

rhino
INTERIORS GROUP

2023 EDITION

Hybrid

Finding the balance



Introduction

Two years ago, ‘Hybrid Working’ didn’t exist.

It’s thanks to the global emergency stop we now know as Covid-19 and the enforced experiment of ‘Home Working’ that the concept of ‘Hybrid Working’ has become commonplace. From the mid-1990’s, as technology improved communication and ease of movement, new working behaviours and patterns were emerging. These were labelled in a variety of ways: *smart working*, *flexi-working*, *new ways of working*, and *agile working*. But regardless of what name was adopted, the principle was the same – providing staff with more options and autonomy to use the time, tools and places available to fulfil their tasks in the most effective way possible.

These early adopters were well prepared for the economic shockwaves of early 2020 with IT hardware and software systems already stress tested for a fully remote organisation. The traditional organisations were not so well prepared; scrambling for laptops and setting up softphones and other essential systems.

Now, more than two years on, many of us have been living a ‘trial and error’ approach to hybrid working, and most organisations are still agonising over the balance. This balancing act of working between home and the office has become a focal point of many difficult discussions; how to harmonise the desire to be remote, and the need to be present.

*A shift in working patterns was overdue,
as technology offered more flexibility than
buildings or corporate structures were able
to accommodate...*

the challenge now is to find the balance.

The function of the office has changed.



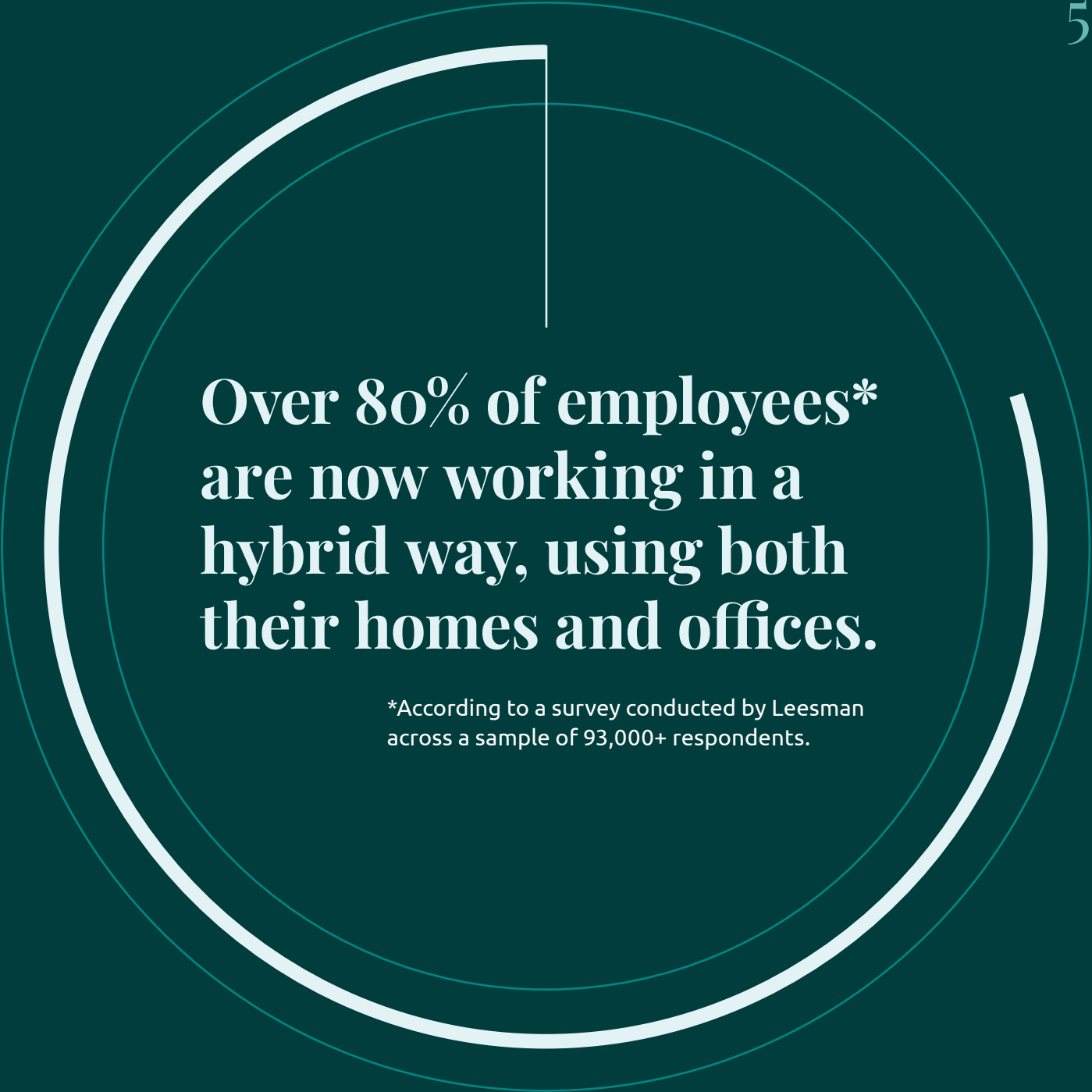
What is needed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, to bolster team morale and keep your culture alive? And what kind of workspace will allow this to happen naturally; a space your employees actually want to work in, not one that they're forced to be in?

