Hexnode Hybrid Work Report 2023

Is it time to let your employees go hybrid?

WHITE PAPER

hexnode

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Introduction

As we are recovering from the ravages of the pandemic, it is time to reconsider what work would look like for the employees and the companies in the future. Today, offices are reopening and employers are starting to call their employees back to the office. On the other hand, employees are not so keen to give up remote work entirely. Hybrid work is a compromise between the two.

It is 2023, and the world has changed. It is safe to say the future has changed too. When the COVID-19 pandemic started wreaking havoc two years back, the world as a whole had to re-think a lot of things – including the way we work. The standard five-day workday with the 9-5 shifts in an office wasn't possible anymore and new solutions became essential. Many new models of work emerged – work from home, remote work, hybrid work, work from anywhere and so on. Each of them has its own pros and cons and companies have been trying to find the right one for themselves. In the hybrid work model, both remote work and work from office are combined in an effective way. It is an attractive way of working for employees and employers, as it has the best of both worlds. However, hybrid work comes with a good set of challenges of its own. Implementing the hybrid model requires dedicated effort from the IT team for protecting corporate data and securing the devices in a dynamic environment.

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About the survey

At Hexnode, we wanted to know how remote and hybrid work impacted working professionals in their everyday life. We conducted a blind survey on employees across the US and examined the benefits, drawbacks, and employee perceptions of remote and hybrid work.

The results from the survey revealed that hybrid work is really something that we cannot dismiss and that neither employees nor businesses would be willing to switch back entirely to the work from office setup.

The survey made it clear that even though hybrid work can be a viable working model, companies have to take more security measures to make it completely effective in the long run.

Employees love the flexibility of hybrid work and companies like the productivity that happy employees bring to their work.

Giving employees what they want is the way to go, and it simply took a pandemic to reveal that.
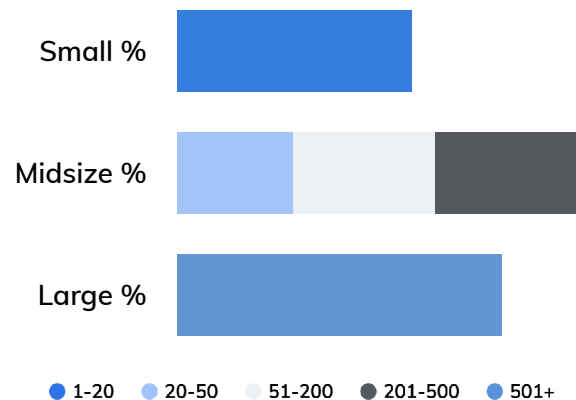
METHODOLOGY

All the research findings mentioned here are based on the blind survey conducted by Hexnode, launched on the year 2022. Our team analysts combined the responses from a diverse set of correspondents in United States and analyzed the results to come up with the inferences mentioned in this whitepaper.
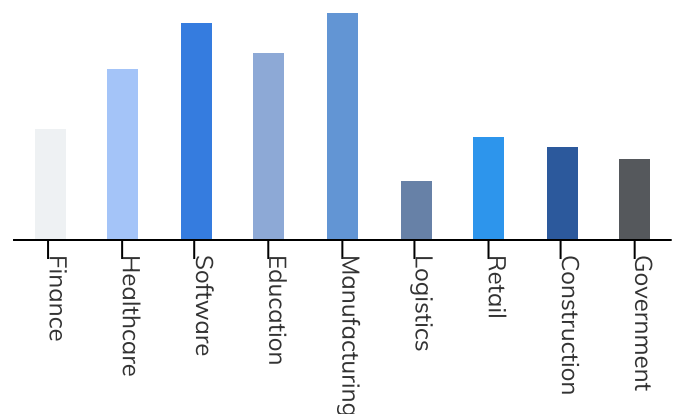
DEMOGRAPHICS

We were serious about representation. We made sure that the survey respondents were well represented across the various age groups, genders, company size and industries.
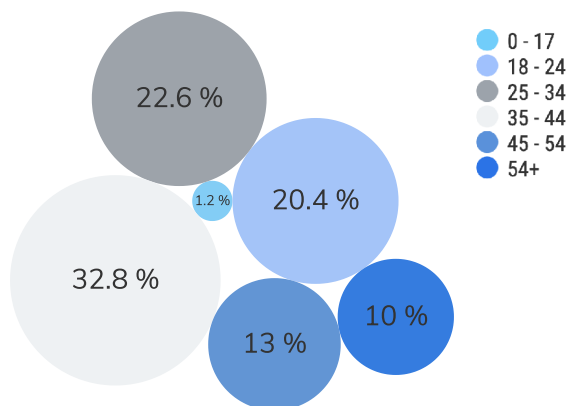
The respondents represented companies of various sizes - be it small (1-20), midsize (21-500), or large (501+) - and included respondents from multiple industries located around the United States including software, education, healthcare, manufacturing, construction, retail, finance, logistics, government, and more. The responses were collected from people within a diverse set of ages (16 to 70 and above) and genders.

Small %
Midsize %
Large %

● 1-20 ● 20-50 ○ 51-200 ● 201-500 ● 501+

Company sizes

Age groups:
22.6 %
1.2 %
20.4 %
32.8 %
13 %
10 %

Legend:
● 0 - 17
● 18 - 24
● 25 - 34
○ 35 - 44
● 45 - 54
● 54+

Age groups

Main industries:
Finance
Healthcare
Software
Education
Manufacturing
Logistics
Retail
Construction
Government

Main industries

KEY FINDINGS

Let's take a look at some of the key findings taken from the 2023 Hexnode Hybrid Work survey.

