Hybrid working:
from revolution to evolution

A guide to hybrid working
success in any organisation

Contents

The future of work arrived early

Covid-19 accelerated digital progress by three years in almost every industry,[1] according to research we published with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr).

89% of organisations now have at least some remote or hybrid workers, our more recent study with Context Consulting and Android Enterprise found.

It's no surprise, then, that 42% of candidates prefer applying for roles in companies that have established a clear hybrid working policy.[2]

And the tech they're using matters too. 78% of employees now say that having the latest connectivity and digital tools is a top priority when looking for a new employer[1], while 81% say the right tech helps them stay engaged and happy at work.[2]

People are changing where they work as well. From homes and gardens to cafés and coffee shops – for many of us, these are all now potential offices.

You need tech that makes hybrid working secure and easy, wherever work happens.

All of this creates huge opportunities, from making yourself stand out as a great employer to helping your people serve customers better.

But with the economy being as challenging and unpredictable as it is, there's also a need to balance making new tech investment go further while getting the most from what you already have.

So how do you get hybrid working right?

Why is it so important that you do, sooner rather than later?

And what are the benefits for those who make it happen?

This guide answers all these questions and more.

[1] Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) 2021
[2] Tech and the battle for talent report

Make a positive impact where it matters

61% of employees think hybrid working should be the new standard.[3] And it's changing the way organisations invest in the tech their employees use.

Public sector organisations, for example, have increased spend on collaboration tools by 15% and on IT equipment by 9.9%.[4]

In large private sector firms, the increase is even higher, with 18.5% more spent on collaboration tools and a 13.8% rise for cloud services.[5]

But it's important to support a range of working styles. After all, not everyone's job allows them to work from home. And some might actually prefer the office, away from noisy housemates or having to work at the kitchen table.

Creating a working policy that caters for different needs, supported by the right technology and tools (while still being secure enough to reduce the risk of a data breach) is vital for hybrid working success.

[3] Creating a dynamic workforce report (2021)
[4] Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) 2021
[5] Ibid
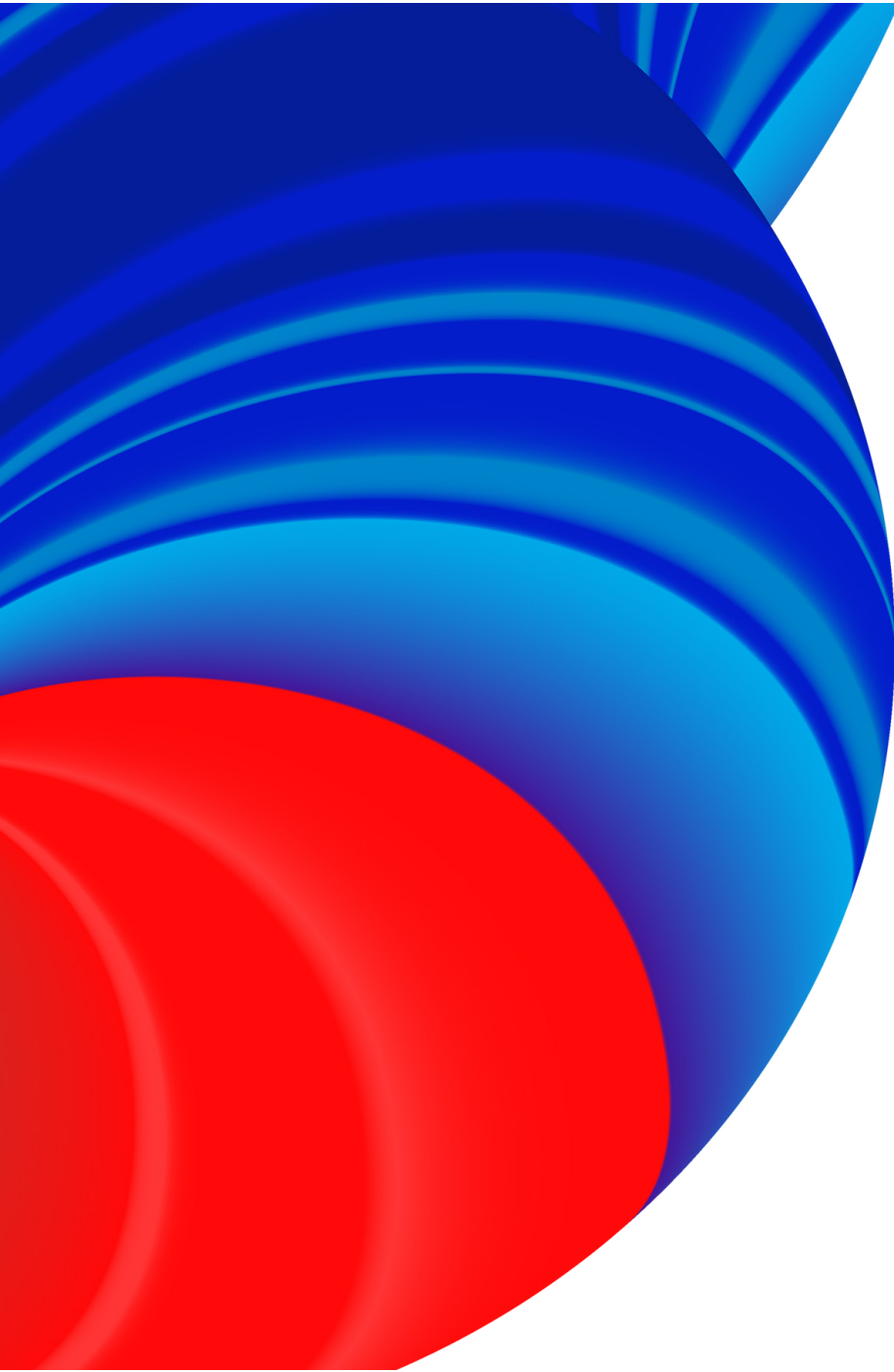
93%

