate, think, create or simply check in with others.

Home working and co-working spaces will rise in prominence, but even with all the benefits they bring, we’ll still see a need for a central company workspace for idea generation, collaboration and to give the workforce its sense of identity.

**Across all these workspaces, the focus will be on creating environments that motivate and empower hybrid workers to be productive and do their best work.**

# 55%

of **REMOTE WORKERS** that didn’t use co-working before stated that they will consider it in the future.<sup>4</sup>

Coworking Insights

# 91%

of **GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS** now support work from home, up from 63% prior to the outbreak.<sup>5</sup>

Nemertes Research

# 70%

of **PEOPLE** will work from home at least some of the time following the COVID-19 outbreak.<sup>6</sup>

Japan Times

<sup>4</sup> **2020 Future of Work Report: What the Future Holds for Co-working and Remote Work**  
<https://coworkinginsights.com/>

<sup>5</sup> **Remote Work Tests Corporate Pandemic Plans**  
<https://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/feature/Remote-work-tests-corporate-pandemic-plans>

<sup>6</sup> **70% in Japan want Telecommuting to Continue after Pandemic, Survey Finds**  
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/22/business/japan-telecommuting-continue/#.Xwbrsy2ZM6U>

# DESIGNING PRODUCTIVE, CONNECTED SPACES



**BY SARAH SUSANKA**  
ARCHITECT AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR  
OF THE NOT SO BIG® SERIES OF BOOKS

**People are at the heart of every company. Even before the pandemic, many organizations began to offer working-from-home benefits in order to secure the best and right talent.**

Now that we're completely outside of that paradigm, we need to re-examine what it means for talent to be productive and connected.

We spend a third of our lives in the spaces that we work from, and we need to rethink how these spaces inspire us to want to be there—no matter where “there” is.

Now is the time to consider how our working spaces are shaped, prioritizing acoustics and our visual representation to others.

The amount of change we've become accustomed to in a short period is unprecedented, but we are more malleable than we think. Now, more than ever, we are in a position to accept even more dramatic changes.

## **HOME OFFICES**

**RETHINK SPACES.** Home offices will be given as much attention as the kitchen and be as ergonomically organized into highly functional places, decorated with objects that inspire. It's not about what you do, but about how you feel received by the space—it's critical to enjoy being there and feel creative within it.

**OVERCOME PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS.** We need multiple physical and mental layers to make it clear to ourselves and others that we are “going to work.” We'll see more offices above garages and in garden outbuildings for a psychological distance from home and a sense of going somewhere different—a new zone.

**PRIORITIZE LIGHTING.** Good lighting welcomes you into a space and encourages you to linger. Poor lighting, whether too dim or too uniformly bright, can make you feel cramped or under the spotlight. Lighting needs to offer pools of warmth, with good task lighting for concentrated work and a warm glow for the space as a whole.

**DON'T UNDERESTIMATE NOISE.** We are bombarded with noise from inside and outside our homes and are sensitive to this. Ensure you are in an acoustically separate space to others and adopt solutions that ensure a quiet environment. If you are constantly distracted, then accomplishing any work becomes extremely challenging.

## **OFFICE SPACES**

**A PREVALENCE OF CO-WORKING.** To attract talent who want to optimize their time and financial resources, organizations will invest in co-working spaces in the outskirts of cities. These workplace hubs allow group collaboration and social connections with colleagues and others, leading to cross-fertilisation of ideas, with resulting innovation.

**CITYSCAPES WILL CHANGE.** Office towers as we know them will likely become a thing of the past. However, the city as a vibrant social structure will remain, with its amenities extending the apartment space; coffee shops become an extension of the living room; restaurants an extension of the kitchen-diner; and walking everywhere becomes the workout space.

**INDIVIDUALITY.** Office layouts with a sea of standard issue desks and lighting have to change. When we walk into a space and everything is the same color, texture, and lighting level, it's deadening. Humans thrive on contrast and variety. We gravitate toward spaces with spatial variety and objects that inspire.



**Humans have incredible capacity for creativity, and businesses need to liberate this largely untapped reservoir. If we embrace hybrid working, then the future is set to be very exciting!**

# 3 WAYS THAT HYBRID WORKSPACES WILL EVOLVE

## 01

### ENTERPRISE HOME SET-UPS

During the pandemic, kitchen tables, ironing boards and even garden furniture were used to create at-home workspaces. But as home working is embraced in the long-term, employees' makeshift set-ups will become more professional home working spaces with the enterprise-grade technology that they need to work effectively.