Employees do not want to work from the office all the time.

56% of respondents say they do not want to work completely from the office all the time. Employees working in a fully wfo strategy misses out on many benefits enjoyed by a remote or hybrid worker.

**A large portion of workers prefer working hybrid rather than going fully remote.**

44% of respondents say they prefer working in a hybrid setup rather than a fully remote one. Hybrid work combines many of the benefits from both work models.

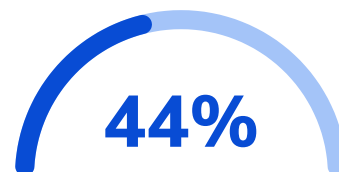**Many companies already have a hybrid office strategy in place.**

42% of respondents say their companies have already realized the benefits of hybrid work and have implemented a hybrid office strategy.

A good deal of companies are planning to make hybrid work permanent.

50% of respondents say their companies are planning to permanently implement hybrid work strategies at the office.
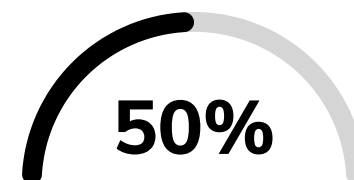
56%
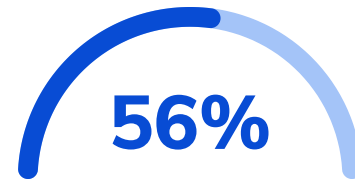
Of workers say are **not a fan of completely working from the office**

44%

Of workers **prefer a hybrid setup** rather than a fully remote one

42%
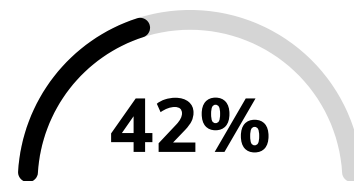
Of workers say their company **already has a hybrid office strategy**

50%

Of workers say their company **has plans to make hybrid work permanent**

2

Hybrid is the new normal

People have changed their attitudes towards how they would like to work. The pandemic has pushed people to consider new ways of working.

This, in turn, has accelerated the adoption of flexible work, giving rise to the concept of the 'hybrid workforce'.

Is this 'hybrid workforce' the new normal for companies around the world? Let's evaluate.

THE HYBRID WORKFORCE IS EXPANDING DRAMATICALLY

It is no new information that flexible work models have gained popularity over recent years. But why? Well, there's no denying it's partially because of the pandemic.

But it's also partially because technology has evolved to a point where businesses can be fully confident in their ability to secure a hybrid workforce.

A significant portion of companies are adopting, or planning to adopt the hybrid work model.

To no great surprise, employees that can work in a hybrid model tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than those working at the office.

In fact, when asked if employees prefer working remotely or in an office, 53% said they prefer working remotely.

53%

of employees say they prefer working remotely

The great resignation played a vital part in shifting the spotlight to hybrid work. As workers began to seek increased flexibility during the times of the pandemic, millions of US employees quit their jobs to reevaluate their priorities in life, including their career aspirations.

For businesses, this meant shifting their work strategies to accommodate the needs of the workforce, which within it, included the hybrid work model.

It was all about offering workers a choice over how and where they would like work, the value of which cannot be stressed enough in a post-pandemic era.
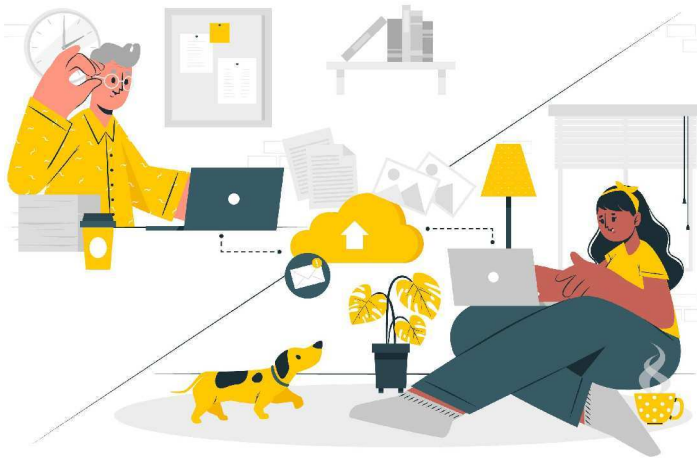
> " Hybrid work – where employees could divide their work schedule between a local office space, and the comfort of their home – became a vital requirement that businesses had to offer to retain their employees.

"In an environment when millions of individuals are considering quitting their jobs, hybrid working is now a prerequisite for businesses that want to retain their top talent."

LET'S TALK BENEFITS – THE VALUE OF HYBRID WORK

Let's walk back in time and take a look at a day at the office for a typical employee, pre-pandemic.

The employee commutes long distances to work, works late at the office, misses out on quality time for themselves, has to schedule personal errands and doctor's appointments outside weekdays, cannot bring their work device home for security reasons.

Yeah. It's a long and quite frankly, a sad list. Now, let's take a peek at the life of a hybrid worker.

