



# BIRD framework

guide to a successful hybrid work model

deskbird

# Hybrid Work has proven to be more significant than all the other buzzwords in the corporate world.

A recent survey found that more than half of employees globally consider changing their jobs if their employers don't provide flexibility in the post-pandemic era<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, we understand hybrid work as the number one area of development for an organization's **future-proof workplace set-up**.

However, it will be too late to begin reimagining and redesigning the workplace only after the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. As the need for change is imminent, the time to begin preparing and setting up your organization's **hybrid workplace is now**.

In the vast sea of possibilities, our **BIRD-Framework** is here to guide your way to a successful hybrid work model. The framework lets decision makers plan and structure their hybrid workplace with a hands-on mentality, providing a practical step-by-step guide with examples, tools and useful insights. It can be seen as a handbook for a well thought-through approach to hybrid that can be adapted to the **specific circumstances and context** of each company.

The BIRD-Framework is based on **4 pillars**:

## 4 pillars



**B**  
Build  
a Vision



**I**  
Ignite  
your Culture  
& Leadership



**R**  
Realise it  
with the right  
tools & spaces



**D**  
Deploy  
with  
infrastructure

# 01 Build a hybrid work vision and define your setup

## A. Define your vision for hybrid work that fits you best

At the top of the pyramid stands a hybrid work vision. It is crucial to define a vision as the first step because it serves as the guiding light and defines the path your company takes.

A great hybrid vision statement does not only consist of an aspirational statement, but includes a “strong line in the sand, communicated clearly and succinctly by senior leaders”.<sup>3</sup>

Concretely, the vision statement involves decisions in 3 fields:

## i. Elaborate the purpose and objectives of going hybrid

Start by **defining the purpose** of going hybrid. The reasons to do so can be multifold and range from enhancement of employee experience, growth of employer attractiveness to office cost reduction. No matter which reason(s) apply to your company, it is important to identify and clarify them with all stakeholders as well as **setting the objectives of a hybrid work model**.

Next, **the alignment of overall company and HR vision and goals**, business strategy and operation model with one's hybrid work vision needs to be checked. Concretely, try to answer the question: Does your hybrid vision reflect your company's objectives? For instance, if employee wellbeing is one of your concerns, how can the hybrid work vision foster it? When implementing a new working model for its 140,000 employees, Siemens aimed at "improving the company's performance capabilities and sharpening its profile as a flexible and attractive employer", said Roland Busch, Deputy CEO and Labor Director of Siemens AG.<sup>4</sup>

Also, it is advisable to **involve your employees** at an early stage in the process. In the end, your staff will be most affected by your hybrid work choice. Employee surveys have proven to be a great way to find out about your workforce's expectations, needs, wishes and concerns.



When Spotify introduced their "Work From Anywhere"<sup>5</sup> approach, for example, they mainly focused on improved flexibility and effectiveness. Along the way, they found that the new policy also increases their attractiveness amongst a whole new pool of talent living far from Spotify offices.

Then, think about the role you want your **current office building(s)** to play in the future. Some questions you could ask yourself are:

- ✓ Are you planning to keep/upgrade/downgrade your office space?
- ✓ For which reasons would you like your employees or other stakeholders to come to the office?
- ✓ Is it for doing individual or team work, innovation, research or other?
- ✓ How would you like to foster networking and team building in the office?

Whilst some companies are going to change the role of their office, others will go back to the state of the office like before the pandemic. Dropbox, for instance, has implemented a virtual-first approach and now sees the office as a place for team work only.<sup>6</sup>

The so-called Dropbox Studios are places where peers can gather, but getting individual work done in these buildings is discouraged. Investment banks like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs, on the contrary, require employees to come back into the office just like before the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>



When SAP asked its employees where they would like to work from, **94%** stated they want to continue to work from home at least occasionally.<sup>8</sup> No sooner said than done! SAP recently presented its “Pledge to Flex” which allows SAPers to freely choose their work location.

6. Forbes, 2021.  
7. Forbes, 2021.  
8. SAP, 2021.

## ii. Define and track targets for your hybrid work vision

After working on the purpose and objectives for the hybrid work model, it is critical to **collaboratively define SMART targets**. These should also be **measured regularly** with adequate metrics.

