

Hybrid mode of working: implications for HRM

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ABSTRACT

Organizations may be concerned about preserving culture and community when they extend greater flexibility to the workforce. Without water cooler chats or opportunities to interact with colleagues outside of your job function, it can be difficult to facilitate cross-pollination of ideas. And if company culture and sense of shared purpose diminish, it can lead to lost productivity and higher turnover. Building a culture based on inclusivity, empathy and trust will therefore be one of the most important aspects of hybrid work. As work has expanded beyond the office walls, keeping the culture intact requires a change in the way we think about shared purpose. Colleagues need to collaborate and build connections, whether they're in a room together or virtual, and your collaboration solution needs to facilitate the interactions that would happen if people were together in person. Organizations can have the best of both worlds when they combine the office and virtual worlds. Employees can choose where they want to work without losing personal connections and team building that benefits the company culture. In this paper, authors take a look at various implications for HR of hybrid work culture.

KEYWORDS: Work from home, Hybrid working, COVID-19, HRM

1. INTRODUCTION

Hybrid work is a people-first approach to workforce management that increases productivity and job satisfaction while addressing the core challenges of remote work, such as isolation and lack of community. The hybrid work model gives employees more flexibility and the ability to work from home or anywhere they can be productive. Thanks to hybrid work, the workplace is no longer within the four walls of a corporate office – it is an ecosystem of employees working from home, in coworking spaces and in the office. Team members can migrate between different locations depending on the work they need to do.

The hybrid work model can take different forms depending on the organization and the type of work performed. These are the four most common hybrid work models:

Flexible hybrid work model, Employees choose their location and work hours based on their priorities for the day. For example, if they need to spend time focusing on a project, they can choose to work from home or in a coffee shop. If they want a sense of community, need to meet with their team, attend a training session or attend a town hall, they can choose to go to the office. Cisco uses this model and offers its employees the ability to choose where they work on any given day.

Fixed hybrid working model, The organization sets the days and times when employees can work remotely or come to the office. For example, some teams may go to the office on Mondays and Wednesdays, while others go to the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Or the organization could allow everyone to work from home on predetermined days each week. American Express is an example of an organization that has adopted a solid hybrid work model.

Office-first hybrid work model, Employees are expected to be on-site but can choose several days of the week to work remotely. Google plans to adopt this type of model, where employees work in the office three days a week but have the option to choose two days to work remotely.

Remote-first hybrid work model, Employees work remotely most of the time with occasional visits to co-working spaces or the office for team building, collaboration and training. In this model, the company doesn't have to have office space and instead relies on team members in the same area to meet when it sees fit. Twitter has adopted this remote model and will allow all employees to work from home.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Growing evidence shows that cultural changes during the pandemic positively affected job satisfaction, employee engagement and performance (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020; Hamouche, 2021; Mangla, 2021; Microsoft, 2020; Minbaeva, 2021). Therefore, leaders constantly strive to accommodate employee preferences, work contexts, and key tasks, thereby ensuring proper inclusion and equity (Krammer, 2022; Will, 2021). According to Alexander et al. (2021) and Gratton (2021) many businesses build a cohesive culture and policy with employees' interests in mind and develop sophisticated technologies to ensure proper collaboration, regular communication and coordination. They also establish shared offices to minimize commuting time, accommodate employee preferences, ensure employee health, safety and well-being (Agarwal, 2021; Caligiuri et al., 2020; Deloitte, 2020; Hamouche, 2021; Huang et al., 2021; International Labor Organization, 2020; Kulik, 2021; Kniffin et al., 2021; Newman and Ford, 2021).

To sustain and support the hybrid work model in India, organizations need to assess the changes it will bring, develop and implement the right policies, redesign processes, restructure office space, deploy more digital work tools, digitize the supply chain and create digital ecosystems (Alexander et al., 2021; Elias, 2020; Jooss et al., 2021; Minbaeva, 2021). Efforts will need to be made to digitize employee interaction, collaboration and customer channels (Deloitte, 2020; Lund et al., 2021). At the outset, business leaders globally and in India are trying to identify the key imperatives of hybrid workplaces and reframe their HR strategies with employee interests and organizational goals in mind. This study therefore aims to explore the key perceived benefits and HR implications of hybrid workplaces in organizations in India.