When working outside the office, the employee puts on their casual clothing, gets comfortable in their home workspace, collaborates with peers online, takes breaks to attend to personal chores, and ensures they get the quality time they deserve. When at the office, they meet in person with their superiors and discuss relevant tasks, they socialize and create strong relations with their peers, they stay in touch with the office and work culture, and ensure a strong work-life balance.

The following descriptions show stark differences between the life of an office worker and a hybrid worker, and for no small reason. Hybrid workers are equipped with more flexible options to work, thereby improving engagement, leaving people happier, and more productive.

To learn more, let's take a detailed look at some of the benefits hybrid work offers for both individuals and employers.

Work when and how you're most productive

Some employees are at their most productive in the morning. Some work better at night. Some may thrive working from home, while some come alive in their good old fashioned office workspace.

Moving away from the traditional 9 to 5 work hours, a hybrid work model equips employees with the flexibility to work however they want, whenever they feel productive. This flexibility improves employee engagement and significantly boosts their productivity. It also helps increase employee satisfaction and instils greater trust with their employers.

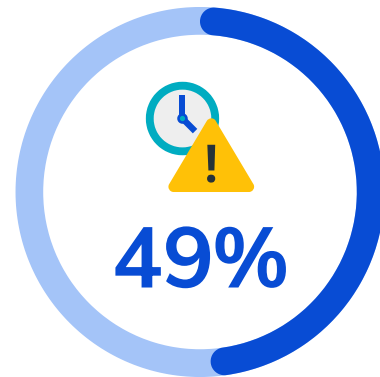## Achieve better work-life balance

Flexibility is a key factor to achieving successful work-life balance. When employees have more control over their work schedules, it becomes easier to find time to attend to their personal chores — whether it's running an errand, reaching on time for a doctor's appointment, or being there with the family.

49%

Of workers say they **worked longer hours** since lockdown began in March 2020

Moreover, a hybrid work model also allows for face-to-face communication and collaboration, with in turn builds stronger work relationships, healthy team-building, and improved collaboration.

Better mental health and wellbeing

Companies must also think about the importance of mental wellness. Working from home eliminates many of the pressures associated with a typical work environment, including the need to travel or stay late at the office to meet deadlines. On the other hand, for people who enjoy working at the office, a work from home setup may lead workers to feel isolated and alone.

" With a hybrid work strategy, companies can adopt a model that offers the best of both worlds. Employees can work both remotely, and at the office, providing greater work-life balance and improving employee mental wellness. "

Save on office expenses

Of course, having all your employees working at the office every day will cost your company significantly, especially in setting up office spaces, providing benefits including food and nourishment, and other miscellaneous expenses.

On the other hand, adopting a hybrid work setup enables companies to plan their workplace strategies such that only the minimum and required number of employees are at the office. Employees can be assigned office hours on a rotation, thereby limiting the need for large office spaces and accommodations. Employees also save up significantly on expenses, including transportation, lodgings and more.

Adopting such hybrid workplace strategies enables both businesses and employees to save significantly on their overall office expenses.

15.6 %

29.2 %

15.0 %

19.8 %

20.4 %

$0
Less than $100
$100 to $500
$501 to $1000
More than $1000
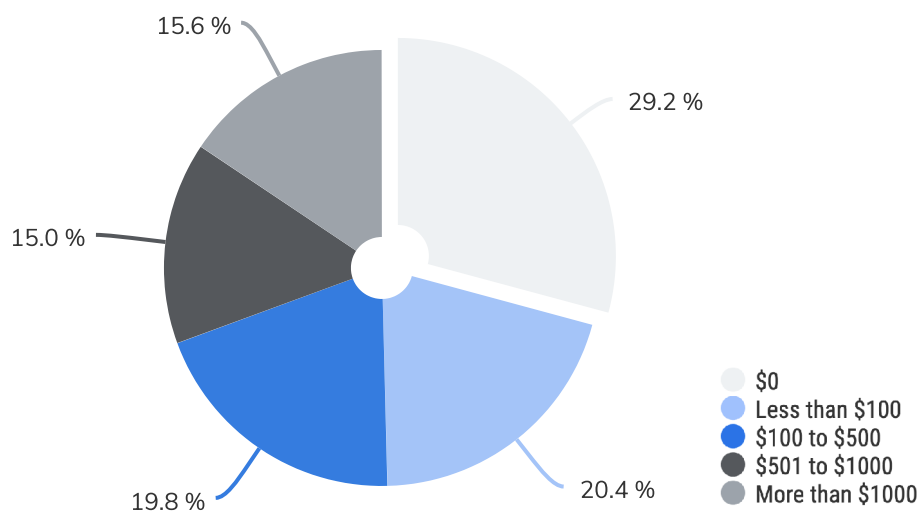
29% *of respondents say they spent* **$0** *on their remote work setup*

20% *of respondents say they spent* **less than $100** *on their remote work setup*

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES? - HOW DOES HYBRID WORK CHANGE EVERYTHING?

Yes, adopting a hybrid work model can offer numerous benefits to an organization. However, they also introduce a host of challenges. Before an organization begins to embrace hybrid work, they must understand these challenges and find ways to effectively address and resolve them. Below is a list of some of the key challenges that most hybrid offices may face.

Data security considerations

It is critical for organizations to ensure that network and endpoint security protocols are in place for the hybrid workforce.