Some examples of smart targets could be:

- Percentage of time spent in office (per employee)
- Percentage of time spent in in-office meetings
- Employee satisfaction rate/happiness rate
- Coverage rate of adequate home office equipment (how many employees have all the equipment they need in their home offices, how many employees out of all who need one have access to a second screen/ergonomic chair etc.)
- Access to appropriate work locations rate (measured through employee survey)
- Teamwork effectiveness (measured through anonymous employee survey)

It is relevant to assess the impact of the new hybrid work on **productivity, employee wellbeing** and other **organization-relevant** factors like innovation in a timely manner. This can be facilitated through the use of tools like Officevibe for employee surveys or deskbird for workplace analytics.

### How deskbird can help you measure the effectiveness of your hybrid workplace

**deskbird is a plug-and-play software solution helping companies to let their hybrid office take off.**

- **Workplace managers can check occupancy rates of their offices and can identify trends at any time to define the optimal office setup**
- **Regular surveys on productivity, workspace satisfaction and corporate culture lead to valuable insights about the workspace**

### iii. Determine a realistic transition approach

Finally, it is realistic to acknowledge that a hybrid work vision cannot be built up and implemented overnight. Depending on your company's circumstances and context, determine **a realistic time frame** to implement the transition. From past experiences, it can be seen that a **"test and learn" mindset** is helpful when approaching the shift to hybrid work. Especially for larger organizations, it might make sense to start with a pilot team or department. This helps the hybrid work responsible(s) to clarify the process and to adopt a cautious approach as every decision has a considerable impact on employees' daily routines.

Next to capital resources, also **human resources** need to be expended to render the switch to hybrid work successful. Define who is responsible for the hybrid work model not only in the implementation, but also during the iteration phases.

In addition, it is key to define **the time frame** for how long your hybrid work model is going to be implemented. Whilst some companies envisage a "from now till forever" change, others foresee the hybrid work model for a certain amount of months or years.

There is no right or wrong here, just listen to your employees' needs, combine it with your circumstances and define what works best for you.

“ A “test and learn” mindset is helpful when approaching the shift to hybrid work. ”



InterNations, for instance, has implemented a hybrid work setup for good, starting after the pandemic. One dedicated project team is continuously working on the switch. It consists of representatives from several departments like HR and IT, but also employee delegates.<sup>9</sup>

## B. Design your hybrid work setup

The next step after establishing the vision is to **craft your hybrid work setup**. This refers to operationalizing the previously defined goals and objectives and defining the details for implementation for your particular case.

In the following, we outline the **3 main aspects** that need to be taken into account when planning a hybrid work setup: **archetypes, role allocation** and **policies**. Since every company is operating with a set of definite circumstances and requirements, the right set up for your organization may look very different from existing models. All the examples we present you with thus serve as inspiration, common practices and role models, but might not always be appropriate for your specific needs.

For instance, if innovation is crucial in your industry, you might require a laboratory to run tests and require staff to work on-site. In fashion, no digital interaction can replace touching a type of fabric yourself. In other cases, your graphics department might need access to printers which they simply do not have at home.

There are so many exemptions and edge cases, but let us introduce you to a guideline of setting up the hybrid workplace for your company.

## i. Identify your types hybrid work archetypes

Overall, we can distinguish between **5 different work location archetypes**. Out of these five archetypes, you need to identify which one (or which ones) are generally appropriate for your organization. After looking at the definitions below, determine which archetypes you would like to see implemented in your organization.

### 01. Full remote

-  **Time in-office:** Never or (if there is an office) a few times a year to meet colleagues in-person
-  **Goal:** flexibility, increased talent pool

### 02. Default remote

or remote-first approach

-  **Time in-office:** special days or occasions
-  **Time remote:** between 4 - 5 days per week

### 03. Relay remote

Rotational system which plans ahead how many and which days every employee works remotely.

-  **Time in-office:** Can vary between 1 to 5 days per week
-  **Goal:** office space & cost reduction

### 04. Occasional remote

Employees work remotely between 1 and 2 days per week. They are free to choose these days, but need to coordinate with their peers.

-  **Time in-office:** 1 or 2 days per week.
-  **Goal:** employee satisfaction (especially where hybrid work is more complicated to implement, e.g. laboratories, R&D, etc.)