of organisations are investing to support digital ready and hybrid working environments.[6]

Get ready for whatever tomorrow brings

According to the study, The Changing Shape of Work in the UK, only 1 in 10 have a fully working and implemented digital solution.[7]

Now is the time to think strategically about where your organisation is heading in the long term.

Is your current hardware fit and fast enough for connecting to the cloud, or are legacy computer systems and old phone lines slowing things down?

Which smart technologies and business applications should you adopt now, and how will you equip your people with the remote communication tools they need to collaborate and feel supported in their job?

[6] TechTarget 2022 IT Priorities 2021
[7] The Changing Shape of Work in the UK

It's all about making sure you're ready to adapt, quickly and painlessly, while safely protecting your data as more people work remotely.

Get hybrid working right and the rewards are immense – 97% of organisations have seen a tangible benefit after implementing remote working technology, according to our study The Changing Shape of Work in the UK.

And according to our own research, organisations that effectively use digital workplace technology see an average uplift in productivity of 13% as well as improvements to employee turnover and staff absence.

It's about freeing up your workforce so they can be more effective. Engaging better with the community. Reducing waiting times for services and providing more responsive care.

This goes beyond the standard service level agreement to deliver a reliable, more secure customer, citizen or patient experience. This is about making it easier for your organisation to respond to new opportunities and challenges every day.

Three ingredients for successful digital transformation:
Connect. Protect. Empower.

We've talked about making the most of the opportunities that come with hybrid working. So how do you do that in a way that works for you, your employees and your community?

The answer lies in these three pillars: three priorities you need to address to achieve secure, effective hybrid working.

Connect

Keep your staff connected to the people and tools they need at all times, with a fast, reliable network that lets you scale or make changes easily.

Protect

Treat connectivity and security as one, reducing the risk of human error and giving you more control, less admin and – most importantly – a lot less hassle.

Empower

Put the right tools in people's hands wherever they are, empowering them to do their job in a way that works for them and your customers.

Connect

Pave the way for faster, easier change

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Pave the way for faster, easier change

Having superfast internet speed is one thing. But connecting your organisation securely across both mobile and onsite networks creates a joined-up way of working that benefits everyone.

Upgrading connectivity also means upgrading the way you work. With integrated tools, your teams can work together more easily. But only a cloud-based network can give you the flexibility without compromising on security.

Migrating from legacy infrastructure to a modern, cloud-ready network is no easy task, of course. There are many, many moving parts involved. And you need to make sure your network is resilient enough to support the increase in digital tools and services.

Many decision-makers worry they'll disrupt the day-to-day running of their organisation, potentially slowing employee productivity or harming the customer experience.

With decades of network expertise and the collective skills and knowledge of some of the industry's leading cloud partners on our side, we can help you make sure that doesn't happen.

Converting vehicle fleets to electric. Recycling old mobile handsets. Using 5G technology to enable energy-efficient factories. Connectivity is already transforming the way we live our lives through the creation of new electrical devices and services. It's also playing a vital role in the circular economy, helping reduce the drain of the Earth's resources and growing e-waste problem. It's why we're so committed to achieving zero e-waste operations and products by 2025 and net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

"We're 30% more energy-efficient than we were in 2020, thanks to technological enhancements such as free air cooling, and advanced automation that temporarily powers down technology on our network when demand is low. And we're building a greener network, setting an ambitious commitment to be the first UK mobile network to reach net zero by 2025."