> **" With the adoption of hybrid work, businesses can no longer rely on the static network perimeter to secure their workforce. "**

Data breaches are one of the most concerning security threats that a hybrid workforce may face. With employees being remote, the attack surface is significantly larger, and hackers will no doubt take full advantage of any and all potential vulnerabilities.

Even the most trusted employee may forget to connect to a secure network when in public or at home. In fact, the survey conducted by Hexnode found that more than 43% of remote employees have not been provided a secure office VPN for work.

And then there's the case of employees using personal devices for work. Hexnode's survey found that 39.6% of employees use personal devices for work purposes. Such devices must be containerized and secured with BYOD security policies.

Moreover, IT must enforce encryption, enable access controls, secure online tools and resources, monitor usage and troubleshoot issues, enforce network security configurations, and more, to protect their infrastructure from internal and external attacks.
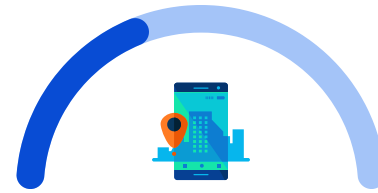
40%
Of remote
employees use
personal devices for
work purposes

44%
Of companies **have
not provided** a
secure **office VPN**
for work

Differences in work culture between in-office and remote employees

By adopting a hybrid work model, there lies a chance that employees who work in the office and those who work remotely may develop differing team spirit and company cultures.

In addition, it may be more difficult for employees who majorly work remote to be recognized and appreciated by their peers and leaders.

Hence, companies should plan strategies with the inclusion of remote workers in mind. Moreover, managers should be trained to use performance monitoring and evaluation tools that objectively assess employees regardless of where they work.

Challenges with workplace collaboration and communication

One of the biggest challenges of working hybrid are the team bonding, collaboration and communication issues that arises when one set of employees are at the office and the other set at home. In many companies, employees still do not have tools to communicate and work together on tasks online. This leads to poor team communication and ultimately a decrease in creativity.

The lack of casual spontaneous conversations at work also leads to a loss of potential work ideas. This in turn, leads to confusion and isolation among remote workers who feel out of the loop.

" Hybrid teams should adopt online communication, collaboration and videoconferencing tools to attempt to bridge the gap between office and remote workers. "

3

How to adopt a hybrid work model

Once companies have evaluated the pros and cons of adopting a hybrid model for their business, the next step is planning.

Company executives must ask themselves the question, 'how do I efficiently adopt a hybrid work model?'.

In the previous chapter, we learnt all about the benefits and challenges of adopting a hybrid work model. Although businesses would have to enforce stronger data security measures and better collaboration tools, they could ultimately save up on costs. At the same time, employees could gain more flexibility on how and where they may work. Now, as a company executive, how do you adopt a hybrid work model? This answer would greatly depend on how they want their business to run. They would have to consider all kinds of variables. This includes their work culture, their customers and market presence, how and where they plan to hire talent, the office spaces at hand, the tools & infrastructure they possess, and more. Ultimately, executives must choose a model that balances both flexibility and productivity with proper organization and work culture.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE HYBRID MODELS

Since many offices have started slowly thinking about switching to hybrid work, the next question that arises is, what kind of model should they adopt? Should your company go for models that offer greater flexibility, or should they focus more on culture and proper organization? The answer depends on how you want your business to run. The following are a list of some of the popular hybrid work models that companies have adopted, and a brief description of when, where and how they would work best.

The at-will model

The at-will model provides employees with the flexibility to work at the office or at home, depending on their convenience. There will be no set limits on the maximum number of days employees can work at home. This, in turn, enables each employee to utilize the most effective work practices for them to optimize performance. However, this hybrid model requires leaders to trust their employees' judgment. While it can boost productivity, the at-will model does present certain drawbacks. This model can be unpredictable. Workers may visit the office together at a time, or even none at all, leading to either an overcrowded, or under-utilized office space.

The days-of-the-week model

This model mandates the number of days employees should be at the office, and which days an employee can work at home. Companies that adopt this model will aim to find a balance between offering employees flexible options, while also ensuring they maintain their traditional office culture.

|	
1 day	9 %
2 days	7.6 %
3 days	11.4 %
4 days	11.4 %
5 days	29.6 %
More	8 %
Other	5.8 %
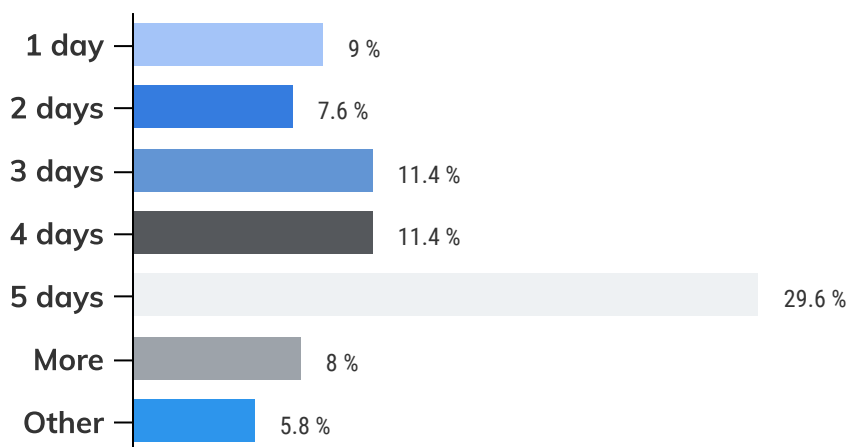
*When going **hybrid**, companies prefer adopting a*

3 to 4 day

approach when requiring employees to come to the office.