### 05. Fully on-site

-  **Time in-office:** Every day in office
-  **Goal:** For workers whose job is not possible remotely, e.g. blue collar, production sites, etc.

A relevant topic of discussion in this realm is **compensation and employee benefits**. It is a good idea to consider adapting benefits to specific work circumstances. For example, funding a public transport ticket for remote workers living abroad might not make sense. Consider different, but **fair options** for all of your employees.

As mentioned, there are many organizations that require different hybrid archetypes for different departments, teams or even individuals. It can absolutely make sense to split your workforce according to needs, which leads us to the next step in the process.



The job search engine Indeed, for instance, has outlined three categories of work: completely remote, hybrid work from home/work from office and full-time in office. Each job role within the business will be informed which category they will fall into after July 2021.

Companies including production units like the automotive industry also have to adapt. VW has recently announced that whilst they still need blue collar workers to be on-site, they will work on a more flexible shift schedule.<sup>10</sup>

## ii. Allocate roles to hybrid work archetypes

After having determined the possible archetypes that would work for your organization, you must decide which archetype you make **available for which roles**. In order to do so, you should examine each position and assess the following:

- ✓ Eligibility:  
Can this role be done remotely?
- ✓ Team:  
If all or part of this role is done remotely, how does it impact teamwork?
- ✓ Trackability:  
If all or part of this role is done remotely, how trackable is the performance? How can I set KPIs for less straight-forward roles, e.g. in HR?
- ✓ Goal:  
What is the goal of making this role fully or partly remote? Possible answers could be increased flexibility, more potential to attract target employees, less office costs etc.
- ✓ Employee Status:  
In the end, it all comes down to the individual. Therefore, ask yourself if the person currently in this role is up for the type of model. This can depend on their time in company/role, proficiency, maturity level, personal preferences or other factors.

It might be helpful to sum all the information gathered and cluster roles with the same scores. Then, you can match them with the appropriate hybrid work archetype.



**Note that not only production industries may require implementing more than one hybrid archetype. Also banks like ING or corporations like BP have implemented different nuances of hybrid work for their employees.**

### iii. Ensure legal compliance

Depending on the country you are operating in, make sure that the hybrid work model you are offering is compliant with legal regulations. For example, check thoroughly if allowing your employees to work from abroad is possible. If so, there might be a maximum number of days your employees can spend working in other countries. In case you are based in the EU, there are also different regulations applying to EU and non-EU countries. Since this is a complex topic, professional legal advice and country-specific knowledge is needed to answer these questions.



Google currently has more than 70 offices in 50 countries. Naturally, the legal situation is complex. As of 2021, however, its employees are allowed to work from anywhere in the world up to four weeks per year.<sup>11</sup>

# C. Communicate your commitment and guidelines to hybrid work across the organization

Finally, the last step of defining and spreading a vision is its **open and transparent communication**. Since the work set up has an imminent impact on your employees' daily routines, but also their life decisions, make sure you communicate about it from your early thoughts, progress to implementation including a timeline. Be clear, leave no room for misinterpretation and prepare frequently asked questions. Also, foresee possible exceptions and edge



When Siemens launched its new work model, it provided a centralized IT platform with all the information needed for leaders and employees.<sup>12</sup>



Automattic, for instance, assigns a mentor to every new employee to answer questions and clarify doubts they might have. This worked so well they founded a mentorship program themselves, Mentor Everywhere.<sup>13</sup>

Even if you decide to pilot hybrid work with a subset of your employees, ensure to communicate to the whole organization beforehand in order to avoid misconception or negative feelings. It is good practice to designate one person per team/department as the go-to hybrid workplace responsible. This person can be addressed if employees have any feedback or questions. They are in direct contact with the hybrid workplace project leader. As we can see, communication is crucial for employee adoption success, which is also directly related to the next pillar of our framework: culture and leadership.

12. Siemens, 2020.

13. Mentor Everywhere, 2021.

# 02 Ignite your culture & leadership for the new reality

After having defined your hybrid work vision and having crafted your setup, now the goal is to ignite your company's culture and leadership. For this, you must empower your managers for the new hybrid world, align your performance management accordingly, and support your work model with agile practices.