## 02

### CO-WORKING SPACES

Co-working spaces will become more prevalent, where remote and flexible workers can fulfil the craving of being alongside other people, without the ties to a specific desk or location. These spaces, already projected to increase more than 40% worldwide<sup>7</sup> prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, can deliver better choice and flexibility for employees, and offer a more cost-effective way for businesses to operate.

## 03

### SATELLITE OFFICES

There's an obvious benefit to ridding the P&L of overheads by shutting or downscaling office space. Research from Gartner<sup>8</sup> shows 13% of CFOs have already made cost reductions in real estate. Rather than using large, city center offices, businesses will look to smaller "satellite" offices dispersed across more locations.

<sup>7</sup> Global Coworking Growth Study 2020 <https://www.coworkingresources.org/blog/key-figures-coworking-growth>

<sup>8</sup> Gartner CFO Survey Reveals 74% Intend to Shift Some Employees to Remote Work Permanently <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-04-03-gartner-cfo-surey-reveals-74-percent-of-organizations-to-shift-some-employees-to-remote-work-permanently2>

# HYBRID WORKING: CULTURE

CREATE A CULTURE OF INCLUSION  
AND COLLABORATION FOR THE  
VIRTUAL WORKFORCE

Organizations have policies and working practices in place, but it is culture that binds them—those shared experiences, behaviors and beliefs that bring people together.

Through COVID-19, employees have gotten into the habit of working remotely, and it's one that many don't want to break, so how do organizations ensure that every voice is heard and everyone feels they belong?

**In the new age of hybrid working, organizations need to rally a collaborative state of mind; one that drives productivity and retains the very essence of their brand's identity, while making employees' work lives manageable, engaging and rewarding.**

# 85%

of **COMMUNICATION** is lost through the absence of body language because we don't necessarily pick up on others' non-verbal cues appropriately.<sup>9</sup>

Northern Illinois University

# 70%

of an **EMPLOYEE'S** engagement is owned by a manager, whether they are remote or not. Meaningful conversations still need to continue.<sup>10</sup>

Gallup

# 4.6x

**EMPLOYEES** who feel their voices are heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work.<sup>11</sup>

Salesforce

<sup>9</sup> **Why is Video Conferencing so Exhausting?**

<https://www.engadget.com/online-conferencing-video-chat-fatigue-172357939.html?guccounter=1>

<sup>10</sup> **Lead Your Remote Team Away From Burnout, Not Toward It**

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/312683/lead-remote-team-away-burnout-not-toward.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> **How Engaged Employees are the Path to Success**

<https://www.salesforce.com/uk/blog/2019/08/how-engaged-employees-are-the-path-to-success.html>

# GIVING EMPLOYEES A VOICE



**BY MEGAN REITZ**  
PROFESSOR OF LEADERSHIP AND DIALOGUE,  
HULT ASHRIDGE BUSINESS SCHOOL

**Agile, innovative, ethical and compassionate. These are the capacities that the leaders I have spoken with have on their “culture wishlist” having been catapulted into a level of virtual, flexible working we never imagined and facing a future that is uncertain to say the least. They can help organizations emerge from this crisis—and be ready to face the next one.**

However, such cultural capacities cannot develop unless employees can speak up on ideas, challenges and mistakes. And employees don't speak up if it feels unsafe or if those in positions of power aren't listening.

Culture can be understood as persistent patterns—habits—in our interactions and conversations. These habits, infused by national and organizational norms, dictate who speaks up and who stays silent, who gets heard, who gets ignored, what subjects are spoken about, and which aren't.

Silenced voices have huge consequences and spell the difference between adaptive, innovative, flourishing teams and inflexible, unethical, unsafe ones.

While we don't know what challenges lie ahead, we have learned that there are some habits worth “hardwiring” into our teams' cultures, which help employees to speak up—enabling teams to be agile, innovative, ethical and compassionate.

## **TRUSTING**

Like it or not, the days of the team all sitting together working the same hours are gone. If team members can't trust each other to get on with things and work with positive intent, then an inordinate amount of energy will go into anxious micromanagement.

**DO YOU FEEL TRUSTED BY YOUR COLLEAGUES AND DO YOU TRUST THEM?**

## **INCLUSIVE**

Diverse teams do better. But you must be able to harness and appreciate difference. That means stepping out of your world and seeing things from other perspectives.