Telefonica UK's Carbon Reduction Plan 2022

The NHS frees up clinicians' time for better patient care

Providing value for money is essential for the NHS. Connectivity has helped it work faster while still saving a fifth of its budget.

Rob Harder, CTO for University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust, says:

"It's given us 10 times more bandwidth at 20% less cost. More reliable connectivity for our clinical systems gives us capacity to share more information."

Adopting software that's less complex and more flexible alongside cloud technologies makes your network easier to manage.

In the same way the NHS has demonstrated so successfully with its own network, yours should allow you to make pain-free changes whenever and however you want, so you can scale up and down to meet demand.

With the right connectivity and approach, you'll always be ready to adapt, no matter what the world throws at you in the future.

"The more information our clinicians can share when discussing complex patients, the better their ability to provide the best patient care."[8]

[8] Virgin Media Business, 'How the pandemic accelerated progress in UK health and social care', 2021

Falkirk's schools give rural education a boost with digital learning

To close the growing digital skills gap between what school pupils could do now and in future, Falkirk Council needed an 'anytime, anywhere' online solution.

This led to the Connected Falkirk initiative: a new learning and teaching programme supported by technology.

With more than 60 schools spread across urban and rural locations, inconsistent internet access and outdated network infrastructure had been making remote learning a challenge.

Working closely with the council, the schools used SD-WAN to move expensive point-to-point leased lines over to lower-cost broadband.

This saved £150,000 per year alone on travel costs and £80,000 per year in online staff meetings. Teaching could also now be done using tablets given to every member of staff and every pupil aged 10 to 18.

Network configuration for new school buildings is also much faster – taking only about 30 minutes, rather than four hours – thanks to the online dashboard.

As Stuart Lennie, Connected Falkirk Manager, Falkirk Council, confirms:

"The best part about the solution is the reliability. We can now cope with large-scale deployment of devices, including the second-largest secondary school in Scotland with 2,500 devices used on a daily basis. In the past, that just wasn't possible."

Find out more

Protect

Never lose sleep
over sensitive data

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69%
of organisations are concerned about remote working security risks.[9]

Interpol says criminals are taking advantage of the increased vulnerabilities that can come with using remote systems.[10]

In our pre-pandemic, office-based world, devices, data and apps usually operated inside an organisation. Now they are dispersed all over the internet, operating on different clouds, which raises the risk of somebody penetrating and damaging your network.

So in a hybrid working world, the best way to keep data safe is by taking a zero-trust approach.

One way to make cybersecurity more intuitive and convenient for employers and employees is Secure Access Service Edge (SASE): a cloud-based security model that lets you control all your security services from a single software platform.

Setting up secure connections for users becomes simpler and it's easier to see what's going on across your network, regardless of where people are logging in from.

[9] Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) 2021
[10] Interpol Cyberattack Report 2020

Fulcrum boosts security without slowing employees down

Tony Thiru, founder of care home consultancy Fulcrum, saw first-hand how putting the right security measures in place has helped protect thousands of staff and patients.

Switching to a modern, cloud-based approach helped separate remote users from the network and made sure any breaches were more easily contained.

As Tony explains:

"Our systems have removed the problem. By moving data to the cloud, we've made it more accurate and more secure. We use systems and apps that are completely intuitive. Anyone who has used an iPhone or a tablet will be able to use them immediately."[11]

Tony also adds how critical it is for people to be able to use security apps and anything else connected to their network intuitively, without having to spend hours on the phone to IT. Otherwise they may look for shortcuts.

And in the security world, a shortcut is a huge (and perfectly avoidable) risk. But by making things easy to use, you get the best of both worlds: you keep your sensitive data safe without slowing your workforce down. All made easier to achieve when connectivity and security come as a pair.

[11] Virgin Media Business, "How digital change is leading Britain's professional services firms out of crisis", 2021, page 9.

Empower

Make collaboration effortless

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Make collaboration effortless

Switching your communication technology to the cloud. Putting the right tools in people's hands. It's all part and parcel of empowering everyone to work anytime, anywhere – helping them achieve more in a consistent, personal way.

Here are some of the ways we're helping our own customers make that happen:

Device as a Service (DaaS)

This approach enables safe, digital working across organisations by providing new devices, platforms and apps, as and when your people need them.

Organisations can communicate more easily and support greater productivity by using Teams, while a unified communications approach allows you to integrate tools like phones, video conferencing, instant messaging and email into a single platform.

8x8

This cloud solution provides 'Experience Communications as a Service (XCaaS)' to streamline the way you use your existing cloud-based tools.

The idea here is that employees can all work together to create amazing customer experiences on one secure platform. And you can choose from a hosted option managed by us or an on-premise option where you manage it yourself in-house.