## A. Empower your leadership for hybrid management

A recent BCG survey<sup>14</sup> shows that only half of employees perceive that their managers can provide them with the leadership they need. Hence, it is important to empower your leadership for the shift to hybrid work while giving your employees more autonomy. This shift requires significant changes to how leaders manage their teams, and most leaders need to be prepared for this shift. Thus, you need to provide your leadership with adequate training, especially for remote settings.

This can help your leaders to become more inspiring, caring, empathetic and have full trust in their employees. More practical recommendations can be to improve the inner-team communication (of your hybrid work model) with weekly team meetings as well as to encourage two-way feedback between leaders and employees.

## B. Align your performance management to your working model

To fully ignite your culture & leadership, you should also align your performance management to the new reality. The measurement of employee performance has always been important, but will change when working hybrid.

For **each of your hybrid work archetypes and associated roles**, you should define how to measure the performance of teams and individuals. Some questions to consider can be:

- ✓ If all or part of this role is done remotely, how trackable is the performance?
- ✓ How can I set KPIs for less straight-forward roles, e.g. in HR?

Generally, you should shift your performance management from an input-oriented approach, such as working hours or 'face time', **to an output-oriented one**, e.g. achieved project KPIs. It is also good practice to set **qualitative and quantitative OKRs** (e.g. project timeline, subgoals achievement), that are tracked by everyone on a timely basis, with tools like Mirro, Engagedly.



Adobe's employees welcomed continuous performance management instead of performance appraisals with open arms. They estimated that traditional appraisals cost around 80'000 management hours per year. Instead, they introduced regular one-on-one check-ins, supported by frequent feedback—both positive and constructive. Ratings or performance rankings were abolished, instead training for managers on how to give and receive feedback was established. The change resulted in increased employee engagement and a voluntary turnover decrease of 30%.

## C. Support your hybrid working model with agile practices

When shifting to hybrid work, you should also implement agile practices across your organization together with your leadership. They allow teams to deliver **high productivity, even in dispersed settings**. This method of project management has previously been used mostly by IT departments and has been associated with Silicon Valley companies. Now more and more companies are tapping the method for use outside of IT.

Some examples of agile practices that can boost productivity are: daily stand-ups, asynchronous communication, weekly team meetings, and demo days. In addition to boosting your productivity, agile practices such as virtual coffees, lunches, random coffee matches, or CEO meetings also **foster team culture**. (see deskbird, Teamazing for virtual team events).



When Campbell Soup Co. wanted to bring a snack to market that would appeal to children ages 9 to 12, the company turned to “agile development” for help. This is a good example of a company that has rolled out agile practices outside of IT. They used the method to develop and launch Goldfish Epic Crunch, a baked tortilla snack in flavors like nacho and ranch. The company has been using the agile-development method for about a year, finding that it can reduce the time it takes to launch products to nine months, down from two years. Now, it plans to use the method to launch all new products, including meals and beverages.

Campbell has been using the agile method also within its IT department, but Craig Slavtcheff, vice president and head of research and development at Campbell, didn’t consult with colleagues there. He also decided not to hire a consulting firm, finding that consultants had more experience with using agile development for the IT world. Instead, he and a small team found the basic principles of the agile method online and modified them for their use.<sup>15</sup>



Agile practises can reduce the time it takes to launch products to nine months, down from two years.



### **How deskbird can help you to foster team culture workplace?**

deskbird is a plug-and-play software solution helping companies to let their hybrid office take off.

- **Optional: Coffee matching**  
deskbird’s coffee matching tool allows employees that are on-site or remote to be randomly paired for quick coffee chats
- **Optional: CEO matching**  
Plan for quick encounters of your C-level managers with your workforce through the deskbird app.

# 03 Realise your vision & hybrid work setup with the right spaces & tools

The best vision, culture and leadership would not be enough to ensure a successful hybrid workplace.

To allow for your hybrid workplace to take off, **modern and appropriate spaces and tools** need to be implemented. Their goal is the delivery of a **consistent employee experience** across time and space in order to enable them to deliver value, whether remote or from the office, alone or in teams. This requires a thoughtful selection of hardware and software solutions.

The following points summarize what to think of in the realm of workspace design and which range of tools and technologies are useful to make hybrid fruitful.