At the cost of flexibility, this model offers advantages over its earlier counterpart, by providing consistency and efficiency on when your employees should come together at the office.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
58.2 %	49.4 %	57 %	48.2 %	46.6 %	17.4 %	14.4 %
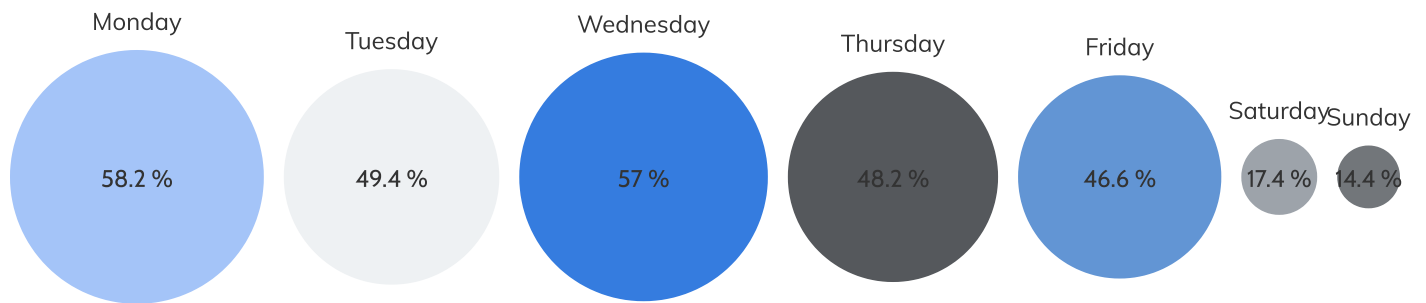
The majority of companies require employees to be at the office on
Mondays (58.2%) *and* **Wednesdays (57%)**.

The number-of-days model

Being quite similar to the days of the week model, the only difference highlighted in this model is the employees' ability to choose the days of a week when they must come to the office. For example, if a company mandates employees to come three-days-a-week to the office, the employee has the flexibility to choose the days when they must work at the office.

Companies that adopt this model aims to offer their employees a bit more flexibility on how they can work, which in turn, increases employee morale and productivity.

The week-by-week model

Under this model, employees can alternate every week between working remotely and in the office. Companies that adopt this model can cut down on costs significantly, by reducing the office space necessary for work operations.

This model also enables companies to hire talent from geographical locations that are further away, as these employees can consolidate their travel and take alternate weeks off from working in the office.

The weeks-per-month model

What do you get when you take the key ideas of the week-by-week model and take it to the next level? That's right, you get the weeks-per-month model. Here, companies mandate employees to come to the office by a set number of weeks per month. Companies can either pre-determine the weeks an employee must be in the office, or they can leave this decision up to the employee. This model is best for companies that operate on a quarterly cycle and require hiring employees from geographical locations that are further away.

## STEPS TO CREATING A PRODUCTIVE HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

The road to adopting a successful hybrid work strategy is not a straight one. There are plenty of curves and bends and taking a wrong turn may cost your business dearly. Which is why companies must first plan a roadmap. Businesses must identify the right infrastructure, processes, and technology to support their hybrid model. The following is a step-by-step guide to help your company plan out a successful hybrid strategy.

Determine what gets done in and out of the office

The first step in planning a hybrid model is to determine what kind of activities will be performed exclusively at the office, and what shall be performed remotely. This may vary depending on the specifics of each company, but primarily involves activities such as weekly meetings, presentations, and more. Executives must determine and list the activities that may be performed remotely and provide appropriate tools to support remote operations.
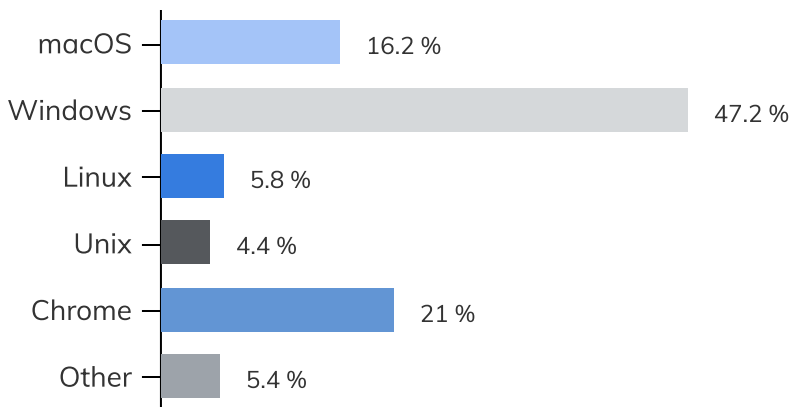
Survey your employees to understand their needs