This guide will help you begin to understand what successful hybrid working might look like for your business, and how a design & build partner can support your journey.



Contents

Pg. 6	Hybrid working Right for the individual? Right for the organisation?
Pg. 9	The case for and against hybrid working
Pg. 10	Case study The Barcode Warehouse
Pg. 15	Case study Gousto
Pg. 18	Summary



**Over 80% of employees*
are now working in a
hybrid way, using both
their homes and offices.**

*According to a survey conducted by Leesman
across a sample of 93,000+ respondents.

Hybrid Working

Right for the individual?

Right for the organisation?

Office workers are yet to revert to pre-Covid working patterns of 5 days in the office, but why?

Survey [data](#) suggests that employees appreciate the flexibility of working from [home](#) and it can benefit businesses by helping to lower overheads and carbon emissions.

A recent [McKinsey report](#) showed that the pandemic had radically altered the C-suite executives view on attendance – with 80% of them preferring staff to be present in the office between 21%-80% of the time.

[Apple's](#) hybrid work plan launched late last year as part of their commitment to prioritising in-person work. Employees are expected to work a minimum of three days

per week in person, with all employees attending the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and a third day agreed on a by-team basis. Some Apple employees, however, are unhappy with this mandate and are petitioning for more flexible arrangements.

Although some employees are pushing back, there is a strong argument for company or team-wide 'in-person' days to maximise the collaboration and productivity benefits they can bring.

But is that right for the individual?



The individual

For the individual, a hybrid approach provides a level of autonomy to map one's week, while still guaranteeing to your manager that you will show up in the office. Certain types of personality profiles work best in groups together; they draw their energy from other people and do their best work in a team, and so certain departments are more likely to embrace office-based days.

The general consensus is that employees will be able to focus more and therefore be more productive when empowered to set their own working pattern. Another benefit is the additional leisure time, previously spent on the daily commute.

[LinkedIn](#) report that professionals value flexible working, skills development opportunities and work-life balance above all else.

However, there is also the counter-argument – distractions and the home setting with the potential to erode personal productivity, while issues surrounding [well-being and mental health](#) are still an important consideration for employers.

And then there is the steep increase in meetings (and the time this wastes), needed to replace the informal conversations in an office environment; remote working requires more co-ordination.

A significant factor for new team members is learning the company and gathering up imparted knowledge. The best experiences are from face-to-face encounters, and while a hybrid work pattern is better in this instance than fully remote, they could miss meeting people for weeks just because they attend on different days.