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU FELT CHALLENGED BY A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE?**

## **INQUIRING**

You can't generalize. "One-size" management doesn't fit all. Employees respond differently to virtual, flexible working. They have different circumstances, personalities and perspectives. So managers must learn the skills to inquire, be curious and ask questions.

**HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND INQUIRING RATHER THAN ADVOCATING WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES?**

## **PURPOSE DRIVEN**

We are seeing a well-overdue widening of purpose from "profit for shareholders" to stakeholder needs and responsibility in society. This focus on impact not only serves as a compass in times of change, it makes for a more meaningful workplace.

**WHAT IMPACT DO YOU AND YOUR TEAM WANT TO HAVE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND IN SOCIETY—AND WHAT IMPACT ARE YOU HAVING RIGHT NOW?**



**Your habits sow the seeds of your future. To reimagine that future means you must change conversations. Different voices need to be invited and heard. Now.**

# 3 WAYS TO GIVE EMPLOYEES A VOICE

## 01

### EMPOWER LEADERS WITH NEW TECHNIQUES

**As workforces** become more virtual in nature, inclusion and belonging are critical, ensuring every employee feels valued.

**Invest in the skills** and communication and collaboration tools that managers need to monitor, engage and interact with teams in new hybrid environments.

## 02

### HARNESS VIRTUAL WAYS TO HEAR, SEE AND WORK TOGETHER

**Video services** and collaboration tools keep virtual workforces connected, driving productivity for work, but also bringing the virtual workforce together.

**Harness audio and video calls** to enable more social interaction, with colleagues coming together over coffee, lunch, sharing experiences, or simply creating virtual “water cooler” moments.

## 03

### CONNECT PEOPLE, NOT THINGS AND PLACES

**With dispersed workforces**, virtual collaboration brings the opportunity to include everyone in the organization in a way that location-based interactions never could.

**Integrate culture** directly into your digital operations. Make it something your people see and experience on a daily basis, wherever they work.

# THE “NEXT NORMAL”

## THE “NEXT NORMAL” IS HYBRID WORKING

—flexible working across multiple locations, new workflows, immersive workspaces and consistent experiences. It’s about creating productive environments that accommodate the workstyle of every employee.

## BUSINESSES WILL ACCOMMODATE HYBRID WORKING

68%

of **EMPLOYERS** say they will adopt broader, more flexible work-from-home policies in the future.<sup>12</sup>

25-30%

of **EMPLOYEES** are predicted to work at home on a multiple-days-a-week basis by the end of 2021.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> COVID-19 and Deciding Who Continues Working from Home

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/covid19-and-deciding-who-continues-working-from-home.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Work-At-Home After Covid-19 – Our Forecast

<https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>

# WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE NEXT NORMAL



**Home office spaces** built into residences



**Increased flexible work** across multiple locations



**Recruitment** over larger demographic areas



**Work from home; meet in the office,**  
bringing everyone together virtually



**Smaller company footprints** over more  
dispersed locations



**Seamless workflows** between home and office



**Technology** designed for ease of use with  
personal devices



**Only necessary** business travel

## 4 TECHNOLOGY

# TRENDS

**If hybrid working brings choice over when, where and how employees work, then businesses must deliver the optimal technology and communication tools to drive productivity and collaboration.**

It's not good enough to focus technology investment on a central office. Organizations need to expand their technology investment to create consistent, enterprise-grade experiences for every worker, whether they are at home, in a co-working location or in a company office.



## 01

**PROFESSIONAL HOME SET-UPS**

The move to home working showed us the majority of knowledge workers could work at home for prolonged periods, but in the longer term the home office needs to become fit for purpose.

It's not enough to use DIY set-ups or provide a laptop and expect employees to work productively. We need to bring enterprise-grade technology into the home.

High quality set-ups include professional headsets, HD video conferencing cameras, high-end audio and active noise cancelling headsets. Introduce these alongside new guidelines so that employees avoid video fatigue and maintain a fresh perspective.

## 02

**BUILT-IN NATIVE EXPERIENCES**

As employee work patterns change, the focus is on creating spaces that are human-first and centred on empowering ideation.

Video conferencing bars, with built-in native software experiences (e.g. Zoom and Microsoft Teams), will play a starring role in the development of collaboration spaces in offices.

The integration of cloud-based services directly into such hardware will help to ensure that workers have a consistent experience no matter where they sit or when they meet. This integration results in simple and quick user experiences that speed up adoption.