# A. Ensure you have the right devices & workspaces hardware

## i. Provide your employees with the technology & equipment needed

Wherever your workforce is located, make sure that they are equipped with the **technology and equipment needed** with a special focus on modern **mobile** devices. If feasible and possible with reasonable investment, home offices should not be furnished with inferior devices. A very straightforward method to ensure your equipment is up-to-standards is asking your employees what they need and consequently providing them with the missing tools.

Whilst this investment in additional equipment can initially sound expensive, it does not have to be. If done correctly, it will lead to **more productivity** on one hand. On the other hand, hybrid work models help you to save office costs which can compensate for device investment. In one way or the other, be aware of the underinvestment trap which can have a negative impact on productivity.<sup>16</sup>



BMW adopted a “choose your own device” (CYOD) strategy: Building on the idea that each employee should be able to work as productively as possible, they allow their employees to choose whichever devices they need.

## ii. Find the right seating plan to match your working model

Next to the right tools, it is crucial to have defined the role your office plays in your hybrid work setup earlier on in the process. In the beginning, you will probably be faced with the challenge of reorganizing the current office space. By redesigning the space internally, seating plans can be adapted to fit your hybrid model. Consider how many **fixed** and **flexible desks**, respectively, you will need. In addition, especially if teamwork and network is at the heart of your hybrid setup, plan enough room for **open spaces** to let employees mingle and communicate. In order to do so, it is smart to sketch your office using a floor planner tool (like Floorplanner or Smartdraw). This also allows you to later just connect the floor plan with the deskbird solution and make your desks and rooms bookable.



Berlin-based online retailer Flaconi, for instance, divided their workforce into so-called “settlers” and “travellers”. Whilst settlers come to the office four times a week and have a fixed desk, travellers work remotely up to three times a week. Thus, they are assigned a flexible desk in the Flaconi headquarters in Berlin. Within the office, fixed and flexible desks are mixed and right next to each other to foster networking and to avoid the building of clusters.

### iii. Equip your workspace with adequate features

Next to an improved seating plan and workplace design, your workspace should be equipped with the right **features to enable hybrid work**. Equip the workspace with smart systems to provide a seamless onsite-remote experience. One of the changemakers are camera systems in meeting rooms that make it possible to have colleagues join virtually and see both their colleagues and the screen. There are many providers to help you with this set up. Starleaf, for example, is focused on equipping meeting rooms with intuitive tech.



Google announced the introduction of “campfire” meeting rooms. Instead of having teams meet on a traditional table, they invite them to gather in designated spaces that look like campfire setups and are equipped with the latest tech to allow remote colleagues to join as well.<sup>17</sup> HP also adopted a remote-first approach and hence redesigned their German offices for 2’000 employees to serve as a place for workshops, team meetings, festivities, training & project development.

# C. Set up your company with a complete and carefully designed suite of tools

To enable your employees with a consistent employee experience, you should also introduce a complete set of tools and software solutions.

## i. Use cloud-based collaboration tools

In order to facilitate remote collaboration, you should roll out a set of (most often cloud-based) collaboration tools. Here you should **ask your employees** about their specific needs, and then **choose the tools that work best for each team or project group** while keeping in mind to choose tools company-wide (e.g. only one video meeting tool to be more efficient). Generally, collaboration tools can be clustered into the following types:

- **Knowledge repository apps**, like Confluence or Notion, that are being used to safely store information while sharing it across the organization simultaneously.
- **Video conferencing tools** like Zoom or Google Meet
- **Shared creativity tools** such as Virtual Whiteboards like LucidSpark or MURAL
- **Instant messaging or communication apps** like Slack or Microsoft Teams (Tip: try to avoid the use of these tools for managing projects end-to-end)



GitLab encourages its employees to adopt a “handbook-first” approach for company communication. At GitLab, only 90 days of Slack activity is retained. After that, it’s gone. This is intentional, as it prevents Slack from being misused as a tool for managing projects end-to-end. Leaders who are serious about ensuring that their team can rely on a single source of truth will be ruthless when it comes to instant message retention. In addition, meeting agendas and notes are mandatory for everyone in the company.<sup>18</sup>

## ii. Empower your employees with the best workspace solutions

In addition to collaboration tools, you should also empower your employees with powerful workspace solutions that allow employees to book desks or spaces on office days. Make sure you have rendered the employee experience as seamless as possible, for all your hybrid work archetypes, and that your workspace tool is aligned with your seating plan.