The organisation

Many companies occupy the same space as they did before the pandemic; it is not unusual to walk into an office to find all the lights on, the air-conditioning running to support 85% empty desks and 15% attendees. Energy wastage, rental and business rates bills are all painful overheads if only a fraction of the workforce is present. So, if you're lucky enough to have a trigger opportunity such as a lease expiry in the near future, a hybrid working strategy could remap your needs, as well as potentially reducing your costs.

Still in its infancy, hybrid working doesn't yet have any defined rules, and it's up to organisations to define best working practices for all stakeholders. Surprisingly, a recent [study](#) found that a third of executives say that their organisations lack alignment on a high-level vision among the top team.

On the positive side, hybrid has allowed companies to hire talent over a wider area, as a daily commute is not necessarily a daily part of life. This has enabled regional players to upskill... but it has also allowed regional staff to join city center companies too.

As an alternative to completely remote working, the hybrid model is significantly better; we need team interaction and close collaboration to achieve our best, but very few wish for a longer commute! The benefits of home-working flexibility need to be balanced with the necessary cohesion and corporate mindset that every organisation needs to maintain its relevance and competitive advantage.

The case for and against hybrid working

FOR

There are four key benefits to hybrid working, some of which benefit employees, some the employer, whilst others can present advantages to both.

- **1. Greater flexibility**
A flexible attitude to work can contribute to higher levels of personal productivity and increased employee engagement.
- **2. Reduction in commuting**
Previously an accepted part of working life, fewer days commuting to the office can save employees money, as well as reducing their stress levels & carbon footprint.
- **3. Wider talent pool**
Employers have the ability to hire talent from a wider geographical radius.
- **4. Employee happiness and wellbeing**
A higher degree of autonomy can improve employees work/life balance, increasing happiness and therefore staff retention.

AGAINST

The negatives for hybrid working come down to four main areas: Trust, communication, worker discord, and the need for a fit-for-purpose-office space.

- **1. Trust**
A critical aspect of hybrid working success depends on trusting relationships between employee and employer, through strong management and clear policies.
- **2. Technology**
Infrastructure must be in place to enable employees to work seamlessly in different locations. Security measures and employee wellbeing are important considerations.
- **3. Fully on-site workers**
There will always be some roles which are not suitable for hybrid. It's important to be aware that hybrid working can cause discord with these workers.
- **4. Fit for purpose office**
Physical offices must offer a range of spaces to meet the needs of employees, including collaboration, breakout and wellbeing areas, quiet zones, pods and meeting rooms.

Case study

The Barcode Warehouse

The Barcode Warehouse team wanted their new Innovation and Customer Experience Centre to offer flexibility, as well as doubling up as an agile working environment - especially important to entice employees back to the office having worked from home for so long.



As a result of strong growth and expansion, The Barcode Warehouse, a leading specialist provider of barcode technology, wanted to create a new Innovation and Customer Experience Centre. They enlisted the help of Rhino Interiors to transform 25,000 sq ft of a former Vodafone centre in Newark, into an inspiring and innovative space to offer customers an engaging, immersive experience, seeing first-hand the best technology solutions available in the industry.

The space needed to nurture hybrid and collaborative working and inspire a sense of belonging; embracing employees, vendors and partners alike. And, as with the other spaces Rhino had created, The Barcode Warehouse team wanted their new Innovation and Customer Experience Centre to offer flexibility, with exhibition style and innovation spaces to showcase existing and future technology solutions, as well as doubling up as an agile working environment – especially important to entice employees back to the office having worked from home for so long.



The transformation of this tired building has created an environment which embodies the culture and branding of The Barcode Warehouse, providing a fantastic state-of-the-art environment where its employees feel proud to bring in partners and vendors.

With a wide variety of settings, such as open and closed meeting rooms, collaboration areas, pods, open plan desking, informal

meeting areas and quiet booths, as well as a ground floor café area and auditorium, The Barcode Warehouse employees have a multitude of spaces to choose from.