## 03

**LOW-TOUCH AND VOICE CONTROL**

Low-touch and voice-based technologies will limit contact with shared screens and surfaces.

Meeting spaces will not require physical interaction, with user recognition, voice-based services and smart integration capabilities allowing workers to connect wirelessly to meetings via video bars and consoles.

Out-of-the-box video conferencing hardware that integrates with any platform will enable any employee to walk into a meeting space and join a meeting from their personal laptop or smartphone. Content can also be shared by in-office and remote participants in the same way.

## 04

**NEW LEVELS OF IMMERSION**

We are already seeing the rise of AI in video conferencing solutions and this will only increase, bringing richer ways to collaborate and share.

For example, cameras with automatic speaker tracking and split screen functionality ensure participants both in and out of the office are fully immersed in the meeting.

Systems will intelligently monitor what's happening in a meeting and within its wider environment, blocking out distracting sounds to ensure voices are crystal clear. Employees will be placed in the spotlight, with technology in the background, resulting in efficient, productive meetings that simply work.

## HYBRID WORKING

# WORK ISN'T A PLACE, IT'S WHAT YOU DO

POLY SOLUTIONS THAT HELP BUSINESS  
NAVIGATE THE “NEXT NORMAL”



### LOW-TOUCH MEETING ROOMS

- **Video conferencing bars and room systems** will turn large meeting rooms into spaces for ideation, while ensuring social distancing.
- **Cloud meeting applications** that integrate with any native platform e.g. Teams, Zoom, for easy, one-touch meetings.
- **Proximity join** to walk into any meeting space and join a meeting instantly from a personal device.



### REMOTE WORKER

- **Enterprise-grade headsets** for instant communication that blocks out background sound to optimize productivity.
- **Next-generation desk phones** for executive-quality audio for the home office.
- **Video conferencing cameras** with a 74-degree field of view to make calls feel like you're there in person.



### OPEN WORKSPACE

- **Enterprise-grade headsets** with USB connectivity for ease of use with multiple devices.
- **Mobile to desk made easy** with desktop mobile phone stations for simple transitions between the two.
- **Video conferencing cameras** with HD quality that integrate with any native platform like Teams and Zoom.



### FLEXIBLE WORKER

- **Enterprise-grade headsets** that transition with you from home to car to office and everywhere between.
- **Portable webcams** that can connect to any device or screen.
- **Bluetooth speakerphones** for exceptional audio.

## THE JOURNEY TO THE

# “NEXT NORMAL”

Workers are gaining the flexibility and freedom in how, when and where they work. It's about creating environments that foster productivity, collaboration, innovation and safety. Poly end-to-end solutions elevate the experience of Teams, Zoom, or any other meeting service and enable organizations to adapt their infrastructure to changing work styles and technologies.

### RESPOND



### REDESIGN



### REINVENT



### POLY IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Our award-winning headsets and video solutions are purpose-built for human connections, **so you can empower your employees wherever they're working.**



**VIEW POLY SOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW OFFICE**

**CONTACT A POLY PRODUCT EXPERT**

# ABOUT **POLY**

**BORN IN 2019 FROM  
PLANTRONICS AND  
POLYCOM, WE BELIEVE  
PEOPLE ACHIEVE  
INCREDIBLE THINGS  
WHEN THEY WORK  
TOGETHER.**

The famous words spoken from the moon—"One small step..."—were transmitted on one of our headsets, and following that small step, people continue using our innovations today to make giant leaps in every field imaginable.

We combine legendary audio expertise with powerful video and screen sharing capabilities to take the friction out of collaboration. From the train to the open office—and every space in between—we make connections more productive. As the lines between home and the office blur, we make it easier to hear, share and see, wherever, whenever. Our solutions respond to human behavior and get smarter all the time.

Our cloud management tools deliver insightful analytics right now and so much more tomorrow. And because it's essential that it all works seamlessly for the people who manage and use it, our offerings are tightly integrated with the world's most trusted platforms and services.

Headquartered in San Jose and Santa Cruz, California, Poly has more than 6,500 employees working in 75 offices located in 35 different countries. The company has more than 1,500 patents in force worldwide. Poly has \$2 billion in annual revenue, and 90% of Fortune 500 companies rely on Poly products and services.

New opportunities abound, so let's embrace new ways of working and new ways of communicating. Let's talk, challenge, imagine, and advance. Let's take on big challenges and celebrate shared successes. It's time to unlock the full potential of authentic human connection.

**[www.poly.com](https://www.poly.com)**