3. METHODOLOGY

To draw meaningful inferences and conclusions, a minimum sample size of 100 is recommended (Alreck and Settle, 2003). Accordingly, 120 HR Managers from Pune were surveyed through a questionnaire containing agreement accorded to 10 statements given below:

1. Employees should be well-equipped to work from home
2. Employees should be able to maintain the same collaboration experience
3. Ease in scaling, monitoring, and managing the experience when employees are working from home or from office
4. Feelings of inclusion and engagement in meetings
5. Security of the collaboration solution
6. Choosing the best hybrid working model
7. People-first approach to managing work
8. Job productivity and job satisfaction
9. Reduction in costs of employees working at the office
10. Implications for sustainability

Likert scales were used for response options. The response options were - 0 - Can't Say, 1 - Somewhat agree, 2 - Completely agree, 3 - Somewhat Disagree, 4 - Completely Disagree.

Responses were received from 120 HR Managers. The questionnaire was tested for reliability, and it returned a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.89 and hence was considered reliable. Following hypotheses were formulated:

H₀: There are no major implications for HR arising out of the hybrid working

H_a: There are major implications for HR arising out of the hybrid working

The hypothesis was tested based on the average agreement/disagreement responses to the ten statements of the questionnaire. The average agreement/disagreement response of the 120 respondents for all the ten statements was taken as the sample mean and it was compared with a hypothesized population mean of 50% agreement/disagreement connoting an event by chance and not due to any statistical significance. A t-test was applied at 95% confidence level and based on the p-value the null hypothesis was tested for rejection or non-rejection.

4. DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

21 respondents were from the Northern region of Pune, 33 were from the Eastern region, 32 were from the Western region, and 34 were from the Southern region. 39 respondents were from the age-group of <30 years, 45 were from the age-group 30-40 years, and 36 were from the age-group of >40 years.

Table 1 gives the ten implications statements items and their agreement ratings by the 120 respondents:

Table 1: Agreement percentages for 10 statements

Statement	Agreement
1. Employees should be well-equipped to work from home	91%
2. Employees should be able to maintain the same collaboration experience	85%
3. Ease in scaling, monitoring, and managing the experience when employees are working from home or from office	86%
4. Feelings of inclusion and engagement in meetings	74%
5. Security of the collaboration solution	74%
6. Choosing the best hybrid working model	77%
7. People-first approach to managing work	89%
8. Job productivity and job satisfaction	74%
9. Reduction in costs of employees working at the office	73%
10. Implications for sustainability	87%

The average agreement for the ten statements was 81% and this was compared with the hypothesized population mean of 50%. Results were as under:

Table 2: Summary statistics

Parameter	Value
Sample Mean ($\bar{x}$)	81%
Hypothesized population mean (μ)	50%
SD of sample	0.936202
n (sample size)	120
t-value= $\text{abs}((\bar{x} - \mu) / (s/\sqrt{n}))$	3.607009
p-value = $\text{tdist}(t,(n-1),1)$	0.00023
Decision	Reject Null

Thus, the null hypothesis there are no major implications for HR arising out of the hybrid working was rejected in favor of the alternate there are no major implications for HR arising out of the hybrid working.

5. CONCLUSION

Hybrid work has emerged as a viable work arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic, with businesses switching to remote work and using virtual collaboration tools to stay productive. While some organizations had hybrid and remote workers before the pandemic, these work arrangements have accelerated overnight as most employees have shifted from face-to-face meetings to virtual collaboration around the kitchen table. Now that organizations have realized the benefits and challenges of remote work, they are adopting hybrid work models to extend more flexibility to employees while maintaining the personal interactions that are central to company community and culture. The transition to hybrid work brings significant benefits to employees, businesses and the environment. It promises to bring increased flexibility, productivity and job satisfaction to employees. For businesses, it improves the bottom line and expands the talent pool. And reducing travel and office space leads to a more sustainable future.

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