

How a hybrid workspace strategy leads to a more resilient workforce - and business

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Enabling your workforce to operate from multiple locations can help ensure that they feel more trusted - and help make your entire enterprise more resilient.



The Covid-19 pandemic hit businesses hard and tested their resilience to the limit. The impact was so seismic that it changed the entire way in which many companies operated. Across the globe, organisations were forced to close their doors, and employees had no choice but to work remotely.

C-suite executives naturally feared the worst, but several businesses and their employees seemed to thrive under the new conditions.

These workers relished the challenge of adapting to new working and operating methods within their company and team. The numerous benefits of working from home became apparent, too – from an improved work-life balance to shorter commute times and more money in their pockets.

And yet, after a while, the reality of working as part of a dispersed team began to hit home. In some cases, trust was a major casualty.

It became clear that never working together in real life affected team chemistry and cohesion, which impacted business performance. Leaders realised they needed to find ways to build trust and resilience among their teams and across their whole organisation.

Many found it through hybrid working. Enabling their workforce to operate from a range of locations – from their homes, a central office, or different locations nearer home – bolstered companies' operations and still gave that workforce what they desired.

“Businesses now have the opportunity, like never before, to revolutionise ways of working. Work-life can deliver a unique trifecta of employee benefits: it can be more flexible, productive and satisfying. And those employee benefits can, in turn, payback for an entire enterprise in the form of increased productivity, increased employee engagement and reduced fixed overheads”, says Joanne Bushell, MD, IWG, South Africa.

But hybrid working doesn't only benefit employees. It can help make an entire business more resilient. If an incident like a

Covid lockdown hits operations in one place, there were still employees elsewhere who could pick up the slack and keep things moving. Liberated from its dependence on a limited number of permanent sites, an enterprise can now operate from thousands of locations worldwide.

These can be part of a formal disaster-recovery plan for a business facing disruption. This approach might range from solutions that: offer teams 'plug and play' office space on the same or the next business day; guarantee that critical team members have permanent access to backup workspace whenever they might need it, or that simply give clients back-up office space that they can use on an on-demand basis.

Alternatively, these new locations can simply form part of a new everyday working practice involving a 'hub and spoke' model and a distributed workforce.

A new way of working

What was once seen as an exception to the rule – allowing people to work from multiple locations – can prove hugely beneficial. These benefits won't only be felt by employees but will affect the performance of the whole business. There are several reasons for this:

When employees are offered the choice to operate from different locations, it builds mutual trust between them and their employer. They can move between working from home, a central office and a local workspace. Working face-to-face for at least part of the week helps maintain working relationships and improve team trust.

Working from different locations means employees have more control of their day. They can reduce their weekly commuting time without losing that vital connection with each other.

It can also create better working relationships between team members. Employees can collaborate face-to-face or work alone when needing to focus or reflect.

From a business perspective, waste is reduced—no need to pay for empty offices or waste carbon that keeps them heated and cooled. There will be a steady flow of people moving between allocated spaces instead. And the risk is distributed more widely too. From the C-Suite's point of view, there is the added benefit of knowing that disruption to a single site will no longer have the potential to cause massive damage to the whole enterprise.

It is a crucial moment for many enterprises. No less an authority than The Harvard Business Review concluded that leaders need to "work to rebuild and maintain trusting relationships – with and among their employees... Those that don't risk far more than lower morale. When trust plummets, the chances of increased attrition, lower productivity and stalled innovation loom large."

"Provided businesses can make their IT systems and HR processes link up with their operations team, allowing employees to work from multiple locations need not be a threat to collaboration and trust. Quite the opposite. Offering teams the freedom to choose how they work and where they work from can strengthen relationships. It can also enhance entire businesses", adds Bushell

No matter how big an enterprise is, it still depends on individuals. By giving those individuals the room to grow, in turn, trust within the workforce will increase. But more than that, productivity will grow, and so will the organisation's overall resilience.

Find out how IWG can strengthen resilience and recovery capabilities for your business.

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