Workspace solutions like deskbird enhance the employee experience while fostering teamwork and networking. In addition, they allow for a better utilization of your office space and provide workspace managers with saving possibilities, advanced analytics and data.

### How deskbird can help you unlock the potential of a hybrid workplace?

deskbird is a plug-and-play software solution helping companies to let their hybrid office take off.

- **Let your employees return to the office safely and have them book desks, rooms and more with an intuitive app**
- **Employees can see when their peers are coming to the office and can book desks nearby or easily coordinate meetings**
- **Employees and teams can easily plan their office and home office days and have them approved by their superiors if required**
- **Notifications and QR codes-based check-ins automatically release booked resources when they are not being used and guarantee easy contact tracing**
- **Get real-time office insights and analytics like office utilization**
- **(Companies can enable employees to book desks and meeting rooms in corporate-grade coworking spaces across Europe - without membership and with consolidated billing)**

### iii. Deploy performance management tools to optimize employee and team performance

Next, you should also carry out performance analytics tools to optimize your employee and team performance while ensuring an adequate and fair measurement of it. From the multitude of possible tools, you should generally deploy **project and workflow management, business intelligence**, and shared dashboards tools to optimize employee and team performance. In addition, while time management optimization tools, e.g. meeting time counters, allow your team members to work more efficiently, **team analytics tools** let teams track and optimize their dynamics and provide insights on team performance.

### iv. Promote socialization routines and continuous learning with the right tools

One of the things we missed most in the pandemic was socializing. Hence, you should actively foster it in a hybrid work environment in order to make sure all employees feel equally included. In order for informal bonds to reinforce culture, you should **promote socialization routines** like coffee matching or Meet the CEOs which are offered by the deskbird solution as well. Next, as more than 30% of managers say it is harder to develop

and train remote workers according to a recent BCG survey<sup>20</sup>, you should carefully consider how to best train your employees in a hybrid environment. Make sure in-office and remote employees have **equal opportunities** to develop and learn with **continuous learning tools, enterprise social networks, or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** like Coursera, edX, Canvas Network.



A good example of a successful shift to hybrid work with an aligned set of performance management tools, is the HR Tech company expertlead<sup>19</sup>: With the advent of the pandemic, the entire company went into a remote setting while maintaining their headquarters as the physical homebase. After having initial concerns of a lowered productivity, they noticed that it actually increased. According to their founder and managing director Arne Hosemann, they succeeded in this because they adapted their work processes, especially in the field of performance management. Here, all employees clearly define their work packages and save them publicly in the cloud, allowing for more frequent tracking of individual and team performance.

19. Zukunft Personal, 2021.  
20. BCG, 2020b.

# 04 Deploy the right infrastructure

To ensure employees can use these technologies safely, securely, and to their full potential, you should have the right infrastructure deployed: modern data platforms and cybersecurity solutions.

## A. Ensure your employees have access to modern data platforms

You should provide all your employees, whether remote or in-office, with access to **high-quality data**, supported by advanced infrastructure and **data management tools** that have the capabilities to generate real-time insights at scale. If you think that your data platforms are not ready for hybrid work, make sure to **involve your IT team** as early as possible in this.

## B. Mitigate your risk with cybersecurity solutions

Having the foundation of a deeply rooted cybersecurity, prevents you from being imposed to the increased risk when employees work remotely. Mitigate that risk with the right cybersecurity solutions, including Secure ID and access management tools (e.g., VPN, conditional access), data protection tools (e.g., backups, data loss prevention), network security tools as well as cyber monitoring and defense tools (e.g., anti-malware, threat management). As there are many providers and consultants, make sure you know your country well and can accommodate for your industry's specifics.

## Conclusion

The benefits of a hybrid workplace are evident: happier employees, a more productive workforce and increased return on investment for your company. However, this can only be guaranteed if the hybrid workplace is planned and realized with a clear vision, culture and leadership in mind, supported by appropriate tools and spaces and accompanied with a strong infrastructure. Our BIRD-Framework is aimed at guiding workplace managers through this process step-by-step. The application of your hybrid work model hereby becomes not only tangible, but shifts within the grasp of your organization.

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