The next step involves understanding the needs and concerns of your employees. Ask questions about how employees would be more productive and happier at work. This includes questions like, 'what time would you ideally like to work at'? or 'how many days in a week would you like to work from home?', 'what kind of devices do you use for work', and more.
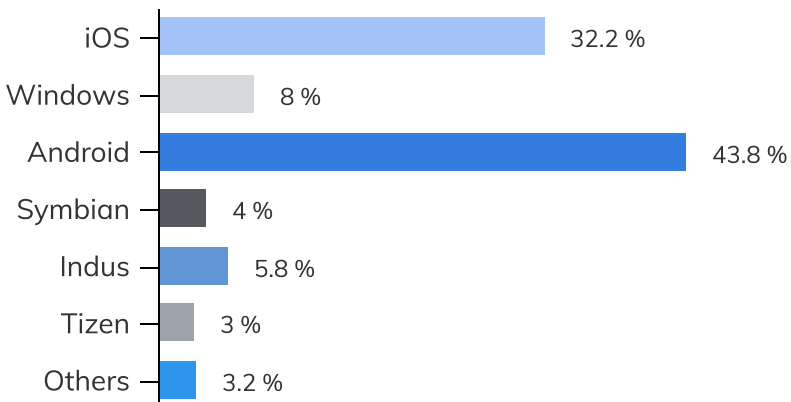
9.6 %

28.4 %

23.8 %

- Desktop
- Laptop
- Smartphone
- Tablet

38.2 %
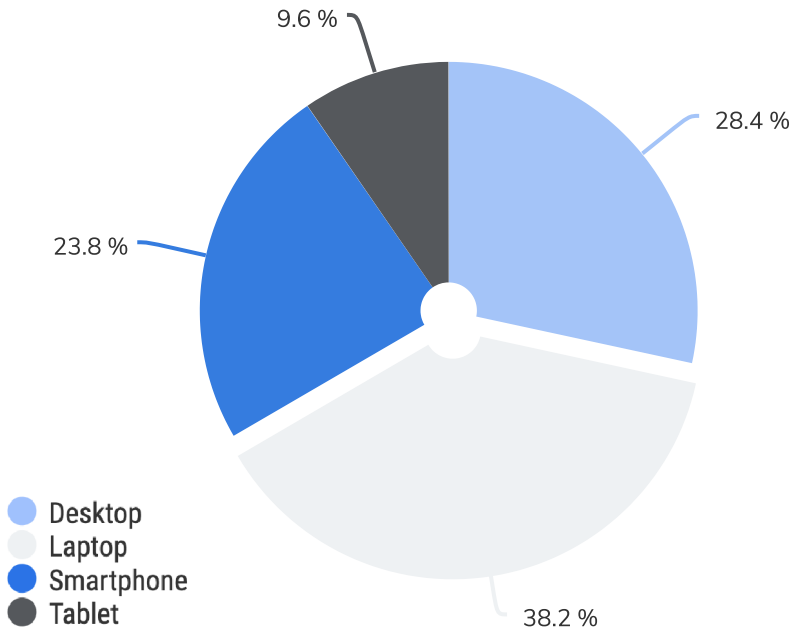
38.2% *of employees use **Laptops** to do the majority of their work*

Once you have analysed your employees' requirements, determine the hybrid model the will best suit both your company's and your employees' requirements.

macOS — 16.2 %
Windows — 47.2 %
Linux — 5.8 %
Unix — 4.4 %
Chrome — 21 %
Other — 5.4 %

47.2% *of employees use **Windows** as their main desktop operating system*

iOS — 32.2 %
Windows — 8 %
Android — 43.8 %
Symbian — 4 %
Indus — 5.8 %
Tizen — 3 %
Others — 3.2 %

43.8% *of employees use **Android** as their main mobile operating system*

Adopt the right infrastructure, systems & software to support hybrid work

When adopting a hybrid work model, companies must invest in technology and tools that can efficiently support hybrid work. This includes communication tools, video-conferencing equipment, collaboration software, and more. Implementing the right infrastructure will provide a solid foundation that can help effectively utilize your hybrid work model. Executives must determine what tools the team requires for success and ensure that both remote and office workers have access to them.
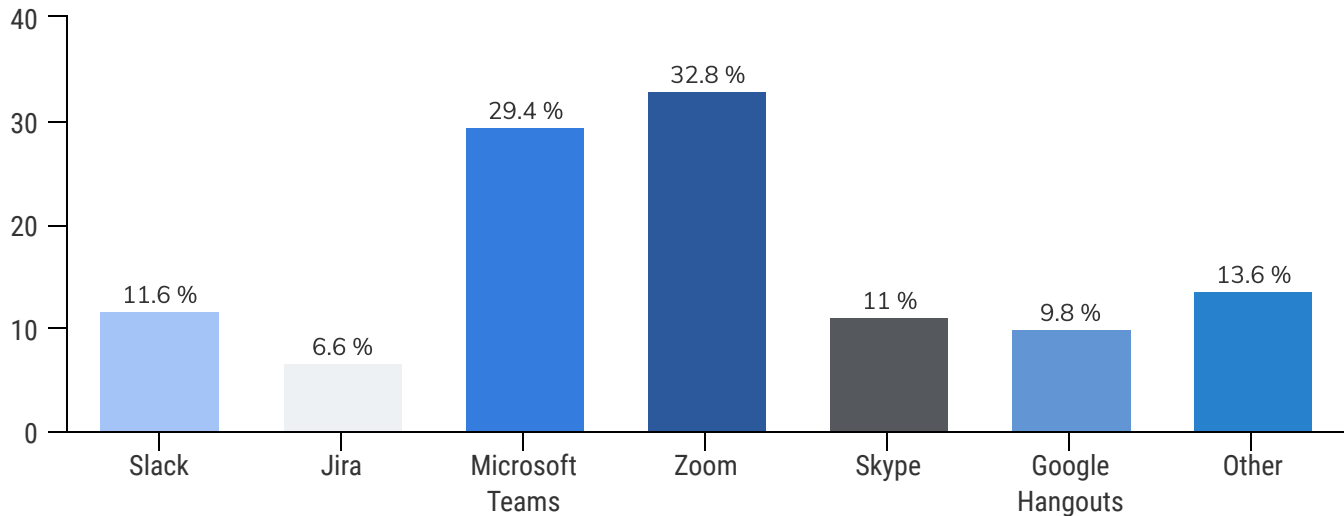
32.8% *of companies use* **Zoom** *as the primary software to collaborate with their teams.*