The double-height entrance area gives a sense of space and light, whilst dark materials used in the state-of-the-art demonstration spaces feel dramatic against the backdrop of natural wood and a muted colour palette.



Throughout the building, accents of colour appear in the form of booths and seating, coupled with a wide array of indoor plants, creating a refreshing and welcoming environment. Glass joinery throughout utilises the natural light.



The centre is a very exciting new addition to the Barcode Warehouse estate and they are thrilled with the results – but don't just take our word for it, hear from The Barcode Warehouse team and take a tour of the space in our video.

 [THE BARCODE WAREHOUSE VIDEO](#)

[THE BARCODE WAREHOUSE CASE STUDY](#)



Case study

Gousto

The snowballing successes of Gousto forced them to confront one of their biggest challenges; to create a space in their prestigious London Shepherd's Bush location that would embody the brand and company's DNA, creating an agile working environment and setting a precedent for future location workspace design as they expand in the future.



Gousto's main priority was to create a flexible and welcoming space for staff and visitors. During this project, Gousto were taking steps to become a B Corp™, joining the global community of businesses that are dedicated to building a better world.

In order to achieve B Corp certification, a company must demonstrate high social and environmental performance. We took steps to support a more energy efficient and sustainable workspace, such as low flow taps for better water efficiency, energy efficient lighting and HVAC and sustainable fabrics.





We created multi-use spaces, incorporating open plan and closed meeting areas, creating an agile environment that promoted collaboration and connected employees. Vibrant, bold designs and colours were used to carry Gousto's branding throughout the space, whilst the acoustics were managed carefully.

A long-term partnership was forged between us which has led to further exciting new projects. Gousto subsequently recruited us again soon after to work with them on their newest and largest fulfilment site in Warrington, and another two sites in Spalding and Thurrock.



Summary

Love it or loath it, 'Hybrid Working' is here to stay – at least for some time. While the labour market is still tilted in favour of the worker, **employers cannot dictate that they return to the office**. In fact, in our opinion that would be a very counter intuitive step given the mobility and connectivity that tech provides.

Furthermore, it is essential for employers to recognise the long-term global impact that Covid has had on our lives: close to 1 billion people globally now suffer with a mental health disorder, and the issues with non-covid illnesses which have gone undiagnosed are swelling daily. People increasingly need the sanctuary of their own space, as well as finding it more conducive for focus work. So, balancing the hybrid expectations of employees against business needs in an unpredictable economy is no mean feat!

As every organisation has a unique DNA, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to hybrid working, nor to creating the perfect hybrid workspace. It is shaped and configured – and, indeed, ever-evolving – to reflect the circumstances and human capital of the time. The organisation's workplaces

become campuses where teams can gather for on-boarding, to exchange knowledge, collaborate and utilise facilities, interwoven as another location together with a home facility in their flexible schedules.

Rhino's approach to creating the perfectly crafted environment is evidenced based. Through a series of surveys, interviews and workshops we gather data on what is working, and what is not. We conduct a unique 'People & Place' study, gaining qualitative and quantitative data to help us to thoroughly understand your business and employees – drilling into where the friction is in the operation, and how they score for operational efficiency.

With this base of data and anecdotal evidence we can then test the buildings available to construct models and options for discussion. Rather than paint you into a corner when the world takes the next unexpected turn, we invest the time to understand your business in a way that ensures our solution is deep and resilient enough to fulfil your current needs, and flexible enough to accommodate future change.

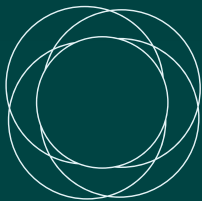
Get in touch

0121 728 9977

info@rhinooffice.co.uk

www.rhinooffice.co.uk

FIND OUT MORE



rhino
INTERIORS GROUP