Endpoint Management

Manage tasks on any device, from a single dashboard, to make it simpler and easier to stay secure and compliant. It also gives you a whole range of useful data that can help inform your wider strategy.

Telecom Expenses Management

With this option your telecom costs are fully managed by us. It gives you more control and visibility of what you're using and spending, while making sure you only ever pay for what you need.

O_2 Flex Plan

No more worrying about unexpected data charges. Your data allowance goes up or down as data needs change, so you'll always be on the right tariff.

And for the public sector, our dedicated catalogue and range of contracting options make purchasing even easier.

Northumbrian Water trials new smart tools to help resolve customer issues faster

Northumbrian Water is always looking to shake up the market with new ideas and technologies. It worked with O$_2$'s 5G network to trial four different projects, using smarter tools to solve problems faster and deliver better services to its customers.

Martin Jackson, Head of Strategy and Architecture, Northumbrian Water Group, says:

"5G technology is reinventing connectivity and this innovation is key to how we can differentiate ourselves and improve our services to customers."

Northumbrian Water uses mobile tech and video communications as a way of linking up remotely with field technicians. It helps the team resolve faults faster and more accurately, lowering costs and improving the customer experience.

High-definition point-of-view cameras, working with a tablet device, provide 3D visualisation, augmented reality (AR) mapping and illustrations of the underground network.

At 10 to 20 times faster than 4G, 5G's download speeds give real-time access to Northumbrian Water's large GIS (geographic information system) database.

Easy access to this information while staff are out on jobs also helps from a health and safety perspective, pinpointing the location of gas or electricity assets and removing the need for guesswork when using paper maps.

Edinburgh City Council cuts admin time from weeks to hours

The collaboration tools your people use should make them more productive while helping them to do their job in a healthy, sustainable way.

Edinburgh City Council is clear that innovation and staff empowerment are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the two complement each other.

Stephen Moir, Edinburgh's Executive Director of Resources, says:

"We accelerated some things directly as a result of Covid… digital is now at the heart of the way we work. Previously it took three weeks to clear 400 landlord applications. When we automated that process, we had 80% cleared in three hours. It freed our staff up to focus on the complex ones that needed a conversation.

There's more time for empathy, judgement and face-to-face human interaction. We're the fourth biggest employer in the city. We don't want technology to cut things; we want to do things better."[12]

Empowering your staff starts with your leadership and the culture you've created. But it's the tools you give them that make it possible. Whether you're in the same room or working remotely, cloud-based communication takes collaboration to the next level. People can communicate using any device, wherever they are.

Sharing knowledge, data and ideas helps spread the load of non-traditional ways of working. Moving communication to the cloud then helps you get there without compromising on security.

[12] Virgin Media Business: How local authorities are capitalising on covid-driven digital change November 2021

Five steps for better hybrid working

Five steps for better hybrid working

Step 1:

Look at your existing tech

Is your current infrastructure holding you back from doing the things you want to do? How and where could you improve it? Consider running an audit to better understand what you're working with.

Step 2:

Make small changes that have a big impact

Again, the best place to start is often with your existing tech. How can you get more out of it and make sure your people are using it to its full potential? Understanding this will help you prioritise new investments too.

Step 3:

Choose the right tools for your specific needs

This sounds like an obvious one, but look at the tools your employees are using today and ask: are they fit for purpose in light of hybrid working? If not, why not? And what could you do differently? Then work out how your infrastructure could support those new technologies.

Step 4:

Test your resilience to cyber attacks

Are you as fully protected as you think you are? Across your fixed and mobile networks, all your devices and multiple sites? Put your cybersecurity in the spotlight to highlight any potential gaps or vulnerabilities that need to be fixed.

Step 5:

Put your digital suppliers to the test

Do they really understand the challenges you're facing? Do they get what you're trying to achieve? Are they flexible enough? Share your plans with them to find out if you're truly aligned and, ultimately, whether they're the right partner for you in the first place.

Need support with hybrid working?

Virgin Media Business and O₂ Business have joined forces to create a new type of digital partner. Whether you're a public sector organisation or a private enterprise, our services and outcome-led solutions are designed to connect, protect and empower your people.

Having more than 20 years' experience in connectivity and mobile digital communications and a trusted network of over 1,000 technicians and engineers means you get expertise and innovation when you need them.

Our tech practice and pre-sales teamwork ensure you meet your organisation's connectivity goals. And a dedicated account management team conducts regular performance reviews to support your digital transformation journey and adapt it if things change.

Our combined networks can better connect you.

Talk to our expert team today

Call 0800 953 0180 or <u>visit us here</u>

Virgin media O₂ Business