Ensure your hybrid strategy complies with all the regulatory guidelines

Implementing a hybrid work model introduces a whole new world of legal issues. For example, companies must provide reasonable equipment for employees to work from home. And if employees work from other states or cities, companies must also adhere to the laws and regulations of those areas as well. Company HR and executives must draft clear and precise employee handbooks, policies and documents with such laws taken into account.

And then there are the data privacy considerations. Your remote employees will be generating, storing and transmitting data, and if that data comes under the jurisdiction of any regulatory bodies, companies must ensure they adhere to the data privacy guidelines mentioned by these regulatory policies as well.

4

How Hexnode embraced hybrid work

Hexnode is a SaaS company headquartered in San Fransisco specializing in providing Unified Endpoint Management (UEM) solutions to companies worldwide.

Hexnode's customers range from small and medium sized businesses to Fortune 500 companies

As a company that focuses on making work more secure for both the employees and the organization, Hexnode implemented multiple strategies to arrive at the right hybrid work model for itself. The hit and trial phase is over, and now Hexnode has adopted hybrid work with pride.

THE STORY OF HEXNODE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

In February 2020, COVID-19 was fast becoming one of the biggest threats that the world has faced as a whole since the bubonic plague. The panic was real. At Hexnode, the situation was not so different. However, instead of panicking blindly, we decided to take preventive measures.

To a large extent, Hexnode was able not only to mitigate the effects of the pandemic but also to grow exponentially.

Today, at Hexnode, we are following a hybrid work model. It has to be said that we did not arrive at this solution one fine day. It took trial and error to figure out that hybrid work is what works best for the company. The journey of Hexnode from following the traditional work model to a hybrid one can be divided into roughly three phases.

Phase 1 – Work from home

In March 2020, Hexnode made a quick decision to enforce the work from home policy for all its employees.

This rapid shift from office to home was expected to raise some challenges but for the most part, it went more smoothly than expected.

Here are the things that made work from home easier:
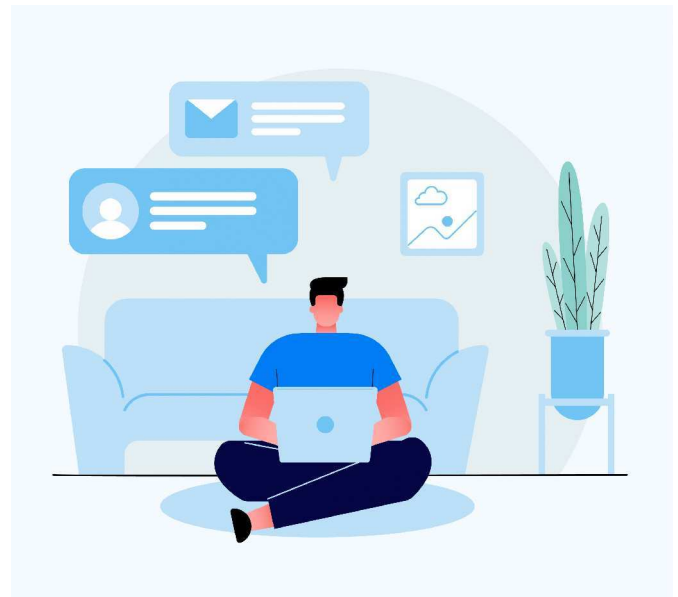
All Hexnode employees had their own work devices.

As a company that prioritizes and nurtures its employees, Hexnode has an Employee Choice Program in place. They are allowed to choose their own devices according to their requirements for the job.

For example, majority of the team is equipped with MacBook Air. Customer facing teams like Customer Success and Sales team members are also provided with high quality Jabra headphones. The teams that require high device specifications such as the designs team are provided with MacBook Pro or Windows machines with required hardware specifications.

These corporate-owned devices helped the employees to transition to working from home without much hassle.

Hexnode used Hexnode to overcome security and management challenges arising from remote work.

All the policies were in place, and the IT team needed to put in just minimal extra effort to keep up the security and remote management standards. We would be discussing the policies in detail in a later section.

Equal focus on productivity and mental health.

Managers were tasked with checking up on their team members regularly – not only regarding the tasks but also their mental and physical well-being. Empathy towards a new working environment and maintaining a positive work culture certainly played a part in higher productivity showed by the employees during the work from home phase.

Phase 2 – Hybrid work I

At Hexnode, all the employees are like a close-knit family. This meant that many were tired of working from home and could not wait to go back to the office. The total lack of socializing was also impacting the mental health of the employees.

On December 2020, everyone received the happy news that they can go back to working from office from January 2021. Not every day, but alternate days of the week. Everyone anticipated for things to go back to normal.
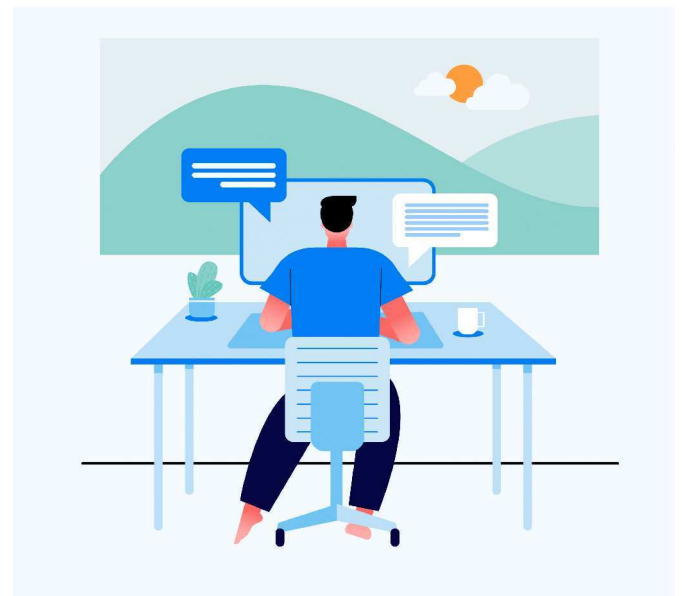
However, it has to be noted that COVID-19 was still lurking as an unbeatable monster. People had started to get vaccinated, but the danger was far from over. The facilities team at Hexnode devised strict social distancing policies and introduced different shifts for employees to avoid crowds.

If anyone showed any symptoms, they had to get tested for COVID-19. They could come back to office only if they tested negative. There were more rules designed with safety of everyone in mind. It worked. Hexnode was able to minimize the COVID positive cases successfully among its employees.

By mid-2021, all Hexnode employees were completely vaccinated. And the company was also rapidly growing to new heights. Was it time to work from the office entirely?

Phase 3 – Hybrid work II

The authorities decided that it was time for the employees to be back at the office entirely. Everyone was back at the office all five days of the week.

However, discussions on improving the working model continued on. After many company-wide meetings, a new hybrid work model was proposed.

We had discussed the various hybrid work models previously. You may remember the

"weeks-per-month" model. Hexnode decided to give the employees the choice of working one week per month from home.

They could choose the week they wanted to work from home by themselves. This model has been working best for the company as the employees are spread across the globe and it has also led to greater employee satisfaction.
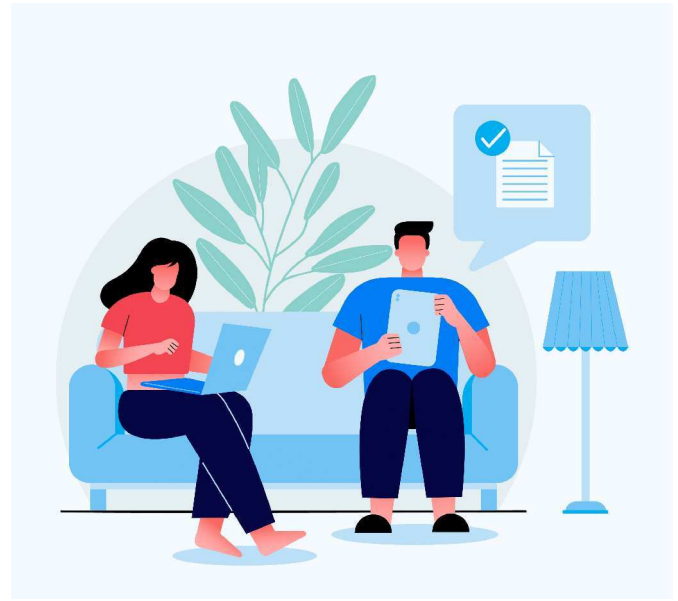
WHAT STEPS DID IT TAKE FOR IMPLEMENTING HYBRID WORK?

" We did not have to create a lot of policies for transitioning to hybrid or even remote work. Since we are using Hexnode UEM for remote management, we already had all the necessary policies in place. "
- Azhar, IT Head at Hexnode

Let's take a look at Hexnode's key remote management features:

Zero-Touch deployment and bulk enrollment methods.

Remote app management for app installation, uninstallation, updation and deletion.

Network management including Wi-Fi networks and VPNs.

Identity and Access management for secure access.

Kiosk management for purpose-specific devices.

Remote view and remote control for troubleshooting.

Device encryption, firewall configurations and web content filtering for higher security.

" The biggest advantage of using Hexnode UEM for remote management was not only its plethora of features, but also the fact that the IT admin could use Hexnode to manage all the devices in the organization in one console regardless of their operating system. It saved the team a lot of time and effort. "

Conclusion

There is no magic solution or work model that would suit all companies alike. However, the flexibility that hybrid work affords the companies and its employees is nothing to scoff at. Employees prefer hybrid work than rigid work-from-office or work-from-home policies.

As we have seen, knowing and understanding the different types of hybrid work models will help companies to choose the best one for themselves. At Hexnode, we experimented with different models until we found the one best suited to us. It may change again in the future depending on the circumstances. This flexibility and willingness to change is something that will encourage your employees to work harder and be happier in life.